

A Reconsideration of the Number of the Prophet's Wars

Morteza Karimi¹

Mostafa Mohseni²

Abstract

In hadith and historical sources, more than eighty wars, comprising *ghazwas* (the wars in which the Prophet was present) and *sariyyas* (the wars in which the Prophet was not present), have been attributed to the Prophet. Scholars of history have mentioned about twenty-seven *ghazwas* and more than fifty *sariyyas*, all of which took place during the ten years after the migration to Medina until the demise of the Prophet. Apart from the famous battles such as Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Bani Qurayzah, Khaybar, Muta, Tabuk and Hunayn, many of these *ghazwas* and *sariyyas* are unknown except to some historians. This raises the question of why there must have been more than eighty wars in ten years, that is, almost one war every ninety days. This research tries to examine the real number of the Prophet's wars. The figure of eighty is greatly exaggerated and was closer to twenty.

Keywords: The Prophet, Number of Wars, *Ghazwa*, *Sariyya*.

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1. PhD in Shi'a Theology, the University of Tehran, Iran. Email: mka830@yahoo.com (Corresponding author).
 2. PhD candidate in History of Islam, the University of Ma'aref, Qom, Iran. Email: morteza830@hotmail.com.



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Introduction

The wars in which the Prophet himself was present are called *ghazwa*. The conflicts that took place without the presence of the Prophet and in which there were two or more people are called *sariyya*. Wars in which one person was present are called *ba'th* (al-Halabi 1427, 3:213). Historians differ on the number of *ghazwas* and *sariyyas*. Ibn Hisham has estimated the number of *ghazwas* as twenty-seven and the number of *sariyyas* and *ba'ths* total of thirty-eight (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:608). Ibn Sa'd has stated that the number of *sariyyas* is forty-seven (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:4-5). Taking into account the commonalities and differences, the total number of *ghazwas*, *sariyyas* and *ba'ths* mentioned in historical sources is a maximum of 85 cases. Shaykh Kulayni narrates a hadith from Imam al-Hadi according to which some have interpreted that the number of these battles was 80 (Kulayni 1407, 7:464).

The important question that arises is whether there were actually eighty-five clashes and conflicts between the Prophet and his companions on the one hand and his enemies on the other?

Conflict in the *Ghazwas*

Historical sources show that out of twenty-seven *ghazwas*, fighting occurred only in nine. Eighteen *ghazwas* ended without any sort of physical conflict. The *ghazwas* in which there was no conflict are as follows:

1. *Ghazwa* of Waddan or Abwa'

The Muslims left Medina and encountered the tribe of Bani Damra b. Bakr in a place called "Waddan". The tribe made peace with the Muslims and a treaty of friendship was signed between the two sides. No clashes took place (Ibn Hisham 2004, 1:591).

2. The *Ghazwa* of Buwat

The Prophet and 200 of his companions followed a caravan of the Quraysh, who had expelled the Muslims in Mecca and confiscated their property. No clash took place (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:6).

3. The *Ghazwa* of Badr I (Badr al-Ula)

One of the pagans of Mecca named Kurz b. Jabir al-Fihri stole the sheep of the Muslims, and they chased him. He escaped and there was no conflict (Ibn Hisham 2004, 1:601). Even assuming there was conflict, could this a war?

4. The *Ghazwa* of Qarqarat al-Kudr

This battle was aimed at the tribes of Bani Sulaym and Ghatafan because they intended to attack Medina. The Muslims moved towards them and arrived at a place called Qarqarat al-Kudr. There was no enemy to be found (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:182).

5. The *Ghazwa* of Sawiq

After the battle of Badr and the disgraceful defeat of the Quraysh polytheists, Abu Sufyan left Mecca with 200 horsemen and went to Medina at night, killing two Muslims and setting fire to two houses and a farm. The news reached the Prophet who called his companions and followed the Quraysh army, but they fled (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:181).

6. The *Ghazwa* of Ghatafan or Dhi Amarr

The Quraysh tried to attack Medina, but the Muslims resisted them, and they fled (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:46).

7. The *Ghazwa* of Bani Sulaym

A large group of Bani Sulaym gathered in Bahran and prepared for war with the Muslims. The Prophet went to Bahran with 300 of his companions, but did not see anyone there and returned to Medina (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:196).

