religion and violence

An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present

VOLUME 2

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Islam

Perhaps no religion is as closely associated with violence in contemporary culture as Islam. In 2006, a Washington Post–ABC News poll revealed that a majority of Americans believe that Muslims are disproportionately prone to violence compared with followers of other religions. One of the reasons for this perception lies in current events. The perceived link between Islam and violence was, in part, forged by the attacks of September 11, 2001. It has been further solidified by subsequent terrorist activities, by the insurgency and sectarian violence in Iraq, and by the increase in suicide terrorism committed by Muslims. However, it is not only violence committed by Muslims that fuels the image of Islam and Muslims as more prone to violence. A variety of popular books and Internet sites also suggest that the religion itself is the source of that violence.

The establishment and maintenance of a just society is seen in Islam as the duty of all human beings, and Islam recognizes that the use of violence is sometimes necessary for the establishment and maintenance of a just society. In order to conclude whether or not Islam and its followers are inherently prone to violence and determine when and why violence is acceptable, one must examine Islam, its core tenets, its sacred texts, and its history and development as a world religion, together with the beliefs and practices of Muslims as expressed at various points in history.

Core Tenets and Sacred Texts

Historically, Islam is considered the youngest of the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, Islam does not define itself as a separate religion. Rather, it presents itself as the continuation and culmination of the one true religion sent by God with all of the prophets (Koran 42:13). *Islam*

is an Arabic word that means "surrender" or "submission," and a *muslim* is "one who surrenders or submits." Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and other prophets and their followers are referred to as Muslims in various parts of the Koran. At the heart of Islam is the concept of *tawhid*—that is, the absolute unity and uniqueness of God, the compassionate and merciful Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all it contains, and the only being worthy of worship (Koran 1:1, 6:102). It is to God that all humanity will return for final judgment on the day of resurrection (Koran 6:62).

Like Judaism and Christianity before it, Islam recognizes Adam and his wife as the first human beings and the parents of the human race; they later disobeyed God and were exiled from the Garden (Koran 2:35–36). According to Islam, however, Adam was also the first to receive revelation from God, and as such is the first prophet (Koran 2:37). God continued to send revelation periodically throughout history to various prophets and messengers, until Muhammad (the last prophet) and the culmination of revelation in the Koran. From the beginning, the message was always the same, according to Islam: There is no god but God, so serve God alone (Koran 21:25). The Koran also commands Muslims to believe in God, His angels, His prophets, and His books, and to pray, fast, give charity, make pilgrimage, do good works, and avoid sins (Koran 2:177, 53:32). Over time, the message delivered by earlier prophets was corrupted, and the Koran represents, for Muslims, the final correction and completion of God's message to humanity (Koran 5:48).

There are two main textual authorities in Islam. The first of these is the Koran (literally "reading" or "recitation"), which in the original Arabic, according to Muslims, contains the literal and direct words of God dictated by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad a few verses at a time over a period of twenty-three years, from 610 C.E. until shortly before Muhammad's death in 632 C.E. The verses were written by Muhammad's followers as they were revealed, and they were compiled into a single text shortly after his death. The Arabic Koran in its present arrangement dates from the time of the caliph Uthman ibn Affan, who reigned from 644 C.E. to 656 C.E. The second source is the Prophetic Traditions—stories about the Prophet, known as Hadith.

The word *hadith* in Arabic literally means a story or piece of news or information. As a technical term in Islam, it means a story about the Prophet Muhammad. Such stories contain the Sunnah (literally, "practice") of the Prophet, detailing his words and actions or those things of which he tacitly approved (things that he witnessed others doing or saying and did not correct or criticize). The stories were passed on orally for generations before being collected and written down. The collections of Hadith used today by Muslims were compiled in the second half of the ninth century C.E., approximately two and one half centuries after Muhammad. Of the more than a half dozen popular Hadith collections used by Muslims, the most well-known and respected are *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. While the Koran lays out general principles, the Prophet and the early community serve as practical examples of how to incorporate and implement those principles in the daily lives of individuals and societies.

The Concept of Jihad

Jurists recognize four kinds of *jihad* (literally "struggle" or "striving"): jihad of the heart, jihad of the tongue, jihad of the hand, and jihad of the sword. The first of these—the effort to purify one's heart from the influences of the devil—is considered the greater jihad. Jihads of the tongue and hand are understood to refer to persuasive missionary efforts and doing good deeds, and jihad of the sword re-

fers specifically to the use of just and necessary violence.

