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Jihad and Nonviolence in the Islamic Tradition

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The most excellent jihad is speaking a word of truth to a tyrant.
A Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Hasan 1984)

Islam's Sacred Texts

The Qur'an: the compilation of revelations received by Muhammad over the period of 23 years (from 610–632 C.E.). The Qur'an contains 114 chapters (chapter is a loose translation of the word *sura*) with topics ranging from announcing God's compassion and proximity to creation as well as his judgment and transcendence. The Qur'an also places great emphasis on human responsibility to nourish righteousness and promote justice on earth. One of the key themes in the Qur'an is to remind the reader of an enduring life after death.

The Hadith: the collection of sayings of Muhammad and reports of actions as observed by his companions. These were compiled by scholars and theologians roughly around two centuries after his death. There are six different collections that are recognized as authoritative.

The Shari'a: this is generally translated as "law." However, in its fundamental sense, it is a succinct version of the guidelines to live a life of faith distilled from the Qur'an and the Hadith. *Shari'a* is based on the ethical and legal injunctions presented in a language of faith. It is formulated through the use of reason and by consensus of religious scholars. Every application of *shari'a* guidelines is an act of interpretation based on specific context. A large part of the *shari'a* deals with aspects concerning inheritance, marriage, divorce, and the practice of faith.

> **Creedal Statement – "the Shahadah"**: *There is no divinity except God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger of God.* Practicing Muslims recite the *shahadah* as a sign of their remembrance of God and their commitment to the practice of faith taught by Prophet Muhammad. It is recited in the ears of a newborn child as a symbolic gesture of her/his reception into the Muslim community.

This chapter provides a concise description of Islam's position on violence, non-violence, and peacemaking. Although analysis is not entirely absent, the emphasis is placed on explaining the ideas on the subject found in the primary texts of Islam. First, I include a brief introduction to the faith tradition, its founder, Muhammad, and beliefs and practices most Muslims hold. The following section deals with ways of understanding violence and contextualizing "religious" violence. Here I have outlined the way the Qur'an speaks of and condemns violence while permitting it in exceptional circumstances as a last resort. The section on jihad considers the quranic understanding of this much misunderstood notion, and its subsequent ever-expanding meanings. The next section provides select sources for peace and nonviolence in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. And finally, I have included a brief discussion of key Muslim thinkers and their contributions to Islamic non-violence including their role in creating the discourse and providing models for nonviolent activism in the way of peace.

Overview of the Islamic Tradition

Islam is a monotheistic religion that arose in Arabia in the early seventh century as a movement for social and spiritual reform. It began with Muhammad (571–632 C.E.), whom Muslims regard as a prophet who received revelations from God (*Allah* in Arabic) through the Archangel Gabriel. Muhammad, son of Abdullah, was born in Mecca and was brought up by his mother and grandfather, both of whom died while he was still young. His father had died just before Muhammad was born, thus his childhood was marred by the tragic experiences of the loss of these immediate relations. Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib, a respected elder of the community, became his protector until the latter's death in circa 620 C.E. These were some of the most difficult years for Muhammad, as the Meccan leaders were opposed to his preaching the message of monotheism. Hence besides the shock of experiencing a personal loss, the lack of his uncle's patronage was deeply felt by Muhammad. In a tribal system, support of a tribal leader/elder was essential for an individual's survival and success. Muhammad's struggles as a prophet and as an activist for justice became even more difficult when, in the same year, he also lost his wife Khadijah, the mother of their only daughter, Fatima.

In the year 610 C.E., when Muhammad was 40, he received the call of prophet-hood as he meditated in seclusion inside a cave on Mount Hira. This call came in the form of his first divine revelations, which were given to him through the Archangel Gabriel, who would continue to serve as an intermediary between God and Prophet Muhammad throughout his ministry. This experience of an encounter with God mediated by the presence of Gabriel was traumatic for Muhammad, who at first was unsure and fearful. Through the confirmation he received from his wife, Khadija, and her Christian cousin, the aged priest Waraqa bin Nawfal, Muhammad gradually became confident that this was indeed a divine call for him to be the messenger of Allah.[1]

Prophet Muhammad continued to receive revelations for over 22 years until his death in 632 C.E. These revelations were recited and memorized by his followers and were also written down during his lifetime. In the decades that followed, the revelations, which were already bound together, were copied and made available widely in Muslim communities. The Qur'an, as it is known, is the most widely read and revered book in the Muslim world. Muslims believe it to be the "final" and perfectly "preserved" revelation from God. The Qur'an is central to Islam and thus is sometimes compared with Christ as the embodiment of the divine Word. Thus it has been said that the Qur'an is to Islam what Christ is to Christianity (Ayoub 1984).

Even though the Qur'an is central in Islam, it reached Muslims through Muhammad since he was the first to receive these words. Thus Muhammad's interpretation and application of the principles and teachings of the Qur'an are of great significance and value. For practicing Muslims, Prophet Muhammad provides an example for a simple and spiritual way of life. His actions and his relationships with others embody the ethics outlined in the Qur'an. For Muslims, he embodies the best practice of Islam as taught by the Qur'an. His words (excluding those which he recited saying "this is the revelation") are preserved in what is known as the Hadith and are consulted for guidance on issues not found in the Qur'an.

Based on the teachings of the Qur'an, Muslims believe that human beings are born "pure" without any sin. The evil aspects of the world are the result of worldly influences and distractions acquired as part of becoming a person. These aspects include vices such as greed, lust for power, and jealousy, and can be removed by following universal ethical guidelines – the Islamic versions of which are presented in the Qur'an and the Hadith. These vices eventually lead human beings to commit violence against another and oneself. To protect oneself from these "unnatural" tendencies one must strive (do jihad) to resist the temporary appeal of self-centered existence. Islamic guidelines for a life of faith lived in awareness of God and through peaceful relations with others are found in the literature broadly known as the *shari'a*, or "Islamic law."

Islamic theology, in trying to balance between the notions of predestination and free will, informs us that in the end only God decides who will be able to resist the temptations and trials of this world and who will succumb to them. Thus what

matters most in Islam is not mere beliefs but one's sincere practice of faith. Etymologically Islam means "peaceful submission" or "commitment" to God, and a Muslim is one who acknowledges the need of such a submission and commits to required practices identified as the "Five Pillars" or acts of faith. The Five Pillars include the creedal statement, which acknowledges the one God (creator and sustainer of all) and recognizes Muhammad as a prophet of God (*shahadah*), ritual prayer five times a day (*salah*), fasting during Ramadan – the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (*sawm*), almsgiving (*zakat*) according to one's ability, and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) if one's resources permit.

In Islam, God has no material representation, although the practice of making calligraphic imagery of the many names (also known as attributes) of God is fairly common and can be seen in mosques and in Muslim homes. Islam does not prescribe priesthood and there is no official clergy in Sunni Islam. However some of the roles that clergy play in some Christian denominations may be viewed as equivalent to the role played by the *ʿulama* (religious scholars) in Muslim societies. The primary role of the *ʿulama* is to strive (implies doing jihad) to understand, interpret, and teach the Qur'an (sacred scripture), the Hadith (reports of the words and actions of Prophet Muhammad), and *shariʿa* to others. The majority of Muslims in the world are Sunni but a smaller percentage belong to the second major branch of Islam known as Shiʿism, which has a variety of leadership roles within the category of *ʿulama*.

Muslims believe that the revelations God sent to Muhammad were in essence not unlike those that were sent to countless others throughout human existence. Muhammad, as he received these revelations, recited them to his followers many of whom memorized these verses. Later these were collected into one document (*mushaf*) and canonized as the sacred Qur'an (or "recitation"). Islam sees itself as a continuation of the Judeo-Christian heritage, leading some to argue that it would be better to regard this as a "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" heritage (Esposito 2002). Thus viewed through its original sources (the Qur'an and the Hadith), Islam does not regard itself as a "new" religion. It openly claims to continue in the path of earlier religious traditions, notably the Jewish and the Christian traditions. Muslims regard the Qur'an to be the final and definitive revelation given by God to his messenger, Muhammad, whom the Qur'an identifies as the "seal" of the prophets.

God is at the center of Islam, not Muhammad. Muslims believe in and pray to "the one true God" who is the Source of all as well as the final destination for all. In the Qur'an, God is said to be the creator and the final judge of all creation including human beings. The Islamic sacred story (including Creation and the destiny of human beings) is similar to the one found in Judaism and Christianity, with notable exceptions with regards to how some events are described and interpreted (Kaltner 2003). Islam also shares the notion of monotheism with Judaism and Christianity; that is, the idea of one God who is both transcendent and imminent; however, it rejects Christianity's notion of the Trinity. Muslims regard Jesus Christ (ʿIsa) as one of the most important prophets appointed by God for the

guidance of humankind. They believe in the notion of Jesus' virgin birth, and uphold the holiness and the sanctity ascribed to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Here, as in the case of monotheism, the Qur'an has a distinct viewpoint; while the reverence for Jesus and Mary are clearly manifest in the Qur'an, it rejects the divinity of Jesus. Thus Islam maintains a rather complex relationship with Christianity. There are both similarities and differences in its worldview and its view of the afterlife.

The figure of Abraham (Ibrahim) is another major connection between the three monotheistic faiths (Hinze and Omar 2005). Abraham is seen as instrumental in bringing humanity back toward the direction of ethical monotheism. Muslims regard him as one of the most influential figures (a major prophet from God) who helped guide humanity to the "right path." The Qur'an suggests that there have been numerous prophets (c. 124 000) since the beginning of the creation of human beings. Like Abraham, a messenger or prophet was appointed (or a succession of them) to every human community who came from within and spoke their language. A typical role of such prophets was to "warn" people of dangers that arise due to deviation from the path of ethical monotheism (belief in one God followed by a firm commitment to universal ethical principles). Along with Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were all important prophets (due to the seminal civilizational changes they brought). Based on the Qur'an Muslims see Muhammad as the "seal" of the line of prophet-hood understood in the sense of him being the last prophet.