8. The *Ghazwa* of the Bani Qaynuqa'

The Bani Qaynuqa', after concluding a treaty with the Muslims, violated it (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:47; Dhahabi 1413, 2:146; Tabari 1387, 2:479). One of them insulted a Muslim woman in the bazaar, which led to a clash between the two groups (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:47; Dhahabi 1413, 2:147). The Muslims and the Jews of Bani Qaynuqa' prepared for war with each other. According to the treaty between them, the Prophet could punish them severely, but he gave them an amnesty, provided that Bani Qaynuqa' left Medina (Tabari 1387, 2:480; Dhahabi 1413, 2:147; al-Waqidi 1409, 2:178).

9. The *Ghazwa* of Hamra' al-Asad

One day after the battle of Uhud, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to pursue Abu Sufyan and his forces who intended to go back to Medina and attack the Muslims again. Therefore, the Muslims went to Hamra' al-Asad. They returned to Medina without any conflict taking place (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:38).

10. The *Ghazwa* of Dhat al-Riqa‘

Two clans of the Ghatafan tribe named Bani Muharib and Bani Tha‘laba were trying to attack the Muslims. The Muslims went to them and met them next to a tree called "Dhat al-Riqa‘", but there was no fighting, and after a few days, they returned (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:203-204).

11. The *Ghazwa* of Badr al-Akhar or Badr al-Maw‘id

After the Battle of Uhud, abu Sufyan exclaimed: "We will meet you next year again." The Muslims went there on time, but Abu Sufyan did not come out. He was afraid after hearing about the number of Muslims present (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:384-391).

12. The *Ghazwa* of Dumat al-Jandal

Some people gathered in Dumat al-Jandal, causing trouble for the merchants and intending to come closer to Medina. The Prophet called the Muslims and marched towards them with 1000 people. The news reached the enemy and they scattered. The Muslims returned to Medina without encountering anyone (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:402).

13. The *Ghazwa* of Bani Nadir

The Bani Nadir, like other Jewish tribes living in Medina, made a peace treaty with the Muslims, but breached their covenant and met Abu Sufyan in order to overthrow Islam (Ibn Ishaq 1410, 310; al-Waqidi 1409, 1:181; Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:44; Tabari 1387, 2:484). Bani Nadir plotted to assassinate the Prophet and tried to throw a large stone at him from the castle wall. The Prophet became aware of this betrayal through revelation.

Although all of the enemy could be punished according to the provisions of the treaty, their betrayal was condoned, provided that they left Medina like Bani Qaynuqa‘ so as not to stab the Muslims in the back again. They agreed to leave Medina (Bayhaqi 1405, 181ff.). As they left the city, they proudly played their music as they passed through the streets of Medina. Their women were so adorned by jewelry that it surprised the people of Medina (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:375). Had the Prophet cared about worldly treasures, he could, at the time of their arrogant departure, at least have prevented them from taking these ornaments under the pretext of breaking the covenant. The first verses of the Quranic chapter al-Hashr were revealed to describe the treachery of Bani al-Nadir and their treatment by the Prophet (Wahidi 1411, 435; Tabari 1412, 28:19; al-Suyuti 1421, 6:187).

14. The *Ghazwa* of Bani Lihyan

Bani Lihyan went to Medina and took some Muslims with them as preachers and teachers of the Qur'an and religious teachings. When they reached Raji', those Muslim preachers were assualyed some were, killed and two people named Khabib b. 'Adi and Zayd b. Dathina were sold to the Quraysh. The Muslims in Medina moved to punish them, but before they arrived there, the tribesmen had fled to the mountains (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:279).

15. The *Ghazwa* of Dhi Qarad

'Uyayna b. Hisn al-Fazari along with a group of people from the tribe of Ghatafan attacked areas around Medina. They stole some of the Prophet's camels, killing a man from Bani Ghifar who was in charge of keeping the camels and capturing his wife. The Muslims chased them to Dhi Qarad Mountain. The enemy reached Ghatafan, so the Muslim army did not catch them and returned to Medina (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:281).

16. The Peace Treaty of Hdaybiyya

The peace treaty of Hdaybiyyah, as its name suggests, was a peace agreement between the Muslims and the Quraysh polytheists. Some authors have nevertheless counted it among the eighty wars (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:571; Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:608).