There is no concept of holy war (*al-harb al-muqaddas*) in the Koran. The noun jihad occurs four times in the Koran. The verb *jahada* (to struggle; to strive) in various forms appears twenty-nine times. None of these refers directly to fighting nor specifically to military action. In fourteen of the twenty-nine places the verb *jahada* appears in the Koran, striving in the cause of God is used in a very general context as a quality of those who believe. Many of these verses, which appear in various places throughout the Koran, have nearly identical wording: "Those who believe and emigrate and *strive* in the cause of God with their wealth and their selves." Two instances (Koran 9:81, 9:86) declare that hypocrites hate to strive in God's cause and try to avoid it. Where the Koran specifically commands striving, there is no reference to warfare. Verses 29:8 and 31:15 give believers permission to disobey parents who strive (*jahada*) to make them associate partners with God. Even under such circumstances the believer is ordered to be considerate and just toward the parents. Taken together, these verses show us that believers must be willing to exert great efforts in the cause of God, using both their property and their persons.

Although the word *jihad* is not used to refer to warfare in the Koran, the Koran does discuss fighting directly. When the Koran addresses fighting, the word *qital*, not *jihad*, is used. The Koran proclaims, "Fighting is prescribed for you and it is hateful to you . . ." (Koran 2:216). Fighting is called for under particular circumstances and is also strictly regulated. Other verses call for fighting only against those who fight you, suggesting only defensive combat. Combat is not limited to self-defense, however, but includes defense of others. The Koran also details specific behaviors that justify fighting those who engage in them. These include attacking Muslims, driving them out of their homes, plotting to destroy them, and breaking treaties. The Koran calls for Muslims to stop fighting once "there is no more unrest and oppression, and religion is for God" (Koran 8:39) and also if the enemy inclines toward peace. Finally, the Koran calls for good relations with all who uphold their treaties and do not fight against the Muslims.

The general principles provided in the Koran suggest that fighting is required in self-defense, in defense of the community, and in defense of the weak and oppressed to bring an end to oppression and to establish justice. Such justified fighting is considered a legitimate form of struggling in the cause of God, and the word *jihad* has been used by Muslims throughout history to refer to such justifiable fighting. Fighting that does not meet the criteria of just war in Islam is not referred to as *jihad*. Such fighting is called *harb* (literally, "war") in Arabic.

Like the Koran, the Hadith indicate that there are various ways that a believer may strive in the cause of God. Indeed, one well-known Hadith declares that struggle to purify one's own soul is the greatest form of jihad. Many Hadith, however, address the issue of jihad as armed struggle. While the Koran focuses on just reasons for going to war, the Hadith focus on just conduct in war. The Hadith call on Muslims to be righteous in their conduct of war; they explicitly forbid deceit, treachery, and the killing of women, children, old men, and the infirm. The recorded practices of Muhammad's early successors show the same restraints. In his history, Tabari (d. 923 C.E.) recounts Ali ibn Abu Talib's instructions to his troops before the battle of Siffin in 657 C.E.:

> Do not fight them unless they attack you first. You, praise be to God, have a good case and holding back from fighting them until they attack will strengthen it. If you fight them and defeat them, do not kill the fugitives, do not finish off the wounded, do not uncover their nakedness, and do not mutilate the slain. If you

reach their abodes, do not tear aside a curtain, enter a dwelling without permission, or seize any of their property apart from what you find in the army camp. Do not do harm against any woman. . . . (Tabari 1996)

The sacred texts of Islam clearly offer a basis for the justified use of violence, as well as setting limits on such violence. However, no sacred texts are interpreted or implemented in a vacuum. A variety of social, cultural, historical, and political factors influence the way these texts are read, understood, and used. Muslim understandings of the appropriate uses of violence clearly reflect such influences.

Muhammad and the Establishment of the Community

Muhammad was born in the central Arabian city of Mecca in approximately 570 C.E. Most of the Arabs of the area were pagans who worshipped a variety of local and tribal deities; however, they did have contact with both Christianity and Judaism. During this time, Mecca was a thriving center of trade. Caravans traveling north into Syria brought the Arabs into contact with the Christian Byzantines. There were also Jewish tribes living in the agricultural oasis of Yathrib (now known as Medina) some 275 miles north of Mecca.