Ways of Understanding Violence and Nonviolence

Two main questions are addressed in this chapter. First, how to understand violence carried out in the name of religion from an Islamic perspective? Second, what role might the Islamic religious tradition, its texts, and those who interpret these texts play in "transforming" the societies we live in, both locally and globally by producing, adopting, and promoting other legitimate ways of understanding?

One of the questions that is implicit in this kind of inquiry is to ask whether, because sacred texts include violence and the followers of faith traditions have historically (and/or are presently) engaged in violence, we should simply discard these traditions or perhaps explore the possibilities – inherent within these traditions – to "rethink" the ways of articulating and practicing them. This in fact is key to the argument for the relevance (or otherwise) of religious traditions in the twenty-first century. Evidently the very existence of this anthology gives away the positive biases of the editors and authors; they wish to not only address the question but respond to it as honestly as possible with the help of their traditions' texts and historical application of meanings. Acknowledgment of the presence of violence in texts and in history is a step in the right direction. However the focus of inquiry here is not the past per se but the present and the future. This chapter

seeks to show that the primary sources of the Islamic tradition are primarily concerned with peace and peacemaking. While many examples of religiously inspired violence can be found in Muslim history and in the present, one can also find examples of peacemaking and practice of nonviolent spirituality as well as an acknowledgment of common humanity. The Islamic tradition, based on the Qur'an and the prophetic example, contains ample sources for peacemaking and nonviolent activism for justice.

Although not focusing on the past, many events from history may be cited to support the enormous potential for religious peacemaking. Furthermore, like any sacred text, the Qur'an, can be, and indeed has been, interpreted in a number of ways. The problem of violence is less that of the text comprising or containing violence and more that of an interpretation of the text. More often than not, religiously inspired violence is forced upon the text rather than the other way around. In other words, texts give us meaning as they are interpreted; hence the role of the interpreter is critical. Any interpreter's own historical, cultural, and social context will inevitably be visible in the meanings drawn from the text. Since each interpreter is bound by such influences despite claims to objectivity, no interpretation may be considered absolute; that is, for all times and all places. The principles (such as ethical and moral ones) and acts of faith and spirituality remain the same (which is what makes a religion a "tradition"); however, how these are applied and practiced changes over time (an example of this would be Thomas Jefferson's phrase that became part of the *Declaration of Independence* "all men are created equal"). A Muslim "fundamentalist" may choose to see the text in a particular way that lends itself to intolerance of other faiths even leading one to commit violence against them in the name of Islam. However, not all forms of fundamentalism would be explicitly exclusive and/or violent in their outcome. They may be "literal," "conservative," "holistic," and "absolute," or any combination of these (Lawrence 1989, 27).

Another problematic proposal in this regard is the argument that violence is considered "divinely accepted" *because of* and *due to* the extent the text is consid-ered divine (Nelson-Pallmeyer 2005, 106–107). If this were so, how are we to explain the text's injunctions for establishing peace and justice? In fact, the same texts (the Bible, the Qur'an, the Bhagavad Gita and texts and/or teachings of other religions) also speak about a moral framework of life, our responsibility to the other, and accountability for our actions, spelled out very clearly and without ambiguity. If violence is only one part of the picture, then why would these other aspects be left unheeded if the text's influence is indeed so important in motivating human behavior *vis-à-vis* violence? With respect to Islam, this is especially prob-lematic because injunctions for peace in the Qur'an are identified as "general" or "permanent" commands, while verses that ask a believer to "fight" are always placed within a restricted framework.

It will become evident from the discussion below that the Qur'an *permits* (not mandates) defensive violence. The question to ask is how does it regard and define

this violence? What are the limits, if any, of this quranic violence? The popular "wisdom" in the world today labels violence that is committed in the name of Islam as "jihad," which is now part of the English language. There are several derivatives of this as one may have noticed in the media and other pseudo-scholarly literature. In the present, we have become accustomed to what Esposito calls, "seeing Islam through explosive headline events" (Esposito 2005, x). This is because it is easy for us to mistake the narrative advanced by the radicals as the *only* narrative due to the overwhelming exposure it generally receives in the media. When in fact there are multiple narratives today – always have been – all competing for the hearts and minds of both Muslims and non-Muslims (Said *et al.*, 2006, 3). But many of the peaceful narratives are not given the same exposure (or not given any at all) as the radical voices tend to receive.[2]

Jihad in the Qur'an

The word jihad itself comes from the Arabic root letters J H D, meaning "to strive" or "to exert" oneself, in the religious sense, in the service of God. Incidentally, this is also the meaning apparent in the Arabic Bible (1906) to refer to some of the actions of Jesus and St. Paul. In II Timothy 4:7 (RSV) it states "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." The Arabic translation of the Bible, *Al-Kitab al-Muqaddas* ("the Sacred Book") uses "jihad" and "*jahadto*" as equivalent to the English "fought the good fight," which is identical to the usage of jihad in the Qur'an. Another instance where jihad appears in *Al-Kitab al-Muqaddas* is in Luke 22:44, the first phrase of which states, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly…" where being in agony is translated as "being in the state of jihad" (*wa is kāna fī jihadin*).[3] Once again the term jihad is used to signify "struggle" and "suffering" in the path of righteousness, which is the same as in service to God. Similarly, jihad in the Qur'an is meant to convey the "striving" that one undergoes in fighting the temptations and base desires (*jihad bin nafs*) that often lead one down the path of evil.

The term jihad appears many times in the Qur'an – according to one scholar 35 times, either as jihad or as some other derivative of the root letters J H D ("to strive"). A vast majority of these references simply imply "struggle" and some others clearly see it as a spiritual struggle. Only four of these verses that contain derivations of the term jihad "…are open … to a 'warlike' interpretation" and even that would depend on the context in which these are received (Bonney 2004, 28). In most of the Meccan verses of the Qur'an where jihad appears, the Qur'an clearly seeks to inculcate a sense of personal effort (*jahada*). In fact, jihad appeared in verses that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad long before any fighting between Muslims and their Meccan opponents took place. The Qur'an gave Muslims permission to fight much later (in Medina), and that was primarily to defend themselves from invasion and aggression by their Meccan

opponents. Similarly, in Islamic history the term jihad has been understood in a range of meanings "from political action (the jihad of the pen) to warfare (jihad of the sword) to an individual's own struggles to lead a righteous life (jihad of the soul)" (Brockopp 2004, 6A).

In the quranic usage, jihad does not appear to mean warfare, let alone "holy war" (El Fadl 2006). The word for a necessary (*not* "*holy*") war is *harb* (or *qitāl*). In the entire Arabic literature for all the centuries of Islam's presence, not a single credible reference to the term "holy war" can be found, which in Arabic would be "*harb al-muqaddasah.*" Such an expression is absent from the Qur'an as well as Muslim writings on the subject of war. In "Islamic theology war is never holy; it is either justified or not…" (El Fadl 2002, 19). Perhaps the first usage of this term "holy war" in any language may have been the one adopted by the crusaders in the middle ages. In subsequent periods a number of Muslim writers began to use it in their polemical literature against Christendom.[4] Jihad was not generally used to mean "war" in Muslim discourse, however, it was understood that when one goes to war, it constitutes a "struggle" and in that sense some wars were deemed as "jihads." Some rulers and even scholars allowed the use of jihad to refer to warfare, but that designation did not remain unchallenged. Other scholars disagreed and protested the misappropriation of this term for political purposes. Nevertheless, the political and economic weight was placed with the definition that supported the rulers' needs and whims; hence the "jihad-as-war" definition was often a preferred choice due to the religious appeal it provided to garner support for consolidation of the empire.

Semantic bleaching of jihad

The term jihad is highly politicized today and is used in many different contexts without regard for its original spiritual denotation. One often hears words such as "jihadists" and "jihadis" to refer to either terrorists and/or separatists (and "jihadism" as their ideology) who claim to engage in religion-inspired activities or at least christened in such language so as to draw a sensationalist response. Seen from a purely analytical lens the political and extremist nature of these activities is apparent. However, the mainstream media outlets are not shy about appropriating the terminology used by the extremists: they often repeat terms like "jihadist" without qualification, hence they manage to create a confused state of understanding for those who are unfamiliar with Islamic teachings. It is as though "jihad" has now become subject to a form of "semantic bleaching" where the original root meaning has undergone a "partial effacement of … [its] semantic features, [thus] stripping away of some of its precise content so it can be used in an abstracter, grammatical-hardware-like way" (Matisoff 1991, 384). The transformation of a purely spiritual concept is thus complete and its meaning broadened to such an extent that most of its "lexical content" is lost while the "grammatical content" is retained (Heine 1993, 89).

For Muslims, jihad continues to evoke religious and spiritual sensibilities. Violence associated with this term is found mostly among those who see religion – in this case, Islam – as a tool to further their ideological, political, and extremist agendas. Just as in the past some Muslim rulers abused jihad for expansionist purposes, today's political extremists seek power and influence without consideration for peace and in violation of all the basic principles of Islam. Some of these extremists cite history to argue that Muslims did use jihad to engage in defensive wars. This argument is supported by evidence from Muslims sources. Nevertheless, to base the meaning of jihad on its *abusive application in history* instead of its *import in the Qur'an* is not only misleading, it is the betrayal of the Islamic tradition itself.