17. Umrat al-Qada'

According to the provisions of the peace treaty of Hdaybiyya, Muslims could visit the House of God (Ka'ba) the next year. The following year, the Prophet and the Muslims went to Mecca and visited the Ka'ba without the slightest conflict. Some have nevertheless considered this journey, which bears no resemblance to a war, to be one of Prophet's wars (Salihi al-Shami 1414, 4:8).

18. The *Ghazwa* of Tabuk

This is the last *ghazwa* of the Prophet as a revenge for the blood of the martyrs of the *sariyya* of Muta, which happened in 9 AH. However, there is no mention of any conflict in any source. The Muslims stayed there for twenty nights, but the Romans did not come out and there was no war (al-Waqidi 1409, 3:1015-1019).

In addition to these eighteen *ghazwas*, there were two other *ghazwas*, which, despite having led to military operations, did not involve a real war, but only a brief skirmish. These two *ghazwas* are as follows:

1. The *Ghazwa* of Khandaq (Trench)

Although this incident is known as a war, the reality was that the polytheists of Mecca allied with several tribes and moved to Medina to overthrow Islam (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:445; Ibn Hisham 2004, 3:235). As proposed by Salman al-Farsi, the Muslims dug a trench around the city and prevented the polytheists from entering the city (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:470-471; Ibn Hisham 2004, 3:234-237; Mufid 1413, 1:98-109).

Disappointed, the polytheists returned to their homeland after fifteen days of siege of the city. How can this incident be described as war in the modern sense? It can only be said that it was close to war, even though a small number of people on both sides were killed.

2. The Conquest of Mecca

After the peace treaty of Hudaibiyya, the Quraysh allies violated the peace, which meant the end of the ten-year ceasefire between the two sides. The Muslims moved towards Mecca in large numbers. Not only did the Quraysh not prepare for war, but some of their elders, including Abu Sufyan, went to the Prophet and converted to Islam before the Muslims entered Mecca (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:808). As a result, many other people in Mecca also converted to Islam, and there was no war except for sporadic and brief skirmishes. The Prophet also issued a general amnesty (today is the day for mercy) (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:822). Of course, twelve criminals were sentenced to death, but this by no means qualifies as war. It is also to be noted that eight of these twelve were also pardoned by the Prophet (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:853). Thus, Mecca was conquered without any war and bloodshed.

Therefore, only the *ghazwas* of Badr, Uhud, Bani al-Mustaliq, Khaybar, Hunan and Ta'if, were real conflicts. Of course, in the *ghazwa* of Bani Qurayza, there was no conflict in the sense of war, but since some people were killed in it, it is considered as an instance of a conflict. Therefore, only in seven *ghazwas*, have clashes been reported in the true sense of the word.

Conflicts in the *Sariyyas*

No conflicts or clashes have been reported in the following *sariyyas*:

1. The *Sariyya* of Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib

In this *sariyya*, thirty Muslims commanded by Hamza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, confronted the polytheists. However, the Muslims and the polytheists reconciled with the intercession of Majdi b. 'Amr (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:9-10).

2. The *Sariyya* of 'Ubayda b. al-Harith

In this *sariyya*, sixty Muslims confronted the 200-member army of Abu Sufyan. This did not lead to any clash (Bladhiri 1417, 1:371), and the two sides separated after firing some arrows (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:4).

3. The *Sariyya* of Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas

This *sariyya* was intended to be a confrontation with a Quraysh caravan, but the Muslims did not reach the caravan and returned to Medina without any conflict happening (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:4).

4. The *Sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha

This *sariyya* was also intended to be a confrontation with a Quraysh caravan. Due to the escape of the Quraysh there was no conflict (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:50).

5. The *Sariyya* of Abu Salama b. 'Abd al-Asad al-Makhzumi

The Bani Asad tribe had mobilized to fight the Muslims. The Prophet sent Abu Salama to disperse them. The *sariyya* ended with the dispersal of the enemies (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:38).

6. The *Sariyya* of 'Ukkasha b. Mihsan

According to al-Waqidi, no Muslim was killed in this *sariyya*, since no conflict occurred (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:550).

