Islam and Politics

Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World

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PRAGMATIC STEPS FOR GLOBAL SECURITY

Faith, Justice, and Violence: Islam in Political Context

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Introduction: Muslim Renewal and Western Understanding

The difficult encounter between the Muslim world and the West at the level of security policy, diplomacy, and politics is complicated by cultural and ideological tension, and a degree of intellectual incomprehension. Western concerns about violence and political extremism in the Muslim world, and their impact on the security of the West, often rest on assumptions about the philosophical, cultural, and intellectual character of Islamic thought and Islamist political movements. Muslim concerns about Palestine, Western geostrategy and oil policy, and Western support to autocratic regimes are often accompanied by similar assumptions.

Mainstream Western commentary on these issues has overstated the importance of culture and religion as factors in Muslim anti-Western sentiment. We should acknowledge that other equally important factors are at work. These include a clash of objective interests, a sharp debate about what political objectives should be pursued, and a divergent understanding of the objective world, of the meaning of the principal trends observed in world affairs, and of the intentions of the key actors. These would remain sources of contention between the Muslim world and the West even were there not a high degree of mutual suspicion about the philosophical, cultural, and intellectual character of the other.

It is in Western discussions of political mobilizations on the basis of Islam and the place of violence in Islamic thought that security policy and interest in ideological trends converge most closely. This paper, in discussing the ideological context of these issues in the Muslim world, cautions against simplistic understandings because of the complexity and richness of intellectual developments there.

The Muslim world today is struggling with modernization, and with the relationship among the local, traditional, and global. Muslim societies are grappling with economic development, effective governance, corruption, and democratic mobilization against dictatorships or entrenched elites. These challenges have given rise to a rich intellectual life. This includes contestations over the reach of religious faith into the public realm, regional

Terminology

The adjective "Islamic" is often used to describe what characterizes the societies and customs of Muslim communities (for which the adjective "Muslim" is more appropriate), rather than more precisely ideas, values, and cultural norms specifically associated with or proceeding from Islam as a religion. One is a term of religious group identification, while the other is a term that refers to an intellectual, legal, and theological tradition grounded in faith. All institutional, social, cultural, and political elements of the Muslim world or the work of Muslims can be described as "Muslim." "Islamic" is a term that should describe a body of religiously based thought or worldly discourse framed explicitly by reference to that body of thought. Although the two are of course closely interwoven, it is helpful to be clear about their distinction, particularly when it comes to political discourse.

Thus many features of ideology and cultural practice that may reflect national histories or regional traditions are misperceived as reflecting Islamic precept. That Muslims often also use the terms "Muslim" and "Islamic" interchangeably compounds the confusion. When Muslim intellectuals deliberately seek to assume the authority of religion to validate what may in fact be merely the social customs and values of people who are also adherents of Islam, the West's semantic confusion amounts to acquiescence in an ideological strategy of legitimization. Not all that professes to be Islamic, or is carelessly described as such, is necessarily so; it may be actuated less by religious than political purposes, or it may be an accident of cultural history rather than a precept of Islam.

Equally careless is the interchangeable and imprecise Western use of terms such as "extremist" or "radical" in discussion of Islam and the Muslim world, and the elliptical association of these with violence and reflexive anti-Westernism. Such sloppy conflation is tendentious: these have become normative terms—moralistic dismissals of the legitimacy of those positions—rather than dispassionate ways of characterizing religious, philosophical, or political positions on a spectrum. The latter would demand articulation of a counterargument. The former seems not to. Yet the failure to do anything but condemn presumptively means that the substantive grievances, arguments, and political agendas go unanswered.

Particularly troubling is the Western use of the term "moderate." This is applied by Westerners to autocratic regimes that are anything but moderate in their political behavior and their denial of political and civil rights to their citizens: that are in fact "extreme" in their repressiveness.* "Moderate" is also a term of approbation of pro-Western political agendas, not useful in understanding the

variations in the ways that Islamic thought bears the marks of its cultural and historical contexts, and secular discourse on global political issues that are shared with the non-Muslim world, such as climate change and migration. What may appear to outsiders as merely opposition to the West, based on a sense of grievance, is experienced from the inside as a Muslim renaissance, a renewal of thought and culture, an aspiration to development and modernization without loss of identity.[1]

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[1] In this respect, the Muslim renewal resembles the various Chinese modernization movements at the turn of the last century; where anti-Western nativism sentiment jostled with movements to find a uniquely Chinese

nuances and imperfect correspondences of religious thought and political ideology within the Muslim world.**

"Fundamentalist," "radical," "extremist," "militant," or "moderate" are not, properly speaking, nouns but adjectives. It is important to specify what they qualify. Are we speaking of extremism or radicalism or moderation in the reading of religious texts, or in critiques of social arrangements, or critiques of political systems, or in the proclivity to use violence? What precisely do we mean by reflexive use of the term "militant"? Here is a term that has been used in recent secular discourse (in Western trade union movements and in European political parties) to describe unyielding, principled, or purist approaches to political practice. How has this come to be applied to groups that are variously or an aggregation of insurgent, terrorist, or ideologically extremist?

And why should "fundamentalism" in religion (in the precise sense of a return to fundaments or to original texts) necessarily imply any particular approach to political or social ideology, or to political action? For example, Salafi properly speaking describes a puritan and fundamentalist theology. That theology may in some cases inspire political zealots who are also willing to engage in violence against the state, and sometimes against innocents. However, Salafi teaching does not require or compel such violence, and such violence is as often inspired by other ideologies or by practical grievances. At the very least this type of conflation of the theological, the ideological, and the political leads to imprecision of thought and discourse. Such imprecision in turn leads to imprecise and ill-conceived policy.

The confusion in terminology seems to spring from fear and anxiety. We should avoid allowing our understandable concern with violence directed against the West, and against innocents in Muslim societies as well as outside, to cloud our understanding of the precise sources of militancy, radicalism, political extremism, and hostility to Western culture. The fact that these stances are often also shared by perpetrators of violence and terrorism does not therefore render all anti-Western militants or radicals terrorist sympathizers.

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* Secularism has suffered discredit by its association with despotic regimes under Western sponsorship.

** Syria is rightly condemned as extremist by Western governments for its positions on international relations, its internal political repressiveness, and its support for armed political movements abroad. Yet it also evinces a moderation in its religious tolerance.

Where we do acknowledge the importance of religious thought to political developments in the Muslim world, it is important to be precise about the contours of that relationship. It is also important to recognize that the conjunction of faith and politics reflects a global trend. Religion and its cultural influences may be more significant in Muslim societies than in any other part of the world. However, religion is important as much for its support for specific social and political (sometimes covertly political) agendas. Islamism runs the

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cultural model as a basis of modernization and political and economic parity with the West. And the failure of Western understanding of the Muslim renewal resembles that which met those movements.

gamut of ideology and political action. Some movements are marked principally by anti-Western sentiment, others by reformist political organization, and yet others by revolutionary mobilization. Some will practice violence, others embrace it in principle, while others merely tolerate it.

When political aspirations are articulated in religious and cultural terms, it is important to unpack and separate the political, the religious, and the cultural. We might first distinguish elements of religious discourse that relate to faith from those that are essentially political debates. We should also be clear that the appeal to Islam is variously and distinctly to identity, custom, ritual, and faith, and to values about the ordering of society. Each component has implications for public life and the practice of politics. Only thus will one appreciate the specific and varied ways in which "Islam" addresses political, economic, or social conflicts, or allays psychological anxieties born of modernization or of the bewilderingly rapid pace of change, or serves as an instrument for spiritual growth.[2]

And we might remind ourselves that almost every religious and cultural feature observed in the Muslim world—the growth in religiosity, the emphasis on external symbols of religious identity, the promotion of political agendas based on religious sources of intellectual authority, and a sense of cultural renewal—finds its counterpart in non-Muslim societies.

Unfortunately, there will be those on both sides who will justify the worst fears of the other. Many Muslims do in fact have deep hostility toward the West and believe, more on the basis of religious zeal than religious education, that terrorism is a form of *jihad*. Their counterparts in the West are only too willing to countenance extreme (and counterproductive) measures against the Muslim world, believing that Islam does indeed justify and rationalize hatred and violence against non-Muslims.

The question of *jihad* is central, both in Islam's understanding of itself and in the corresponding anxiety in the West about its justification of anti-Western violence. Islam is uniquely a religion based on mobilization.[3] The emphasis of its founding community was organization for social action and opposition to primitive customs and tribal divisions, albeit on a spiritual basis. Whether or not this makes Islam's interactions with others confrontational in practice, the oppositional stance itself is likely to give rise to non-Muslim anxieties and perceptions of confrontation. Where the appeal is to a sense of justice against unequal and autocratic political and economic orders, and accompanied by reference to *jihad*, the sense of confrontation will be most acute.

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[2] To unpack is not to suggest that there is no interrelationship. As the "religious right" in the United States has shown piety, and the sense of loyalty and identity based upon it, is receptive to the appeals of political movements. Islamist political movements appeal to pious Muslims to do their duty.

[3] This might be contrasted with the principal emphases of other major religions on group identity (Judaism, Hinduism) or spiritual identity (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism).

This paper attempts to provide an understanding of the role of Islam in politics, and to examine the place of *jihad* and related issues of political mobilization in Muslims' understanding of their core religious duty. Its purpose is to deepen communication and mutual understanding between a sometimes anxious West and an equally anxious Muslim world.