As a young man, Muhammad was a successful businessman who enjoyed a reputation for honesty and good judgment. He was in the habit of going alone into the hills outside Mecca to meditate. It was during one of those retreats, in the month of Ramadan in the year 610 C.E., that he first received revelation. According to Muslim tradition, he experienced a crushing sensation and heard a voice command him, "Recite!" Muhammad answered, "What shall I recite?" The voice responded with what was to become the opening verses of chapter 96 of the Koran. This was the beginning of Muhammad's mission, although it took him some time to ac-

cept it. For the first few years, he preached only to his closest friends and family. Eventually, he received the command from God to preach publicly.

When he began to publicly preach his message of absolute monotheism, it was seen by the Meccans as a direct challenge to their established order. They responded by persecuting Muhammad and the few followers he was able to attract during the first twelve years of his mission. The pivotal moment of Muslim history, which has become the date that demarks the beginning of the Islamic era, came in 622 C.E. when, at the invitation of the leaders of feuding tribes, Muhammad and his followers emigrated from Mecca to the city of Yathrib. Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Yathrib is known as the *Hijra*. After the Hijra, Yathrib came to be known as Medinat al-Nabawi (The City of the Prophet), simply called Medina. It was in Medina that Muhammad would establish the Muslim community as both a religious and a political entity. Muhammad's governance in Medina is seen by the vast majority of Muslims as the ideal example of how a community should live and conduct its affairs.

It was just before his migration to Medina that the Prophet first received revelation allowing the Muslims to fight. There is some disagreement among the traditions as to exactly which of the verses that permit fighting were revealed first. Some suggest that the first such verses were Koran 22:39–40:

Permission is granted those to take up arms who fight because they were oppressed. God is certainly able to give help to those who were driven away from their homes for no other reason than that they said "Our Lord is God." And if God had not restrained some men through some others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where the name of God is honored most, would have been razed. God will surely help those who help Him.—Verily, God is all powerful and all-mighty—Those who would be firm in devotion,

pay the tithe, and enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, if we give them authority in the land. But the result of things rests with God.

In his commentary on Koran 2:190–191, the Koranic commentator Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.), stated that some exegetes suggest that these verses were the first to allow fighting:

> Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not aggress. Indeed, God does not love the aggressors. Kill them where you encounter them, and expel them from where they expelled you. Unrest and persecution is worse than killing. Do not fight them at the sacred mosque, unless they fight you there, but if they fight you, kill them. Such is the reward of the disbelievers. (Koran 2:190–191)

Whichever of these was revealed first, both convey a sense of defensive combat and reflect the vulnerability felt by the nascent Muslim community in Medina after having been driven from Mecca by persecution. Moreover, verse 22:40 indicates that the persecution was religiously motivated: "for no other reason than they said: 'Our Lord is God.'" This same idea is also conveyed in Koran 2:193: "Fight them until there is no more unrest and oppression and religion is for God. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except against oppressors." Thus, the Koran portrays the Muslims fighting back against a larger, stronger community—a community that was persecuting them to prevent them from worshipping and serving God. That is how the first Muslim community is portrayed in the Islamic biographical and historical works. In December of 623 C.E., the Prophet sent a party of eight Muslims to spy on a Meccan caravan. The caravan was lightly guarded, and the group decided to attack and raid it in spite of the fact that it was a sacred month, when fighting was forbidden by Arab custom. This was the beginning of warfare between the young Muslim community in Medina and the Meccans. When the group returned to Medina, the Prophet is said to have rebuked them for fighting during the sacred month but then received the revelation of Koran 2:217:

> They ask you concerning fighting in the prohibited month. Say: "Fighting therein is a grave offense; but graver in the sight of God is to prevent access to the path of God, to deny Him, to prevent access to the sacred shrine and drive out its members. Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter."

