

MP-IDSA

Issue Brief

The Irreligious, Inauthentic Narrative of 'Ghazwa-e-Hind'

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August 18, 2023

S*ummary*

The article seeks to expose and discredit the false narrative of 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' against the Indian state as bandied about by violent transnational non-state actors and Pakistan-backed cross-border terror groups. It is a meaningless slogan linked to a patently immoral and irreligious war against humanity.

In recent times, violent extremists and terrorists have become the greatest threat to the very religions and communities they claim to defend. They frequently violate the values of their avowed faiths with the self-same contempt and abuse that they direct towards the hapless victims of their physical violence. True religious scholarship therefore has the task to stand up against the wanton manipulations and distortions done to religions by the narratives of extremist movements and terrorist groups.

For instance, there are strict instructions in Sunni Islamic traditions against future speculation in all matters related to the esoteric (*‘batiniyya’*) and the unseen (*‘ghaib’*).¹ Even while interpreting the divine verses of the Quran, Islamic scholarship makes its summations by concluding with the term *‘Allahul Aalam’* (transl. ‘God Alone Knows the Truth’), which implies that the explanation of the scholar is a personal interpretation and opinion (which is thereby subject to error), as the true meaning of a Quranic verse or passage is best known to God alone.²

In spite of such strict provisions, irreligious transnational terrorist groups purposely dabble in obscure eschatological literature and dovetail carefully crafted strategic narratives into the theological exegeses to legitimise extremist and violent agenda. Thus, we find inauthentic end-time terms such as *‘Ghazwatul Hind’* (in Arabic language)/ *‘Ghazwa-e-Hind’* (in Urdu), etc. being raked up to radicalise morally dissonant minds.

The use of the phrase *‘Ghazwatul Hind’* by so-called jihadist groups is particularly perfidious, as the phrase is not mentioned anywhere in the Quran, which Muslims regard as the only infallible revelation from Allah.³ It is also not deemed *‘Saheeh’* (authentic) in any major Sunni Hadeeth compilation and finds no mention in Shia Hadeeth literature as well.⁴ Still, the use of the term *‘Ghazwa-e-Hind’* has become so popular in South Asia that it has assumed a kind of permissiveness in the religious discourse of the times.

Ghazwatul Hind: A Fabricated Misnomer?

‘Ghazwatul Hind’ only became part of the Muslim theological discourse in recent times. Indian Islamic scholar Ghulam Rasool Dehlvi believes it is a wrongly worded

¹ El-Sayed El-Aswad, **“Al-Ghaib”** (The Invisible-Unknowable), *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 2010.

² “Say: Allah knows best ... to Him are (known) the unseen things of the heavens and the earth”, in Abdullah Yousuf Ali (transl.), *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Surah 18, Verse 27, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1934.

³ Ahmad Hasan **“The Concept of Infallibility in Islam,”** *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1972, pp. 1–11.

⁴ Salim Haq, **“The Myth of Ghazwa-e-Hind”**, ANI, 18 December 2014.

Pakistani concoction, in that the word ‘*Ghazwa*’ (which in Arabic language literally means a ‘foray’ or a ‘charge’) is only used in Islamic theological literature with regards to campaigns personally led by the Prophet.⁵ Even the campaign that the Prophet sent or despatched under another general or official appointed by him was called *Sariyah*, and not *Ghazwa*.⁶

After the passing away of the Prophet, all military campaigns in Muslim history were called *Ma’rka*, even when such expeditions were led or despatched by the Righteous Caliphs (*Khulafa-i-Rashideen*), who were the Prophet’s closest companions. Therefore, the question arises as to how come a supposed end-time prophecy, which speaks of a warlike campaign against the region of ‘*Hind*’, can be called ‘*Ghazwa*’, when the word is only used for Prophet-led campaigns. This has raised suspicions that the *Ghazwatul Hind* reference in Hadeeth literature is a possible fabrication.⁷

Some Muslim scholars have even suggested that these set of Ahadeeth were likely fabricated during the campaign of Muhammad bin Qasim against India, which was contemporaneous to the period of collection of Hadeeth literature under the Umayyad rulers. Still, thanks to the probity of the *Muhaddithun* (hadeeth compilers) of the *Sihah Sitta* (the Authentic Six), the reference never got the seal of authenticity (*Saheeh*) in their collections.

According to Maulana Waris Mazhari of the Darul Uloom Deoband seminary in Uttar Pradesh, had the Ghazwa-e-Hind narrative been true, it would have been narrated by many companions of the Prophet and cited in multiple collections of the Hadith “considering the merits or rewards of the *Ghazwa-e-Hind* that it talks about.”⁸ Given that only one companion of the Prophet reported it, Maulana Waris Mazhari claims that “it is possible that this Hadith report is not genuine and that it might have been manufactured in the period of the Umayyad Caliphs to suit and justify their own political purposes and expansionist designs.”⁹

Even Maulana Mufti Mushtaq Tjarvi of Jamaat-e-Islami India has affirmed that the Ghazwa-i-Hind Hadith is not genuine at all and perhaps a fabrication intended to justify Muhammad bin Qasim's invasion of India in the 7th century CE.¹⁰

⁵ J. M. B. Jones, A. F. L. Beeston, et al. (eds.). *The Maghāzī Literature*. Vol. Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period. Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 344.