Political Contestation and Religious Ideology

Struggle for Justice

Often overlooked is the extent to which varieties of anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world are actually critiques of the economic and social dimensions of the global order, similar to non-Muslim political ideologies. To many Muslims, the phrase "Islamic law and justice" refers not to harsh penal sanctions, but to exercising constraint on rulers, a mechanism that in theory ensures justice for all. The phrase is a cognate of Western notions of "the rule of law." In many large Muslim societies, including Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan, religious thinkers have articulated responses based in Islamic law to government corruption and the chronic effects of economic crisis. The broader aspirations of the Muslim world are reflected not only in a cultural struggle against a culturally and religiously hostile and uncomprehending West. They also reflect protest at an unjust and unequal global order, considered unjust in the economic and political arrangements between societies and nations and within autocratic Muslim societies, the latter most often sponsored and protected by the West.

"They are more Islamic than us," says a Bangladeshi intellectual about Western welfare states such as those of Scandinavia. Many Islamists speak of the need for a moral revolution against a highly aggressive corporate capitalism, even while other Islamists excoriate socialism and extol the virtues of markets as a shared value with the West. In the Philippines, Islamist parties worry about failing at the polls because their promotion of an Islamic economic and social agenda is mistaken by many voters for a socialist or communist platform. The concern about their political platforms being mistaken for secular ones underlines two points. Muslims are concerned with issues of social justice that concern non-Islamists as well; yet there is a specifically Islamic world view that eschews a sense of identification or solidarity with those others.

Progressive Muslim intellectuals, seeking to correct Western misperceptions about what the Muslim revival really consists of, often emphasize principles found in the Quran and other sources of religious authority: women's empowerment, equitable distribution of wealth, opposition to monarchy, and other egalitarian principles. The essential duties of a Muslim relating to tithes, alms, and fasting are seen to bolster the message of social and economic justice. The first two embody the redistributive principle, and the latter encourages empathetic solidarity with the hungry and the poor. One is reminded often that the earliest

adherents of Islam were women, freedmen, servants, slaves, and lesser "weak" clans; that this was a community of oppressed persons, explicitly opposed to the wealthy and powerful.

In this discourse, the terms "neo-liberal" and "neo-colonial" recur liberally and are often used interchangeably. According to this school of thought, the Muslim world is "targeted" by the West not because it is Muslim but because it is weak. In this view, Islamic ideologies are not seeking to opt out of or stand against globalization. They believe there is an alternative global community of which the Muslim world is a more enthusiastic participant: a global community characterized by street power, mass mobilizations, antiwar protests, and gatherings such as the World Social Forum. The Muslim world, in this view, is athwart the long-range Western agenda of dominating the world's natural and technical resources.

There is a strong line of argument among some Islamist movements that seeks to make Islam the champion of a global movement promoting justice for all, including non-Muslim "oppressed groups." In some guises, this argument emphasizes the ideological tools provided by Islamic precept for the liberation of mankind. In others it adopts a more pragmatic stance of common cause with already mobilized groups. In yet others, it appeals to secular popular grievance and resistance principally as a tool for the victory of Islam in societies where Muslims are a minority. For example, the Students Islamic Movement of India, which has been blamed by the Indian government for recent terrorist bombings in Indian cities, seeks to position itself as the vanguard of an antistate movement to overthrow the current Indian state on behalf of victims of caste and other social and economic oppression, offering an Islamic India as a preferable alternative to the current political order. The Indian Jamaat-e-Islami has in recent years adopted a similar solidarity-based approach to political mobilization, albeit with a less revolutionary subversive thrust.

Professedly Islamic armed insurgent movements in the southern Philippines, southern Thailand, or Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions are seen by many Muslim and non-Muslim activists and analysts as reflecting common elements with communist, Maoist, and "Naxalite" rural insurgencies: a sense that traditional communities and ways of life are beleaguered by demographic encroachment, and by economic exploitation and environmental degradation by powerful outsiders.

Of course Islam fails to live up to its professed values of social liberation. So do other religious traditions, whose passionately held core principles ("Hindu tolerance" or "Christian love") are often found lacking or incomplete in the practice of political mobilization. What is important is that within the Muslim world and the world of Islamic political theory, there is recognition of and debate about the extent to which the principles of justice enunciated above have been hijacked and violated. Muslim activists and thinkers engage in candid discussions about what should be the roles of women, monarchies, entrenched powers, theocracies and other elites, and aggressive nationalism. To focus only on Islam's least

desirable features is to ignore the significant intellectual resources of social change and reform already at work in the Muslim world.

Violence and Terrorism

Jihad has often been described by Muslims and Islamic scholars as a core principal of Islamic faith and ethics. For its part, the West today is preoccupied with the threat of violence emanating from the Muslim world and sees *jihad* as the intellectual source of that problem. In effect, the West holds distinctly Islamic culture and ideas responsible for an existential threat. The combined effect of these two perceptions is highly toxic. Muslims take offense at the calumny that their religion promotes violence, while Western opinion consciously or otherwise blames Islam as a religion for its own sense of insecurity and unease.

This is the essence of the clash of civilizations. Political concerns poison cultural perception, and vice versa. It is necessary to carefully examine the nature of political violence in the Muslim world as well as the varieties of Muslim understanding of *jihad*.

The discussion of terrorism is perhaps the most obvious example of how confusion of the political and the cultural poisons perceptions and creates mutual ill will. The Muslim world sees a crude and simplistic understanding of terrorism in the West. The West perceives a permissiveness and tolerance of violence among substantial segments of Muslim opinion. Quite apart from the shaping of mutual perceptions, these fixed views are also central to the shaping of political, diplomatic, and military behavior on both sides.

Several factors lead many Muslims to discount Western concerns about the perceived tolerance of extremism in Muslim societies. Representative Muslim opinion considers the "global war on terror" a fig leaf for the political and economic goals of the West. Muslims note that terrorism is not the only significant form of political violence, and the West's obsession with it obscures the pervasive violence found in Western societies and the extent to which Western states and private interests perpetrate violence in the Muslim world, and thereby spawn violence that is political in origin.[4]

A wide swath of Muslims objects to the term "Islamic terrorists," which seems to associate terrorism with the religious tradition. Many find this even more offensive than pairing "terrorist" with group origin, as in "Muslim terrorist." There is no corresponding use of terms such as "Hindu terrorist" or "Jewish terrorism," despite the practice of majoritarian

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[4] Less than 10 percent of Muslims polled consider the use of force against civilians legitimate, compared to more than 20 percent of Americans. There is a high degree of consensus among Muslims that the West's condemnation of "Islamic violence" must be discounted as hypocrisy because of the West's silence on Israeli "state terrorism," the possession of nuclear weapons by the major Western powers, the terrorism inherent in nuclear deterrence theory itself, and the perceived double standards embodied in UN resolutions.

Hindutva and Terrorism

Even as India reels under a spate of terrorist attacks likely perpetated by Muslim or Islamist groups of various ideological hues, recent events suggest that the convergence of identity, religious ideology, and terrorism, and the acquiescence of cultural chauvinists in violence, extends to non-Muslim groups.

On the eve of the attention-catching terrorist attacks in Mumbai in late 2008, the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) in Mumbai uncovered a terrorist cell involved in a bombing plot in Malegaon against the extremist Students Islamic Movement of India. This cell included religious activists and active duty and retired army officers who were also members of Hindutva organizations. In 2006, two members of Bajrang Dal died in a bomb-making incident elsewhere in Maharashtra State. Bajrang Dal is part of the Hindutva family of organizations that includes the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the mainstream political voice of Hindu chauvinism. In mid- to late 2008, arrests were made of Hindus plotting bombing incidents in Maharashtra, or Hindus were killed in bomb-making accidents in Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier in 2008, a nativist Hindu-chauvinist leader in Mumbai, India's global city, had suggested the intriguing prospect of Hindus preparing to engage in suicide attacks for the defense of the community. Following the discovery of the Malegaon plot, leading figures in the BJP leapt to the defense of the plotters in various ways. The party suggested that the accusations were a calumny on Hindus, that Hindus were naturally immune to terrorism, and that the conspirators were framed on insufficient evidence. These arguments in defense were particularly ironic in view of the fact that the party had traditionally rushed to judgment on terrorist incidents allegedly carried out by Muslims, and had accused the Congress Party government of "mollycoddling" terrorists in order to appease Muslim opinion.

Those Indians, including Hindus, seeking to stem the tide of generalized anti-Muslim sentiment arising from terrorist incidents have long noted that the Muslim community in India has recently been "terrorized" by mob violence and by law enforcement, and administrative and judicial prejudice against Muslims (and now against other minorities including Christians). This wave is associated

violence or state terrorism against innocent civilians in India and Israel, or the practice of covert terrorism by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

Muslim societies appear to be quite self-critical of the violence intrinsic to some of their politics. There is widespread recognition that they must fight terrorism too, because the cultural, social, and traditional integrity of their societies is also threatened by it. However, they believe that they should make their own political judgments about the nature of the threat and the optimal response to it rather than responding to the anxious (and hypocritical) demands of the West.

Violence perpetrated by Muslims appears from within as the pursuit of political objectives, some legitimate and some not, rather than as the pursuit of religious or "Islamic" objectives.

closely with the political organizing and agenda of organizations associated with the BJP, which leads the opposition in the Indian Parliament.

The alleged conspirators of the Malegaon plot had come from an organization, Abhinav Bharat, which has an established historical pedigree in a little-known tradition of Hindutva terrorism. Although its current incarnation was founded in 2006, it bears the name of an organization that was founded in 1904 by V. D. Savarkar, the founder of Hindutva ideology and the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha, the mother organizations of the BJP.

