# The Concept of Jihad in Islamic Philosophy

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#### **Abstract**

In any given society, there is always need for revolution especially when deviation is noticed in every aspect of human life. However, revolution is not easy to come by because man by nature is antagonist of changes. Therefore, in the process of ensuring that revolution take place, physical confrontation or bloody combat, in most cases, becomes unavoidable because revolution is usually resisted by its antagonists. It must be emphasized that among the messages that Islam wants to deliver to the entire world is the establishment of peace in the place of crisis, relief in the place of oppression, equality in the place of social class, pleasant in the place of evil. Meanwhile, Jihad in its different connotations is capable of achieving these objectives. In the process of realizing these objectives there is need for protection and the protection cannot come by without power. This explains the concept of jihad in Islamic philosophy. Jihad means defending Muslim community against any form of oppression or external aggression, wagging war against one's soul from being corrupted, standing for the truth infront of a tyrant ruler, striving in the course of peaceful propagation of Islam. Anything outside this cannot be regarded as Jihad. Based on this, this paper will attempt to shed light on the origin and causes of Jihad in Islam, Islamic law of jihad, the effects of modern jihad theory in the Muslim world, the critique of modern jihad theory with objective of establishing its viability within the precepts of Islam, relevance of physical in 21st century and misconception about Jihad which has created jihadphobia in the mind of non-Muslims.

#### Introduction

The perception of Islam on Jihad has been misconstrued by non-Muslims such that whenever the word Jihad is mentioned they understand it to be a holy war against non-Muslims. Unfortunately the reactions of some uninformed Muslims to profane statements or actions made against the Prophet or the Qur'an by non-Muslims seems to confirm their misconception. In 1988, the late Imam Ayatollah Khomeini passed verdict by placing \$1.5 million bounty on Salman Rushdie's head over his controversial novel titled Satanic Verses. Similarly, in 2012, a movie titled "Innocence of Muslims" written and produced by Nakoula Bassely Nakoula was released. Because of how the Prophet Muhammad was depicted as a child of uncertain parentage, a womanizer, a homosexual and bloodthirsty thug makes some Muslims in some parts of the world to react violently which led to the death of many people. Even a Pakistani minister offered a bounty for killing Nakoula, the film producer. The emergence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) under the leadership of Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi is another dimension to the misconception of Jihad in the sight of non-Muslims because the insurgents claimed to be jihadists fighting for establishment of Islamic State. The Iraqi Christian minorities who reside in the areas captured by the insurgents were asked to leave or pay toll. Their activity has resulted to the loss of many lives and wanton destruction of properties. The climax of all these was 9/11 attack which majority of Americans believed that it was done in the name of Jihad. It is going to be very difficult to disabuse the mind of majority of Americans who have already made up their mind like Kadriye Branning who said "I learnt that it was done in the name of Allah, the most Merciful and the most Compassionate."

Locally, the situation is not different, for instance, in 2002; This Day News Paper carried a report considered to be blasphemous against the Prophet Muhammad. In reaction to this, the former deputy governor of Zamfara State, Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi passed the following verdict;

Like Salman Rushdie, the blood of Isioma Daniel can be shed. It is binding on all Muslims, whenever they are, to consider the killing of the writer as a religious duty.

What occasioned this scenario was as a result of an attempt to organize a beauty pageant in Kaduna State unfortunately the period coincided with the period of Ramadan fast which made the Muslims in Kaduna State oppose it. Amid this acrimony, This Day News Paper carried a report credited to Isioma Daniel that

If the Prophet Muhammad was alive today and had viewed the miss world pageant, he would have probably chosen to marry one of the contestants.

In another occasion, one of the female teachers, Mrs. OluwatoyinOluwaseesin who was a teacher in the Government Day Secondary School, Gandu, in Gombe State was lynched on 22 March, 2007 by her students accusing her of desecrating the Qur'an whereas it was reported that, this woman caught one of the students cheating during the examination. The lists of such incident are endless and unfortunately all the perpetrators would claim jihad. This act has given the impression that jihad is holy war against non-Muslims. The impression can be best captured in the expression of Rev. Peter Akinola on the wake of Boko Haram that BokoHaram is another strategy employed by the Muslims to kill Christians and this cannot be stopped because it is their religious duty.

