

“The Qur’an and War: Observations on Islamic Just War”

By Dr Joel Hayward

Given the strategic importance of the Middle East, the geographical location of our major wars throughout the last two decades as well as the cultural origin of some of the terrorist groups that have hassled the West during that time, it is surprising that very few non-Muslim strategists and military personnel have included the Qur’an in their reading. This article analyses the Qur’an and articulates its mandatory codes of conduct in order to determine what that text actually requires or permits Muslims to do *vis-à-vis* the use of military force. It concludes that the Qur’an is unambiguous: Muslims are prohibited from aggressive violence and are compelled, if warfare should become unavoidable, always to act within a code of ethical behaviour that is closely akin to, and compatible with, the western warrior code embedded within Just War. This article is intended to be useful to western military personnel — sufficient to dispel any misperceptions that the Qur’an advocates the punishment, subjugation or even killing of “infidels” as well as to reveal its key concepts governing justice during wartime.

Introduction

I have been a professional military educator since 1996 and throughout most of those fourteen years I have taught the ethics of war — almost always through the framework of western Just War concepts — to military personnel from all three services and at various levels from officer cadets to senior officers. Particularly since the declaration of the so-called War on Terror in 2001, I have noticed an increasing concern among military students at all levels that, while “we” adhere to Just War tenets, other states and peoples, particularly Muslims in general and Arabs in particular, have no comparable philosophical framework for guiding ethical behaviour during international disputes and during warfare itself.

Having so far overseen the education of approximately 3,000 Royal Air Force officer cadets at the Royal Air Force College, and having taught Just War on almost every commissioning course in which they have studied since 2005, I have been struck by what I perceive to be the consensus opinion of students: that although we westerners have a code of war based on restraint, chivalry and respect for civilians, the faith of Islam — from which “radical Islamists” gain their inspiration and permission, if not guidance — is more militant, aggressive and tolerant of violence. According to this view, Islam is indeed the religion of the sword.

My purpose in writing this article is therefore to analyse the holy text which underpins Islam and articulates its mandatory codes of conduct in order to determine what that text, the Qur’an, actually

requires or permits Muslims to do in terms of military violence. It is my conclusion (and that of every authoritative Islamic scholar) that the Qur’an is unambiguous: Muslims are prohibited from aggressive violence and are compelled, should war prove unavoidable, always to act within a code of ethical behaviour that is closely akin to, and compatible with, the western warrior code embedded within Just War.

This article is intended to be useful — sufficient to dispel any assumptions that the Qur’an advocates the punishment, subjugation or even killing of “infidels” as well as to reveal its key concepts governing justice during wartime — but it is not designed to be exhaustive. Nor is it designed to trace the complex 1400-year history of Islamic faithfulness to the Qur’anic teachings. Its endnotes contain terrific books and articles for readers interested in that subject.¹ Yet the article will hopefully help to enrich the understanding of the servicemen and women who serve in Islamic lands or see the current conflict as somehow being related to that faith’s approach to war.

The Book with 1600 Million Readers

Although Muslims constitute one-quarter of the world’s population, people do not tend to read the holy scriptures of other faiths so it is not surprising that very few non-Muslims have taken time to read the Qur’an.² Yet, given the strategic importance of the Middle East, the geographical location of our major wars throughout the last two decades as well as the cultural origin of some of the terrorist groups that have most frightened or angered the West during that time, it is surprising

that very few non-Muslim strategists and military personnel have taken time to read the Qur'an alongside doctrine publications and works of military philosophy. The Qur'an is certainly shorter than Clausewitz's magisterial *Vom Kriege* (*On War*) and far easier to understand.

The Qur'an is a relatively short book of approximately 77,000 words, which makes it about the size of most thrillers or romance novels and roughly half the length of the New Testament or one-quarter the length of the Old.³ It is neither deeply complex philosophically nor written as inaccessible poetry or mystical and esoteric vagueness. The Qur'an was reportedly revealed by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad, a Meccan merchant in what is now Saudi Arabia, through a series of revelations from Allāh (Arabic for God), over a period of twenty-three years beginning in the year 610. Muhammad's companions memorised and wrote down the individual revelations almost straight away and compiled them into the Qur'an's final Arabic form very soon after his death in 632. The Qur'an is therefore held by Muslims to be the very words of Allāh, recorded precisely as originally revealed through Muhammad. This explains why most of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims⁴ endeavour to learn at least the basics of Qur'anic Arabic so that they can read and more importantly hear Allāh's literal words as originally revealed and why they consider all translations into other languages to be decidedly inferior.⁵

