

Islam and Radicalism: A Brief History

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ABSTRACT *This article explains the nature of Islam and its tolerance. It sheds light on Medina constitution as one nation in order to understand the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims in the state of Medina. Jihad has long proven to be one of the most controversial terms therefore, the study sheds light on the violent interpretations of jihad by two radical Islamic scholars Abul A'la Al-Maududi and Seyyid Qutub. Their call for unrestricted war against the enemies of Islam has had a direct influence on extremist militant groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS who have carried out terrorist attacks on an international scale, delegitimized the existing Muslim governments, and called for the restoration of the caliphate throughout the Islamic world. The understanding of jihad should be conducted with an awareness of the controversial nature and the ambiguity surrounding the concept in the modern context of terrorism and religious extremism. In response to the propagators of the offensive theory of jihad who keep feeding the already circulating misconceptions about Islam as a violent and intolerant religion, I provide scholarly evidence to the centrality of peace and tolerance in Islam. .*

Key words: Islam, radicalism, Medina constitution jihad, tolerance, Maududi, Qutub, Al-Qaeda, ISIS

Introduction

There is a widely prevailing, but often misconceived, notion that Islam lacks a consistent teaching or practice of pacifism and that it is by nature and design a violent religion which calls upon its followers to wage unceasing war against non-Muslims. It is also alleged that Islam prohibits all freedom of religion, spreads its faith by the power of the sword alone, and does not tolerate any criticism of its teachings. When the principles of nonviolence and concepts of peace are evoked in the context of Islam, they tend to be associated not with the life of the vast majority of Muslims, but with the practices of a few minority sects. These misconceptions are, in fact, reinforced by the intemperate words and actions of some contemporary Muslim extremists who justify armed violence under the supposed pretext of fulfilling the teachings of Islam. However, as professed by Prophet Muhammad, Islam repudiates the extreme doctrines that manipulate and exploit faith “to give religious sanction to what are in actuality social and political agendas” (Aslan, 2005)

Definition of Islam

The literal meaning of word Islam is “Peace”. The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root “Salema”: peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the

religious sense, Islam means submission to the will of God and obedience to His law. Islam dates back to the edge of Adam and its message has been conveyed to human beings by God's Prophets and Messengers including Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them). Islam's message has been restored and enforced in the last stage of the religious evolution by God's last Prophet and Messenger Muhammad (pbuh). Therefore a religion that has such a name is natural to be more close to moderation than radicalism and Islam is moderation and harmony in every aspect of life with no extremism or rigidness.

Tolerance in Islam

Islam is a religion of mercy to all people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. There is no place for religious intolerance or radicalism in Islam. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) was described as being a mercy in the Quran due to the message he brought for humanity: Allah says: "We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures." (Quran, 21:107). When a person analyses the legislations of Islam with an open mind, the Mercy mentioned in the above quoted verse becomes apparent. One of the aspects of this Mercy can be seen by the way the legislations of Islam deal with people of other faiths. "The tolerant attitude of Islam towards non-Muslims, whether they be those residing in their own countries or within the Muslim lands, can be clearly seen through a study of history" (Said, Funk, and Kadayifci: 2001).

Intrinsic to the socio-political dispensation of the Quran is tolerance of other faiths and the recognition of the individual's freedom of choice and liberty of conscience. This cardinal principle finds endorsement in several passages like "There is no compulsion in religion" (Quran, 2:256), and like "To you [the non-Muslims] your religion, and to me [the Prophet] mine" (Quran, 109:6). The Quran is full of other statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern. (1) The categorical prohibition of coercion in anything that pertains to faith is so clear and strong that any attempt at forcing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin, a verdict which disposes of the allegation that Islam places before the unbelievers the alternative of "conversion or the sword." The Prophet was tolerant to Jews and Christians, for instance, and these religions have at all times been allowed in Muslim lands. More interestingly, many Muslim scholars argue that the Quran includes under the category of believers not only Muslims but also "whoever believes in God and the Day of Judgment and does good" (Quran, 5:69). Whether Muslims, Jews, or Christians, these believers "shall have no fear, neither shall they grieve" (Quran, 5:69).