The first major battle between the Muslims and the Meccans took place several months after the caravan raid, in March 624 C.E. at the wells of Badr, just south of Medina. A large Meccan caravan was returning from Syria. Muhammad learned that the caravan would pass close by Medina and made plans to intercept it. Word of the plans reached the leader of the caravan, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, and he sent word to Mecca requesting men to protect it. Because most of Mecca's major clans had invested in the caravan, they quickly dispatched forces that reportedly outnumbered the Muslims by about three to one. In spite of the odds, the Muslims were victorious. The decisive victory over a much larger force was seen by the Muslims as proof of God's support. This victory was followed by defeat one year later, when in March of 625 C.E., the Meccans sent a force of several thousand men, including some 200 cavalry, to attack Medina. Whereas the victory at Badr had been seen as proof of God's support for the Muslims, the defeat at Uhud was seen as a test of the resolve and intent of the Muslims, as reflected in the Koranic verses related to the event (Koran 3:152–153; 3:165–167).

The Muslims had lost the battle of Uhud, but the Meccans had not defeated them completely. The Muslim community continued to grow in strength and prestige, which the Mec-

cans saw as a direct threat to their own position in the region. The Meccans then formed an alliance with various clans and tribes, including the Banu al-Nadir, a Jewish tribe from Medina, which had been expelled for plotting an attempt on Muhammad's life. The confederation, reportedly some 10,000 strong, moved to attack Medina in March 627 C.E. Muhammad learned of the planned attack and had a trench dug around the city in order to thwart the Meccan cavalry. Muhammad brought a force of 3,000 Muslims. The two sides faced each other across the trench for nearly a month with no fighting other than some mutual firing of arrows, after which the Meccans and their allies abandoned the siege and returned to their homes. This was a turning point in the relationship between the Muslims and the Meccans.

The preceding examples suggest that violence is religiously sanctioned in response to aggression and threats of aggression against the Muslim community. Treachery also serves as a basis for the justifiable use of violence. This is illustrated by the situation involving an important Jewish tribe in Medina: the tribe of Qurayza. During the siege of Medina in 627 C.E., in violation of their treaty with Muhammad, the Banu Qurayza engaged in secret negotiations with his enemies. According to tradition, Koran 8:56 refers to the tribe of Qurayza: "Those with whom you have made a treaty, and then afterward they break their treaty at every opportunity, and they do not fear [God]." Because of their support for the Meccans, Muhammad besieged the tribe of Qurayza immediately after the Meccans withdrew. When the tribe surrendered, Muhammad suggested that an arbiter from among their confederates should be appointed to determine their punishment. The Qurayza agreed, and Sa'd ibn Mu'adh was appointed to decide their fate. According to Tabari's account, there was an expectation that Sa'd would be lenient (Tabari 1997). Instead, he ruled that the fighting men of the tribe should be killed and the women and children taken captive. Muhammad reportedly declared that Sa'd's decision was a sign of the judgment of God.

That violence on the part of the early Muslim community was limited to responses to aggression and treachery is further demonstrated by the fact that following the siege of Medina and the punishment of the Banu Qurayza, Muhammad approached Mecca the following year (628 C.E.), not as a warrior, but as a pilgrim. The Meccans intercepted Muhammad and approximately 1,000 other Muslim pilgrims at a place called Hudaybiyya and forbid him to proceed to Mecca. However, the Meccans entered into negotiations with him. The Treaty of Hudaybiyya and the cessation of violence was a watershed in Islamic history. The distraction of battle was seen by early Muslims as a hindrance to the successful establishment and spread of the religion. The agreement called for the Muslims to return to Medina but allowed them to make a pilgrimage to Mecca the following year. Muhammad led the pilgrimage in 629 C.E., as agreed.

In 630, allies of the Meccans were accused of breaking the treaty, and Muhammad marched on Mecca with an army of some 10,000 troops. The Meccans surrendered without resistance. Muhammad accepted the surrender and granted amnesty to his former enemies. Over the next two years, Muhammad consolidated his control over the Arab tribes and led the community from Medina until his death in 632 C.E. These examples of the Prophet show that he used both violence and diplomacy to establish and protect the early community. After Muhammad's death, the community's understanding of appropriate and just use of violence continued to develop and evolve.