⁶ Ghulam Rasool Dehlvi, “[Pakistani Jihadis' War Cry of Ghazwa-e-Hind Is Entirely Based on Concocted Ahadith](#): No Religious Sanctity attached to Terrorist Designs on India”, *New Age Islam*, 20 October 2013.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Maulana Waris, “[Countering Pakistani Terrorists' Anti-India Propaganda](#)”, 26 January 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Husain Haqqani, “[Prophecy & the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent](#)”, Hudson Institute, 27 March 2015.

Ghazwatul Hind not in Quran, nor Deemed ‘Saheeh’ (Authentic) Hadeeth

To better understand the presence of ‘*Ghazwatul Hind*’ references in a Hadeeth compilation, albeit not rated as ‘authentic’, requires a basic understanding of the process by which the Prophet’s sayings were authenticated. After the Quran, the most respected religious texts in Islam are the Hadeeth compilations. Muslims believe that Quran contains Allah’s own infallible and eternal words, whereas Hadeeth literature contains the personal speeches and deeds (Sunnah) of Prophet Muhammad, who according to Islam was a human Messenger of God (*Rasulullah*), but not God.¹¹

Unlike the Quran, Hadeeth literature can be subject to enquiry and scrutiny as the collected sayings of the Prophet were not compiled by him, but by succeeding generation of Muslim scholars, who began the work more than a century after the Prophet’s death. These Muslim scholars who collected the sayings and actions of the Prophet are called ‘*Muhaddithun*’ and they mostly wrote down oral narrations of Prophetic sayings from people of their times, who claimed to have memorised not only the text of the Hadeeth (*matn*) but also the chain of narrators (*sanad*) from whom they received the speeches. The preceding generations (*tabi’een*) from whom the Prophetic tradition had been transmitted to them was also verified by the compilers through various ways.¹²

The ‘*Muhaddithun*’ are said to have taken great care in ascertaining the authenticity of the Hadeeth text, as they validated through various means every link in the preceding chain of narrators, in addition to determining the personal character and moral rectitude of all the people in the narrative chain after the Prophet and his companions. This was done to ensure that no vaguely recollected, false, interpolated or fabricated Hadeeth text is included by the *Muhaddith* in his compilation.¹³

In fact, every Hadeeth text that claimed to be a saying from the Prophet was graded under different categories according to the compiler’s judgment regarding its

¹¹ Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld), 2009.¹² Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, Muhammad. “Hadith Literature—I: The Development of the Science of *Hadith*.” in A. F. L. Beeston et al. (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature until the End of the Umayyad Period* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 271–288.

¹² Muhammad Abd al-Rauf, Muhammad. “Hadith Literature—I: The Development of the Science of *Hadith*.” in A. F. L. Beeston et al. (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature until the End of the Umayyad Period* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 271–288.

¹³ Aisha Y. Musa, “[Hadith Studies](#)” in Clinton Bennett (ed.) *Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 15 January 2015, pp. 75-92.

authenticity. These Hadeeth texts are thus categorised in Hadeeth compilations as either *saheeh* (authentic), *hasan* (fulfilling conditions of acceptability, yet not deemed as authentic) or *d’aeef* (literally ‘weak’, as they fail to meet conditions of acceptability). There were also other, more subtle classifications that are not mentioned here for the sake of brevity.¹⁴

Furthermore, only compilations of Six Hadeeth collectors were finally deemed to be authentic in Sunni Islam, known as the *Sihah Sitta*, as described earlier. Interestingly, even these six authentic compilations have been graded in order of authenticity through a consensus among scholars.

In our case, the only compilation out of the *Sihah Sitta* (the Authentic Six) that contains hadeeth quotations related to *Ghazwatul Hind* is generally graded fifth in the order of authenticity out of the six volumes, and is called *Sunan al-Sughra*, compiled by Imam al-Nasa’i (d. 303 AH, 915 CE).

Within this volume of Hadeeth, there are only three hadeeth quotations related to *Ghazwatul Hind*, out of which two are graded as ‘*daeef*’ (literally ‘weak’, as they fail to meet conditions of acceptability) and one as ‘*hasan*’ (or ‘fair’, with qualified acceptability). Even here, none of the ‘Ghazwatul Hind’ Hadeeth quotations have received the grade of ‘*Saheeh*’ (authentic) by the respected compiler Imam Nisai.¹⁵

It is important to note that even the one Hadeeth that has been rated as ‘*hasan*’ (‘fair’) by Imam Nisai, has been critiqued by many Islamic scholars over the ages, with one of the most recent being a scholar of Pakistan origin, Javed Ghamdi, who has provided copious historical evidence to prove unreliability of at least two narrators listed in the chain of this particular Hadeeth (namely Asad ibn Musa and Baqiyah).¹⁶

End-Time Prophecy Relates to Eesa ibn Maryam (Jesus) and the Anti-Christ

The only ‘*hasan*’ (fair) Hadeeth in the *Sihah Sitta* (Authentic Six), which is ascribed to the Prophet (pbuh) as regards *Ghazwatul Hind* is translated below:

“God shall save two groups of people from amongst my followers from hellfire. One, which shall do ‘Ghazwa’ in “Al-Hind” and the other, which shall accompany Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus) [on his return].”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Haqqani, “[Prophecy & the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent](#)”, n. 10.