If and when there comes a need for a defensive war, the rules of deciding, declaring, and the conduct in war are very clearly enunciated in the Islamic legal tradition. Only a legitimate (in today's context, popularly and fairly elected) head of government can, as a last resort, make that decision, which (again, in today's context) must meet the requirements set by the United Nations (UN). Many theologians however argue that these elaborate guidelines for what is often called the Islamic equivalent to Christian "just war" are not even relevant today since it is difficult to imagine a "just war" that can remain faithful to its own principles.[5] As a result many Muslim scholars believe the only way to resolve conflicts today is through nonviolent means (see below the discussion on Wahiduddin Khan, Jawdat Sa'id, and Rabia Harris).

The defensive war *permitted* by the Qur'an was always referred to as *harb* (warfare) *qitāl* (combat) and not by the term jihad. For example, Q. 22:39, one of the earliest verses that refers to the violence of war uses the term *qitāl* and also gives a rationale for it – that it be undertaken as a means of defense against oppression: "To those against whom war is made (*yuqaataluna* – derived from the same root letters as *qitāl*), permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged" (Ali 1992, 832). It does not sanction warfare as a means of political expansion or for hegemony over other peoples (Sachedina 1988, 106).[6] Here it is also important to note that the Qur'an offers a choice in what means one might adopt (e.g. taking up arms) to defend oneself and one's community. The Qur'an does not see it as an option *whether* one should take measures to defend oneself and stand up to injustice and aggression forced by an adversary. In other words, the Qur'an is emphatic that one must strive to eradicate injustice, but it is not suggesting in absolute terms that it must be through the use of weapons. The choice of means is left to the ingenuity and wisdom of the persons in charge of the task of defending.[7]

Jihad as struggle with the inner self

The data regarding the popular view of jihad among Muslims are quite telling. In 2002, to gauge the Muslim self-understanding of what the term jihad means to Muslims, the Gallup Poll conducted a survey of Muslims on this notion. In his report, which was based on several predominantly Muslim countries, Richard

Burkholder wrote that he found a majority of people surveyed (over 10 000) understood it to mean striving to honor one's "duty toward God" in their personal daily lives with "no explicit militaristic connotation at all" (Burkholder 2002). Despite the volatile and violent world we live in since September 11, 2001, the vast majority of Muslims regard jihad as a personal struggle. Except for a fringe minority, Muslims reject the very idea that jihad may either be translated or invoked as "holy war." Although some among the Muslims would not agree to even categorize it as either defensive or offensive, they simply prefer to see jihad as a "universal revolutionary struggle" (Peters 1979, 118 and 132–133).

According to mainstream religious thinkers it is a serious misappropriation of the *principle* of jihad when the term is employed in practice to mean something the source-principle did not intend, let alone clearly state. The principle as clearly enunciated by the Qur'an is to recognize jihad as spiritual struggle, the inner struggle of the *nafs* or self – *jihad al-akbar*, greater jihad. However, the practice as proposed by some Muslims today is in terms of war or armed struggle, *jihad al-asghar* or a lesser jihad, which is understood by the scholars to be *provisional* at best. It was identified as such by Prophet Muhammad due to the specific historical circumstances of early Muslims who were surrounded by hostile forces. Its applicability today is further complicated by the fact that there is no one unified and legitimate entity (such as the caliphate in the past) that can initiate a process by which jihad-as-war could be legally initiated. Muslim societies in the twenty-first century are part of nation-states and, in general, secular laws governing many of these societies by way of international consensus already have measures for defensive wars to be carried out through a recognized legal process. Hence the argument for a defensive "jihad of the sword" is mooted in light of the provisions already contained in the Charter of the UN. The Islamic notion of defensive war in today's terms would correspond with various articles of the UN Charter that deal with breach of peace, security, and possible actions for stopping aggression committed against a member state. These include the option to take military action as a matter of last resort.[8]

The distinction between the so-called greater and lesser jihads is also very deliberate and foundational as it is believed to be one of the important Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad. The greater jihad (understood to be as "striving in God") is evidently more difficult and is a deeply spiritual notion, while the lesser jihad ("striving for God") is understood to be a social, political, and (if necessary) military "struggle" (Ayoub 1992, 211–212). In this latter sense, jihad as armed struggle could be compared to the Christian just war tradition. It is important to note that many Muslim religious intellectuals insist that in our present circumstances, in the era of modern nation-states, emphasis must be placed on jihad's spiritual significance and that jihad should be viewed as a symbol of humility and piety (Khan 1997, 8–9; Khan 1999b). In today's world we must view jihad from a purely spiritual perspective. Political interpretations of jihad arose in a dichotomized world of the *dar al-Islam* (the Islamic state) and the *dar al-harb* (the non-Muslim

state or the state hostile to Muslim state).The political (military) context is no longer viable; even if it was deemed suitable for the pre-modern era when the world was divided along religious and ethnic lines. In the spiritual sense, jihad's significance is permanent and it is in that sense that jihad must be understood and practiced today. While jihad as armed struggle may have been necessary in the early years of Islam for a strategy of defense and survival, there is very little need for it in our present-day world where violent conflicts, partly due to the nature of weapons involved, have a far greater chance of resulting in the destruction of all sides and even the annihilation of the planet itself (Khan 2003).

In the era in which the Prophet Muhammad lived, militancy was the order of the day and a primary means to secure order and pursue justice. This militant attitude, which manifested in what are known as *ghazwat* (warfare), "was a sport, a source of fame and material wealth, and a way of life" (Ayoub 1992, 206–207). It was more of an end in itself than a means to an end. But as people who have the opportunity to learn from past mistakes as well as discover newer ways of reconciliation, twenty-first-century Muslims ought to be able to move beyond medieval solutions to solve problems today. Parallel to the spiritual and political usages of jihad mentioned above, here we see two distinct understandings of the notion of jihad: (1) *textual* and (2) *historical*. It is unfortunate that what historically transpired overshadowed what was originally intended by the text of the Qur'an. The notion of jihad, from the quranic perspective, pertains entirely to an inner striving, in history, a part of which also included defending one's faith and livelihood. But the "part" came to be understood as the whole and the central feature of the notion of jihad (*jihad bin nafs*) became hostage to its historical usage.

Martyrdom or extremism? Misrepresentations of the prophetic example

Religious extremism has always been present in Islamic and other societies. Early Islamic history experienced many such groups, such as the Kharijites, who took absolutist positions with respect to judgment against others even when the Qur'an suggested that judgment belongs only to God. But never before in history had the extremists been given a free and unlimited access to what I refer to as the "loud speaker" for free publicity of their propaganda. Until very recently, they existed at the fringes of society and were tolerated but had very little impact. Today they are able to manipulate the mediums of communication while many media outlets in the world are willing to give coverage to their message of hate to be broadcast to the entire world. Muslim extremists allege that since Prophet Muhammad fought the jihad against the "infidels," they too must do so in the context of today. Taking the advantage offered through global media, extremists are able to spread their message far and wide. However, there are several problems with this view. First, the extremists mistakenly assume or falsely assert that Muhammad was involved in many violent conflicts. As a matter of historical fact, there are approximately 83

recorded incidents of conflict between Muslims and their opponents in early Islamic history. Only four of those, which happened in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, were actual armed encounters. Most of the times where conflict occurred and where violence could have erupted between Muslims and other groups, it was resolved through other means, such as treaties and negotiations. Prophet Muhammad himself spent less than 2 days in defensive fighting in his entire life of 63 years (Khan 2009, 25).

Second, during these so called "battles" Muhammad fought to defend the life and property of his followers and the right to practice their faith freely. For the first 13 years of his ministry, Muhammad and his followers experienced severe persecution but they did not retaliate, did not use violence and accepted the hardships for the sake of their faith. In the second phase of his ministry in Medina, Muhammad and other Muslims fought to protect the nascent Muslim community from being annihilated. A Hadith of the prophet often cited in this context says, "Do not wish confrontation with your enemy but always ask peace from God." This approach was considered radical at the time because the Arabs of Hejaz knew only one way to settle their disputes – through warfare. No difference of opinion could be resolved without violent conflict and the use of weapons. Even against such odds, Muhammad introduced peaceful means, including diplomacy and dialogue (Khan 1997). Muhammad's actions on numerous occasions provide a strong basis to argue that his policy was mainly to avoid violence and not to insist on it (Khan 2003). Thus, in the Islamic ethical framework, violence or armed struggle is only an exception to the rule and not the rule itself. In the present age, a more powerful and potent method to "fight" has gained greater currency, and that weapon is "nonviolence." Therefore it is not only prudent but also imperative that we restore the spiritual vision of jihad strongly emphasized by the Qur'an, and continue the common struggle for justice through nonviolent means. Basic familiarity with the Qur'an makes it plain that its message is centered on the principle of *al-sulhu khayrun* (reconciliation is best). The Qur'an, although allowing it for self-defense, sees violence as grossly displeasing to God, and repeatedly calls for resolving conflicts through peaceful negotiation. As noted earlier, jihad in the Qur'an simply means "to strive" or "to struggle"; it has no fundamental connection to the notion of *qitāl* (fighting) (Engineer 2001). In the eyes of God the struggle is meant to be spiritual, seeking inner peace, in order to achieve social peace among peoples, communities, and nations. Those who engage in such struggle would, according to the Qur'an, experience the divine reception: "*wallāhū yadū'u ilā dār as-salām*" (and God calls to the home of peace).[9]

Third, the extremists seek to dichotomize between "us" and "them" – between Muslims and non-Muslims, the so-called infidel. The Qur'an's focus is on struggle against the self, rather than against an enemy "other." It does not grant the right to anyone to call another person "infidel." The quranic usage of this term must be seen in its historical context and in light of the larger message of the Qur'an. Against the quranic imperative for a peaceful struggle in the path of self-reform, some extremist

Muslim groups today take the path of confrontation with others and portray the "West" as anti-Islamic, trying their best to vindicate, sadly, the infamous notion of the "clash of civilizations." They violate Islamic ethics on several counts. For example, they misinterpret and misuse the text of the Qur'an; they breach local laws and rules of the country where they live, which is a violation of *shari'a* law; and they cause mistrust and division between Muslim and other communities, disregarding the quranic imperative for dialogue and cooperation with other communities.