The Community After Muhammad

Muhammad had not designated a successor (caliph) to lead the community after his death,

and that led to a dispute in the community. Some of Muhammad's followers wanted to choose a leader from among the senior men of the tribes, according to the traditional practice (sunnah) of the Arabs. But there was a party (Shi'a) that felt that succession should pass on to Muhammad's nearest male relative, Ali ibn Abu Talib. Ali was Muhammad's first cousin; husband to Muhammad's daughter, Fatima; and father of Muhammad's twin grandsons, Hasan and Hussein. The dispute between those who wished to follow the tradition, or Sunnah, and the partisans, or *shi'at* of Ali, laid the foundations for the development of the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam.

Ali did not actively seek leadership of the community, and a group of Muhammad's senior companions chose one of their own to lead. The first man to succeed Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community was his father-in-law, Abu Bakr, who reigned from 632 C.E. to 634 C.E. In the wake of Muhammad's death, some of the tribes who had sworn allegiance to him felt that that allegiance ended with his death and rebelled against Abu Bakr's leadership. In response, he used military force to hold the community together. It was Abu Bakr's successor, the caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634–644), who ushered in a period of great expansion and conquest. These conquests were seen as a necessary part of the Koran's mandate to establish justice on the earth, which is seen as the obligation of all human beings. It is only through the establishment of justice that a peace is truly achieved. Therefore, the effort (*jihad*) to expand the influence of godly rule was seen as incumbent on Muslims. The purpose of such expansion was to extend governance and influence rather than to convert the peoples of conquered territories, who were required to pay taxes to the central government but were not forced to convert to Islam.

The First Civil Wars

The rapid expansion of the community brought with it political and economic tensions. The policies of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–656 C.E.), caused a great deal of discontent, and Uthman was assassinated by Egyptian rebels in 656 C.E. His successor was Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin, Ali ibn Abu Talib (r. 656–661 C.E.). Ali's alleged failure to seek out and prosecute Uthman's assassins led to the first civil war among Muslims. Muhammad's widow, Aisha, and others among Muhammad's companions accused Ali of grave injustice and sought redress for the murder of Uthman. The first battle of this war is known as the Battle of the Camel because Aisha led her army against Ali from the back of a camel on the battlefield. Aisha's army lost the battle, but the challenge to Ali continued, resulting in the Battle of Siffin, between Ali and Mu'awiyya, governor of Syria and a relative of Uthman. That battle ended when Ali and Mu'awiyya engaged in arbitration that left Mu'awiyya in power in Damascus. Ali withdrew to the city of Kufa (in modern-day Iraq). A group of his followers saw his agreement to accept arbitration as abandoning his rightful authority and responsibility, and they assassinated Ali in 661. These events and later Muslim interpretations of them further contributed to the development of doctrinal differences between the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam.

As with the fighting that occurred between the Muslims and the pagan Meccans, the underlying claim was that the fighting was being undertaken only for the sake of justice. Neither side saw itself as mounting a war of aggression against the other, but instead saw itself as doing what was necessary in response to wrongdoing and to establish justice. There was a focus on both *jus ad bellum* (just reasons for going to war) and *jus in bello* (just conduct in war), and

religion is seen as limiting in relation to each. The responsibility to establish and maintain justice (rather than to bring about conversions) continued to inform Muslim discussions of the appropriate uses of violence throughout Islamic history (Kelsay 1993).

Dar al-islam and Dar al-harb

The expansion of the Islamic empire and the realities of world politics led to the development of two very important concepts: *dar al-islam* (land of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (land of war). These terms are not found in the Koran or the Prophetic Traditions but are classical legal doctrines that developed over the first several centuries of Islamic history. The term *dar al-islam* refers to the areas under Muslim control, while the term *dar al-harb* refers to those areas not under Muslim rule. The distinction between them is based on the idea that a land ruled by Islam is "theoretically the land of peace and justice," while a land not ruled by Islam is "characterized by disorder and internal strife" (Kelsay 1993). Dar al-islam "was coextensive with *secure*, nonoppressed Muslim inhabitation" (Parvin and Sommer 1980). Dar al-harb was essentially everywhere else. Over time, this stark dichotomy was moderated by development of the intermediate concepts of *dar al-sulh* (land of peace) and *dar al-ahd* (land of truce) to designate areas that were not under Muslim control but where formal agreements guaranteed that Muslims would be secure from oppression and free to live according to Islamic law. These concepts have significant implications today. Now as in the past, "the content of justice and injustice . . . is specified by the interaction of moral concern with religious, political, and military factors" (Kelsay 1993).