We have ignored the truth. Boko Haram must be seen in the right context. It is a continuation of the past. Shun all political claims that Boko Haram is not against Christianity. It is. It has been going on since 1966. They are committed to Jihad. You can't stop them it is their religious obligations. They have been doing it for 36 years; they have not stopped and they won't stop.

The germane questions at this juncture are; is it true that jihad is holy war against innocent non-Muslims? In whose interest are the perpetrators carrying out attack? Do they really have understanding of nitty-gritty of jihad as enunciated in the holy Qur'an? In order to provide answers to these intriguing questions, the origin and causes of jihad in Islam will be examined.

## The Origin and Causes of Jihad in Islam

The period that predated the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad was known as the era of ignorance for barbaric practices prevalent in Arabian Peninsula. There was chaos in every aspect of their life; religiously, socially, politically and economically. The God was perceived in everything, apart from idols which sacrifice was made to, some perceived God in a date which can be eaten if the requests of its adherents are not granted. At social level, the incessant and perennial war dominated their way of life. The womenfolk were not accorded any dignity and the girl child was usually buried alive for the fear of poverty. Oppression was the order of the day because the might devoured the weak ones with pride and dignity. Tribalism and supremacy of the clan was a cause which each member of the clan fights and dies for. Economically, the rich continued to be rich while the poor lives his whole life in perpetually abject poverty.

In the midst of this anarchy and animalistic tendency, a man with impeccable characters and pedigree who was highly respected and loved by them began the message of reforming the society as directed and guided by Almighty God. He employed all the means to get his people understand why they have to forsake their bad and heinous practices and embrace the newway of life. Unfortunately, the message was perceived as a threat to their ideology which had being inherited from their progenitors. The persistence of the Prophet Muhammad in his mission made his people to think of eliminating him. For good thirteen years, the Prophet and his followers faced a heavy persecution that resulted to the loss of lives or seeking asylum in neighbouring towns in order to save themselves from the persecution. As asylum seekersin Madinah, the Prophet and Muslims neededsecurity becauseMadinah was one of the trade routes between Makkah and Sham (the current Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) where the people of Makkahcarried out their trade. Obviously, the presence of the Muslims in Madinahwas a threat to economy of people of Makkah. This underlines why people of Makkahwould not relent until they get rid of Muslims. The Prophet on the other hand understood this security challenges and quickly signed a treaty on security with three clans of Jews who resided in Madinah before his arrival.

However, the fear of people of Makkah over their economy was proved right by the expedition of Abdullah bnJahsh who was sent on are co naissance mission and he was overwhelmed by the spirit of vengeance which eventually led to the attack of the caravan of people of Makkah in Rajab 623CE. Actually, what Abdullah bnJahsh did was a violation of existing custom among the Arabs where no any form of hostility must be carried out in the sacred months which Rajab is one of them.

In spite of persecution that Muslims suffered from the people of Makkah for over thirteen years, the Prophet did not support the action of Abdullah bnJahsh and felt very bad over it and this occasioned the revelation of the Qur'an chapter 2: 217;

People ask you about fighting in the holy month. Say: "Fighting in it is an awesome sin, but barring people from the way of Allah, disbelieving in Him, and denying entry into the Holy Mosque and expelling its inmates from it are more awesome acts in the sight of Allah; and persecution is even more heinous than killing..."

What is noteworthy from the reaction of the Prophet and above quoted verse of the Qur'an isthat Islam does not condone any form of aggression against any soul. It is a clear principle of two wrongs cannot make a right otherwise both Allah and Prophet would have lauded the action of Abdullahibn Jahsh.