7. The *Sariyya* of Abu 'Ubayda

Abu 'Ubaydah was sent to Dhi al-Qassa with forty people to punish the perpetrators of the martyrdom of some Muslims. The inhabitants of Dhi al-Qassa were also trying to attack Medina. Abu 'Ubayda's army captured a man from them. He became a Muslim and then was released. No conflict occurred (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:551).

8. The *Sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha

Zayd b Haritha was sent to Jamum to fight Bani Sulaym because they joined the Quraysh polytheists in the battle of Khandaq by sending seven hundred people to help them (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:443). They also collaborated in the killing of the Muslim reciters of the Qur'an in Bi'r Ma'una by 'Amir b. Tufayl (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:447). In this *sariyya*, there was no conflict. Zayd captured some people who were released after arriving in Medina (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:66).

However, Sayyid Ja'far Murtada doubts the occurrence of this *sariyya* (Sayyid Ja'far al-Murtada 1426, 14:296-297).

9. The *Sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha

Zayd b. Haritha was sent to 'Is follow caravan of the Quraysh. As mentioned before, the Quraysh had confiscated Muslim property after the expulsion of the Muslims from Mecca. The Muslims chased their caravan in retaliation for this and their oppression, both in Mecca and after their migration to Medina. According to historical reports, there was no clash in this *sariyya* because some of the Quraysh escaped; several were captured and their property was confiscated. Among the captives was Abi al-'As b. Rabi' the Prophet's son-in-law (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:67). He converted to Islam after seeing the forgiveness of the Muslims in returning the property of the captives and releasing them (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:554).

10. The *Sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha to al-Turf

Zayd b. Haritha was sent to fight Bani Tha'laba but the polytheists fled (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:553; Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:67). Sayyid Ja'far Murtada, however, has doubts about the occurrence of this *sariyya* (Sayyid Ja'far al-Murtada 1426, 14:309).

11. The *Sariyya* of 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf to Dumat al-Jandal

'Abd al-Rahman was sent to Dumat al-Jandal in Sha'ban 6 AH. The Prophet instructed him not to cheat and not to kill children. When 'Abd al-Rahman arrived at the place, he calls them to Islam for three days. Many converted to Islam; some remained Christians and agreed to pay *Jizya*. Therefore, no clashes have been reported in this *sariyya* (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:68).

12. The *Sariyya* of Imam 'Ali to Fadak

According to Ibn Sa'd, no conflict took place in this *sariyya* (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:67).

13. The *Sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha to Madyan

No clashes between Muslims and the people of Madyan have been reported in this *sariyya* (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:635).

14. The *Sariyya* of 'Umar b. al-Khattab

'Umar was sent to a place called Turba. He moved to Hawazin with thirty men, but before they arrived, the enemy fled and 'Umar and his army returned to Medina without a fight (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:89).

15. The *Sariyya* of Bashir b. Sa'd

The Prophet was informed that a group of people from the Ghatafan with the cooperation of 'Uyayna b. Hisn were trying to attack Medina. The Prophet sent Bashir to them with 300 people. The polytheists fled and only two of them were taken captive. They both converted to Islam (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:60-61).

16. The *Sariyya* of Shuja' b. Wahb

Shuja' was sent to Bani 'Amir in 8 AH, but there was no conflict (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:96). According to al-Waqidi, Ibn Abi Sabra did not accept this *sariyya* and said that he had not heard anyone quoting it (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:754).

17. The *Sariyya* of 'Amr b. al-'As

It is known as the *sarriya* of Dhat al-Salasil and occurred in 8 AH. When the news reached the Prophet that a group of people from the Quda'a tribe had gathered and intended to approach Medina, he sent 'Amr b. al-'As to them as the commander of an army of 300 men. There was a brief clash and the polytheists dispersed (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:99-100). This clash cannot be considered a serious clash, let alone a war.

18. The *Sariyya* of Khabt

Troops were led by Abu 'Ubayda al-Jarra and the event took place in the month of Rajab in the year 8 AH. He was sent to the shores with 300 men, who returned without encountering the enemy (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:100).

19. The *Sariyya* of Abu Qatada b. Rib'i

Abu Qatada was sent to Wadi 'Izam before the Conquest of Mecca. The reason for this *sariyya* was to distract the enemy from the Conquest of Mecca as it was rumored that the Prophet intended to mobilize. So, the Prophet sent eight people to Wadi 'Izam to identify the paths and distract the enemy from the Conquest of Mecca. Therefore, from the beginning, they did not intend to fight and did not fight (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:101; Sayyid Ja'far al-Murtada 1426, 19:283).