Hindutva terrorism has at least as long a pedigree. The iconic Indian nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar ("Lokmanya") Tilak embraced terrorist violence, modeled on anti-czarist terrorism in the Russian empire and anti-British terrorism in Ireland, as a means of national liberation. Among those drawn to his message were young Western-educated Hindus. At that time India's Muslims remained immune to the allure of radical measures.

In one Abhinav Bharat manifesto, its followers vowed to "shed upon the earth the lifeblood of enemies who destroy religion," while another militant journal considered murder of foreigners in India "not a sin but a [ritual sacrifice]." The first four decades of the 20th century saw many terrorist incidents in India resulting in deaths of civilian officials or innocent bystanders. None of these were perpetrated by Muslims.

While many Hindutva leaders have been forthright about their admiration of 20th century European fascism and of Adolf Hitler, Hindutva's long pedigree of ideological justification for terrorism might bear further study.

Of course, none of this suggests a particular Hindu proclivity to terrorism, any more than there is a Muslim proclivity as believed by partisans of Hindutva. What does seem clear is that the embrace of terrorism reflects political circumstances and vicissitudes of a given historical period, not features innate to the culture or "mind" of one religious tradition or another.

Muslim political thinkers and analysts consider the Western view of violence in the Muslim world, and in Islamic thought, as ahistorical and normative. Muslims believe that this view thereby obscures the actual political, economic, and social roots of antistate violence. Traditions of violent resistance appear from within to be rooted in anticolonial struggles, or in resistance to indigenous oppression, not in anti-Western sentiment or religious faith. The extent to which violence is accepted as legitimate in contemporary Muslim societies depends on its perceived political causes.

In summary, the Muslim consensus is that if terrorism means resorting to violence against innocent civilians, then all forms of terrorism, individual, group, and state should be equally condemned. The issue of legitimacy and justness of the objectives as well as of the means used to combat terrorism are equally important and relevant.

Jihad, *Justice, Mobilization, and Militancy*

Opposing the facile assumption that the religious concept of *jihad* justifies political violence, Muslim exponents and Islamic scholars in speaking to non-Muslims have propounded the argument that *jihad* refers more properly to spiritual and moral struggle. This may be an equally facile misstatement of a more complex idea. The term does indeed appear to mean more than simply striving for spiritual and ethical improvement. We might perhaps say that even as a spiritual and ethical precept, the idea partakes of a characteristically Islamic refusal to separate the inner or personal and the social or political. Even if not a justification for violence, *jihad* does refer to struggle in the political world against the enemies of Allah and those who would harm the Muslim *ummah* (the worldwide Muslim community). At issue is the duty to mobilize against injustice and other threats, a duty of militant resistance. This relates *jihad* to the central importance of justice discussed above.

In this respect, it is of the highest importance that many Muslim intellectuals see mobilization as not only a central principle of Islam, but also as a distinguishing characteristic. Islam is seen as an intellectual and social tradition based neither on radical personal autonomy nor on authority and obedience. Thus the beneficial organization of an Islamic society is seen as requiring mobilization for common endeavor, based upon a common ideological understanding among its members.

To discuss *jihad* in terms of political mobilization and contestation, of practical day-to-day politics, can also explain why, despite the almost universal condemnation of terrorism in Muslim societies, attitudes toward political violence remain more ambiguous. Many Muslims accuse the West of the same in its attitudes to political violence, at least toward the Muslim world.

Muslims who categorically reject terrorism as a political and ideological distraction from the *jihad* of the struggle for social justice and equality nonetheless still reserve judgment about the use of violence against entrenched injustice. Many also embrace the notion of ideological war against the enemies of Islam, defined either as those who violate basic social justice (understood as a core Islamic precept applied to Muslims or non-Muslims), or those whose perpetration of injustice harms particular Muslim communities or the *ummah* as a whole. Others embrace the notion of unyielding struggle against non-Muslim ideologies in the conviction that only Islam can secure justice.

Army of God

The areas straddling the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan are the epitome—almost a caricature—of the confrontation between the West and Islam. The area is both a meeting of conflicting cultural systems and the epicenter of the "global war on terror." This region

embodies almost all the West's anxieties about ideological developments in Islam and the security of the West. By most measures it is a highly conservative society suspicious of outsiders. It is also home to fundamentalist and anti-Western religious-political movements; indigenous and foreign armed groups devoted to war against regimes friendly to the West; and military training facilities and educational institutions that are attended by young Muslims from around the world and devoted to the waging of *jihad*, against not only non-Muslims but also against "bad Muslims."

> "There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to a creed of non-violence. It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet all the time he was in Mecca, and it has since been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressor's yoke." —*Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan*

This "perfect storm" of conditions seemed to come to a head following 2001. The Pakistani government adopted a policy of tactical collaboration with the US on the NATO occupation of Afghanistan and on the "global war on terror." Nonetheless, in elections closely controlled by that government, the Northwest Frontier Province elected a coalition of Islamist parties to the provincial government. Most of these parties had sympathetic, even cooperative relationships with many leaders and activists in the autonomous tribal areas, who in turn had cooperative and sympathetic relationships with the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other foreign *jihadi* units.[5]

Yet, after serving almost a full term in office, in 2008, the coalition of Islamist parties was replaced in provincial elections by a coalition led by the Awami National Party (ANP), an avowedly secular political party. The ANP is no flash in the pan. It is in fact the latest incarnation of the oldest political party in the Northwest Frontier Province, and was the major political force in the province until the very eve of the partition of India and Pakistan. Indeed, it opposed the creation of the separate Muslim nation of Pakistan on the grounds of commitment to social reform and secularism.

Nothing better conveys the complexity of the relationship between Islamic ideology and political militancy than the ANP. Notwithstanding its commitment to a secular political order, the ANP stands for the traditions of the deeply traditional and devout Pathan/Pushtoon society, and is committed to dialogue with many of those in rebellion against or disaffected with Pakistan's army and federal government. The historical antecedents of the ANP, both cultural and political, shed light on the complex nature of militancy, mobili-

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[5] That the parties also were part of a political coalition with the military government allied with the US and NATO is an added irony.

zation, resistance, and anti-Western sentiment in this volatile region. They also offer a complex, ambiguous, and surprising understanding of the doctrine of *jihad*.

The ANP is the successor and proud guardian of the legacy of the colonial-era Khudai Khidmatgar, the "Army of God." This was an early 20th century mass movement of anti-British resistance, led by the charismatic and deeply devout Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a Pathan notable from a landowning family.

The movement seemed at first blush to reflect the image of the Pathan as a proud and warlike people, resistant to foreign occupation and influence, and deeply motivated by religious faith and identity. It was on those grounds that the British sought to demonize it and to justify their harsh measures against its followers and leaders. Khudai Khidmatgar soldiers wore military uniforms and drilled like an army. Using rhetoric replete with references to *jihad* and martyrdom, the movement sought expulsion of the British, as had previous religious movements, including the insurrection led by the so-called "mad *mullah*," Mullah Mastun.

However, while it reflected its historical antecedents and cultural milieu in mixing the practice of spirituality, martial language, and militant resistance, the Khudai Khidmatgar offered one startling innovation. As a matter of religious conviction and ethical choice, it was an army with no weapons. While not ready to offer violence, it did not shrink from death, martyrdom, and resistance by all unarmed means. Its brand of militancy remains legendary, and its soldiers' commitment to martyrdom was deadly serious: many risked and some suffered death, wounds, and imprisonment while resisting armed colonial constabulary.

In urging villagers to resist a ban on freedom of association, Khan used the metaphor of war. "Pay no attention to the order," he exhorted. "Be ready and come out to the non-violent battlefield. Non-violent war means a kind of war your ancestors fought fourteen hundred years ago. Show the people you are their descendants…Rule yourselves, and as long as you live, do not submit to the rule of anybody else. Be prepared and free yourselves from this oppressive rule. If you perish on the battlefield, what does it matter? Everyone must die."[6]

The last pair of slogans would have had tremendous echoes for his listeners in their lessons on the Quran and on the accounts of the words of the Prophet before battles with the enemies of the first Muslim community. Elsewhere Khan described the evolution of his understanding of the political duties of a Muslim:

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[6] Eknath Easwaran, *Badshah Khan, Non-violent Soldier of Islam* (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1984).

> As a young boy, I had violent tendencies; the hot blood of the Pathans was in my veins. But in jail I had nothing to do but read the Quran. I read about the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca, about his patience, his suffering, his dedication. I had read it all before, as a child, but now I read it in the light of what I was hearing all around me about Gandhiji's struggle against the British Raj.

Khan articulated the theological basis of this posture as follows.

> There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to a creed of nonviolence. It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet all the time he was in Mecca, and it has since been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressor's yoke.

Khan's reference to the Quran and to the Prophet's forbearance and pacifism has two dimensions. It is at once an ethical appeal to nonviolent principle and a reference to the pragmatic superiority of nonviolence in the face of more powerful opponents. The Khudai Khidmatgar drew inspiration equally from the Prophet who could cannily wrong-foot his opponents by accepting partial victories and disadvantageous terms in the short run (the treaty of Hudaybiyah) and the Prophet who refused to bend to his enemies.