An attempt made by the Prophet and Muslims to control the free transition of goods of Quraysh along the route of Madinah led to the abortive interception of caravan led by Abu Sufyan. In a clear indication, the presence of Muslims in Madinah becomes a great bottleneck to the economy of Quraysh. Like America today who will go at any length to protect her economy, the Quraysh decided to wage a war against the Prophet and Muslims for the purpose of freeing their economy from the bondage and this led to the first battle known as Battle of Badr in 624CE between the Muslims and Quraysh. For the sake of defending themselves and the integrity of Madinah, the only option was to carry arms against their enemy. Then, they were granted permission by Allah with revelation of the following verse of the holy Qur'an.

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah indeed has power to help. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, "Our Lord is Allah..." Q22: 39-40.

These verses of the holy Qur'an clearly state the philosophy of fighting in Islam as well as its causes, that is fighting becomes necessary when Muslims are unjustly oppressed. It is noteworthy according to the verses quoted above that the word *Jihad* was not used to mean fight rather the word *Qital* which connotes fight was used. Therefore, using the word Jihad specifically for fight or war is inadequate.

However, the triumph of Muslims in the Battle of Badr was a great vindication for Islam against who may think that Islam was being spread by force or who believes that Islam must be forced on people because all the captives of Battle of Badrwere set free by ransom without forcing them to accept Islam. It must also be emphasized that throughout the life of the Prophet and the companions any form of aggression either on Quryash or Jews had never been reported against them all what they stood for was defense against external aggression or security. The conquest of Makkah which was the last fight that took place between the Muslims and Quraysh was as a result of violation of Treaty of Hudaybiyyah by Quraysh. Despite the fact that the Treaty did not favoure the Muslims yet the Prophet maintained the rule of *pactasuntserv and a* which means international agreement is binding once is being signed. Similarly, the hostility between the Muslims and Jews of Madinah was occasioned by violating the treaty of Madinah. Above all, the Muslims in all the battles fought were strictly guided by the rules of Allah so that the rights of individuals were highly protected no matter the situation. The wounded or the captives were treated with humane and the dead were treated with decency.

## The Islamic Law of Jihad

Contextualizing Islam in a religious context or seeing it as religious institution will baffle non-Muslims why Islam sanctions war. However, if it is seen as a state that has a distinctive ideology (Teachings of Islam) that is meant to superimpose the ideologies of the existing states as clearly stated in the (Q61:9) justification for sanctioning war would be clearly understood. Obviously, for thirteen years that Islam stayed in Makkahit was nothing but a religious institution but on getting to Madinah it became a state. According to Montevideo Convention of 1933 in which the USA and South American States were signatory to, stated that an entity called state must have four main features. One, a permanent population, two, a defined territory, three, a government and four, a capability to enter into relations with other States. It is noteworthy that at the arrival of the Prophet in Madinah, the Prophet became a statesman who controlled the affairs of Madinah.

The treaty of Madinah and that of Hudaybiyyah as well as his letters written to contiguous states introducing himself and his mission depicts the capability of Madinah as a state to enter into relations with other states.

Putting it in the right perspective, Madinah as a state must be defended against external aggression and its populace must be saved from oppression because they have been oppressed and persecuted because of their religion.

In order to realize this, fighting against oppression was declared on different pages of the Qur'an as the only means of repelling anarchy."And were it not that Allah repelled some people with another, the earth would surely be overlaid with mischief."Q2:251

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah indeed has power to help. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, "Our Lord is Allah..." Q22: 39-40.

And what is the matter with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and of the weak-men, women and childrenwho say, Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and make for us some friend from Thyself, and make for us from Thyself some helper.Q4:75

These two verses are very instructive in the sense that the objectives for which Islam sanctions fight must be within the gambit of defending Islam and repelling oppression not to coerce people into Islam or aggress. And these objectives were pursued in accordance with laid down principles by the Prophet and his companions. As-Siba'i (2010) highlights ten principles of Jihad as enshrined in the holy Qur'an.