Violence is often seen as a morally and religiously justified response to perceived injustice and oppression. As they have throughout Muslim history, the arguments offered for fighting focus on questions of justice, and what is seen as just or unjust is influenced as much by political and military factors as it is by religious ones. Among the most significant political and military factors that influence Muslim thinking today are the prevalence of dictatorial governments in the Muslim world, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the first Gulf War and its aftermath, and the U.S. war in Iraq. These factors play a central role in militant arguments calling for the use of violence against the United States and its allies.

Divergent Voices

One of the distinguishing features of Islam as a religion is the lack of a generally recognized central authority that speaks for the majority of the faithful. Both Sunnis and Shi'as recognize various religious scholars and clergy; the extent of their authority is determined by their followers. Therefore, religious opinions rendered by the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, the grand ayatollah of Iran, or the grand sheikh of al-Azhar, for example, carry only as much weight as Muslims choose to give them. In addition to such traditionally recognized scholars as those just mentioned, individual Muslims may also render religious opinions. The Internet makes it possible to immediately publish such opinions globally. Dale Eickelman discusses the profound effect that "the unprecedented access that ordinary people now have to information and knowledge about religion and other aspects of their society" is having on religious authority in the Muslim world:

> What distinguishes the present era from prior ones is the large number of believers engaged in the "reconstruction" of religion, community, and society. In an earlier era, political or religious leaders would prescribe, and others were supposed to follow. Today the major impetus for change in religious and political values comes from "below." (Eickelman 1999)

The impact of the phenomenon described by Eickelman is evident in the variety of uses and understandings of the word *jihad*. Today, the word is used by a variety of Muslims fighting for a variety of causes throughout the world. Terrorists' use of the word jihad and other religious terminology suggests direct a link between the religion and violence. An al-Qaeda recruitment film titled *Harb al-Mustadafeen* (The War of the Oppressed People), dated March–April 2005 and circulated on the Internet, opens with a recitation of Koran 22:39–40, cited above. The title of the video refers to another verse of the Koran:

> And why should you not fight in the cause of God and the oppressed [*al-mustadafeen*] among men, women, and children, who say, "Our Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors. And give us from you, a protector. And give us from you, a helper." (Koran 4:75)

The militants perceive themselves as the allies and helpers appointed by God to fight in defense of those they see as the weak and oppressed victims of injustice. Therefore, they see violent actions against the perceived aggressors (in this case the United States and its allies) as a just and appropriate use of force.

Suicide Terrorism

Incidents of suicide terrorism are on the rise, and many suicide terrorist attacks are carried out by Muslims who claim religious justification for their acts. This fact also contributes to the idea that Islam is the root of the problem. The influence of factors other than religion is often overshadowed by the egregious nature of the terrorist acts committed by Muslims, while religious factors are highlighted by both the perpetrators and reporters of such acts. The focus on religion as the primary motive for terrorist violence is misleading. Research on the growing phenomenon of suicide terrorism also challenges the popular idea that Islam is the root cause of such violence. According to Robert Pape, author of *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (2006):

> What nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland. Religion is rarely the root cause, although it is often used as a tool by terrorist organizations in recruiting and other efforts in service of the broader strategic objective.

Muslim scholars are divided on the question of suicide bombings. Some condemn all such attacks as un-Islamic, while others distinguish between acts of self-sacrifice, which are commendable, and attacks in which noncombatants are killed, which are condemned. Yet others excuse the killing of civilians in those countries perceived to be responsible for the deaths of Muslim civilians. The divide does not follow popular categorizations of "fundamentalist" and "mainstream." Muslim criticism of and opposition to terrorist tactics challenges the perceived causal link between what is popularly called "fundamentalist" Islam and violence. Many Muslim critics and opponents of U.S. policies—including those who are popularly referred to as fundamentalists and who believe strongly in the need to establish an Islamic state—are equally critical of terrorist tactics and actions because they violate established Islamic principles of honorable combat, primarily by targeting innocent people and noncombatants and also by engaging in fighting not authorized by a legitimately established Islamic government. They too find justification in the Koran and the Prophetic Traditions for their position.