Historians have noted the extent to which both the teaching of the Quran and the leadership of the Prophet sought to blunt the effects of the traditional code of *jahiliyyah* in Arabia. That code required a haughty dignity among elites (and therefore a sense of social stratification in society), a sense of exclusive tribal identities, and violence and revenge for the vindication of the dignity of leaders and the maintenance of balance in tribal interests. The Prophet often struggled against the manifestation of *jahiliyyah*, both outside and residually within the early Muslim community. The Frontier of Khan's time manifested a similar dialectic: the tribal institution of blood feud, called *badal*, coexisted with more inclusive and less violent norms based on Islam. The notion that the embracing of nonviolence would constitute the victory of true Islam over backward, violent, and arrogant pre-Islamic cultural norms enjoyed the finest Islamic pedigree.

It is highly significant that the Khudai Khidmatgar's ideology, at once religious, militant, and pacifist, is the foundational ideology of the dominant political force in the Northwest Frontier Province today. The more so because the same movement at one time articulated the case for Pashtunistan—unity of the Pashtuns of Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is also not an insignificant dimension of the current security challenges there. This is not to deny that many Taliban sympathizers in the province remain committed to a more conventionally threatening version of *jihad*, and would find reprehensible the ANP and its ideological antecedents, even as they share the vision of a Pashtun unity spanning the border. We need only acknowledge that the alternative ideological tradition—more pacific and yet no less militant or anti-Western—also holds its own in the rough and tumble of Frontier politics.

Having survived for decades, this alternative vision has demonstrated that even in the stark world of the Frontier, Islam and its adherents support several credible versions of *jihad*.

Jihad in the Way of Allah

A fair assessment based on observation of Muslim societies and history would have to conclude that *jihad* does mean more than violence, that it encompasses spiritual and ethical striving and struggle. Certainly, contemporary publications abound throughout the Muslim world that use the term *mujahid* to describe those who simply seek intellectual and social renewal of Muslim communities.[7] The discussion that follows focuses on *jihad* as struggle in the external worldly context, whether as a doctrine of mobilization, militancy, or armed struggle, and whether for purposes of social justice or religious rectitude. There is a dynamic, complex, and ambiguous interplay among the mystical, political, military, and legal or theological views of *jihad*.[8]

Muslims use textual and contextual approaches to the Quran to caution Western discourse against facile association of faith and violence. Modern Islamic scholars, such as the Pakistani Fazlur Rahman, have noted that the Quran must be read in context, and that Muslim champions and their critics are equally guilty of an inert, literal, and merely textual reading.

Scholars—Western and Muslim, Islamic and secular—have noted that the social context of the Arabian peninsula at the time of the Prophet was marked by the violent code of *jahiliyyah*, and that the Prophet's championing of an alternative vision of social relations and sanctions was an implicit rejection of violence as the principal currency of social and political relationships. When the Prophet used violence, he did so for defense of the Muslim community against persecution and unprovoked violence. This was in pursuit of a social revolution, and in the context of economic and political vested interests trying to wipe out Islam with violence. Even before the onset of his Prophetic mission, the Prophet was a nonviolent partisan of worldly justice, having formed an organization (*hilf al-fudl*) to help victims of injustice in Mecca. Thus, the legitimacy of the use of violence is dependent on political context and struggle.[9]

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[7] This has parallels in evangelical Christian metaphors of military struggle. One example is the Salvation Army. Literary examples include the poet and mystic William Blake's "I shall not cease from Mental Fight/ Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand;/Till we have built Jerusalem" or the Anglican hymn "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war/With the cross of Jesus going on before."

[8] This is hardly unique to Islam. One of the two favorite books of Gandhi, the iconic apostle of nonviolence, was the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita*. Not only is this an account of a battle; it is an explicit encouragement by God incarnate to overcome humane scruples, battle one's enemies, and slay them. Gandhi read the exhortation as a metaphor for the spiritual war over ignorance, selfishness, and limited awareness.

[9] The range of opinion on the American Revolution and the various anticolonial armed rebellions, as well as wars and other armed struggles against dictatorship in the course of the 20th century, suggests that an objective view would find this Islamic view of violence squarely in the mainstream of global thought.

One finds as much clear-eyed realism among Muslims as among thinkers in other traditions that not all violence perpetrated by Muslims, historically or today, is legitimate. Even where states and elites have sought to mobilize warriors to arms on the appeal of *jihad*, Muslim political violence in modern history is understood as being like that of the West or other societies: conducted for worldly objectives regardless of the ideological rationalization.

Many Muslim intellectuals and Islamic scholars note that the term *jihad* occurs on 41 occasions in the Quran, and never to mean war. Other terms are used for war, such as *qital* or *harb*. Prohibitions against warring are found on more than 70 occasions in the Quran.

The overall spirit and vision of the Quran provides guidance for unpacking the political import of *jihad*: whether it means warfare, political violence, militant nonviolent resistance, or simply striving for social justice through established institutions. The concepts that recur throughout, often as the attributes of Allah, are justice (*adl*, *qist*, and *hakama*), benevolence (*ihsan*), compassion (*rahmah*), and wisdom (*hikmah*). Even were *jihad* a source of violence, its use in the Quran on a mere 41 occasions may be compared to 194 instances of *ihsan* (benevolence), 101 of *hikmah* (wisdom), and 244 of the various terms for justice. The terms *rahman* and *rahim* (compassion and mercy) between them recur 335 times in the Quran. These are the attributes invoked in prayer every time a devout Muslim begins any work.

Even if *jihad* does provide doctrinal justification for the use of violence, the Quran's approach is consistent with mainstream thought in the West, including "just war" theories.[10] "War in the way of Allah" is what is called for, and this is by definition not for personal ambition, revenge, or territorial aggrandizement. It is for defense, not aggression. Thinkers look at the context of the Prophet's own life and work in building the early Muslim community, and in navigating the practical demands of survival while hewing to an ethical vision.

Some Difficulties

It bears repetition that there is no charge of violence, superiority, exclusiveness, or self-righteousness that may be laid against Islamic tradition or thought that may not also be laid against most other major religions. Nonetheless, there is a danger of a one-sided, too-rosy reading of the political import of Islamic precept. This is an understandable impulse among Muslims and their Western defenders seeking to protect against unfair calumny. It is also understandable among Muslim liberals seeking to promote a more pacific vision of

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[10] In this respect also, Islam is not unique. The foundational scriptures of many major religions, such as the Old Testament, or the Hindu Mahabharata and Ramayana, either take armed combat for granted as part of the working out of divine purpose on earth, or even glorify violence and warfare in pursuit of righteousness.

Muslim duty. However, a tendentiously simplistic reading of *jihad* specifically or violence more generally may undercut the credibility of the defense. It may also impede clear understanding and honest appraisal of the difficulties presented and the ideological and political work to be done.

The distinction between the "greater" *jihad* of spiritual and ethical striving and the "lesser" of armed struggle is important to Islam's defenders. How-

> "Slay the polytheists wherever you find them. But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; Allah is all forgiving, all compassionate." —*Quran 9:5*
>
> "They long that you should disbelieve so that you might be on the same level; so take not from among them friends until they flee their homes in Allah's way. Then if they turn back to hostility, seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take no friend or helper from among them." —*Quran 4:89*

ever, this is of limited authority within Islamic tradition, at least among strict schools, in that it is a "popular tradition," not strictly speaking *hadith*. Moreover, although *jihad* means "struggle, endeavor, striving, or fight," and not "war" as such, most commentary treats armed struggle as at least one of its important dimensions. The fact that most writers note that *jihad* in the path of Allah is the only form of warfare permitted suggests that divinely sanctioned violence is indeed legitimate.

Many Muslims today feel beleaguered in their own societies by the forces of global capitalism, by Western culture, and by local autocracies supported by Western powers. Even those in democratic Muslim societies find in secularism or in economic inequality an existential threat to all that is familiar and all that is validated as righteous by religious education and socialization. Such a sense of existential threat to the *ummah* and to an authentically Islamic way of life is a ready candidate for *jihad* in the more worldly sense, including that of violence. All this is so regardless of radical ideologies, fundamentalist propaganda, or puritan revivalism, though their introduction certainly sharpens the sense of antagonism and feeds on the broader sense of social and cultural grievance.

Even where very few are ready to actually engage in *jihad* themselves, the willingness of many to accept the legitimacy of the actions of the few will be greater under such circumstances. Because there is also a substantial and respectable intellectual tradition that speaks to the duty of Muslims to come to the rescue of Muslims oppressed in other societies, the conduct of what we might call "solidarity *jihad*" will also be more acceptable.

Two intellectual approaches are deployed in an attempt to domesticate the destabilizing and subversive potential of this. One, found among progressive and liberal Indian Islamic scholars such as Asghar Ali Engineer, questions the authority of canonical doctrine on the grounds that it merely reflects accidental reasons of state, not divine guidance. The other,

typified in the position of the Saudi government, takes the opposite approach, seeking in state or social sanction the exclusive justification for the deployment of violence. The former is the approach of theological and political liberals seeking the freedom to interpret *jihad* for contemporary requirements, whereas the latter is the approach of conservatives.

It can hardly be refuted that the doctrinal guidance about *jihad* propounded in the early years of Islam reflects the practical exigencies or logistical imperatives of an expanding (or beleaguered) Muslim community. Some Muslim thinkers and Islamic scholars note that there is therefore a real danger of confusing Allah's will with such practical requirements.

Others reject this implication. They note that the integration of the sacred and the profane is a defining characteristic of Islamic thought. The spiritual duty to Allah and the requirements of the welfare of the community are both of equal importance in the Quran. The Prophet himself is seen as the cleric-warrior-statesman par excellence, centrally concerned with issues of political leadership of the community and diplomacy on its behalf with outsiders. Thus, while every act of subsequent interpretation by Muslim political leaders, exegetes, legists, theologians, and historians runs the risk of distorting the meaning of *jihad* in the Quran, in an important sense the full range and implications of its meanings can only be gleaned from the entire historical experience of building a community of Islamic faith.