In the Medinan society since the upper hand was with the Muslims, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) strictly warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths: "Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment." (Hadith, Abu Dawud). The Holy Prophet (pbuh) was conscious of the responsibility Muslim

leadership had towards respecting and tolerating other religions. He made it clear that anything other than tolerance would not be tolerated, and that, although all were members of a society, each had their separate religion which could not be violated. Each was allowed to practice their beliefs freely without any hindrances, and no acts of provocation would be tolerated.

The Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) was a region in which various faiths were present. There were Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, polytheists, and others not affiliated with any religion. When one looks into the life of the Prophet (pbuh), one may draw on many examples to portray the high level of tolerance shown to people of other faiths. In order to understand and judge this tolerance, one must look into the period in which Islam was a formal state, with the specific laws laid down by the Prophet (pbuh) in accordance with the tenets of religion. Even though one can observe many examples of tolerance shown by the Prophet (pbuh) in the thirteen years of his stay in Mecca, one may incorrectly think that it was only due to seeking to raise the profile of the Muslims and the social status of Islam and in general. For this reason, the discussion will be limited to the period which commenced with the migration of the Prophet (pbuh) to Medina, and specifically once the constitution was set.

Medina Constitution

The best example of the tolerance shown by the Prophet (pbuh) to other religions may be the constitution itself, called the “Saheefah” by early historians. When the Prophet (pbuh) migrated to Medina, his role as a mere religious leader ended; he was now the political leader of a state, governed by the precepts of Islam, which demanded that clear laws of governance be laid out to ensure harmony and stability in a society which once had been distraught by decades of war, one which must ensure the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and polytheists. Due to this, the Prophet (pbuh) laid down a ‘constitution’ which detailed the responsibilities of all parties which resided in Medina, their obligations towards each other, and certain restrictions which were placed on each. All parties were to obey what was mentioned therein, and any breach of its articles was regarded as an act of treachery.

One Nation

The first article of the constitution was that all the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were “one nation to the exclusion of all others.” (Dhiya,1994) All were considered members and citizens of Medina society regardless of religion, race, or ancestry. People of other faiths were protected from harm as much as the Muslims, as is stated in another article, “To the Jews who follow us belong help and equity. He shall not be harmed nor his enemies be aided.” (Dhiya, 1994) Previously, each tribe had their alliances and enemies within and without Medina. The Prophet (pbuh) gathered these different tribes under one system of governance which upheld pacts of alliances previously in existence between those individual tribes. All tribes had to act as a whole with disregard to individual alliances. Any attack on other religion or tribe was considered an

attack on the state and upon the Muslims as well.

There are many other articles of this constitution which may be discussed, but emphasis will be placed on an article which states, "If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and His Messenger." (Dhiya,1994) This clause maintained that all inhabitants of the state must recognize a higher level of authority, and in those matters which involved various tribes and religions, justice could not be meted out by individual leaders; rather it must be adjudicated by the leader of the state himself or his designated representatives. It was allowed, however, for individual tribes who were not Muslims, to refer to their own religious scriptures and their learned men in regards to their own personal affairs. They could though, if they opted, ask the Prophet to judge between them in their matters. God says in the Quran: "...If they do come to thee, either judge between them or decline to interfere..." (Quran 5:42). Here we see that the Prophet (pbuh) allowed each religion to judge in their own matters according to their own scriptures, as long as it did not stand in opposition to articles of the constitution, a pact which took into account the greater benefit of the peaceful co-existence of society. This fact is not only purported by Muslims, but many non-Muslim historians also accept it.

Marmaduke Pickthall (1) states: "In the eyes of history, religious toleration is the highest evidence of culture in a people. It was not until the Western nations broke away from their religious law that they became more tolerant, and it was only when the Muslims fell away from their religious law that they declined in tolerance and other evidences of the highest culture. Before the coming of Islam, tolerance had never been preached as an essential part of religion. The tolerance within the body of Islam was, and is, something without parallel in history; class and race and colour ceasing altogether to be barriers". (Pickthall, 2014) The benevolence of Allah and Islam is not limited to Muslims alone.