One, fight must be against the enemy who carry weapons against the Muslims and in this instance, the Muslims are advised to be armed;

And make ready for them whatever you can of armed forces and of mounted pickets at the frontier, whereby you may frighten the enemy of Allah and your enemy...Q8:60

Two, in case the enemy surrender and settle down or opt for peace, the Muslims are encouraged to reciprocate;

And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing All-Knowing. Q8:61

Three, in case the enemies insist on fighting and aggression, the Muslims are encouraged to repel them in likely manner:

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors. Q2:190

And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors. Q2:193

Four, in the cause of war, a strategy should be employed to cause fears in the heart of the enemies and weak their plan so that the war can be stopped within shortest period and the number of casualties be minimized. According to the traditions of Prophet "War is strategy".

Five, when the battle field is critical, the Muslims are encouraged to be steadfast and remember Allah and rely on Allah's help and their intention must be purely for defending against their religion not for any other reasons lest they should be like their enemies who are the oppressors.

O you who believed, when you encounter a company (from the enemy forces), stand firm and remember God much that you may be successful. Q8:45

Six, in the battle field, the Muslims must remember that they are fighting a war for the purpose of defending the weak and oppressors therefore they are to fight only those who carry arms against them or the aggressors.

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors. Q2:190

One of the distinctive features of war in Islam that differentiate it from other wars is that the attack is highly prohibited on the aged people, the women, the children, the farmers, the monks and unarmed people.

Suffice to quote here is the advice of Abu-Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam when Muslim soldiers were sent on an expedition;

"Stop, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services: leave them alone."1

In the same vein, the second Caliph of Islam, Umar bn al-Khattab signed a treaty with the Christians when Jerusalem fell under the control of Islamic government and the following is the excerpt from the text of the treaty;

This is the treaty for the people of Aelia, granted by Umar, the servant of God and commander of the Faithful. He gives them the guarantee of their lives and properties, their churches and crosses. Your churches will not be transformed into dwelling houses, nor destroyed, nor will any one confiscate anything belong to them. The inhabitants will not be subjected to any compulsion or constraint in matter of religion... (Mazhar-ul-Haq 1977:251)

Seven, while battle is going on and the enemies perceive their waterloo and by that they opt for peaceful resolution, the Muslim soldiers are obliged to stop the fight and enter into negotiation with them. But if the treachery is later noticed, the Muslims are obliged to inform the enemies about their treachery and give them notice of war so that they would not be attacked unaware.

And if you fear treachery from any people (with whom you have a covenant) then publicly throw their covenant at them. Allah does not love the treacherous. Q8:58

Eight, when the hostility is over with the victory on the side of Muslims and enemies have surrendered, the Muslims are warned against destruction of life and properties all the prisoners of war must be treated with respect and dignity and no any form of vengeance is allowed except reconciliation, liberation, fairness and retaliation of the evil with good.

(And they are) those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give charity and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and to God belongs the outcome of (all) matters. Q22:41

Nine, not only that the prisoners of war must not be maltreated or be subjected to harsh condition, they must be set free either by free of charge or by ransom.

And when you meet (in regular battle) who disbelieve, smite their necks and when you have overcome them, bind fast the fetters- then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom –until the war lays down its burden...Q47:4

Lastly, the people in the conquered lands must be accorded the freedom of religion, safety of life, freedom to acquire property and they are entitle to all the rights of citizens only that they have to pay toll for the service rendered to them.

A critical examination of all these ten principles will vindicate Islam from insinuation that it was spread by sword and that jihad is a holy war against Christians. More importantly the method of warfare in Islam is entirely different from perspective of other warfare which is basically on economic and political subjugation. Above the Geneva conventions of 1949 on the law of war can be regarded as offshoot of these principles.

## Jihad in the 21st Century

The experience of first and second world wars was so brutal to the extent that the world learnt an unforgettable and bitter lesson. The fear of reoccurrence of such devastating experience led to the emergence of United Nations as alternative to the League of Nations. Among the objectives that United Nations sets to achieve is maintenance of peace and security of the world and suppression of any act of aggression. This is clearly stated in the Article one paragraph one of the United Nations Charter;

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression...