The attempt to render *jihad* less threatening, by suggesting that it is not a license for anarchic violence at the disposal of any zealot with a conviction that he has special knowledge of Allah's will, raises its own difficulties. According to this approach, *jihad* is constrained by requiring the authority of a state or legitimate ruler, or of the *ummah*. It argues that, according to the Quran, it is Allah alone who punishes oppressors and that no individual is empowered to do so, only a state or a community.

The force of this argument is vitiated by two considerations. One is the high degree of skepticism about the religious authority of the state characteristic of Islam. This is illustrated in the relatively decentralized nature of theological or ideological authority, and the rejection of state-imposed religious orthodoxy. The notion that the state can effectively and legitimately domesticate a fundamentally subversive concept such as *jihad* is a dubious one.

The other difficulty with domesticating *jihad* by requiring official sanction is that it robs Muslims of a tool of mobilization for struggles for social justice and for resistance to official justice, surely at the heart of the ethical vision of Islam. To preserve this tool of insurgent politics is to entertain the prospect of incendiary means. An idea cannot simultaneously be liberating and neatly contained. Its dangerous implications are the price paid for its creative potential.

The complex intertwining of worldly progress and the religious embrace of violence is starkly embodied in two examples from South Asia.

The Indian educational institution and school of thought, Dar ul Deoband, is highly influential throughout South Asia. It is a dynamic ideological and educational movement. In Deoband, Puritanism and theological extremism coexist with political liberalism and progressive ideology. Deoband recently convened a conference that condemned terrorism as a violation of Islamic teaching, but its curriculum includes passages such as: "The destruction of the sword is incurred by infidels, although they may not be the first aggressors, as appears from various passages in the sacred writings which are generally received to this effect." In its statement condemning terrorism, Dar ul Deoband also emphatically condemns injustices perpetrated by the West.

In the early 20th century, the Indian poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, a knight of the British Empire, prominent Muslim modernist and reformer, and author of *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, is another case in point. On the one hand his work gives *jihad* an entirely political character as a tool of anticolonial mobilization. On the other, his poetry echoes martyrdom as he laments the dearth of youth's "delight in death."

These are difficulties only if there is a perceived compulsion to propagate a pacific vision of Islam. We have seen that there is in all the major religious traditions a mainstream discourse that is not shy about the use of violence under defined circumstances. The question for Islam turns out to be the same as for any other tradition: the circumstances in which violence may legitimately be used, not an abstract question of whether in all cases it is legitimate or is a religious duty. Of course, if moral, political, or ideological legitimacy is narrowly defined, as there is a danger it might be within Islam, then the reach of purportedly permissible violence will be greater.

While the West (and the non-Muslim world) may therefore have justifiable concerns about that last question, it is important that it not hold Islam to a higher standard of political nonviolence than it is willing to embrace for itself.

The Embodiment of Justice

Islam, State, and Society

The relationship between religion and the state in Islam is not settled. The most commonly expressed view is that in Islam, religion and politics are inseparable. This is usually taken to mean that Islamic precept must inform the design of state institutions, and that the state is a proper instrument of religious purposes. A minority view contends that such guidance as is available from the time of the Prophet is on the proper relationship between religion

Contemporary Global Challenges: Muslim History and Islamic Guidance

Islam's vision has from the outset been a universal one. It has always aspired to create a transnational community, and its political history has allowed it the scope to embody this transnational vision. Intellectuals and historians, Muslim and non-Muslim, also note that the orientation and evolution of the early Muslim community under the Prophet's guidance was at once both spiritual and pragmatic, with public utility as an overarching principle. This provides a point of departure for contemporary discussion in the Muslim world about the extent to which Islamic principles provide direction for addressing contemporary global challenges such as environmental degradation, migration, narcotics and crime, or disease outbreaks.

Some Muslims suggest that the instrumental and invasive frame of mind that has produced environmental degradation and its secondary consequences reflects Western ethics and social philosophy. This point of view finds Islam a particularly useful antidote, pointing to principles of natural stewardship found in the Quran and other Islamic sources.

Other Muslims note that migration is intrinsic to early Muslim history, beginning with the flight to Abyssinia and to Madina, as well as early instances of the spread of Islam through trade and peaceful settlement. It is suggested that the scriptural and other early sources of ideological guidance, and Islam's intrinsically inclusive, global, and fluid sense of identity, may also offer ideological guidance and render Muslim sensibility and tradition more responsive to contemporary challenges.

Muslim economists have articulated Islamic principles for their discipline. One Islamic approach to poverty and economic development suggests thinking of society as a unified—not an atomized—entity; adopting an adaptive approach to policy formulation; recognizing the rapidly changing technological and knowledge environment; preserving the principles of individual freedom and dignity and rejection of coercion; and recognizing that all assets, whether owned/managed by private or public entities, have a social aspect.

A more skeptical Muslim view suggests that specific Islamic guidance on modern challenges is limited because the currently dominant theology was elaborated to answer a very different set of questions in the Middle Ages. However, the application of fundamental Islamic principles in the spirit of the Quranic injunction to observe and acquire knowledge, and the principle of *Ijtehad*, could yield a dynamic tradition, though such thinking is in its early stages and there remains a need for an issue-based and more specific approach.

Some have suggested that the Organization of the Islamic Conference constitute working groups on the principal global natural, economic, developmental, and governance challenges of the day.

Even where the Quran or other religious sources offer useful guidance about matters such as crops, animals, and water; the treatment of migrants; economic justice; or the probity of governments; it is commonly agreed that the behavior of Muslims falls short of these precepts. Many Muslims look to religion to play a critical role in educating citizens on basic issues and civic duties, and as a source of legitimacy it can act as a tool for civil society to hold elites and political leaders accountable.

Islam and Environmental Protection

Jumaina Siddiqui

The United Arab Emirates is constructing Masdar City, designed to be zero waste and carbon neutral, but the majority of countries in the Muslim world are not taking innovative steps to address environmental degradation. Many lack the financial resources and political will to do so even if it was on their agenda. However, even the wealthier countries of the Muslim world, such as those in the Gulf Cooperation Council, have spent little on research and development of green technologies. In agreement with other developing nations, Muslim governments make the case that since wealthy, developed countries have had the largest impact on the Earth's environment, they should be the ones investing in solutions.

Since Islamic principles play a role in the governance of many countries of the Muslim world, an emerging body of scholarly literature that highlights Qur'anic guidance on the duties of Muslims to protect the Earth from environmental degradation could motivate governments to address these issues. For example, in Islam humans are seen as trustees of the Earth and are responsible to sustain and protect it. Surah 6:165 of the Qur'an states that "It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth." Additionally, Surah 2:11 states "Do not cause corruption on the earth." Furthermore, Surah 2:60 states that man should "…eat and drink the sustenance God has provided and do not act wrongfully in the land, causing corruption." One Islamic scholar notes that by protecting the Earth a Muslim is serving God because "to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And He it is that Encompasseth all things" in Surah 4:26. He also notes that Surah 15:19–22, calls upon mankind to maintain balance and moderation when utilizing Earth's resources:

> And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance. And We have provided therein means of subsistence, for

and society, not religion and the state. This in turn suggests that principles for the conduct of the state were elaborated by subsequent rulers for practical reasons of state, indistinguishable from reasons of state found in the non-Muslim world. These principles therefore do not reflect strictly to religious values, but rather the political values of the early Muslim societies.

According to this view, Madina in the time of the Prophet constitutes the model of Islamic governance. Since Madina had no paid police or army, and no other indicia of a modern state, the role of Islamic ethics was to guide and imbue social behavior, not to inform the shape of formal state government. The authoritative model of Islamic precepts of governance was thus elaborated in a setting where Muslims coexisted with non-Muslim communities, did not enjoy undisputed political authority, and yet had preeminent moral authority through the role played by the Prophet: in other words, a civic model of Islam.

you and for those for whose sustenance ye are not responsible. And there is not a thing but its (sources and) treasures (inexhaustible) are with Us; but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures. And We send the fecundating winds, then cause the rain to descend from the sky, therewith providing you with water (in abundance), though ye are not the guardians of its stores.

Surah 23:18 addresses issues of water scarcity and calls for conservation: "We sent water down from the sky in due measure and lodged in the earth—We have the power to take it all away if We so wish."

Despite Muslim scholars appealing to these and other verses from the Qur'an on environmental protection and climate change, there is a lack of broad public awareness of the issues among Muslims on the national and international level. However, there are several positive trends. The platform for Indonesia's Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or National Awakening Party has a strong environmental message and considers itself the country's "Green Party." In 2005, Muslim organizations in East Africa established the Africa Muslim Environment Network. The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences raises awareness of the environmental issues through projects around the world and publications like the *Muslim Green Guide*.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), representing one-fifth of the world's population, could serve as a forum for Muslim countries to address global climate change and develop a strategy for the Muslim world. However, they cannot wait too long to address environmental degradation because many of these countries are already feeling its effects. Between 2002 and 2007, members of the OIC have endured 32 floods, 11 flash floods, 6 typhoons, 5 cold waves, 4 droughts, 3 tornados, and 3 snow avalanches.

These proponents of Islam as a predominantly social ethical system note that the role of the Prophet in Madina was not that of king or chief of the territory or group, but as *hakam* (arbiter) of all the people. They argue that most Muslims to this day have no ecclesiastical hierarchies, resist state imposition of religious interpretation or orthodoxy, and disdain official Islamic bodies such as *Ulama* councils.