Patriarch Ghaytho, a Christian historian analysing the attitudes of Islamic religion towards non-Muslims, wrote: "The Arabs, to whom the Lord has given control over the world, treat us as you know; they are not the enemies of Christians. Indeed, they praise our community, and treat our priests and saints with dignity, and offer aid to churches and monasteries." (The Egypt Gazette: 2013). Will Durant in his renowned work comments: "At the time of the Umayyad caliphate, the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sabians, all enjoyed degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples were preserved. They enjoyed autonomy in that they were subject to the religious laws of the scholars and judges." (Durant, 2013).

These relations between Muslims and people of other faiths were not due to mere politics played by Muslim rulers, but rather they were a direct result of the teachings of Islam, which preaches that people of other religions be free to practice their own faith, only accepting the guidance offered by Islam by

their own choice. Allah ordains in the Quran: "Let there be no compulsion in religion..." (Quran, 2:256)

Not only does Islam demand their freedom to practice religion, but also that they be treated justly as any other fellow human. Warning against any abuse of non-Muslims in an Islamic society, the Prophet (pbuh) stated: "Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, curtails their rights, burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment." (Hadith, Abu Dawud). Extremism and religious intolerance are the evil that imperil the existence of society. They strengthen chauvinism and weaken the rational approach to life.

Islam abhors needless killing and exhorts the protection of the lives of entire humanity. The Quran is emphatic: "If you kill an innocent human, it is as though you have killed the entire humanity." (Quran, 5:32). The beauty of this verse is that Allah pointedly decries the slaying of all humanity and not Muslims alone. Many mistakenly believe that Islam does not tolerate the existence of other religions present in the world. The lives of the practitioners of other religions in the Muslim society are also given protective status. In addition to the Quranic teachings, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) exhorted: "Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise." (Hadith: Saheeh al-Bukhari)

When history contradicts this fact, it also shows that, on particular occasions, Muslims have belied the teachings of their Prophet Muhammad and the precepts of the Quran. When Osama bin Laden, who is widely assumed to be the force behind the September 11 hijackings in the United States, cites the Quran as the inspiration for his group's actions, he is presenting his own equivocal interpretation of jihad, a Quranic concept which may have numerous meanings except the killing of civilians. Jihad literally means struggle or striving, an exertion or great effort. Its primary religious connotation is the inward or spiritual struggle to overcome evil and reach a state of moral perfection and complete submission to God. In short, it is the personal struggle to become a better Muslim. The Quran is specific with regard to the nature of this internal struggle because in order for people to be at peace with themselves, they must seek spiritual purity and control their baser instincts such as greed, lust, and cruelty. This quest is featured widely in the Quran as the greater, true or mighty jihad, and has nothing to do with violence and war.⁽²⁾ The struggle is familiar to adherents of any religion trying temper inclinations towards evil with an ongoing commitment to righteousness (Hussain,2012).

The call for the believer to struggle against oppression and tyranny, by military means if necessary, is a lesser jihad which does not completely accord with how Muhammad originally intended the term, nor with how many scholars through the ages have interpreted it (Cortright, 2008 and Aziz, 2007). T. B. Irving notes that: "In proper translation, jihad does not mean 'holy war' except by extension, but it has been debased by this meaning, which is a journalistic usage" (Irving, 1979). The Quran, however, clearly allows Muslims the use of force, but only in self defence against only those who attack them or oppress

them: "Permission [to fight] is given to those on whom war is made ... Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And if Allah did not repel some people by others, then cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down" (Quran, 22: 39-40). Thus, Muslims were fighting to defend the right of every religion to be practiced freely and openly. The defensive character of a fight in "God's cause" is maintained throughout the Quran as evident from Chapter 60, verse 8 (mentioned earlier), as well as from Chapter 4, verse 91. (3)

But if the believers are enjoined to fight back when they are attacked, the words of "Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors" (Quran, 2: 190), make it clear that they must, when fighting, abstain from all atrocities and from inflicting unnecessary damage. Furthermore, and in accordance with the injunctions "if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well" (Quran, 8: 61), and "if they desist [from fighting] then all hostility shall cease" (Quran, 2: 193), the believers are obliged to make peace with an enemy who makes it clear that they want to come to an equitable understanding.