¹⁶ “[The Hadith of Ghazwa-i-Hind: An Analysis](#)”, Al Mawrid Hind Foundation, 31 January 2017.

¹⁷ “[The Book of Jihad](#)”, Sunan an-Nasa’i, Book 25, Hadeeth No. 91, [sunnah.com](#).

Many Islamic scholars link the above-mentioned reference to campaign on Hind to Eesa ibn Maryam’s (Jesus, son of Mary) Islamic war against the anti-Christ during the end-times. It should be noted here that Eesa or Jesus is considered both a Prophet and Maseeh (Christ) in Islam, though not a son of God.

In some eschatological Hadeeth texts, ‘Eesa ibn Maryam’ (or Jesus son of Mary) has been prophesized to return to earth before end-times to free the world from the global domination of the evil ‘Dajjal’ (or anti-Christ). Thus one interpretation of the above hadeeth links Ghazwatul Hind with Jesus’ campaign after his Second Coming. According to the interpretation, Jesus would lead an army to capture the western hemisphere on his ‘Second Coming’, while another contingent fights in the east in the so-called ‘*Ghazwatul-Hind*’ campaign.¹⁸

Thus, even if one were to give the hadeeth of ‘*Ghazwatul-Hind*’ some credence, it can only be in its juxtaposition to the aforementioned prophesized end-time events, when the whole world is occupied by the forces of Dajjal (anti-Christ) being fought and defeated by Jesus. As such, a so-called prophesized scenario does not exist in present times, and as ‘Hind’ is currently not under the occupation of Dajjal’s supposed global empire, the use of *Ghazwatul Hind* in the current geopolitical context seems both ridiculous and irrelevant. Therefore, this Hadeeth and its interpretation cannot be applied to the present times, as most contemporaneous terrorist organizations in the region do, be it Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad or even elements in the Pakistan military establishment.

Meanwhile, some religious scholars interpret the above Hadeeth differently and do not agree upon linking the supposed *Ghazwatul Hind* prophecy with Jesus’ second coming and believe the stated events shall happen much before the supposed coming of Jesus as a Muslim king. Many Pakistan-based ideologues seek to imply that the time and place for the prophecy is the present 21st century CE and the word ‘Hind’ actually refers to the Republic of India. However, they fail to provide any evidence to prove their specious assertion.

Meanwhile, some Indian Islamic scholars like Mufti Sajid Qasmi from Dar ul-Uloom Deoband suggest that the *Ghazwatul Hind* prophecy came true following the raids of Muhammad bin Qasim and Mahmud Ghazni and that is why *Ghazwatul Hind* will not happen in the future.¹⁹ Much of the speculation regarding the above Hadeeth is derived from apocryphal Hadeeth volumes of Imam Ahmad’s *Musnad* and Naim ibn

¹⁸ Antonio Cuciniello, “[Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and the Second Coming of Jesus in Islam](#)”, Maydan, The Abu Sulayman Centre for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University, 14 December 2022.

¹⁹ Waris, “[Countering Pakistani Terrorists’ Anti-India Propaganda](#)”, n. 8.

Hammad’s *Kitab Al-Fitan* and these books are not part of the ‘*Sihah Sitta*’ (the Authentic Six) collection of Sunni Islam.²⁰

Curiously, some transnational jihadist groups include several countries in the region of ‘*Hind*’ in their interpretation of this dubious eschatological reference. In May 2014, the then Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) released a video of Burmese Mufti Abuzar Azzam discussing Ghazwa-e-Hind. He argued that the region of ‘*Hind*’ not only covers India but also includes Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Kashmir, Burma, and Bangladesh; and explained that the so-called jihad in Pakistan was part of his group’s *Ghazwa-e-Hind*.²¹

Similarly, the Uyghur jihadi group Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) released a video in April 2014 proclaiming jihad against China as necessary for the fulfilment of the Prophet's purported *Ghazwa-e-Hind* prophecy.²² To these groups, *Hind* does not just relate to India, but more specifically to Pakistan and China as well.

Thus, *Ghazwatul Hind* appears simply to be a speculative eschatological red herring, meant to beguile and mislead young minds by violent extremist and terrorist groups. It is a meaningless slogan linked to a patently immoral and irreligious war against humanity.

²⁰ David Cook (transl.), “The Book of Tribulations: An Annotated Translation by Naym b. Hammad al-Marwazi”, Edinburgh University Press, 1 August 2017.

²¹ [IMU video on Burmese militant declaring Ghazwa e Hind](#), MEMRI Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) Weekend Summary, 24 May 2014.

²² [Turkestan Islamic Party on Ghazwa e Hind](#), MEMRI Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) Weekend Summary, 12 April 2014.

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