Even a cursory reading of the Qur'an will draw the reader's eyes to hundreds of scriptures extolling

tolerance, conciliation, inclusiveness and peace, but also to a few scriptures that seem to be more aggressive than, for example, Christians are used to reading in the words of Christ and his followers as expressed in the New Testament. Critics of the Qur'an who advance what I consider to be an unsustainable argument that Islam is the world's most warlike major faith — among whom the American scholar Robert Spencer is both the most prolific and influential⁶ — routinely highlight Qur'anic passages to support their argument that Islam has a tendency towards aggressive war, not inclusive peace.⁷

These writers tend to focus their attention on a few passages within the Qur'an which seem to suggest that Allāh encourages Muslims to subjugate non-Muslims, and even to take their lives if they refuse to yield. The critics especially like to quote *Surah* (Chapter) 9, *Ayah* (Verse) 5, which has become known as the "verse of the sword" (*Ayat al-Sayf*). This verse explicitly enjoins Muslims to kill "pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)."⁸ You could not imagine gentle Buddha or the peaceful, cheek-turning Jesus ever saying such things, the critics assert, brushing off some of Jesus' seemingly incongruous statements, such as Matthew 10:34 — "Do not think I come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" — as allegorical and metaphorical.⁹

When they read the Qur'an, the opponents of its message tend not to place adequate importance on the obvious difference between Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus was the spiritual

leader of a small and intimate group of followers at a time of relative peace throughout the land. He suffered death, according to the Christian scriptures, but his execution by the Rome-governed state came after a short burst of state anger that actually followed several years of him being able to preach without severe opposition and no known violence. By contrast, Muhammad (in some ways like Moses) found himself not only the spiritual but also the *political* and *legislative* leader of a massive community that wanted to be moderate, just and inclusive but suffered organised warfare from other political entities which were committed to its destruction. His responsibilities (including the governance, sustenance and protection of tens of thousands of children, men and women) were very different.

The scholars and pundits who dislike the fact that Muhammad had to fight his way to peace and who consider his religion to be inherently martial often add to their condemnation of Surah 9:5 with equally strong attacks on Surah 9:29. This verse directs Muslims to “fight those who believe not in Allāh” and the Day of Judgment, who do not comply with Muslim laws, as well as those Jews and Christians who reject the religion of Islam and will not willingly pay a state tax after their submission.¹⁰ Many critics assert that this verse directs Muslims to wage war against any and all disbelievers anywhere who refuse to embrace Islam or at least to submit to Islamic rule.¹¹

The critics also place negative focus on Surah 2:190-194, which states:

190. *Fight in the cause of Allāh those*

who fight you, but do not transgress limits: for Allāh loveth not transgressors.

191. *And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque [Al-Masjid Al-Harām, the sanctuary at Mecca], unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.*

192. *But if they cease, then Allāh is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.*

193. *And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allāh; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.*

Before this article offers an explanation of the meaning of these ostensibly severe verses and presents other verses in order to give a balanced view of the Qur’anic view of war, it is worth observing that even among the scriptures that form the bedrock and bulk of the Judeo-Christian tradition — the Old Testament — are verses that explicitly advocate murderous large-scale violence incompatible with any codes of warfare that Jews and Christians would nowadays condone. When Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land and promptly laid siege to Jericho, which was the first walled city they encountered west of the Jordan River, “they destroyed with the sword

every living thing in it — men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.”¹² The lack of what we would today call discrimination between combatants and non-combatants accorded with God’s earlier commandment that, in areas which God had set aside for their occupation, the Israelites were to ensure that, “without mercy,” they did not leave alive “anything that breathed”.¹³

The ancient world was certainly brutal at times, with military excesses sometimes involving deliberate widespread violence against whole civilian communities. “It is a wonderful sight,” Roman commander Scipio Aemilianus Africanus gushed in 146 B.C. as he watched his forces raise the enemy city of Carthage to the ground following his order that no trace of it should remain. “Yet I feel a terror and dread lest someone should one day give the same order about my own native city.”¹⁴

No-one can doubt that humanity has since made tremendous progress in the way it conceives the purpose and nature of warfare and the role and treatment of non-combatants. Yet we would be wrong to believe that the “Carthaginian approach” has disappeared entirely. The Holocaust of the Jews in the Second World War, one of history’s vilest crimes, involved the organised murder of millions of Jews by Germans and others who considered themselves Christians or at least members of the Christian value system. Other crimes perpetrated by Christians during recent wars have included the (Orthodox Christian) Bosnian Serb massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in and around the town

of Srebrenica in July 1995.

It is my assessment of historical evidence that Christianity is a faith of peace that cannot reasonably be considered blameworthy in and of itself for the Crusades, the Holocaust, the Srebrenica massacre or the Timothy McVeigh terrorist attack in Oklahoma City in 1995, even though Christians committed those horrendous acts and many others. It is also my judgment that Islam is equally a faith of peace that cannot fairly be seen as blameworthy in and of itself for the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait or the Al-Qaeda attacks on America in 2001, even though Muslims committed those disgraceful deeds. Certainly Islam’s framing scriptures, the Qur’an, contains no verses which are more explicitly warlike than those cited above and, in any event, those verses have not provided major Islamic movements, as opposed to impassioned minority splinter groups, with a mandate to wage aggressive war or to inflict disproportionate or indiscriminate brutality.