This implies that any form of anarchy would not be more tolerated in any part of the world. Besides, the Universal Declaration of Human Right adopted by United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 guarantees freedom of religion which has also been domesticated by every nation of the world. For instance, in 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria section thirty-eight sub section one states that; "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion..." in other words, physical jihad in 21st century is no longer encouraged because the purpose why Islam sanctions a defensive attack is to repel the aggression and guarantee freedom of religion.

Akin to that is the statement made by the Prophet after the conquest of Makkah that "We have returned from lesser jihad to the greater jihad" meaning that when the freedom of religion is guaranteed the next jihad is the internal struggle against carnal self. This is perpetual while physical jihad is conditional therefore it is seen as greater.

However, the impact of colonialism on the Islamic culture divides the Muslim scholars on the relevance of physical jihad in 21st. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) asserted that jihad was obligatory for Muslims only in the case of positive oppression and obstruction in the exercise of their faith. Similarly, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1953) argued that peaceful coexistence is the normal state between Islamic and non-Islamic territories and that jihad is only allowed as defensive warfare. The stand of these Muslim scholars is that physical jihad cannot be declared against colonialists because they recognized and upheld freedom of religion. Contrarily, this stance was opposed by other Muslim scholars on the premise that the existence of colonialists in the Muslim lands is oppression which must be repelled by physical jihad and they are referred to as modern jihad theorists.

## Modern Jihad Theorists

Modern jihad theory could be regarded as an attempt to use Islam to rationalize offensive jihad against the society that does not recognize Shari'ah as only authority. SayyidQutb (d. 1966) and Abu al-A'laMawdudi(1903-1979) and Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (1941-1989) a.k.a Father of Global Jihad and Abd al-Salam Faraj(1954-1982) were known to be proponents of this theory. Outb believes that western democracy as well as Marxism is in conflict with man's nature and needs and it is only Islam that is harmonious with human values, positive, constructive and practicable. The only home of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam) is where the Islamic state exists and Shari'ah is the authority. Any place where Shari'ah is not enforced and Islam is not dominant is the abode of war (Dar-ul-Harb). This underlines why modern jihad theorists see every Islamic government that does not operate Shari'ah as infidel government therefore violent jihad is legitimized against such government. Faraj argues that unbelievers are not only non-Muslims, but also those Muslims who do not adhere to Sharia. He evokes the ideas of classical Muslim scholar IbnTaymiyya (d. 1328) to state that an unbeliever is someone who does not believe or does not adhere to any of the prescripts of Islam, even if he pronounces the Islamic confessions of faith.(Scott, 2003).Mawdudi on the other hand opinionates that this jihad should be both internal and external, internal should be by removing any government that decline to implement Shari'ah while external should be against foreign occupiers of Muslim lands. Removal of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi engendered by Iranian revolution in 1979, assassination of Anwar El-Sadat of Egypt in 1981 and overthrowing of Sudanese president JaafarNimeiry in 1985 was a demonstration of internal jihad. The emergence of jihad organizations in the Arab world such as Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt whose intent is to fight against Israel and their accomplices is a demonstration of external jihad.

Zad al-Mi'adwritten by IbnQayyim al-Jawzi which serves as inspirational book for Qutb, Milestone written by Outb himself and Al-faridah al-gha'ibah (The Neglected Duty) written by Abd al-Salam Faraj are the books written on modern jihad theory. The objective of modern jihad theorists can be encapsulated as a war with the goals of reshaping Islamic society by ridding it of Western influence and presence, economically and politically. This will explain while ISIS, Taliban, Hizbollah al-Shababetc are terrorizing their various countries.