Those who through "suicide attacks" claim to seek martyrdom (*shahadah* or witness – martyr is *shahid*) stand on shaky ground; their entire philosophy – if we can call it that – contravenes Islamic ethics based on their political misunder-standing and not spiritual understanding of the term *shahid*. In Islam, martyrdom is never sought, it is given by God. If the intention of the person who stands up for justice is to get killed in the cause hoping for "martyrdom," that person may not be considered a martyr in the eyes of God. Instead, it might be regarded as suicide, which is prohibited. Intention is half of one's faith, the Prophet said, and thus one has to be quite clear in one's mind what one is seeking, personal glory or divine will. Moreover, no martyrdom can be achieved when one is knowingly willing to harm not only oneself but also others, especially noncombatants. Still, true martyrdom in Islam is that which is sought to save others and oneself from being harmed; not to cause harm at a mass scale.

Peacemaking and the Challenge of Violence

It is apparent that violence has been and is being committed by invoking the name of religion, including Islam, supposedly for reasons sanctioned by God. However, Muslim nations and Muslim violence receives far greater attention due to the nature of contemporary geo-politics and specific events since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. These include the "wars" in Afghanistan and Iraq and more recently the "Arab Spring" and its aftermath. However, for our purposes in this chapter it would be important to note that despite what we witness in terms of the present state of the Muslim world, one has to distinguish between Muslim conduct and the teachings of Islam.

In this section, I will draw on select Islamic resources that highlight the impor-tance given to the need for what are essentially peaceful and nonviolent means for social and political change rather than engaging in the violent methods that have been utilized by some Muslim groups today. Despite the odds of history, several theologians, scholars, and activists today strive (i.e. do jihad) to dig deeper into their theological resources and, using their interpretational and hermeneutical skills, they have unearthed a "theology of nonviolence" in Islam that they believe is based on both the texts as well as historical examples. It might be helpful to look at some of the terminology emanating from the Qur'an and which is employed in the service of this theology of nonviolence.

Resources from the Qur'an and the Hadith

The word Islam is derived from the verbal root '*salima*', which means to be safe and secure. Salām, the noun, means safety or submission to God in peace. *As-Salām* is also known in the Qur'an as one of the "most beautiful names of God" (Q. 59:23). God, the source of all Peace greets His creation with Peace. The verse reads: "'Peace' a word (of salutation) from a Lord, most Merciful" (Q. 36:58).

The following four terms have been highlighted by several Muslim theologians as instrumental in arguing for a theology of nonviolence. The first and the most fundamental is *al-silm* (peace, reconciliation), which comes from the same root *salima*. Peace is defined in the sense of a relationship with others, which must remain peaceful at all costs. However, at the ultimate level, one seeks the very source of all peace, which is God. Second is *al 'afw* (forgiveness), which is consistently stressed in the Qur'an as the preferred option in situations even where one is entitled to compensation against injustice. The Q. 42:37 says: "true believers are those who when angered [provoked] are willing to forgive." From a justice-oriented perspective an average person has the right to demand that the violator of an injury is duly punished, and yet the Qur'an invites the victim to consider a better option: "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto, but whoever forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God" (Q. 42:40). Those who are closer to God, according to the Qur'an, are inclined to forgive because "forgiveness is better." In instances of provocation and even actual physical harm the reader of the Qur'an is asked to terminate the trail of violence through forgiveness.

The third term, *al-sabr* (patience), is described in the Qur'an as one of the greatest virtues. It appears many times in connection with those who have faith. Some quranic verses highlighting this are as follows: Q. 39:10b: "those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure." Similarly, Q. 13:24 speaks of the greeting that will be encountered by those entering the paradise: "peace unto you for that you have persevered in patience; now how excellent is the final home." And Q. 14:23 states: "but those who believe and work righteousness will be admitted to the gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever with the leave of their lord. Their greeting therein shall be 'peace!'" According to Q. 15:46, they will be welcomed and asked to: "enter here in peace and security." For the Qur'an the Garden or paradise is the place of ultimate peace (Q. 50: 32–35). And finally, *la 'unf* (nonviolence), which is not mentioned in the Qur'an but is always implied in various verses dealing with conflict resolution. Although it does not directly obligate one to be either nonviolent or pacifist, the Qur'an emphasizes in many instances that there is always more than one way of responding in situations of conflict and indeed better options are those that avoid violence. The verse 41:34 says: "Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with goodness; you will see that the person with whom you had enmity has become your dearest friend." For the Qur'an, nonviolence is a better and more dynamic

way of persuasion. It acknowledges that nonviolence is far more effective than violence in resolving conflicts. The term *'unf* means violence, harshness, and severity and appears in a *hadith*:

> God the Blessed and the Exalted is graciously Courteous and loves 'gentle-civility' (*al-rifq*). God bestows on account of gentle conduct what God does not bestow on account of violent conduct (*al-'unf*). (Khan 1999a, 170)[10]

The practice of nonviolence can be seen as an imperative if one understands the worldview the Qur'an proposes. Through several of its verses the Qur'an obligates Muslims to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths, especially the "people of the book." The Qur'an acknowledges diversity and expects that there will always be Muslims and other religious communities. It never assumes that all human beings may one day follow the same faith tradition. Such acknowledgment and acceptance of diversity of faiths by the Qur'an necessitates that Muslims maintain good relations with other peoples who are religiously or culturally different from them. This perception of plurality is also due to the fact that Islam sees itself as part of a larger plan for humanity rather than as an exclusive ideology, which is isolated from others. It sees itself as fulfilling a role that contributes to a balanced view of the world. If there is conflict and war, it is quite difficult to keep cordial relations with others. Violence emanating from conflicts brings out the worst in all; it creates problems for all, and it almost always fails to solve the original problem that caused the conflict.

Nonviolence: A principle or a means?

The Qur'an is neutral on the issue of nonviolence even though it is not so on the question of establishing peace and justice. While it highlights the wisdom of nonviolence and forgiveness, it does so with the aim of moving towards these two goals. Justice is the basic theme in the Qur'an, violence and nonviolence are essentially means to achieve justice. As means, they can be applied according to the strategy, convention, or as a matter of principle. In history Muslims have applied it in all of these various ways in the service of fulfilling their temporal aims. Many have used it as a strategy, others have used it as a principle because of how they read the Qur'an and the life of Muhammad. In the twentieth century, we have witnessed that nonviolence is also being applied due to it becoming a convention based on the success this method has shown in resisting and overturning unjust political systems (e.g. India, Poland, and South Africa). The power of nonviolent resistance is becoming manifest at all levels of society. In fact, it threatens even the most brutal oppressors of our time. Thus where we stand today, it is a positive sign that many more Muslim theologians are becoming convinced of the power of nonviolence. They are able to see it as a viable strategy, a successfully proven conventional method, but more importantly, as a principle that is supported by the scriptural demands placed on them.

The pursuit and establishment of justice may or may not require violent methods such as war. In the context in which the Qur'an was revealed, based on the circumstances, violence was permissible within a strict framework and with specific guidelines and for specific aims that included self-defense and freedom of religion which was denied to Muslims. Any such violence was not only limited by the Qur'an, it was also strictly regulated by the *shari'a*, which is based on the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition. Thus the Qur'an approaches the issue of violence from the perspective of the victim and the oppressed. As noted earlier, this is similar to contemporary international understanding where violence as a last resort is permissible to political entities in order to defend victims of aggression by another force. The Qur'an 22:39 states, "sanction to take up arms is given to those who are attacked." This sanction was afforded to Muslims even as they were being shaped into a political entity in opposition to their persecutors in Mecca. But this permission was neither for all time nor against all people. Thus verses such as these are to be seen in their historical context, which makes it apparent that permission to defend through the use of weapons was limited by time, place and purpose. Theoretically, this may still be applicable in cases where tyrants and oppressors forcibly prevent people from "professing and practicing their religion" (Safi 2001, 12). This issue is intimately connected to the pursuit of justice. From the perspective of the Qur'an, freedom of religion is one of the most fundamental rights human beings possess and denying that right to anyone is an unjust act that must be resisted. However, even this right to fight religious persecution has been questioned by many major theologians – such as al-Ghazali (d. 1111) – on the grounds that it might create unrest and therefore disturb social peace, which is also treated by Islamic law as sacrosanct.

Both justice and peace appear to be two major concerns of the Qur'an. The Q. 2:190 says, "fight in the way of God against those who fight against you but be not the aggressors. Surely God does not love aggressors." The granting of permission to fight is qualified by the caution "do not be aggressors." In another verse the Qur'an reminds Muhammad and his followers that despite the fact that it is a defensive struggle, if the opponent side inclines toward peace, Muslims are to put down their weapons immediately. It is mandated by the Qur'an that, whenever possible, they must turn their backs on war and violence. Violence aside, in the path of justice, the Qur'an does not even absolve one's own self or one's family from being just. Here is what Q. 4:135 asks of Muslims:

> O you, who believe, stand firmly for justice, as witnesses for God, even if it means testifying against yourselves, or your own parents, or your kin, and whether it is against the rich or poor, for God prevails upon all. Follow not the lusts of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, surely God knows what you do.