Those who believe that Islamic precepts about society are more properly the domain of social ethics than political theory are not necessarily quietists or apolitical. They are often as active politically on the basis of explicitly Islamic conviction or Muslim identity. The point of difference is that their religious values inform their political behavior as citizens regardless of the religious, secular, or neutral character of the constitutional order. Their commitment to *shariah* focuses on its embodiment less in state institutions and more in social practice.

At its most general, "Islamic" refers to Islam as a source of legitimacy for a variety of positions, including apolitical quietism, emphasis on personal ethics, or mystical spirituality. Islamist politics refers to a point of view that believes that Islamic values should be embodied in the design of state institutions and laws. Islamic politics describes something distinct and broader. The infusion of politics with Islamic terminology and ethos is broader than, and distinguishable from, the phenomenon of "Islamist" political parties and movements (or ruling elites), that are explicitly devoted to the establishment or

Shariah

"The Book gives us all that Allah permits us, or is essential for us, to know about his attributes. But it does not require our acceptance of its contents simply on the ground of its own statement of them. On the contrary, it offers arguments and evidence…It spoke to the rational mind and alerted the intelligence." —*Muhammad Abduh*

"The [Quran] is a powerful sacred text, but we must recognize that our understanding of it is both historically conditioned and shaped by human agency." —*Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim*

Sharia comprises "Law" as it is understood in the Old Testament (the Divine Commandment as well as rules of social practice), *Dharma* in Hindu thought (individual social duty as well as the collective rules for the ordering of communities and the relationships among them), Canon Law (rules for the ordering of religious life), and elements now commonly embodied in secular law, including crimes and contracts.

Among Western observers, *shariah* seems to occasion anxiety, fear, distrust, or even anger. It is often taken to imply establishment of theocratic forms of government. The frequent Muslim reference to the inseparability of politics and religion in the Islamic sensibility bolsters such concern.

Like *jihad*, *shariah* is capable of various equally authoritative interpretations by Islamic scholars and worldly Muslim thinkers and intellectuals. Also like *jihad*, *shariah* is susceptible to multifaceted use: for radical criticism of the established social order, or as apologetics for autocratic and illiberal legal and political systems. In brief, it is a hotly contested intellectual territory between those who would contain and those who would empower. Finally like *jihad*, the various facets of *shariah* include guidance about personal, spiritual, and moral development as a Muslim as well as ordering social relationships. A few Muslims consider all but the Quran to be of uncertain value as authority.

One finds a supple and flexible theological discourse, susceptible to conservative and radical, and puritan and liberal ones. It is noted by Muslim intellectuals that the Prophet's companions themselves had varying understandings of some verses of the Quran, and there is clear evidence that the Prophet, knowing this, did not seek to impose a unitary vision. Apart from a universal acceptance of the Quran, and an almost universal acceptance of the *Sunnah* (actions and behavior of the Prophet), different groups of Muslims follow different schools of *shariah* based on different authorities. A variety of exegetical tools may be used, including agreement or consensus of expert opinions (*ijma*), analogy (*qiyas*), and reasoning based on the public good (*istislah*), as well as *ijtihad* (commonly understood as "critical reasoning," more narrowly the use of all capacities to reach a legal conclusion).

maintenance of a state that follows specific Islamic teachings. For all these points of view, Islam functions as the presumptive source of legitimacy and of both moral and intellectual authority. It is less a description of a particular political program and more a normative source of legitimacy.

Divisive debates have sometimes arisen within the realm of Islamic politics. When religious rhetoric and objectives are employed by political actors, the religiously devout sometimes

Controversy abounds over the attempt to accommodate *shariah*, understood as sacred law, to the formal legal systems of states. A totalistic view holds that *shariah* must be adopted wholesale, effectively rendering religious scholars the sole jurists in society. There is contestation over the significance of *shariah* for contemporary Muslim societies. For example, does the obligatory sovereignty of Allah allow constitutions of states to embody popular sovereignty? Is this sovereignty delegated by Allah, or a lesser form of sovereignty over a more limited realm, with the state occupying less space than society? In some instances heated debate takes place between what independent religious scholars demand and what official and domesticated institutions such as ulema councils propound.

In some Muslim societies, what is understood as "*shariah*" in fact reflects actual practice, and therefore includes traditional and customary norms and practices derived from local pre-Islamic cultures, or shared with non-Muslim communities. For example, in popular discourse in Afghanistan, the term is frequently used simply to describe all normative law, Islamic or customary, as well as all legal institutions, formal ones of the state as well as traditional dispute resolution ones such as *shura* and *jirga.*

The doctrinal and intellectual suppleness of the idea of *shariah*, no less than that of "justice" in the West, suggests that the juridical is but one dimension; that there is a broader philosophical and ethical dimension to be considered. *Shariah* thus provides simultaneous guidance for the requirements of an Islamic State, an Islamic Society, as well as for the Truly Muslim Person.

The complexity is conveyed in the often-expressed idea among Muslim progressives that Islamic penal justice can legitimately only be administered in a just society, which embodies Islamic economic justice. It is also conveyed by consideration of the effort among progressive Muslims to move beyond the formalist view of *shariah* as inert and static rules toward one that looks at the duty to embody its animating values. This progressive tradition (typified in the work of the Malaysian Chandra Muzaffar) began in recent decades with calling upon *shariah* as authority for struggles against poverty, corruption, and denial of human rights. It has now begun to look at other contemporary challenges such as environmental degradation and terrorism to seek frameworks that simultaneously answer to Islamic authority and to emerging contemporary global norms and challenges. The dissident Iranian thinker Abdolkarim Soroush, author of *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam*, looks to democracy as the best safeguard against human error in the interpretation of the exact requirements of *shariah.*

see religion politicized and abused as a tool of mobilization by movements that are principally political. They fear religion's subordination to narrow and short-term political interests. This is particularly so when autocracies such as the Saudi monarchy or the later stages of the Saddam Hussein dictatorship are seen as exploiting religious loyalties for the perpetration of worldly elite interests. When Islamist movements have emphasized short-term political objectives, they have supported coups and other undemocratic means for rising to power or influence, as in Sudan, or have agreed to be junior partners to military dictatorships, as in Pakistan. More democratically inclined Islamists see in these a detriment to the integrity of Islamic values and Muslim society.

Islamists and Islamism

Although there is a rich body of Western literature devoted to a nuanced and differentiated analysis of Islamist political movements, Western policymakers and publics by and large still speak of Islamist movements in general terms, as if they reflect a uniform model.

The variations among Islamist movements and political parties reflect their specific national histories and political conditions. The most important distinction to be drawn is that between movements that are principally political in their thrust and those whose principal concern is the restoration of an ideal Islamic culture and society. The principal thrust of movements in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, and Turkey is predominantly political and only secondarily religious. The popular appeal within Muslim nations of such movements is based in substantial part on their articulation of aspirations for social and economic justice or antipathy to elements of the global economic order, which are shared with secular movements worldwide, albeit articulated within the framework of Islamic justice and statecraft.

Islamists have been successful both in repressive systems, such as Egypt, and in democratic systems, such as Lebanon, Malaysia, Palestine, and Turkey. In other relatively open political systems, such as Pakistan, they have done less well. In Turkey, they have succeeded in democratic processes under peaceful conditions. In other democratic processes the pressure of conflict, military occupation, and ethnic antagonism has been a good part of their appeal, as in Palestine or Lebanon. In yet other cases, their role as challengers to a repressive state has burnished their appeal, as in Egypt.

The conditions under which they have operated have determined the ideologies and strategies that distinguish them from each other. Mainstream Islamism in Turkey is fully invested in democracy. Indeed, it is democracy's stalwart champion against the elitism of other mainstream parties. In Indonesia, the older Islamist political movements, Muhammadiya and Nahdlatul Ulama, formerly accommodated themselves to an elitist and antidemocratic secular order. They thus carved out a niche in social and educational service

and civic initiative, which proved the basis of their long-term institutional viability. These constraints formed several of their current characteristics. They were compelled thereby to coexist with the broad range of Indonesian political opinion, including the substantial body of secular opinion. These formative conditions also served to bolster their conservative instincts, and moderate the temptation to adopt an oppositional stance, even when the political order opened up. The more corrupt and autocratic systems in the Muslim world have meanwhile spawned the most radical Islamist groups, which have enjoyed varying degrees of support or success.

The examples of Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon demonstrate a curious segmentation within movements that operate as sophisticated political actors and maintain military capacities. Some have suggested that Western policy should tolerate such segmentation, with the understanding that military capacity related to the conflict with Israel should not blind us to the political importance of these movements to future political stability within their societies. The reality is more troublesome, as is suggested by the deployment of Hezbollah's military capacity within Lebanese politics. However, in either case the capacity to diminish the importance of the military element to the benefit of the political depends on acceptance and engagement of the complexity of these movements, not their demonization and their exclusion from diplomacy and politics.

The majority of Islamist political parties are pluralistic to the extent that they accept that all citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim, are capable of being responsible participants in an Islamic polity. Their intention is not to purportedly "re-Islamicize" Muslims or "Islamicize" non-Muslims, but to reorganize society on the basis of ideals and values acknowledged already to be held by the majority. They confront their states, not their societies. They are also ideologically pragmatic. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt looked to Sufi principles, while the closely related Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan did not hesitate to look to the Sudanese Communist Party as a source of ideological guidance and understanding. *Jihadis*, in contrast, see themselves as involved in confrontation with their societies as well as their states, and reject established value systems and ideologies indigenous to their societies, both traditional and modernist.