## Does Islam Sanction Modern Jihad Theory?

Islam sanctions defensive jihad for the purpose of repelling the aggression and oppression as it is understood in some verses of the holy Our'an where the Prophet and his companions were permitted to carry arms against their enemies. The amnesty that the Prophet granted the people of Makkah despite the fact that they did not profess Islam at the time when the amnesty was given and the treaty he signed with the three tribes of Jews who were domiciled in Madinahon the security of Madinah is an indication that people must not be coerced to accept Islam. The prophet was admonished in many places in the Qur'an as regards the attitudes of people to have faith in Allah that he must not grieve to death over disbelief of people (Q18:6). He was also reminded that he cannot force people to be believers (Q10:99). More importantly he was made to know his duty as admonisher not compeller (O88:21-22). Based on that, the offensive jihad with objective of coercing people to implement Shari'ah is null and void in Islam. Also tagging a Muslim as infidel on the account of non-implementing Shari'ah is unfounded.

"The Neglected Duty" written by Abdel al-Salam Faraj which supported offensive jihad against both Muslims and non-Muslims has been critiqued by Jad al-Haq the Mufti of Egypt in 1982 on the basis that his ideology did not in any way reflect the prescripts of jihad as enunciated in the Qur'an. Haq accuses *The Neglected Duty* of being motivated by political rather than religious concerns. He states that theFaraj ideology is not different to that of Kharijites who interpreted the verses of the Qur'an based on their whims and caprices. He also pointed out the linguistic weakness of Faraj in interpreting the verse 44 of the Qur'an chapter 5 and verse 5 of Qur'an chapter 9. Come to think of it, fighting against what Qutb tags as Jahiliyyah society, can it be a winnable war? It must be emphasized that the world is vigilant and is ready to fight against forceful imposition of anyculture unless it has to be through persuasion. Unfortunately, these modern jihad theorists lack this vision therefore they are bound to fail because the devastating effects of both first and second world wars are still fresh in the world history and by this anything humanly possible will be done to prevent the outbreak of third world war.

# Way Forward

The aspiration of every Muslim is to live in a society guided by the law of Allah because it is presumed that faith remains incomplete until Shari'ah is implemented. This becomes necessary if utopia society is the ultimate goal of every nation, (Q20:123). In order to achieve this, the Islamic laws must be codified in such a way that it will be in tandem with ordinary constitution for its accessibility to non-Muslims. More importantly, awareness should be created through education that will make everybody conversant with the objectives of Shari'ah.

Secondly, offensive jihad must be seen as anti-Islam and all the Muslims all over the world must preach against it. Moreover, any book written on offensive jihad such as "Milestone" and "The Neglected Duty" must be removed from circulation. The works of IbnTaymiyyah and IbnQayyim must be reviewed with a view to expunging the aspect of jihad which inspires the likes of Outb and Abdel al-Salam Faraj.

Finally, religious extremism is against Islamic precepts because the Prophet sternly warns against. Therefore, fighting against it should be seen as responsibility of every nation.

#### Conclusion

The attitudes of some Muslims who claim to defend the dignity of Islam and Prophet through violent means is a reflection of their ignoramus of origin and purpose of jihad in Islam or they have been misguided by sentiments. Demanding for the head or killing somebody on the account of desecration of the Qur'an is unfounded. The precedent experience shows that the prophet Muhammad had been referred to as mad person while the Qur'an had been called many names. "... when they hear the message, and they say, "Indeed, he is mad" (Q68:51). "And said; This (Qur'an) is merely a sorcery of yore; this is nothing but the word of mere mortal" (Q74:24-25).In the face of this maligning, the Prophet was advised to be patient with them. "And bear patiently all that they say..." (Q73:11). If Salman Rushdie described the Qur'an as satanic verses or the prophet was described as womanizer there is better way of defending the Qur'an and the Prophet among which could be through scholarly rejoinder or by filing a case against such people in the court of law. Though keeping quiet might not be the best option but whatever reaction being taken must be the one that will depict Islam and Muslims as they are being described in the Qur'an.

You are the best people raised for the good of mankind, you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah... Q3:110

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