Puritanical and extremist Muslim interpretations heavily rely on verses that are read in isolation, as if the meaning of the quranic verses were obvious and "as if

moral ideas and historical context were irrelevant" to how they are interpreted. The moral thrust of the Qur'an is essential in interpreting those verses that deal with inter-personal, inter-religious and even intra-religious relations and Muslim conduct over all. For example, "the Qur'an persistently commands Muslims to enjoin the good. The word used for 'the good' is *ma'ruf*, which means that which is commonly known to be good" (El Fadl 2002, 14). This same concept, when defined in a narrow ideological framework, may mean something completely different and may only include "good" works that suit the goals of an ideologically motivated extremist group. Thus we can find in the text whatever we are looking for even though the final meaning derived may be completely skewed, twisted, and even abusive. To summarize, it is pertinent to quote a prominent scholar of Islamic law, K. Abou El Fadl, concerning this misuse of the text by the Islamists and extremists:

> In regards to every ethical obligation, the Qur'anic text assumes that readers will bring a preexisting, innate moral sense to the text. Hence, the text will morally enrich the reader, but only if the reader will morally enrich the text. (2002, 15)

The Qur'an and nonviolence: The challenge ahead

The Qur'an has numerous references to peace and related terms and only a handful of verses deal with defensive war (*qital*). Based on the quranic ideas discussed above, it may be argued that the thrust of the message of the Qur'an is toward establishing peace with justice. Despite the permission given to take up arms, the quranic emphasis on the right to peace and stability seems to indicate its preference for nonviolent methods to achieve the goals of peace. The quranic text remains the same over the centuries and so are its principal aims. These aims constitute seeking justice and following a path of moderation in all things but especially in matters of faith. However, the means to pursue justice can and should be modified based on our personal and social circumstances, our collective achievements in human interpersonal relationships, engagement with newer and more reliable methods of reconciliation, our increased human and intellectual resources, and our commitment to people across various religious traditions who also struggle to achieve similar aims. Increasingly, it is recognized that the best way of pursuing justice in the present age is through nonviolence. The fact that many Muslims, like people in other faith traditions, have acknowledged these new ways of responding to violence is arguably the most positive step toward decreasing violence in the name of religion.

　　Muslim activism for peace currently focuses on many fronts one of which is to create local as well as sustainable mechanisms toward reforming societies. Many such efforts are not easily noticed or even considered newsworthy due to their unstructured nature. In many rural societies a local religious leader (*imam*) may

act as a peace negotiator between individuals, groups, and even between villages. Such individuals may not be part of a registered organization or have physical offices out of which they work and yet they may be well known in their communities as a resource for conflict resolution and inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. The work of such individuals is "assumed in [their] identity" (Kadayifci-Orellana 2007, 24–25). These cultural, grassroots-based, local examples of peacemaking are abundant in the Muslim world and they often involve a re-interpretation of religious texts to challenge traditional discriminatory practices against an "other." Having a person of religious authority in that role helps provide a sustainable change over time.

However, this unstructured peacemaking style can also be problematic as it has been in some parts of the Muslim world with the rise of religious extremism and terrorism in the twentieth century. In the past few decades since the 1980s, various ideological groups (claiming religious authority) have taken it upon themselves to become vigilantes in the name of defending Islam against what they identify as Western aggression. Ironically, they have in effect violated all of the important Islamic laws and ethical principles in their attempt to supposedly defend Muslim interests. These include breaking the rule of law, violating basic human freedoms and the sanctity of life. They have engaged in uncivil and inhuman practices such as kidnappings, assassinations, destruction of towns and villages, and other forms of violence. The theological claims made by extremists for their terrorist activities are dangerous and must be countered because they tend to frame political goals in religious language and seek to confuse people into thinking these are Islamically acceptable choices.[11]

For several decades since the 1960s, a growing number of Muslim intellectuals, theologians, and religious leaders have been engaged in trying to create a theoretical foundation for civil, nonviolent possibilities, that is inclusive and pluralistic, allowing rights of others, including Muslims and non-Muslims. At the same time, numerous practical initiatives for reclaiming the spiritual heritage of the Qur'an have been launched by various scholar-activists in Muslim societies across the world.

Nonviolent Activism: Key Muslim Figures

Muslim theologians and scholars who have been at the forefront of scholarship and/or activism in advocating peace and nonviolence are generally not well known in the West and until recently were not hugely popular even in many Muslim countries. Below I will briefly note some key figures and provide a more detailed account of the views of three contemporary Muslim scholars and leaders: Mawlana Wahiduddin Khan (b. 1925, India), Shaykh Jawdat Sa'id (b. 1931, Syria), and Chaplain Rabia Terri Harris (b. 1953, United States).

Muslim Scholar-Activists and Their Contributions

One of the most prominent Muslim voices for nonviolence in the twentieth century has been that of Abdul Ghaffar "Badshah" Khan (d. 1988), who was a close friend and follower of Gandhi. One of the most absorbing biographies written in English referred to him as a "nonviolent soldier of Islam" (Easwaran 1984). Badshah Khan's achievements are noted by many as "revolutionary" simply because of the contrast between what was expected of him and what he eventually became. He was raised in a Pathan culture where defending one's independence and honor in the face of colonization and invasion came as naturally as eating and sleeping. The Pathans had a reputation for being courageous with their "violent heroics" (Easwaran 1984, 19) in the battlefield; they were feared for their strong capacity for resistance. But what terrified the British authorities in the Northwest Frontier Province – with all of the empire's mighty arsenal at their disposal – was not the Pathan with a gun, but one without one. Badshah Khan's nonviolent army of Pathans, in which there were over 100 000 soldiers, belied all the stereotypes and changed the dynamics of India's independence struggle. This was in some ways a response to Gandhi's call to engage in a "nonviolent warfare." The contrast lay in the dynamic notion of a fearless, tall and strong Pathan committed to delivering the "dove" to his oppressors. Despite savagery on the part of the British soldiers on numerous occasions, the Khudai Khidmatgars ("servants of God") of Khan's army remained nonviolent.[12]

Badshah Khan and all his companions were not acting this way as part of an anti-colonial strategy. They were inspired by the Islamic values of commitment to peace and justice and by Prophet Muhammad's methodology of using nonviolent means to struggle against oppression (recall the first 13 years in Mecca where Muhammad and his followers suffered at the hands of the pagan elite who persecuted them because of their belief in the One God). For many years, most members of the Khudai Khidmatgar organization endured severe hardships on account of their association with Badshah Khan, such as torture, imprisonment, and even death, at the hands of the British. They proved themselves to be a force greater than any with weapons; Gandhi often cited them as *actually* practicing what he (Gandhi) thought was true nonviolence – the "province of the daring and the undaunted" (Eswaran 1984, 20) and "nonviolence is not for cowards … it is for the brave" (Gandhi 2004, 140). The Islamic spiritual nature of their struggle was clear from the start as echoed by the words of Badshah Khan in a speech given to his followers:

> I am going to give you such a weapon that the police and the army will not be able to stand against it. It is the weapon of the Prophet [Muhammad], but you are not aware of it. That weapon is patience and righteousness. No power on earth can stand against it. (Easwaran 1984, 117)

Badshah Khan's ideas have found continuity today in the voices of many Muslim scholars and activists (some of whom are mentioned below) who have written

Figure 1.1   Abdul Ghaffar Khan with Gandhi and an Anglican minister. Source: © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS

persuasively and with conviction that the Islamic tradition contains ample resources it needs for developing a nonviolent framework for action to face contemporary challenges.[13] They have argued that struggle for justice – one of the key requirements of jihad enjoined by the Qur'an – can and must be undertaken nonviolently as is demonstrated by both the textual and historical sources of Islam. At the same time it is their contention that violence is neither the *only* nor the *best* way to "fight" for justice. Despite the fact that in Islam a defensive war is sanctioned, a strong and convincing case is being made by these thinkers for narrowing the option of using violence even further than the demands placed by the classical Islamic ethical theories. In fact it is hoped that as we learn more about human ingenuity in finding newer ways to resolve – and avoid – conflict, we would categorically reject violence as a reliable means for this purpose. The list containing successful examples of nonviolent struggle in Muslim societies, past and present, continues to expand just as the resources for peace and nonviolent methodologies are becoming easily accessible and translatable from one community and country to another (several such case studies are included in Stephan 2009).

Among the notable *'ulama* (religious scholars) who have sought to further develop the views described above is Abdurrahman Wahid (d. 2009). Wahid was president of the Republic of Indonesia from 1999–2001, and for many years

was president of the largest religious leaders' organization in Indonesia, the Nahdatul Ulama. He was an outspoken pro-democracy scholar-activist who advocated the idea that Muslims need to accommodate their practice to contemporary times without compromising any essential part of their faith (Wahid 2001). A formidable voice for nonviolence is that of Khalid Kishtainy, an Iraqi activist-scholar and the author of *Towards Nonviolence* (1984). He has been an outspoken proponent of nonviolence and is credited to have coined the term "civilian jihad" to give a name to the struggles of ordinary citizens, which include acts of civil disobedience and other nonviolent forms of resistance (Stephan 2009, 1). Another scholar-activist who is indispensable for anyone studying Islam and nonviolence is Chaiwat Satha-Anand, a Muslim scholar from Thailand. Satha-Anand has taken a very direct textual approach to advocate nonviolence as the most viable means for struggle. He has also been actively involved in the reconciliation efforts between conflicting groups in Southeast Asia. In his writings, Professor Satha-Anand proposed "eight theses on Muslim nonviolent actions," which offer a significant challenge to many of the violent options available (Satha-Anand 1999, 23):

1. Islam permits limited violence – it is mentioned in the Qur'an as *qital*.
2. Violence is governed by strict rules and conditions and the use of violence is understood to be the last resort.
3. These conditions include prohibition on harming noncombatants and nature.
4. Modern warfare – technology of war disallows the possibility of leaving noncombatants unharmed.
5. Therefore, under this reality of how wars are generally fought today, violence cannot be used based on religious principles.
6. Yet Islam calls for "fighting" against injustice – a call for all times to "strive" – to do jihad.
7. Therefore, the sole option for Muslims to carry out jihad for justice is through nonviolent means.
8. Quranic use of jihad as striving can be precisely followed through such nonviolent activism; it is not only sought, but demanded by the Qur'an.