20. The *Sariyya* of Khalid b. Walid

Khalid was sent to destroy the idol of 'Uzza; no war and conflict occurred (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:436).

21. The *Sariyya* of ‘Uyayna b. Hisn al-Fazari to Bani Tamim

The *sariyya* did not lead to any fighting; rather, some were captured and soon their release decree was issued (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:121). This *sariyya* was not about war, but the collection of zakat from another tribe, which was prevented by Bani Tamim and eventually led to a conflict (Sayyid Ja‘far al-Murtada 1426, 26:147).

22. The *Sariyya* of ‘Amr b. al-‘As

‘Amr was sent to Suwa' to destroy the idol of Hudhayl. Therefore, the conflict was about the destruction of idols, not war (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:111).

23. The *Sariyya* of Sa‘d b. Zayd

Sa‘d and twenty others set out to destroy the idol of Manat in 8 AH after the conquest of Mecca. There was no war in this *sariyya* (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:111-112). Historians, however, have referred to it as a *sariyya* and today it counts as one of the approximately eighty wars of the Prophet.

24. The *Sariyya* of Tufayl b. ‘Amr al-Dawsi

Tufayl set out during Shawwal in the year 8 AH to destroy the idol of Dhu-l-Kaffayn. He set the idol on fire and no one confronted him, so considering it a war is incorrect (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:119-120).

25. The *Sariyya* of ‘Uyayna b. Hisn to Bani ‘Anbar

‘Uyayna was sent to Bani ‘Anbar with fifty or one hundred people (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:122), who hindered the collection of zakat from certain Muslim tribes (al-Waqidi 1409, 3:974; Salihi al-Shami 1414, 4:8). The Muslims captured some and brought them to Medina. After a while, all the prisoners were released. No fighting was reported in the incident (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:621).

26- The *Sariyya* of ‘Alqama b. Mujazzaz to Abyssinia ‘Alqama was sent by the Prophet in 9 AH with 300 men to confront the Abyssinians who were preparing for an attack against the Muslims. The Muslim army reached the waters, but the enemy fled before the Muslims arrived, and no war took place (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:123-124).

27. The *Sariyya* of Imam ‘Ali to break the idol of al-Fuls (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:123-124)

The idol of al-Fuls belonged to al-Tayy tribe and the family of Hatim al-Ta‘i family, although the tribe was headed by Christians. In this *sariyya*, in addition to breaking the idol, people such as Saffana, Hatim's daughter, were taken

prisoners and 'Adi b. Hatim fled. His escape indicates that he had spies in Medina and was aware of the imminence of the Muslim attack (Sayyid Ja'far al-Murtada 1426, 26:345-346).

In addition to the generally accepted report, al-Waqidi quotes another report on the same page, according to which some people from this tribe were killed. However, since no one but al-Waqidi has quoted this report, it cannot be accepted. 'Adi b. Hatim's companionship with Imam 'Ali until the end of his life shows that there was no killing, since he would not show such devotion to the murderer of his tribesmen, to become one of his closest companions to the extent that he defended Imam 'Ali in the presence of Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya told him that "'Ali did not treat you fairly, since he kept his sons and sent your sons to the war". 'Adi said: "No, by God, I did not treat him fairly when 'Ali was killed and I am still alive." (Ibn 'Abd Rabbi 1404, 4:98)

28. The *Sariyya* of 'Ukkasha b. Mihsan to Ghamr

'Ukkasha was sent to Ghamr in 6 AH. According to Ibn Sa'd, there was no conflict in this *sariyya* (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:65).

29. The *Sariyya* of 'Ukkasha b. Mihsan to al-Jinab

This *sariyya* is reported by Ibn Sa'd who does not refer to any conflicts (Ibn Sa'd 1410, 2:124).

