

argument is not only an invented articulation of the meaning of military raids in seventh-century Arabia, but also a misrepresentation of the common traditional Muslim interpretation of what motivated the *maghāzī*. The sources do not include a proclamation of faith, nor do they support a notion of a religiously driven preemptive battle. The hypothetical response above is an attempt to form our understanding of battles and balance of power by making spiritual blanket statements, which can hardly be accepted by non-religious thinkers. Such a traditional argument violates the textual representations found in the Muslims' own sources.

The traditional Muslim accounts of Badr emphasize the manner in which the Muslim warriors played a significant (and ultimately successful) role in the victory achieved. The warriors sought their revenge on the Meccans who expelled them and their Prophet from Mecca. They targeted the Meccan notables and successfully eliminated several heads of the Quraysh. No evidence in the extant sources suggests that the Muslim warriors were motivated by the desire to proclaim Islam to the Meccans. On the contrary, according to classical Muslim accounts, the spoils of war, the ransoms paid by the Meccans, and the treatment of the dead Meccan notables give evidence that the Believers sought power and resources rather than the conversion of the pagan to Islam. While the Muslim accounts of the Battle of Badr have adopted, in some instances, a tendentious approach, historians with a more critical approach may obtain a contrary and reasonable idea regarding the initial motivations for the clash.

## The Battle of Uḥud

The political power of the Muslim *umma* grew after Badr. Seven days after arriving in Medina from the victory in Badr, the Prophet led the raid against the sons of Salīm.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, the Meccan leader Abū Sufyān led a raid against the Muslims in *ghazwat* al-Sawīq.<sup>113</sup> The conflict between Muhammad and the Meccans continued to grow, resulting in various raids and campaigns, including Dhī Amr and Bahrān.<sup>114</sup> The Battle of Uḥud was a culmination of these earlier raids, particularly as revenge against the Muslims for their treatment of the Meccans in Badr.<sup>115</sup> Here, I will explain briefly what initiated Uḥud and make five critical observations on the apparent motivations behind it.

According to Muslim accounts, the Muslim army encompassed about 700 warriors led by Muhammad.<sup>116</sup> They were initially 1000, but about one third decided to leave the Prophet, following ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubayy, who was consequently called a hypocrite.<sup>117</sup> The Meccans comprised a force of about 3000 well-prepared and strong men under the leadership of Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb.<sup>118</sup> They also had in their

ranks the skillful warrior Khālid ibn al-Wālīd.<sup>119</sup> The Meccans brought women with them to the battle in order to *yuharriḍū* (boost the morale of) the warriors.<sup>120</sup> Al-Wāqīdī points out that not all Muslims were in consensus regarding participating in the battle—Muhammad himself, following a divine vision, decided not to leave his position in Medina to go to Uḥud.<sup>121</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī compares Badr and Uḥud and states that, one year after Badr, the Muslims *ʿuqibū bimā ṣanaʿū* (were punished [by Allah or the Meccans?] because of what they did [at Badr]). He reports that, “seventy Muslim companions were killed [at Uḥud] and seventy more were taken as war prisoners.”<sup>122</sup> According to Muslim tradition, the two armies gathered in the areas surrounding Mount Uḥud a few days before Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shawwāl in A.H. 3, when the battle started. Unlike Badr, the Prophet was at the rear of the army<sup>123</sup>: “and the Messenger was calling you in your rear” (Q 3:153).<sup>124</sup> Al-Ṭabarī describes the initial victory of the Muslim army, emphasizing that Allah “brought down his victory, fulfilling his promise, as [the Muslims] slew<sup>125</sup> [the Meccans] by the swords, and that *al-hazīma* (the defeat) [of the Meccans] was without a doubt.”<sup>126</sup> The Believers thus gained an early victory.<sup>127</sup> However, near the end of the battle, some of the archers disobeyed Muhammad’s instructions and left their assigned positions in hopes of obtaining some of the spoils left by the fleeing Meccans.<sup>128</sup> This permitted a counterattack by the Meccans, led by the shrewd Khālid ibn al-Wālīd,<sup>129</sup> during which many Muslim warriors died and Muhammad was severely injured.<sup>130</sup>

Reflecting on this narrative, there are five points to make regarding the defeat at Uḥud, considering the *possible* motivations for the battle. First, the apparent floundering, uncertainty, and hesitation among the Believers refutes notions of divine guidance and supernatural support, which in a sense does not support traditional claims of religiously driven incursions. It does reflect a normal scheme of battles and balance of power. Muslims were divided into two groups: some desired war, and others hated it.<sup>131</sup> Even when the Prophet is said to have received a divine vision warning him of the slaughter of the Muslims should they go to this battle, there was still hesitancy and indecisiveness.<sup>132</sup> In this situation, there is no supernatural guidance, nor is there mention of Gabriel, who supported the Muslims at Badr.

In his argument regarding what motivated Uḥud, Haykal insists that the Muslims were driven by two factors: (1) defending *al-ʿaqīda* (tenets), *al-īmān* (faith), and *dīn* (the religion or the law) of Allah, and (2) defending *al-waṭan* (home) and its *maṣāliḥ* (interests).<sup>133</sup> According to the classical narrative, the Believers were indecisive and confused, and crippled when the skillful Muslim warrior ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the tribe of al-Khazraj, withdrew with many warriors. He resisted and rejected leaving Medina to fight the Meccans at Uḥud. In fact, Muhammad himself initially agreed with ʿAbdullāh and did not want to march to Uḥud; however, he proceeded anyway.<sup>134</sup> Al-Suhaylī reports that

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