Three case studies

The eight theses proposed by Satha-Anand correspond with ideas found in the thoughts of other scholar-activists promoting nonviolent struggle for peace and justice. Below I will present these ideas, highlighting the work of three individuals.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a well-known Indian Islamic scholar who has been promoting his pacifist views since the early 1980s. His writings are centered on the belief that nonviolent activism and inter-religious solidarity are key to establishing peace and justice. His views are challenging in that they break the mold and ask for greater sacrifice on the part of the self and without pointing

fingers at others. Khan argues that Islamic religious teachings are opposed to constructing a dichotomized view of the world where one is forced to see in terms of "them" and "us" (Omar 2008). The tendency to divide people based on cultural and religious differences is antithetical to the goals established by the Qur'an, which seeks to invite rather than alienate people by labeling them the "other." The Qur'an asks Muslims to "Invite (all) to the way of your God with wisdom and with beautiful preaching; and discuss with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (Q. 16:125). His views on violence are fairly clear; there is no justification for it in the present age, which he regards as most conducive for the intellectual jihad or jihad of reason. His philosophy revolves around a major incident in the life of Prophet Muhammad – the treaty of Hudaybiya – which Khan believes is paradigmatic for conflict resolution. The Hudaybiya principle is derived from the events surrounding this treaty.

Hudaybiya is a place 10 miles outside of Mecca where, in 628 C.E., Muslims were stopped by the Quraysh – the Meccan elites – preventing them from visiting the Ka'ba. Muslims were prepared to make the pilgrimage, and as per Arab custom, were only asking to exercise their right to access the holy shrine in Mecca. This act on the part of the Quraysh was deemed as an act of war, but Prophet Muhammad, instead of fighting for what was their right, decided to resolve the issue through negotiations with the Meccans. Despite the seemingly unfavorable terms from the Meccans and understandable resistance from some of his own companions, Muhammad went ahead with the treaty, a key feature of which was a "ten-year no-war pact" (Khan 2009, 120). As the Muslims turned back without performing the pilgrimage Muhammad received a revelation that would refer to this incident as a "clear victory" (Q. 48:10). Wahiduddin Khan sees in it much more than a peace treaty. He argues that it was a courageous step *to make peace for the sake of peace* rather than insist that peace comes only after justice has been achieved. He points out that the pact between Muslims and non-Muslims at Hudyabiya was:

> indeed a peace treaty, but the peace it ensured was not accompanied by justice, rather it was bereft of justice. Even so – the treaty tells us – it was this unilateral adjustment that led to … peace between the two parties, [which] gave … Muslims the opportunity to engage in activities which were more positive than just warding off enemy attacks. … The result was truly remarkable – within a short span of two years, Islam became so powerful that Makkah was brought into its fold without any fighting. (2009, 120)

Shaykh Jawdat Sa'id is a Syrian thinker and scholar whose writings first appeared in the 1960s in Arabic and were only recently translated into English. His position on violence is similar to Wahiduddin Khan's in that he argues that, despite the hardships and persecution of Muslims in some parts of the world, the overall conditions that Muslims face do not necessitate the so-called armed jihad (Sa'id 1998a). However, the situation does require a jihad of a more fundamental nature,

the one taught by the Qur'an – that is, jihad of the pen, jihad of the self (spiritual), and jihad of reaching out to others in the form of intra- and interfaith dialogue. Saʻid has been one of the earliest proponents of peace and nonviolence in the Arab world. His 1964 book, *The Doctrine of the First Son of Adam* or *The Problem of Violence in The Islamic Action* (translated from the Arabic) is one of the most thorough theological treatments of the arguments against war and violence in general. His thought has been decisively framed from the perspective of the imperative of nonviolence in Islam and has already influenced many in the Arab world. It is important to note that he did not begin writing on Islamic nonviolence in the post-9/11 world when it suddenly became fashionable in some quarters to speak of peace and nonviolence to counter the effects of the impending backlash against Islam and Muslims. Saʻid has been arguing these positions for over five decades.

Due to his emphasis on nonviolence, Saʻid often faced questions such as whether he wished to annul the notion of jihad, which is fundamentally quranic. He has responded by saying that "I am not annulling jihad; I am merely showing that the jihad [of Prophet Muhammad] is not the same as that of the '*kharijites*, the schismatics'" and in today's terms, also not that of the terrorists (Saʻid 1998b). Saʻid wants to separate jihad from the activities of the extremists and the terrorists who invoke this notion to garner support and seek false religious justification for their actions.

Saʻid believes we should be using the means of persuasion and not intimidation to resolve conflicts. Violence and weapons have no place in building a just and equitable society. But how to convince people that war and murder are not part of God's way? He argues that we must locate newer "substitute" ways to address conflict. When people only know the path of weapons and war to deal with injustice and to resolve conflicts, then they will continue to rely on it. But once they are shown an alternate and a better way, they will most likely be convinced.

> if someone were holding on to a fragile pillar as a support [while hanging above] an abyss, he would not abandon it if we were to [point out the pillar's weakness]. However, this person would certainly drop [the pillar] of support away if we were to offer him something else to save him from the danger [of the abyss]. So no sooner do we offer him a substitute, making it consciously and purposely handy to him, than he will free himself from the previous means. (Saʻid 2002, 121)

In short, Saʻid hopes that as everyone, including Muslims, realizes that there are other effective ways to resolve conflict they would be eager to let go of the weaker support mechanism (violence) to sustain their faith in the cause of peace.

Chaplain Rabia Terri Harris is an American Muslim scholar and religious leader. She is the founder of the Muslim Peace Fellowship and has been involved in the work of promoting peace and interfaith dialogue for over two decades. She is currently Scholar in Residence and Muslim chaplain at the multifaith "Community of Living Traditions" at the Stony Point Center in New York. Harris approaches the subject of jihad and violence from both a textual and spiritual perspective. She unambiguously

states that the notion of jihad in the Qur'an signifies nonviolence (Harris 2010). This suggestion has substance if we acknowledge and understand two very basic meanings of nonviolence, which are: first, implicit in nonviolence is the activism for peacebuilding; and second, meaning has to with the right methodology to do it, that is, "unarmed struggle." Similarly, the notion of jihad at its core contains these two things. Thus Harris' elaboration on nonviolence below applies equally to jihad:

1. "Nonviolence is the *life decision* to live in harmony with the order of creation by giving up the domination of other people or the planet. Today, when put into community practice, this life decision is called *culture of peace* or *peacebuilding*."
2. "Nonviolence is the *method* of pursuing necessary social change by relying upon the real long-term spiritual power of justice rather than the apparent short-term political power of injustice. Today, when put into community practice, this method is called *unarmed struggle*." (2010)

Harris contends that many contemporary proponents of violence claim to emulate Prophet Muhammad's struggle against injustice. However in addition to misrepresenting Muhammad's actions, they fail to see his "priorities," instead focusing on

Figure 1.2   Rabia Terri Harris, Muslim chaplain, scholar and activist for peace, and founder of the Muslim Peace Fellowship. Source: reproduced by permission of Rabia Terri Harris

his "tactics" in the very few times he was on the battlefield (Harris 2007, 120). These priorities included social and communal peace, which would inevitably allow everyone to continue to seek the inner peace wherein the Qur'an's focus lies. Harris places her hopes in a struggle to revive the "alternative Islamic community tradition," which will allow Muslims to reclaim the quranic principle of "no compulsion in religion" (Q. 2:256a), "which the rest of the world calls non-violence, as our own and to share it with our global community" (Harris 2007, 123). The challenges are great but so is the reward of working for justice for all. However, Harris warns that we must guard against any form of utopianism and must learn to work with the imperfections of this world. Our "object cannot be *achieving* peace" instead it "must be the *work* of peace, for its own sake, without glory, no matter what" (Harris 2006, 69). The idea that our (interfaith) journey *is* the reward is an indispensable and wise counsel for, if the work of peace is to continue despite the immense challenges facing the global community today, we must not be disheartened if we fail to see measurable results from the work of peace.

Conclusion

Nonviolent activism assumes a posture of humility, which is also the hallmark of a pious person. Nonviolent activism for peace requires patience, restraint, and self-discipline. While violent activism is predicated on the assumption that change must begin outside of oneself, nonviolent activism involves personal commitment for self-transformation, becoming resilient, and cultivating courage, standing up for justice, not remaining silent, and, most important of all, controlling one's anger and hatred toward others. Violent activism does just the opposite; it assumes that all problems lie outside of oneself; therefore the perceived enemy is to be blamed for all ills.

From the foregoing, we can see that Muslim scholars and/or activists have been engaged at many fronts in an effort to address the challenge of violence committed in the name of Islam. Numerous resources both theoretical and practical are available and circulating even as the rise in violence continues. One of the main tasks of our time is to reclaim and reframe the notion of jihad as nonviolent struggle for justice, which may be regarded as the greatest form of jihad in Islam. As noted above, Jihad's true meaning is inner struggle; it provides a credible path for believers in the quranic message to work for justice through collaboration and in solidarity with others. It falls upon Muslims to liberate the notion of jihad from the bondage of mistranslation as well as misappropriation by terrorists and Islamophobes alike. Against the collective memory of misuse of the notion of jihad in history, we must seek to re-employ this notion once again in the service of unarmed struggle for justice.