***Sariyyas* involving conflicts**

The *sariyyas* in which physical conflict took place include: the *sariyya* of 'Abd Allah b. Jahsh, the *sariyya* of 'Umayr ibn 'Adi (there are doubts about this *sariyya*), the *sariyya* of Salim b. 'Umayr to Abu 'Afak, the *sariyya* of Muhammad b. Maslama for killing Ka'b b. Ashraf, the *sariyya* of Abd Allah b. Anis to Nukhayla, the *sariyya* of Mundhir b. 'Amr (Bi'r Ma'una), the *sariyya* of Muta, the *sariyya* of Marthad b. Abi Marthad (incident of Raji'), the *sariyya* of Muhammad b. Maslama, another *sariyya* of Muhammad b. Muslimah to Dhi-l-Qassa, the *sariyya* of Zayd b. Haritha to Hisma, the *sariyya* of 'Abd Allah b. 'Atik to Khaybar, the *sariyya* of 'Abd Allah b. Rawaha, the *sariyya* of 'Amr b. Umayya to Mecca, the *sariyya* of Kurz b. Jabir, the *sariyya* of Abu Bakr to Najd, the *sariyya* of Bashir b. Sa'd to Fadak, the *sariyya* of Ghalib b. 'Abd Allah, the *sariyya* of Ibn Abi al-'Awja to Bani Sulaym, the *sariyya* of Ghalib b. 'Abd Allah to Bani Maluh, the *sariyya* of Ka'b b. 'Umayr to Dhat Atlah, the *sariyya* of Khalid b. Walid to Bani Judhayma, the *sariyya*

of Qutba b. ‘Amir to Khath‘am, and the *sariyya* of Dahhak b. Sufyan to Bani Kilab which are 24 *sariyyas* in total.

Six of these twenty-four *sariyyas* were single-person clashes, namely: the *sariyya* of ‘Umayr b. ‘Adi to ‘Asma bt. Marwan (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:636-640), the *sariyya* of Salim b. ‘Umayr to Abu ‘Afak (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:635; Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:21), the *sariyya* of Muhammad b. Maslama for the purpose of killing Ka‘b b. Ashraf (Dhahabi 1413, 2:341), the *sariyya* of ‘Abd Allah b. Anis to Nukhayla (Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:39), the *sariyya* of ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Atik to Khaybar to kill Abu Rafi‘ (Tabari 1387, 2:493), and the *sariyya* of ‘Amr b. Umayya to kill Abu Sufyan (Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:633).

If we subtract these six *sariyyas* from the twenty-four *sariyyas* above, there will be eighteen cases in which a conflict is said to have occurred. Of these eighteen *sariyyas*, three were brief skirmishes to which the term war does not properly apply, namely: the *sariyya* of ‘Abd Allah b. Jahsh (Ibn Hisham 2004, 1:605; Tabari 1387, 2:413), the *sariyya* of ‘Abd Allah b. Rawaha (al-Waqidi 1409, 2:567; Ibn Sa‘d 1410, 2:70), and the *sariyya* of Ghalib b. ‘Abd Allah to Banu Maluh. So only fifteen *sariyyas* remain.

Of these fifteen *sariyyas*, two were related to the incident of Bi‘r Ma‘una (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:346; Ibn Hisham 2004, 2:183; Dhahabi 1413, 2:235) and the incident of Raji‘ (al-Waqidi 1409, 1:354; Tabari 1387, 2:538; Dhahabi 1413, 2:230), in which a number of Muslim preachers were dispatched by the Prophet at the invitation of certain tribes, and were massacred by the inviters on the way. These two incidents are known as the *sariyya* of Marthad b. Abi Marthad and the *sariyya* of Mundhir b. ‘Amr.

Accordingly, there was no war between the two groups; rather, the tribes that had invited the Muslims massacred them. It is clear that these two incidents cannot be called a war between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Thus, only thirteen *sariyyas* remain. Of course, in the *sariyya* of Muhammad b. Maslama, in which the number of Muslims was only ten, and in the *sariyya* of Qutba b. ‘Amir, in which the number of Muslims was only twenty, the Muslims were sent to preach the religion of Islam and did not intend to fight, but were often forced to do so, it does not seem natural to send such a small number of people to a far distance for a war. Also, in the two *sariyyas* of Ibn Abi al-‘Awja and Dahhak b. Sufyan, the purpose was preaching. The *sariyya* of Khalid b. Walid to Banu Judhayma was also to invite them to enter Islam but Khalid arbitrarily killed some people from Bani Judhayma. The Prophet strongly

condemned Khalid's deed. However, we will not subtract this from the total number of the Prophet's wars.

