How the Islamist Mindset Rationalizes — and Promotes — 'Sex Sins'

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Is it inconsistent for Muslim "holy warriors" to engage in voyeuristic acts of lasciviousness? Because would-be jihadists and martyrs have been known to frequent strip bars — such as the 9/11 hijackers and Major Nidal Hasan [1], whose "late-night jiggle-joint carousing stands at odds with the picture of a devout Muslim" — many Americans have concluded that such men cannot be "true" Muslims, leading to the ubiquitous conviction that they are "hijacking Islam."

In fact, Islamists rely on several rationalizations — doctrines, even — that make "jiggle-joint carousing" consistent with Muslim piety. Considering that Islamic law permits sex slaves (Koran 4:3), who can be kept topless [2] by their masters, and makes sex one of the highest paradisiacal rewards, this should come as no great surprise. However, to elaborate:

First, the doctrine of tagiyya allows Muslims residing among infidels to deceive the latter by, among other things, behaving like infidels, e.g., frequenting strip bars: "Tagiyya [3] [deception], even if committed without duress, does not lead to a state of infidelity — even if it leads to sin deserving of hellfire."

In conjunction, the overarching Muslim principle that necessity makes that which is forbidden permissible [4] goes a long way in helping Islamists validate their libidinous desires: "It is 'necessary' for me to be at this strip club so infidels come to believe that I'm just a regular bloke and not a soldier of Allah." Indeed, sometimes the mere gratification of sexual urges is deemed a "necessity" that makes the forbidden permissible in Islam, as in this historical anecdote:

After conquering the Banu Mustaliq tribe in 628, Muhammad's men deemed it "necessary" to rape their captive women [5] (citing their wives' absence and untended desires). However, they also wanted to sell these women for a profit, which posed complications, as copulating with them risked impregnating them. So they rationalized that 'azl (coitus interruptus) would solve the problem and asked Muhammad. The prophet went one step further and offered a cosmic rationalization [6], dismissing coitus interruptus as unnecessary, "for every soul that is to be born up to the Day of Resurrection will be born" — that is, pullout or not, you cannot thwart Allah's will, so don't bother. (See here [7] and here [8] for more 'azl quotes.)

Muhammad also maintained that death in the jihad not only blots out all sins — including sexual ones, a la voyeurism — but it actually gratifies them:

The martyr is special to Allah. He is forgiven [of all sins] from the first drop of blood [that he sheds]. He sees his throne in paradise, where he will be adorned in ornaments of faith. He will wed the 'Aynhour [a.k.a. "voluptuous" women [9]"] and will not know the torments of the grave [10], and safeguards against the greater terror [hell]. ... And he will copulate with 72 'Aynhour (see *The Al Qaeda Reader* [11], p. 143).

In light of this, how "un-Islamic" can it be for Islamists to gawk at nude, gyrating, infidel women — especially prior to "martyring" themselves in the jihad, which, as Muhammad said, blots out all their sins? This rationalization has precedents going back to the Middle Ages: Muslim groups like the Isma'ilis created hidden "gardens of delight" swarming with voluptuous women, and, prior to sending their assassins on missions, would immerse them in these gardens, thereby giving these prototypical "suicide attackers" a foretaste of the sexual delights awaiting them in the afterlife. After this experience, the assassins would eagerly undertake any assignment simply to be "martyred" and return to the gardens of delight, which were based on "the description Muhammad gave of his paradise" (see Marco Polo's 13th-century account [12]).

Nor has this intersection between sex and violence subsided in the modern era. The Arabic satellite program *Daring* Question [13] recently aired various clips of young jihadists giddily singing about their forthcoming deaths and subsequent sexual escapades in heaven. After documenting various anecdotes indicative of Islamist obsession with sex, human rights activist Magdi Khalil concluded that "absolutely everything [jihad, suicide operations, etc.] revolves around sex in heaven," adding, "if you look at the whole of Islamic history, you come up with two words: sex and violence."

Deceit, rationalizations, and a paradise that forgives the would-be martyr's every sin — indeed, that satiates his hedonistic urges with 72 voluptuous women (which may only be raisins [14]) — all help demonstrate how Muslims can be observant and simultaneously frequent strip clubs.

Yet there is one final explanation that requires an epistemic shift [15] to appreciate fully: in Islam, legalism trumps morality, resulting in what Westerners may deem irreconcilable behavior among Muslims, that is, "hypocrisy." As Daniel Pipes observed some three decades ago in his *In the Path of God* [16]:

[There is] a basic contrast between the Christian and Islamic religions: the stress on ethics versus the stress on laws. Controls on sexual activity directly reflect this difference. The West restricts sex primarily by imbuing men and women with standards of morality. ... Muslims, in contrast, depend on "external precautionary safeguards" [e. g., segregation, veiling] to restrain the sexes. ... Rather than instill internalized ethical principles, Islam establishes physical boundaries to keep the sexes apart.

In this context, the problem is not Muslims frequenting strip clubs, but misplaced Western projections that assume religious piety is always synonymous with personal morality — a notion especially alien to legalistic Islamists whose entire epistemology begins and ends with the literal words of seventh-century Muhammad and his Koran.

And it is this slavishness that best explains Islamist behavior. For the same blind devotion to the literal mandates of Islam which encourages Islamists to lead lives of deceit also explains why Islamists are callous to human suffering, why they are desensitized to notions of human dignity and the cries of their raped victims, and, yes, why they cheerily forfeit their lives in exchange for a fleshy paradise. In all cases, Muhammad and his Allah [17] said so — and that's all that matters.

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