The Qur'an could not be any clearer on violence and why it is problematic. Under certain conditions Muslims are/were permitted to take up arms (Q. 22:39). In other instances, the same Qur'an seeks to promote values of tolerance, patience, and peace. Justice remains the key objective, but the ultimate goal of the quranic

sanction for war (*qital*) and jihad (all forms of struggle) is to achieve peace (*al-Salam*). To consider violent conflict as a means to pursue peace and justice has become increasingly problematic and even self-contradictory because of the nature of warfare today. Similarly it can be said that violence always generates more violence. The path to eradicate terrorism does not begin with more senseless violence but with wisdom and compassion, with dialogue and moral persuasion.

In the years after Prophet Muhammad's death and especially after 680 C.E., the increasing use of the word jihad to mean "jihad of the sword" made it difficult to distinguish between the quranic jihad and armed struggle. The lines became blurry at some point in history when the Muslim elite, preoccupied with empire building, failed to see the quranic emphasis on human liberation rooted in the notion of justice. In the present, the process of reclaiming the spiritual meaning of jihad has once again galvanized many secular and religious intellectuals. It is imperative to realize that the vision of pursuing peace (within ourselves and between people) is the *overriding message* of the Qur'an. It is on this basis that Muslims seek to establish a fundamental relationship between the quranic message of compassion, forgiveness, patience, and nonviolence – the most effective weapon for achieving peace. Following the successful examples of many nonviolent movements witnessed in the last century, the option of war today is viewed by many as neither necessary nor just. Activists and scholars in all religious traditions are joining forces with many other supporters of nonviolence and pacifism to oppose war as a solution. Muslim thinkers and concerned citizens from both religious and secular perspectives have called for a rethinking of the notion of jihad in light of the demands of our contemporary age. Working across religious, cultural, and

Figure 1.3   An example of Chinese-style Arabic calligraphy found in the worship hall of the tenth century "Niujie Mosque" in Beijing. The text reads "Surely, God loves those who are God conscious, mindful." (Qur'an 3:76b). Source: Irfan A. Omar

ethnic lines provides the optimism that nonviolence as a religious imperative can be established. Such interfaith collaboration may be our best hope to curtail the spread of the culture of violence that surrounds us today.

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the meanings of the words "Islam" and "Muslim." What do they say about the identifiable goals of the religion of Islam?
2. What does the Qur'an say about using violence against another? How might it be read and interpreted?
3. If in history some Muslim rulers justified and used violence against other groups (Muslim and non-Muslim) does it mean that Islam is a violent religion? What are some ways to differentiate between collective teachings (as opposed to disparate, stand-alone quotes from the text) and the actions of those who claim to practice the teachings?
4. What quranic notions can be drawn upon to promote peacemaking and the nonviolent struggle for justice for all?
5. Jihad is a much-abused term today with many negative derivatives in circulation such as "jihadism" and "jihadists" – should Muslims abandon the use of this term and replace it with some other to refer to inner spiritual struggle? Why or why not?
6. This chapter introduces several Muslim activists for peace and nonviolence. Which of these would you be interested in exploring further and why? Are there specific ideas with which you agree or disagree?
7. What are some of the most pressing issues facing Muslim communities and groups today?
8. Reflect on the vast majority of Muslims who often feel the brunt of violence as a result of terrorism and "counter-terrorism" operations sponsored by state actors (such as the United States military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq during most of the first decade of the twenty-first century). It may be argued that in such circumstances an average person's perseverance and struggle to survive and make ends meet, despite all odds, represents a form of nonviolent resistance? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Notes

1 There are numerous works available in English on the life of Muhammad. Two recent and accessible studies are Armstrong and Ramadan. For details, see "Further Reading."
2 To find news and reports of positive interfaith and intercultural interactions and activities about/by/among Muslims, one has to go off the "mainstream" media grid. One web source that seeks to report on and collect positive stories of peacemaking and

community building is www.TheAmericanMuslim.Org. See "Good News Stories About/By/For North American Muslims in 2013" compiled by Sheila Musaji, http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/good-news-2013/0019814, accessed November 28, 2014.

3 The Greek "agōn" in its general meaning does seem to support the Quranic meaning of "struggle" and "fight" in metaphorical sense. See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1954), s. v. "agōn".

4 For this information, I am indebted to Professor Mahmoud Ayoub for allowing me to rely on his encyclopedic knowledge of Arabic religious literature.

5 For in depth discussion of an "Islamic Just War" see Kelsay 2007.

6 Some quranic references to the term jihad or its derivatives are found in the following verses, all of them meaning "to strive": 9:19, 9:24, 22:78, 25:52, 29:6, 49:15, and 60:1. The term *qitāl* (defensive war) appears in 2:190, 4:75, 9:12–13, 9:29, and 22:39.

7 Of the over 6600 verses in the Qur'an there are about 40 that deal with defensive war. That amounts to less than 1% of the quranic content (Khan 2003, 119). Most numerous are those verses that speak of peace, patience, and the eternal life after death.

8 See chapter VII, http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml, accessed November 28, 2014.

9 A reference to Q. 10:25. See also Q. 89:30 where the "soul at peace" (a righteous person) is invited by God to "enter the Garden" affirming that God's paradise is the core of all peace and conversely, being at peace is like being in paradise.

10 A fuller version of this Hadith is found in *Sunan Abu Da'ud*.

11 At present, the so-called "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" or ISIS – with its violent and destructive actions against civilians – represents one such pseudo-Islamic organization that seeks to use religion to pursue purely political aims.

12 For a fuller discussion on the irenic ideas and activism of Badshah Khan (India/Pakistan), see Gandhi 2004.

13 Within the West, there are several scholars and activists whose voices have become influential and have impacted both the activism and the discourse. In the United States, scholars such as Abdulaziz Sachedina, Mahmoud Ayoub, Amina Wadud, Azizah Al-Hibri, Abdul Aziz Said, Riffat Hassan, Muhammad Abu Nimer, Meena Sharify-Funk, A. Rashied Omar, Farid Munir, Eboo Patel, Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, Najeeba Syeed-Miller, and Amir Hussain are part of a growing body of scholars and leaders who are engaged in dialogue and outreach to make a difference for peace.

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keen observer and meticulous scholar who has studied and written about several major religious figures. Here she unpacks Muhammad for a twenty-first-century reader

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Glossary

dar al-Islam: the Muslim polity where social and legal spheres may be informed by Islamic teachings.

dar al-harb: the political entity hostile to Muslims.

Islamism: in Islamic studies discourse, an equivalent term for fundamentalism. It seeks to separate between Islam as faith, and an ideology or ideologies that appropriate Islamic form and terminology to express their political and/or extremist objectives.

Islamophobe: a person harboring irrational fear of and/or prejudice against Islam or Muslims.

Jihad bin nafs or Jihad al-akbar: struggle against the self, or the greater jihad.

Jihad al-asghar: the lesser jihad, sometimes also used to refer to the "struggle" in the battlefield.

Kharijites: a group of Muslims in early Islam who took the extreme position of declaring someone "unbeliever" based on apparent action deemed to be against God.

The Prophetic tradition: the beliefs, practices, and decisions that emerged on the basis of the Muhammad's teachings based on the Qur'an.

qital: defensive war.

Quraysh: the Meccan leaders opposed to Muhammad and his message of monotheism. They persecuted him and many of his followers until they were defeated by Muslims in a nonviolent conquest of Mecca in 631 C.E.

shahadah: the first pillar of faith, the creedal statement, also means "witness" and is a term commonly associated with "martyrdom."

Schools of Law: Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi'i (Sunni), and Ja'fari (Shi'a). There are five major schools of law; each recognizes all the others as valid ways of practice. The differences are often cosmetic but in some instances they have led to major shifts in theological thinking. Separation among these first arose mainly due to the differing interpretations of the source materials, the Qur'an and the Hadith.

Shi'a: smaller of the two sects in Islam, Shi'a have a special reverence for Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and his family.

Sunni: the larger of the two sects in Islam.

1.1

A Confucian Response

Sin Yee Chan

In his chapter, Irfan Omar has given a nuanced and meticulous scholarly analysis of the much-contested term "jihad" and tried to detach the term from its associations with violence and terrorism. According to Omar, jihad's primary meaning in the Qur'an is "to strive" or "to exert" oneself, in the religious sense, in the service of God. In brief, it means "personal spiritual struggle." It is deemed problematic to use the term for a violent endeavor. The concept of jihad as defensive warfare emerged during the early Muslims' battles against the Sassanid Empire and other political powers, and many political authorities have since then invoked jihad as part of armed campaigns for their ideological and political undertakings, especially during the era of the crusades. Consensus among scholars of Islam, however, is that in the Qur'an defensive, last resort war is not referred to as jihad, but as "*qital*" (fighting). Jihad in the Qur'an therefore is distinguished from "*harb*" (war), "*futuhat*" (conquest), and "*qital*" (fighting). Omar conceives of this effort to "reclaim" jihad as a contribution to counter extremism and violence by depriving the extremists of their ideological resources. Omar emphasizes that the Qur'an's general and permanent stance is for peace and nonviolence; violence is only permissible in a very limited context. This can be seen from the cherished Islamic virtues such as *al-silm* (peace, reconciliation), *al ʿafw* (forgiveness), *al-sabr* (patience), and *la ʿunf* (nonviolence).

