Imran Khan on the Unfairness of Linking Islam to Terrorism

by Hugh Fitzgerald

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan recently attended a meeting of Muslim states in Mecca, where he delivered himself of some thoughts on the unfairness of blaming Islam for terrorism. [He asserted](#), not for the first time, that Islam has nothing to do with terrorism.

> No one ever blamed Hinduism for Tamil Tigers' bombings or Japanese religion when they blew up themselves on US ships. So why Islam is branded so?" Khan said during the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Makkah.

> He asserted that "the Muslim world has not been able to

This was duly reported around the world, without his charges being subject to critical examination. But Imran Khan had a number of things wrong — aside, of course, from his absurd claim the "Islam has nothing to do with terrorism."

First, he wondered why Hinduism was not blamed for the terrorist attacks of the Tamil Tigers. But the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), were not inspired by Hinduism; no Hindu texts were relied on by them to justify their attacks; some of the Tamil Tigers were not even Hindus. Compare the Tamil Tigers to Muslim terrorists, who are acting according to the Qur'anic verses that command them to wage violent Jihad against all Unbelievers, and to "strike terror" in their hearts. The goal of jihad is ultimately to conquer the world for the faith, so that Islam everywhere dominates, and Muslims rule, everywhere. The LTTE, by contrast, was a self-styled national liberation organization, with the primary goal of establishing an independent Tamil state in northern Sri Lanka. It had nothing to do with spreading Hinduism; Tamil nationalism was the basis of its ideology. The LTTE denied being a separatist movement based on religion — non-Hindu Tamils were members, while non-Tamil Hindus were not. It t saw itself as fighting for self-determination and the restoration of Tamil sovereignty in part of Sri Lanka. The LTTE was an avowedly secular organization; religion did not play any discernible part in its ideology. In fact, the LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was a secularist who criticized what he saw as the oppressive features of traditional Hindu Tamil society, such as the caste system and gender inequality. And that is why no one blamed Hinduism for the terrorism of the Tamil Tigers. It's doubtful that Imran Khan knew any of this; he is known not for his intellect, but for his skills as a cricket player and playboy before he

entered politics, and apparently he did not feel the need to learn more about the Tamil Tigers and their nationalist and secular agenda, before presuming to pontificate about them.

It may be worth noting that Khan's knowledge of geography has also put to the test, and found wanting:

> "Imran Khan was recently the object of scorn for confusing Japan with France, when he made comments about Japan and Germany sharing a border, discussed here; https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/imran-khan-on-the-border-region-of-germany-and-japan-1.63501476

> "Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's knowledge of geography came under the scanner when he said that Germany, situated in Central Europe, shares a border with Japan, an island nation in East Asia.

> "The faux pas happened when the Pakistan PM was emphatically advocating the necessity of promoting trade between the two countries to ensure peace ibeen n a speech.

> "The more trade you have with each other…your ties automatically gets [sic] stronger. Germany and Japan killed millions of their civilians, until after the Second World War. [[In]the border region of Germany and Japan they had joint industries. So now there is no question of them ever having bad relations because their economic interests are tied together," the Pakistan PM said in a video clip, which was widely circulated on social media.

> "It appears that the Pakistan Prime Minister was referring to the close Germany-France ties forged after the Second World War. However, the Prime Minister ended up mixing Japan with France.

> "Khan's lack of knowledge of geography not only left the delegates present at his speech puzzled but also rocked up a storm on social media.

Neither geography, nor history, nor world religions, are Imran Khan's strong suit.

Imran Khan asks why no one blamed Hinduism for the terrorist attacks of the Tamil Tigers. But why would they? Everyone in Sri Lanka knew that Hinduism was neither necessary nor sufficient to explain the phenomenon of the Tamil Tigers, a nationalist, separatist, and secular movement, whose leaders were critical of central elements to Hinduism, and who were fighting not to further Hinduism, but only to carve out a homeland for ethnic Tamils, whatever their religion.

Imran Khan's further claim that no one blames the "Japanese religion" for the kamikaze pilots deserves comment. Which "Japanese religion" does he mean? There are two — Shinto, the religion native to Japan, and Buddhism, an import from China. I suspect Khan does not realize that these are different faiths. Shinto consists mainly of a series of rituals designed to keep the Japanese people connected to their distant past, a religion of public shrines devoted to the worship of a multitude of "spirits," "essences," or "gods" (kami), suited to various purposes such as war memorials and harvest festivals. Practitioners express their diverse beliefs through a standard language and practice, adopting a similar style in dress and ritual, dating from around the time of the Nara and Heian periods (8th–12th centuries). Shinto was not an aggressive faith; there was no impulse to spread Shinto outside of Japan; it would have made no sense to do so, given that it was designed to keep the Japanese aware of their uniqueness.

But beginning in the 1920s, and increasingly in the 1930s and during the war years, Shinto was exploited by the Japanese

militarists, who connected it with the cult of sacrifice for Emperor Hirohito as the God-Emperor. The Americans, recognizing the Japanese military's misuse of Shinto for aggressive purposes, required the Japanese, as part of their surrender, to end state support for Shinto. This was not the traditional Shinto itself, which was pacific, but the distorted version constructed beginning in the 1920s to support Japanese militarism. That is quite different from Islam, which, unlike Shinto, needs no distorting to support aggression. Islam has always been a fighting faith, and the 109 Qur'anic verses commanding Muslims to "fight" and to "kill" and to "smite above the neck" and "strike terror in the hearts" of Infidels are surely enough to justify laying the blame for the attacks by Muslim terrorists — of which there have been 35,000 since 9/11 — on Islam itself.

When Imran Khan indignantly claims that no one blames "the Japanese religion" for the kamikaze pilots, he is wrong in two ways. First, the real Shinto religion, which primarily connected the Japanese people to their past through rituals and shrines, cannot be blamed for the distorted version promoted by the Japanese military, who used the cult of the God-Emperor to encourage the kamikaze pilots who sacrificed themselves by the thousands. Second, as noted above, Shinto, or more exactly the distortion of the faith in the service of Japanese militarism, was indeed blamed by the Americans for contributing to Japanese aggression. Imran Khan's claim that "no one blamed" the "Japanese religion" for the kamikaze pilots is wrong; he has forgotten, or more likely never knew, the American-imposed Terms of Surrender, which included the requirement that Shinto would no longer be the state religion of Japan.

Imran Khan would do well to take the time to study the irrelevance of Hinduism to the secular, nationalist struggle of the Tamil Tigers, and to learn a bit more about both traditional Shinto and the version created by Japanese

militarists. And finally, he might read the Qur'an more closely, so as to comprehend what it is that leads so many of us to believe that Islam does indeed have a great deal — indeed, everything — to do with Muslim terrorism.

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