Nevertheless, the idea that the Islamic tradition condemns violence and promotes peace and tolerance has only partial correspondence to observed reality. Different historical episodes in which Islam has been involved have made Islam and violence become synonymous in the mind of many non-Muslims, and a negative valence started to be associated with Muslims. As early as the 6th century, Muslims felt obliged to extend the faith to unbelievers. Even if the original concept of jihad did not include warfare against non-Muslims, wars of expansion were advanced by the devotion of the Caliphs to an interpretation of the Quran which allowed them the latitude of conquering lands and peoples outside the Arabian Peninsula. By the 8th century, Islam had vastly increased its territory to include the Middle East, the Near East, North Africa, most of the Iberian Peninsula, Southwest France and Central Asia. In addition to the use of military power in the spread of Islam, the imposition of a personal tax on all non-Muslims forced many of those who did not wish to pay the tax to become converts. Therefore, though much of the population in conquered geographies might have accepted Islam for a variety of social and economic reasons as well as for the appeal of its teachings, it would be difficult to argue that it was not the victories of Muslim armies which brought Muslim faith to those lands, and that some sort of forced conversions did not occur.

More recently, the misuse of Islam to legitimize violence has become a popular tendency among many influential individuals and groups. Abul A'la Maududi, a celebrated Muslim political philosopher and theologian, gave a speech in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1939 where he claims that: "In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. 'Muslim' is the title of that International Revolutionary Party organized by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary programme. And 'Jihad' refers to

that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Party brings into play to achieve this objective” (Al-Tamimi: 2014).

What is striking in Maududi’s words is the hybrid connotations he imparts to jihad by fusing the primary ideal of the striving on the path to God, which could under specific conditions permit the recourse to violence as a form of defence, with communist ideas about the party as the basis of a revolutionary struggle that would bring a global political transformation through human agency. He further assigns this human agency the role of “destroying all States and Governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam” (Maududi, 2006) so as to “establish in their stead an Islamic system of State rule” (Maududi, 2006).

Maududi had a direct influence on Egyptian Islamic theorist Sayyid Qutub whose *Milestones* would become probably the essential charter and the manifesto of action for several Islamist fundamentalist movements. Qutub claims that modern societies, both Islamic and Western, are living in a state of ignorance and darkness resembling the state of *Jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic era) in the Arabian Peninsula. This is because contemporary societies are organized on the basis of man-made laws that run counter to the *Shariah* bequeathed by God to humanity through Prophet Muhammad. Qutub argues for the creation of a universal community (*Umma*) accepting Allah’s sovereignty on earth and united under Islam’s banner of equality and brotherhood. Yet, he avows that the realization of this vision needs more than peaceful means: The establishment of Allah’s kingdom on earth, the elimination of the reign of man, the wresting of sovereignty from its usurpers and its restoration to Allah, and the abolition of human laws and implementation of the divine law “*Shariah*” cannot be achieved only through sermons and preaching. Those who have usurped Allah’s authority on earth and have enslaved His creatures will not surrender their power merely through preaching (Qutub: 1987). The social, economic, political and racial human forces blocking the path to God and alienating faith from the public sphere are too powerful to be conquered by preaching and persuasion alone. As such, militancy becomes the only way to bringing the rulership of God. A violent interpretation of jihad is the watchword in the end of Qutub ideologizing. It is the means for shifting human beings from bondage to anyone or anything to complete submission to the Lord.

Qutub advocates a militant interpretation of the concept of jihad as an anti-apostate attitude which he draws from his own understanding of key Quranic passages as well as from the views of fourteenth-century Sunni theologian, Ibn Taimiya. Qutub rejects the notion of jihad merely as a defensive mechanism or as an inner struggle for self-righteousness as argued by many classical and modernist scholars, and avoids citing any of the verses typically used to describe the undertaking of jihad via nonmilitant methods. Apparently ignoring context and exegesis, and without proper attention to the mechanics of how jihad is to be declared, undertaken and concluded, Qutub claims the existence of a developmental idea of jihad in the Quran. According to this view, Prophet Muhammad received revelations on jihad in three stages: tolerance, defensive,

and offensive. Qutub cites the verses that demonstrate God's progressive granting of permission to Muslims to engage in jihad of the sword which culminate in Chapter 9, verses 29 and 36. (4) Following this logic, offensive warfare against all polytheists and apostates is now the divine diktat so as to establish the hegemony of Shariah law. (Qutub, 1987)