Those who identify themselves as progressive Muslims are unequivocal in their condemnation of "all attacks on civilians, whether

that violence comes from a terrorist group or a nation-state." Safi goes on to caution against "the superficial appeals of an unjust peace" and reminds Muslims of "the possibility of upholding resistance to well-entrenched systems of inequality and injustice through non-violent conflict" (Safi 2003). Progressive Muslims are not the only ones who promote Islamic concepts of nonviolence. In "A Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam," Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2000–2001) writes, "Peacemaking and negotiation are recommended as the first strategy to resolve conflicts, as clearly expressed in the Qur'anic verse: 'if they incline to peace, you should also incline to it, and trust in God' (8:39)." Abu-Nimer also inextricably links peace to establishing justice: "The connection of peace building with justice is thus never far from the surface in Islam. Peace is the product of order and justice. One must strive for peace with justice. This is the obligation of the believer as well as the ruler. More than that, it is a natural obligation of all humanity."

Conclusion

Both the Koran and the Prophetic Traditions indicate that violence is sometimes necessary as part of the struggle to establish a just society, which is humanity's responsibility to God. Although Islam condemns the killing of noncombatants, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate uses of violence is often a matter of dispute. Throughout Islamic history, Muslims have fought not only to ensure their freedom to live according to what they understand as God's law but also to extend the influence of Islam, which they view as the ideal means of achieving a just and peaceful society. The principles laid down in the Koran and the Prophetic Traditions that define and limit the uses of violence are general in nature, and their understanding and interpretation have always been influenced by a variety of political and military factors. The general principles allowing and limiting violence do not change; however, Muslim understandings and interpretations of the appropriate and inappropriate use of violence vary, often dramatically, depending on the political and temporal context in which those interpretations are made. However, there is a gap between the jihad of al-Qaeda and the Islamic tradition, and the arguments between Muslims on this issue illuminate that to advocate a policy of indiscriminate fighting is a problematic approach. In addition to the gap between terrorist activities and more traditional Muslim understandings of the use of appropriate and necessary violence in the struggle to establish justice, there are interpretations of that struggle that emphasize the nonviolent aspects of Islamic teachings. No Muslims will deny that Islam condones the use of violence under certain circumstances, and no Muslim will deny that Islam places clear restrictions on that use. Where Muslims disagree is on the particular circumstances and restrictions.

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See also: Hamas; Hizballah; Islamic Fundamentalism; Jainism; Jihad; Middle East; Muhammad; Muhammad, Elijah; Mujahideen; Suicide Bombing.

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Islamic Fundamentalism

Islamic fundamentalism and radical Islam have received considerable attention since their expansion in the 1970s. Although some authors predicted that political Islam would fail, the attacks of September 11, 2001, and consequent events have proven it to be very much alive. This social reality leads to a number of essential questions: What is Islamic fundamentalism? What do Islamic fundamentalists believe? What ideologists are the sources of inspiration of Islamic fundamentalists? Under what circumstances did Islamic fundamentalism emerge? What specific movements form part of this social phenomenon?

The Concept and Related Terms

The concept of Islamic fundamentalism refers to a complex phenomenon with multiple facets. Other terms that are used to describe this and related phenomena are Islamism, political Islam, radical Islam, and Salafism. Sometimes these terms refer to a broader category, and at other times they demarcate a narrower category. Islamic fundamentalism itself is in certain cases used to describe a traditionalist, religious, and political approach to Islam, whereas in other cases it is used to refer only to a political approach. The term has received considerable criticism, especially because the term *fundamentalism* initially referred to Christian Protestant movements of the early twentieth century in the United States. These movements aimed only at purifying their religion and returning to its basics, unlike Islamic fundamentalism, which has a political dimension. Because of these complexities and criticism, it is important to describe what one means when using the concept and examine the principal controversies regarding Islamic fundamentalism.

The first point of disagreement is whether Islamic fundamentalism should refer to political movements or also to purely religious movements. Some distinguish scripturalist Islamic fundamentalism from political Islamic fundamentalism, claiming that scripturalists try to return to Islam in its pure form without striving for political changes. This means returning to the sources of Islam—the Koran and the Sunnah (or Prophetic Traditions)—and getting rid of successive alterations and influences. Politically oriented fundamentalists, on the other hand, aim to reshape society according to Islamic standards. The opposing view is that Islamic fundamentalism is inherently political and