Omar carefully demonstrates a case in which an ideological element has been misappropriated by some political authorities and contemporary extremists. Misappropriation is a common fate of most, and perhaps all, major ideologies, religions, and traditions in the world. Confucianism is not immune from this misfortune. For example, while philosophical Confucianism emphasizes hierarchy, it also stresses the importance of reciprocal duties between the parties in a hierarchical relationship, as well as the importance of remonstrance from the party in an inferior position to ensure that the superiors follow the right path. However, when the political authorities enforced Confucian ideology in the past, it was the

hierarchical and not the reciprocal elements that were emphasized. The result then is the association of Confucianism with authoritarianism and blind obedience. This feature is still central to the image many have of Confucianism today.

Reflections on the case of Confucianism bring out some questions about Omar's analysis. Though the idea of hierarchism in Confucianism suffers from misappropriation, there is no denial that hierarchism is indeed a central element in Confucianism and that there is an intrinsic tension between it and the element of reciprocity. The misappropriation removes the tension by making hierarchism one-sided. In contrast, in Omar's analysis, it is not clear whether jihad is a central element in Islam and whether there is any intrinsic tension between spiritual struggle and violence inherent in the concept of jihad. Otherwise, the chapter only shows that the extremists have used a concept wrongly, but not that the extremists are purported to embrace something central to Islam. It may be that jihad in the Qur'an does not mean war or fighting, but is the term jihad still somehow related to the concept of violence? What does jihad as striving or struggle mean? Does it imply or is it associated with vehement use of force, if not exactly violence? One would suspect that the association of jihad with war or fighting is not a matter of mere coincidence or total arbitrariness; there must be some elements in the concept that enable the misappropriation to happen.

Moreover, while it is important to reclaim the concept, it is also important to acknowledge the historical understanding of the concept and its impact on the culture. Otherwise we may not be able to fully understand the basis that anchors the concept in people's psychology – its associations, connotations, and connections with other elements in the history and tradition.

Furthermore, it does seem that jihad as armed struggle is a well-established concept in Islamic history and traditional culture. If so, whether jihad as armed struggle is still called for or not requires a political and not a mere religious or scholarly judgment. Omar explains that jihad as armed struggle in the current time is unjustified because the nature of the weapons involved makes war an extremely destructive endeavor and that the extreme ethnic and religious repressions which happened in the past are no longer true in the same way today. We have greater freedom of speech and freedom to practice religion and many more methods of political reconciliation and mediation. Many extremists, on the other hand, contend that the political, religious, and ethnic repressions are just as severe as before, though perhaps not as blatant. Moreover, on top of all these traditional repressions, they claim, there are also the more debilitating economic and cultural repressions by the capitalist, imperial powers. To fully divest the ideological resources of the extremists, it seems that theoretical and political analysis are also needed to address the issues of economic imperialism and ethnic and religious segregations in the various parts of the world.

Another point of comparison with the Confucian tradition concerns the Confucian notion of a just war – punitive expedition. One major reason for launching a punitive expedition is to remove tyrants who have caused immense

suffering to the people and destroyed the social order. Omar emphasizes the peaceful and nonviolent elements of Islam and points out that war is justified only for the defense of one's state or one's religious freedom. Does this rule out the kind of humanitarian intervention and regime change implied by the Confucian notion of punitive expedition? Would Islam really prohibit military humanitarian intervention? Wouldn't emphasizing nonviolence and forgiveness in the face of horrendous atrocities practically mean bolstering the oppressors? Moreover, the Confucian punitive expedition is also about retribution, which the Confucians believe is a part of the moral order. What does Islam say about retribution and war? Is it permissible to launch a war to punish a tyrant?

Regarding the nonviolent nature of Islam, it would be helpful for Omar to explain the issue of martyrdom a bit further. He claims that the extremists cannot achieve martyrdom because to achieve martyrdom:(1) martyrdom has to be given by God and cannot be sought by oneself; (2) the intention can never be about personal glory; and (3) one can never knowingly be willing to harm any noncombatant. But can the extremists still claim that they meet all the above conditions because (1) they receive God's calling; (2) the intention is to achieve moral revolution, not personal glory; and (3) they do not aim to harm, but rather the will is to achieve moral revolution, the harm is a byproduct. And harm must be permissible as a byproduct, they will claim, otherwise, any military confrontation would be deemed impermissible. Or alternatively, the extremists can claim that they are not achieving martyrdom, they are mere soldiers of God and God will reward them in heaven. (It might help therefore to also explain briefly the myth of the heavenly rewards that the extremists often claim that they will receive after their sacrifice.)

The major aim of Omar's chapter is to defend Islam as a religion preaching peace and nonviolence. One question then is why Islam, more than any other religion in the world, is often associated with extremism and violence. Does it have a more vivid appeal to the underclass and the oppressed because of some of its doctrinal ideas? Or is it because of certain nondoctrinal related historical and sociological factors such as the association between Islam and the Third World? I do not know if answering these questions is beyond the scope of Omar's chapter, but they are worth raising.

1.2

A Jewish Response

Joshua Ezra Burns

In today's world, the object of peace in Islamic thought can seem like a rare commodity. Irfan Omar is justified in lamenting that those few Muslims who perpetrate violence in the name of a radical fundamentalist Islam tend to get more press than the vast majority who reject that interpretation of the concept of jihad as a betrayal of their core ethical principles. The resulting imbalance in the public discourse on Islam has been to the detriment of those both within and without the Muslim community advocating the less authentic interpretation urging the individual to seek social change through introspective means. I commend Omar for his intellectual honesty in considering both approaches and thank him for providing a constructive counterpoint to the prejudicial portrayal of Islam.

Speaking from my own admittedly idiosyncratic Jewish perspective, I find much with which to identify in Omar's comments on the scriptural foundations of Islam's teachings on violence and peacemaking. He appropriately acknowledges that the Qur'an and the Hadith contain statements supporting both alternatives. Urging, however, the critical reader of these texts to consider their pronouncements in their literary and historical contexts, Omar shows that they prescribe no uniform doctrine to be asserted as the only way for the devout Muslim to conduct his or her behavior. I reach an identical conclusion with respect to the Hebrew Scriptures in my study of peace and peacemaking in the Jewish tradition. In both Judaism and Islam, it is therefore the prerogative of the individual to decide how best to interpret the revealed word of God. And while both religions recognize the contributions of past interpreters, neither compels the individual to imagine the present in past terms simply for the sake of tradition.

Of course, religion is only one of the factors which determine the practice of Judaism and Islam. In the case of Islam, the political interests of the Islamic state have always conditioned the enforcement of certain religious customs in the interest of public mores. As Omar points out, many contemporary movements involving radical Islamists are predicated on political ideologies of a bygone era

when theologians knew of only two states comprising the "us" of the Islamic caliphate and the "them" of the world beyond its borders. The desire of those fundamentalists to press Islamic law upon unwilling subjects both Muslim and non-Muslim is a residual effect of a break between past and present owing to geo-political and sociocultural developments well beyond their purview. What they desire is nothing less than a reversal of history. That many have resorted to violence to achieve that impossible goal is no wonder. There simply are no rational means whereby to achieve their goal.

As I discuss in my chapter, the Jews too have had occasion to reflect on the loss of political power. Yet where the developments of the past 100 years served to debase Islam's ancient political constitutions, the same developments galvanized Judaism's. I refer here to the birth of the modern State of Israel. The creation of a dedicated Jewish nation-state in May of 1947 was facilitated by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent emergence of local Arab nationalist movements throughout the Middle East. What was once an impossible dream for the Jews became a reality in part due to the dissolution of Islam's political hegemony over Palestine, a place where Jews and Muslims had lived in relative harmony for nearly 1400 years. Of course, Jews in Palestine and elsewhere in the Islamic world during those centuries had no need for political theologies of their own. Lacking the social apparatus to exercise their political will, they relied entirely on the allowances of their Muslim protectors. The only sovereign Jewish state of which they dared to conceive was the eschatological kingdom of the Messiah, a state to be ruled directly by God through His earthly regent.

Though decades in the making, the declaration of the State of Israel suddenly forced Jews around the world to digest a clash of traditional values no less upsetting than that incurred by the dissolution of the Ottoman caliphate. Many liberal Jews, including the most vocal proponents of the Zionist movement, envisioned their new state as a secular political entity bound by Jewish national interests rather than the long disused political dictates of the Jewish religion. Even those religious Jews who supported the Zionist movement largely disassociated its aims from the Messianic beliefs of their theological tradition. But Jews from both camps were quick to realize the difficulty of serving the political needs of their state without trampling on on the venerable ethical principles of their faith. Judaism was not well equipped to wield power over non-Jews, even if its proponents were to imagine that power as civil rather than religious.

Just as some Muslims have struggled to come to terms with their inability to restore the religious order of ages past, some Jews of a similar fundamentalist bent have resisted letting go of the idyllic eschatological kingdom of which their ancestors dreamt. These Jews assert their rights and the rights of all Jews to settle the entirety of the biblical Land of Israel, an area encompassing the politically contested Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. The pull of tradition has proven strong, influencing the domestic policies of the Israeli government and the organizational agendas of right-leaning Jewish advocacy groups throughout the

world. The resulting conflict of interests between Jewish and Muslim claimants to these disputed areas thus remains a point of controversy in the broader conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians and, to the minds of many on both sides, a major obstacle to peace.

I will conclude by commending Omar and other scholars of his noble temperament for continually striving to remind us all of Islam's ethical conscience in these trying times. While I am sure that these efforts are appreciated by likeminded Muslim audiences, they stand to teach just as much to those of us less well acquainted with the venerable ideas behind the Islamist slogans menacingly touted on the evening news. Countering prejudice with authentic knowledge of Islam might be a radical idea in its own right. But it is an idea with which all morally driven people should be able to relate.