Because he views the conflict between good and evil as one of cosmic proportions, Qutub needed to justify his call for unrestricted jihad against the enemies of Islam not only abroad but also at home so he resorted to the authority of Ibn Taimiya. The latter issued a fatwa allowing the Muslim Mamluk authorities to attack Muslim Mongols. According to Ibn Taimiya, although the Mongols had made a Muslim confession of faith, they followed not the commands of Islam but a code of behavior set down by Genghis Khan, thus rendering themselves apostates and therefore a legitimate target of jihad. Believing that a vast ocean of Jahiliyyah has encompassed the entire world, and convinced that whoever does not respect the injunctions of the Lord is, in effect, guilty of apostasy, Qutub declares the small, separated cells of "true" believers to be in a state of war against the rest of the world: "We are the Ummah of the believers, living within a Jahili society. ... As a community of believers we should see ourselves in a state of war with the state and the society. The territory we dwell in is Daru Al-Harb "the House of War" (Karch, 2006).

The works of Maududi and Qutub have been widely read, and their theories have contributed significantly to the radicalization of the thinking of many Muslim youths worldwide. Qutub, in particular, is believed to have been "the bridge to the more radical contemporary strains prevalent today" (Burke, 2004). Mass movements whose objectives are, to different extents, grounded in the Qutbian rhetoric include the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Qutub was a leading member, the Lebanese Shiite organization Hizbollah, Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). However, whereas the first two groups remain focused on local goals, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have espoused more expansive political objectives, mainly the removal of existing Muslim governments and borders along with the restoration of the caliphate throughout the Islamic world.

Al-Qaeda is globally notorious for using terrorism as a deliberate tactic to punish the United States for its support to Israel and for its presence and influence in Muslim lands. It also identifies United States' allies as legitimate targets of violence. Since 1992, Al-Qaeda has planned and carried out a string of deadly suicide attacks in places as varied as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Tunisia, the U.S., England, and Spain with an enormous human toll, the majority being innocent civilians including people of the Muslim faith. Interestingly, Al-Qaeda does not present itself as a mere nihilist group that revel in inflicting destruction and death indiscriminately. In many of their public statements, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri make frequent analogies between Al-Qaeda's acts and past Islamic practices, and they quote from the Quran and Hadith to show that their organization is acting within the confines of Islamic

law”. (Ali, 2016). This has led to corroborating the idea that terrorism and violence are intrinsic characteristics of Islam.

ISIS, on the other hand, is a radical militant group active in Syria and Iraq, but with aspirations that strive to dominate the entire world. It grew significantly as an organization due to its involvement in the war in Syria, where it fights both Assad’s troops and the rebel factions that oppose its ideology and plans. In Iraq, it enjoys substantial support among Iraqi Sunnis who have suffered economic and political discrimination after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

ISIS is known for its adherence to an extremely violent theory of transnational jihad, even by Al-Qaeda measures. In addition to government and military targets, it attacks Shia Muslims and Christians. It believes “that there are only three choices in Islam: conversion, subjugation, or death” (Al-Tamimi, 2014). On 29 June 2014, ISIS changed its name to just the Islamic State and proclaimed itself a caliphate in the stretches of Syria and Iraq that have fallen under its control. The group’s chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was named the Caliph, which presumably bestows him with authority over all Muslims, and Muslims everywhere were demanded to swear allegiance. “Upon declaring a caliphate, ISIS has become increasingly emboldened to express the global jihad movement’s true long term goal” (Maher, 2016), namely the elimination of the borders, laws and authority of current states and the establishment of an Islamic State that should encompass the whole world.