Because of their appeal to popular opinion and because they have suffered at the hands of autocratic political systems, political Islamists have at various times championed principles such as a free press, an independent judiciary, and representative government. On the other hand, they are committed to the imperative to base all political actions on divinely guided principles, and the notion that all political and social arrangements must correspond to a unitary vision of the relationship between the worldly and the divine.

This dominant trend among Islamist movements, the predominantly political, may be distinguished from what are often called "*jihadi*" (though the discussion of *jihad* above

Human Rights and Tolerance

One of the more controversial features of the Western-Muslim dialogue is the question of human rights. The controversy is not about whether some governments of Muslim states violate basic rights. About this there is wide agreement. However, questions of pluralism—issues such as tolerance of varieties of Muslim opinion, of non-Muslim religions, of irreligion, and attitudes to apostasy—are hotly contested within the Muslim world and between the Muslim world and Western opinion. Controversy also arises from Muslim resentment at the Western perception that there is something intrinsic to Muslim society or Islamic thought that provides a larger enabling environment of human rights violations.

Among the dimensions that many Muslim intellectuals seek to bring into this particular discussion is the extent to which Western societies themselves act against Islam, through a secularism perceived as aggressive and intolerant, and through the resurgence of Christian or Judeo-Christian discourse in Western public life. There is also substantial discussion of discrimination and persecution against Muslim citizens and communities in societies such as India or Western Europe, but not against Islam as a religion.

Some see ideological variety within Muslim societies as a sign of vigor; others see particular sectarian minorities such as Ismailis or Ahmadis in terms such as "Western-inspired mischief to be nipped in the bud." The latter point of view seems to some to be based on political, not religious, concerns; that is to say, that the concern is about a threat to political stability and order rather than a concern with ideological rectitude.

Questions of pluralism, particularly the treatment of apostasy, remain difficult. There is on the one hand a sense that pluralism is not a threat, and that Islamic thought thrives in an open intellectual environment. On the other hand, there is a repeated discussion about the point at which intellectual freedom becomes a challenge to the Islamic nature of the society—a challenge that is considered beyond the pale and therefore legitimately sanctionable.

In one point of view, the tradition of Islamic statecraft and social norms going back to the time of the Prophet in Madina offers progressive and liberal models of justice and welfare, the rights of minorities, unity within the Muslim community, and cohesion with non-Muslim minorities and neighbors. This perspective is encapsulated in the observation that the term *ummah* was used by the Prophet not to describe the Muslim community but as a collective noun applied to all the communities of Madina, including Jews, Christians, and pagans as well as Muslims.

Muslim critics of intolerance in their own societies, as well as those who deny its existence or defend it, draw attention to the intellectually, socially, and politically warm and generous attitude toward Christian and Jews found in the Quran and in the early life of the Muslim community. Others

suggests that any such label is problematic). Whereas Islamist political movements are focused on their own societies and on addressing the specific problems of those, "*jihadis*" by contrast are focused on a more revolutionary agenda in relationship to their own societies and on a global agenda of ideological and strategic confrontation with the West.

note instances in Muslim history from Spain to Mughal India that prove that intellectual liberality is at least consistent with, if not intrinsic to, the tenor of Islamic thought. Variances reflect social and economic conditions and circumstances, much as in any civilization or religious tradition—maritime and trading cultures tend to be more liberal and cosmopolitan, whereas less dynamic Muslim societies evince a greater conservatism and less ideological flexibility.

On the other hand, illiberality is found in extreme and minority positions such as theological justification for the killing of apostates, extension of this even to disapproved sects within Islam condemned as "non-Muslim," and the justification of severe sanctions against *fitnah* (mischief that can cause disunity), even when the mischief is an ideological slight rather than actions against political stability and order.

Illiberality is also embodied in mainstream discussions of the bearing of Islamic thought on human rights, as reflected in the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, adopted in 1990. This document reflects a troubled meeting of universal secular legal and ethical norms and the universalistic and liberationist ethical vision of Islam. The Cairo Declaration is surely unique among international human rights charters adopted by states in its supremacism and theocratic orientation. The sole criterion and authority throughout the Cairo Declaration is explicitly *shariah*, not the rights of individuals or the powers of states.

The declaration's provisions on the rights of women reiterate Islamic principles of inheritance and financial capacity. While Islam was, in this respect, once the most progressive in the world, universal principles have now caught up and also embody these values. Beyond this, the rights of women provided in the Cairo Declaration relate to the right to be supported by a husband. There is no consideration of the rights of women outside marriage or the related issue of women's right to livelihoods.

The declaration's provision on labor rights, while embodying a paternalistic protection for workers as individuals, is silent on issues of labor association such as unions.

The declaration's prohibition of compulsion in religion relates only to its use to convert people from Islam. Free expression is protected only to the extent that it is not contrary to *shariah* principles or is otherwise according to the norms of *shariah*. The provisions on information are framed not in terms of freedom of information but rather a limitation on the use of information, to prohibit its use to violate the sanctities and dignity of the Prophets, or to undermine moral and ethical values or to harm society or weaken its faith. Political participation and holding of office is made subject to provisions of *shariah*, Crime and punishment must be only as provided for in *shariah*. While this can be seen as a protective principle limiting state authority, it could also be seen as limiting the reach of more universal and liberating international human rights principles and norms.

There is a real danger that inordinate emphasis on the cultural dimensions of Islamism, (such as the anti-Americanism of most, or the relative conservativism of some on issues of women's rights), will contribute to alienation, polarization, and radicalization. Repression of Islamists has already resulted from convergence of the culturally based anxieties

of Western governments and the political interests of their allied autocracies in the Muslim world. Repression has undercut those Islamists who chose to participate in the give and take of politics, and has strengthened and emboldened groups committed to revolutionary action outside the political system. The articulation of the debate between the West and Islamist groups or between those groups and their own governments in religious terms rather than political ones has the effect of privileging those groups that emphasize cultural conflict at the expense of those who speak the common language of (admittedly divergent) political interests.

A Two-Way Mirror

For all the ambivalence that could be said to characterize the West's sense of what the contemporary Muslim world is about, a mix of fascination and fear, there is a corresponding ambivalence on the other side. For all that the West finds sources of concern both in the political practice and in the intellectual authorities of the Muslim world and Islamic thought, Muslims return the compliment.

Both appear oblivious to the mirrorlike mutuality of this encounter. We might note that the global violence of the West and the violence perpetrated against it are related to each other, and that each is equally complex, spanning a range from covert skullduggery to warfare bounded by laws.[11] One might even note that *jihad* in the form of terrorism is morally and doctrinally indistinguishable from many tools used by the West in the "war on terror," such as "extraordinary rendition" or the gulag of Guantanamo and secret US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) prisons.

An impartial judgment would have to conclude that there is a literalism and reductionism on both sides of the dialogue; each caricatures the other's sources of intellectual and moral authority. Whereas few within a tradition read scripture literally, and authoritative teaching recommends contextualization of scripture, lay opinion in the other tradition inevitably relies on a literal reading of the most provocative scriptures.

The same is true of political discourse. An impartial observer would conclude that few in either civilization engage in violence against the other, and even fewer in covert violence; and that rarely does religious faith or fundamental philosophical conviction clearly rationalize violence against innocents. Why then the mutual sense of a proclivity to violence? Perhaps the question is more properly about the standing in a particular society of discourse in favor of violence. The degree of sympathy with those who practice violence, born of a pragmatic sense of self-defense, may be greater than the willingness of oneself to use

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[11] Islamic scholars and Muslim intellectuals often note that the principles of the Geneva Convention were prefigured in Islam's meticulous original and long-standing rules governing warfare.

it. In circumstances of perceived existential threat, this may make the more bellicose, more supremacist schools of thought more persuasive than others.

But surely the proclivity to violence is mutual. And not without cogent justifications offered on either side. It might also be observed that what is said here of the encounter between the West and the Muslim world is as true of the encounter between the Muslim and the Hindu worlds.

There is also a mutual sense of superiority over the other. For every insulting Western assertion of the superiority of secular democratic values over what are perceived as the less enlightened social, legal, and political precepts of Islam, one may find an assertion of the superiority of Islamic values, tradition, and way of life. Even among intellectuals of cosmopolitan education and terms of reference, there remains a deep ambivalence toward

Hindus and Muslims

Hindus in India take pride in their history of religious tolerance and in their philosophical authorities validating religious pluralism. Yet too many do so as a basis for triumphalism and a sense of superiority. Few evince awareness of parallel traditions of tolerance among their Muslim compatriots. They focus instead on the historical instances and philosophical sources of zealotry in Islam. Muslims in good measure return the compliment, focusing on the narrow exclusiveness of Hindu social structure rather than its tolerant traditions.

What is unmistakable in the Hindu-Muslim encounter is that the key symbols of cultural identity have become significant grounds of contestation, if not outright tools of contention. Attempts to ban cow slaughter to please devout Hindus inflame Muslim sentiment, which sees these attempts as deliberate attacks on the Muslim way of life. The cancellation of commercial inland fishing licenses in Gujarat is widely understood as a discriminatory policy of an openly anti-Muslim state government, but is rationalized as respect for the religious sentiments of the radically nonviolent Jains. The public expression of faith by both communities, in worship or religious festivals, is a significant *casus belli* between them.