Accordingly, out of the eighty-five *ghazwas* and *sariyyas* attributed to the Prophet, a maximum of seven *ghazwas* and thirteen *sariyyas*, i.e., a total of twenty cases, resulted in serious clashes, and therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the number of the wars during the Prophet's time.

Definition of War in the Culture of the Era of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*) and Modern Culture

An important point that has a great impact on the argument of how we see the wars of the Prophet's era is the difference between perceptions of the people of the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, on the one hand, and the present perception of this concept, on the other hand. In the Arab culture of the so-called Era of Ignorance, war and killing were indeed indications of the courage and fearlessness. In that culture, any physical or verbal conflict, large or small, was referred to as war. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani quotes a report from a conversation between two Arabs who said that, "We did not have a real war except for the Bu'ath war; rather we used to beat each other with stones and sticks and called it war." (Al-Isfahani 1415, 3:9)

But today, war has its own meaning, and street battles and brief conflicts between countries are never called wars. Many of the *ghazwas* and *sariyyas* that took place between the Muslims and their enemies were like street fights rather than wars in the modern sense of the term, and most of them were only brief chases and retreats. Even in large-scale *ghazwas* such as Khandaq and Tabuk, there is no significant conflict to which the term war could properly apply. The widespread conflict between the Muslims and their enemies was limited to the battles of Badr, Uhud, Bani Qurayza (with appeasement), Khandaq, Muta, Hawazin, and possibly in a few *sariyyas*.

Different Operations against one Enemy, not Multiple Wars

Another problem in counting the wars of the Prophet's time is that any operation against an enemy is considered an independent war. However, such a view is not acceptable at all at the present time. Indeed, when the enemy is one, all operations against it are deemed a single war. From this point of view, too the alleged number of eighty-some wars is not correct because the battles of the Prophet can be related to three main enemies (polytheists, Jews, Roman

Christians) in which various operations have been launched. So, these are only three wars.

For example, in World War I, which began in 1914 (Taylor 1374, 1:6-12) and lasted for four years, until 1917 (Taylor 1374, 1:322-323), large countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Russia, the United States, Romania, Japan, Serbia, France, Montenegro and Greece were on one side (Grenville 1377, 1:206) and Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire on the other (Grenville 1377, 1:127-135). World War II, which swept across the world for six years, was reported to have killed 40 million people and cost \$ 4 trillion (Taylor 1375, 1:401). Although in World Wars I and II, these battles took place on different and separate fronts between various warring countries, all of them are included under the rubric of World War I or World War II.

Moreover, in the imposed war of Iraq against Iran, which lasted eight years, many operations were carried out, including multiple operations under Walfajr, Karbala, Bayt al-Muqaddas, etc., but all of them are referred to as one war, without each operation being considered a separate war.

In the case of the Prophetic battles, however, not only has each of the various operations against the polytheists, Jews and Christians called an independent war, but also the brief conflicts and even street battles have been considered as separate wars, based on the difference between the cultures of the early Islam and our time.

When it is said that eighty or more took place over ten years, this raises questions, but when it is explained that in many of them there were no clashes, some consisted in several operations against one and the same enemy, and there were also a number of wars that were little more than street fights not literally a war in its true sense, such questions and doubts are removed.

Conclusion

The number of eighty-five wars that has been attributed to the Prophet, even by his proponents and followers, does not match historical data, nor is it based on modern usage of the term 'war'.

Accordingly, all the prophetic battles can reduce to three or four wars:

One: Fighting the polytheists of Mecca or the Quraysh with the operations of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Conquest of Mecca and some small *sariyyas*, many of which did not involve clashes.

Two: Fighting the non-Meccan polytheists, including the battles of Hawazin, Ta'if and some small *sariyyas*, many of which did not lead to clashes.

Three: War with the Jews of Medina and its environs, including operations such as *ghazwas* of Bani Qaynuqa', Bani Nadir, Bani Qurayda and Khaybar.

Fourth: The war against the Christians under the control of the Roman government, including operations such as the battle of Muta, the *ghazwa* of Tabuk and the battle of Usama, with conflicts occurring only in Muta.

On this account, the attribution of eighty-some wars to the Prophet is not true. The correct number is much smaller than this, perhaps only thirty in all, although these can be further reduced to only four.

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