The fact that the proponents of the offensive theory of jihad, like Maududi and Qutub, and the perpetrators of terror, like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, use Quran to justify their violent tendencies has indeed created a paranoid fear about Muslims. Amir Hussein has even noticed the rise of what he terms “misoislamia, a neologism that captures the move from a fear (phobia) to a hatred (miso) for Islam and Muslims” (Hussain, 2012). Nevertheless, Jawaid Quddus points out that “to judge Islam by the conduct of a minority of its people is misleading. It stigmatizes a vast majority of law abiding peaceful citizens” (Quddus, 2005). After drawing on extensive statistics, Quddus reminds that in the Western media hoopla of trying to present Islam as the root of all terrorist acts, a basic fact is forgotten, namely that “most of the victims of terrorism are Muslims” (Quddus, 2005). Consequently, ordinary Muslims have the same reasons to fear for their lives from the terrorist follies of “these overnight propaganda merchants posing as Islamic scholars (but whose) forays into the study of Islam has been very superficial, biased and without critical thinking” (Quddus: 2005).

Likewise, Niaz A. Shah does not agree with Maududi and Qutb’s justification of violence because, first, “the offensive theory of Jihad is against the Quranic code of armed conflict with non-Muslims and the inherent principles of neutrality, that is, fight only those who fight you” (Niaz: 2008), and, second, “a contextual interpretation of the verses they rely on brings a different meaning to them” (Niaz, 2008). Thus, when violence is mentioned in the Quran, “it is a violence that is contextualized, meaning it occurs in the context of warfare between Muslims and polytheists,” and, very importantly, “it is a violence that

is tempered” (Hussain, 2012). Tempering violence refers to the strict code of behaviour prescribed by the Quran to minimize the damage likely to occur during an armed conflict. According to Quddus, this includes:

Not attacking a wounded person, not attacking or killing non-combatants such as any old person, any child or women, monks in monasteries or people sitting in places of worship. In addition, it specifically prohibited to kill a prisoner of war, indulge in loot or plunder, destruction of villages, cattle, cultivated fields, trees and gardens. Muslims are prohibited from taking anything from the general public ... without paying for it. Needless to say, Muslims are also prohibited from mutilating the corpses of the enemies and are to return the bodies of dead enemy soldiers without delay or compensation (Quddus, 2005). Quddus concludes that “although people of the Islamic faith around the world have violated all of the above rules some of the time, they have done so despite Islam and not because of Islam” (Quddus, 2005).

In similar condemnation of and resentment for those who terrorize others in the name of Islam, Muslim legal scholar Khaled Abu El Fadl observes: “The classical jurists, nearly without exception, argued that those who attack by stealth, while targeting non-combatants in order to terrorize the resident and wayfarer, are corrupters of the earth” (Khaled, 2007). He further adds: “Those guilty of this crime were considered enemies of humankind and were not to be given quarter or sanctuary anywhere” (Khaled, 2007). The jihadists who commit acts of terror or strive to provide a theoretical basis for it do not necessarily represent Islam and the great majority of Muslims. It does not matter if they are videotaped reciting verses of the Quran or yelling “Allahu Akbar.” It does not matter if they have written books that got reprinted or translated to most languages. They are simply a misguided few who instead of giving non-Muslims the opportunity to appreciate Islam, they give them reasons to fear and hate it.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Islam is not a religion of radicalism but moderation and harmony in every aspect of life. However, for that Muslims thoroughly study and learn Quran and follow the teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which would ultimately bring the true picture of Islam in front of the entire world. The prevalence of media bias and ignorance regarding Islam can be countered by understanding Islam through its proper teachings. That means referring to the Quran (which Muslims believe to be the word of God) and the authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Through the proper understanding of these teachings, one will discover Islam to be completely against any form of extremism. The Islam emphasizes peace and reconciliation as basic to all social and even international relations. One of the ninety-nine names of God is Salaam, which means peace. Throughout history, Muslims have made every effort to establish peace and serenity everywhere

in all divergent fields, only taking military measures when their enemies tried to hinder these efforts for humankind. Over the course of history, the general approach of Muslims has been supportive of maintaining tolerance, spreading an environment of serenity and trust, and constructing a civilization of love, compassion, and mercy to share with other people in peace. Jihad is not a violent concept and it is not a declaration of war against other religions. Military action in the name of Islam has not been common in the history of Islam and calling for violent jihad is not sanctioned by Islam.

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