There is no dearth of parallels in the extremist Hindutva movement to the worst "Islamic radicals" that the anti-Muslim imagination can conjure up. There is violence against those who allegedly insult religious figures or challenge the tendentious view of history propounded by the zealots. There are the international networks for propaganda to, and raising money from, expatriates for purposes of militant mobilization, often in the guise of charitable or educational activity.

On the beneficial side are found Hindu intellectuals, paralleling Muslim intellectuals, who stand against bigotry and violence: those who appeal to established Hindu religious thought and authorities to argue for a more tolerant and inclusive vision, and who remind us that Hindu religious faith and Hindutva political ideology are quite distinct.

Religiosity, Identity, and Conflict: A Global Trend

The renewal of interest in religion, the intensification of religion as source of group identity, and the assertion of religious values and identity in politics are global trends: not limited to Muslims, but also found today in the worlds of Christendom and Judaism, among Hindus in India, and among Buddhists in Burma and Sri Lanka (albeit with markedly divergent political agendas and effects). The religious revival in Islam is also not new. Various revivalist movements have been at work in all parts of the Muslim world for longer than a century.

Symbols of culture or cultural identity such as wearing of the *hijab* can sometimes assume disproportionate importance, equally for proponents and opponents. New forms of self-identification often reject old ones. The wearing of the *burqa* comes to replace the traditional *sari*, and thus the established sense of Bengali identity among Muslims in Bangladesh is displaced by a more Middle Eastern form of the "Islamic." Often the manifestation of different cultural symbols takes on a competitive color within, between, and among religious groups, as each feels threatened by the sense of mobilization implicit in the assertion of cultural symbols by the other. Yet each is also often oblivious of the similar effect of its own on the others.

Even the moderate or apolitical in all groups have come to feel that they are constrained in the full practice and expression of their own religion, because of the expression of others in a shared public space. This sense of grievance is expressed even by religious majorities and results in resentments against others. Militant or violent groups in all traditions have appealed to their co-religionists on this basis, and have sought financial and political support among them, including expatriate communities.

Fundamentalism of identity or belief in different religious traditions also takes on a mutually reinforcing character. Muslims often note, by way of self-justification, that Christianity and politics are no strangers to each other in the contemporary West or in the Philippines and Indonesia, and that Christian fundamentalism is a vital religious force in those societies.

The worst of extremism is found equally among all religious groups. Hindutva zealots in India, Sinhalese chauvinist clergy in Sri Lanka, and Muslim zealots bear a remarkable resemblance. All evince a semiliterate reading of scripture, theology, and history. Their normative, historical, and even fictional sources of identity are confused with one another. These form a basis for feelings of superiority or exclusiveness toward others, and for a sense of aggrieved self-justification. Violence, official or popular, is practiced against other groups.

Christians and Jews, equivalent to the corresponding broad-brush and visceral puzzlement among Western opinion about Muslim intentions.[12]

The preamble to the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam begins with reference to "the civilizing and historical role of the Islamic Ummah which God made the best

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[12] Majid Fakhry notes in *A History of Islamic Philosophy* that at the dawn of Muslim modernism, even Muslim thinkers (such as Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Jamal ad-Din Al Afghani Muhammad Abdu, and Ameer Ali) who sought to modernize Islamic thought by emulating the West, nonetheless displayed a mistrust of Western culture and asserted the superiority of the Islamic view of life.

nation" and continues with a description of the ways in which the Ummah should enlighten a humanity "confused by competing trends and ideologies" and plagued with "the chronic problems of this materialistic civilization." A recent Indian volume, designed to refute the notion that the religious doctrine of *jihad* supports terrorism, is frankly superior in its tone, and argues that a morally superior religion such as Islam could not possibly stoop so low.[13]

Sometimes, the sense of superiority of the Islamic way of life depends precisely on the comprehensive system of thought, guidance, and social order that it offers. It unites meta-physical and worldly; spiritual, ritual, legal, ethical, and political. This is seen as a reflection of a more complex and developed system. For the Western observer, this very feature is a source of disquiet, making Islam seem, if not totalitarian, then totalistic in its approach to the control of every aspect of human life by an ideology. Yet, for every Islamic school of thought that applies divine injunction literally, we may find an equally fundamentalist or Puritan school in Christendom, and in other religious traditions too. Every Islamic argument for the embodiment of religious values in statecraft finds a non-Muslim echo, whether established churches in some Christian societies, political movements to embody religious principles in secular law as in the United States, or similar movements in India or Israel.

Conclusion

The ways in which religion marks identity and inspires action is anything but simple. Its adherents seek in it one or more of spiritual world view, ethical precepts, and marker of group identity. Each of these may also be the basis of political ideology and action. The faith of its adherents will variously emphasize religious duty, mysticism, and attachment to particular philosophical schools of thought. A religion may inspire a generalized pride in the political, social, and intellectual history of the faith, and all else that constitutes its civilization. The political stances of its adherents will vary according to the requirements of their societies as well as their convictions, and will be influenced significantly by the intellectual posture they adopt toward tradition, history, authority, or scripture—skeptical, critical, liberal, conservative, fundamentalist, progressive, or modernist. The relationship between religion and politics in any given social or historical context can only be understood if the discussion of the relationships among these elements is specific to the case at hand.

Such an empirical and precise understanding would allow us to see contemporary Islamic ideologies not as a caricature of an intellectual tradition divorced from other aspects of human history, as autonomous ideology driving political action, but rather as being in a cause-and-effect relationship with processes and challenges the Muslim world shares with

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[13] Faizan Ahmed Azizi, *Jihad in the Light of Holy Quran* (Islamic Awareness Society, 2006).

> ### Strength from Tolerance
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> The world of Islam and the West might each recognize not only that there are historical antecedents in the other that display great tolerance, but also that such tolerance has been a source of strength. A brief look at some examples suggests that tolerance or intolerance is not intrinsic to a civilization, but rather reflects the particular social, ideological, and political conditions of a particular historical moment.
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> In the young Muslim world, Christian and pagan scholars such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq of Hira and Thabit ibn Qura of Harran, who survived from the old order, translated the Greek heritage into Arabic (first through Syriac and then directly). Non-Muslims were thus indispensable to Islam's intellectual and scientific rise. The power of the Muslim realm was a result of its ethos of tolerance.
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> On the part of the West: after the "reconquest" of Toledo in the 12th century, Arabic texts were translated under the patronage of Christian kings. Christian scholars from Italy, Scotland, and Germany, as well as elsewhere, came to study the Hispano-Arab texts of Hellenism. This produced the cultural diffusion and rediscovery of classical heritage that made possible the European Renaissance and the Christian Reformation. The history of Sicily after the Norman defeat of the Arabs, also in the 12th century, tells the same story.

the global community. These include bewildering and often unmanageable social change and mobility, education, the challenges of democratic participation and governance, corruption, resource and environmental degradation, livelihoods, and the ubiquitous and multifaceted issues raised by cyberspace—such as intrusion of the public into the private, volume and speed of information outstripping human and social capacity to manage it, and the loss of control of cultural norms such as those of decency and civility.

The conversation might then be about the broader question of the relationship between religious faith and identity on the one hand and public life (governance, politics, social action, and public ethics) on the other. In that light we would stop looking at movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan as imperfectly modern because their political action is hampered or discredited by their religious convictions. We might instead see that they are taking note of the deeper-level intellectual and ideological frameworks of their societies to address contemporary issues of development and modernization, of the empowerment of new constituencies, and the expansion of democratic space. In other words, we might look at them much as we have learned to look at Turkey's Justice and Development Party, in terms that we would use to understand the fortunes of all political parties, including secular ones in the West.

Or to take another source of unease between the West and Islam: rather than asking whether Islam requires women to veil themselves in a particular way, whether that constitutes a violation of their human rights, and therefore whether Islam is inherently antithetical to

women's equality, one might instead ask a simple political and social question. Is a Muslim woman freely choosing to adopt the veil or the victim of coercion to do so? This principally political approach would free the veil to be simply the religious duty and mark of religious conviction desired by the devout, while simultaneously addressing the gender equality or human rights issues of individual freedom and choice.

A more empirical approach that avoids panic and alarmism about the relationship between Islam and politics might also calm other panics. For example, what is the precise basis and extent of passive support and sympathy for even the most dangerous terrorist movements? Is there an iconic romance devoid of active political significance? Does amorphous or inchoate youthful radicalization explain some of what we are looking at? Is the iconic significance of Osama bin Laden in the Muslim world like that of Che Guevara among Western youth a few decades ago?

A careful examination, unpacking the religious and political elements, might offer a better appreciation of the rich, progressive, and authentically Islamic thought on many issues that concern casual Western observers. It would also allow for understanding that this reflects a robust tradition; that it is not a recent development.[14] A clarification of Western understanding might also allow for appreciation of the substantial and influential body of Islamic thought that sees religion as held hostage by its politicization, and is now arguing for freeing it.[15]

The implications for Western policy would be to eschew condescension, support those aspirations that we share, and let the Muslim world draw on its own substantial sources of inspiration. Understanding that the sources of instability and conflict lie at least as much in politics as in culture, we might support reform and the rule of law in the Muslim world with the same zeal that characterizes our counterterrorism efforts and our public diplomacy.

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[14] The Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, author of *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, rejects the idea that women's participation is a modern idea or a Western import. Equally important, she rests on inter alia the work of late 19th century intellectuals of the Salafi, a school also used as authority by radical insurgent and terrorist groups.

[15] The Iranian Abdolkarim Soroush champions democracy as the potential source of Islam's religious renewal, criticizes Islamist theocracy as a corruption of religion by political and economic interests and elites, and argues that human rights are essential for the realization of the ethical vision of Islam.