Abrogation?

While Muslims hold the Qur’an to be Allāh’s literal, definitive and final revelation to humankind, they recognise that it is not intended to be read as a systematic legal or moral treatise. They understand it to be a discursive commentary on the stage-by-stage actions and experiences of the prophet Muhammad, his ever-increasing number of followers and his steadily decreasing number of opponents over the twenty-three year

period which took him from his first revelation to his political hegemony in Arabia.¹⁵ Consequently, doctrines or concepts within the Qur'an emerged or developed in stages throughout that period, with some early passages on inheritance, alcohol, law, social arrangements and so on being superseded by later passages, a phenomenon that the Qur'an itself describes in Surah 2:106, which reveals that when Allāh developed a concept beyond its first revelation and he therefore wanted to supersede the original verses, he would replace them with "better" ones.

This pattern of conceptual modification or development does not mean that Muslims see the Qur'an as purely contextual, with all its scriptures being relevant only to the time and place of the individual revelations. The Qur'an itself states in several Surah that Allāh's words constitute a universally applicable message sent down for "all of mankind" and that it was "a reminder" (with both "glad tidings and warnings") to "all" of humanity.¹⁶ With this in mind, Muslims believe that to ignore scriptures on the basis of a that-was-then-this-is-now reading would be sinful. They likewise believe that to quote or draw inspiration or guidance from verses in isolation, without seeing how they form parts of consistent concepts which only emerge when the entire book is studied, would be unhelpful and self-serving. They also reason that, while their holy book was not revealed with the intention of being a self-contained and systematic ethical treatise, it serves eminently well as the source from which a universally applicable ethical system can and

should be developed.

Opponents of Islam or (at least of Islam's supposed teachings on war) have routinely argued that, in the early years of his mission while still in his hometown of Mecca, Muhammad strongly advocated peaceful co-existence with peoples of other faiths, particularly Jews and Christians. Despite mounting resistance and persecution, some of it violent and all of it humiliating, Muhammad advocated an almost Gandhian policy of prayerful and dignified non-resistance. Then, after he and his followers fled persecution in 622 by escaping to Medina, where they had more chance of establishing a sizeable and more influential religious community, Muhammad became increasingly bitter at his intransigent foes in Mecca and ordered warfare against them.¹⁷ Finally (the critics claim), following the surprisingly peaceful Islamic occupation of Mecca in 630, Muhammad glumly realised that certain Jews and others would not accept his prophetic leadership or embrace Islamic monotheism, so he then initiated an aggressive war against all disbelievers.¹⁸ Critics furthermore claim that, because Muhammad did not clarify his position before he died two years later, in 632, after Allāh's revelation to mankind was complete, the verses encouraging the martial suppression of disbelief (that is, of the disbelievers) are still in force today. These supposedly include the so-called "verse of the sword" of Surah 9:5 (and 29), quoted above and revealed to Muhammad in 631.¹⁹ As scholar David Bukay wrote:

Coming at or near the very end of

*Muhammad's life ... [Surah 9] trumps earlier revelations. Because this chapter contains violent passages, it abrogates previous peaceful content.*²⁰

The critics of Islam who hold that view insist that these warlike verses abrogate (cancel out) the scores of conciliatory and non-confrontational earlier verses which had extolled spiritual resistance (prayer and outreach) but physical non-resistance. They note that Osama bin Laden and other leading "radical Islamists" — who also believe that the later Qur'anic verses on war have cancelled out the earlier peaceful and inclusive verses — have justified their vile terror attacks on America and other states by quoting from the "verse of the sword" and the other reportedly aggressive scriptures mentioned above. Bin Laden certainly did draw upon the verse of the sword and other seemingly militant Qur'anic scriptures in his August 1996 "Declaration of War against the Americans occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places"²¹ as well as in his February 1998 fatwā.²² The first of these wretched fatāwā instructed Muslims to kill Americans until they withdrew from their occupation of Saudi Arabia, and the second more broadly instructed them to kill Americans (both civilians and military personnel) and their allies, especially the Israelis, for their suppression of Islam and their exploitation of Islamic resources in various parts of the world.

Of course, the obviously partisan bin Laden is not a cleric, a religious scholar or a historian of early Islam. He is an impassioned, violent and murderous extremist without judgement or moderation. He is not

representative of Islamic belief or behaviour. His assertions that the verse of the sword and other martial Qur'anic verses are still in place and universally applicable therefore holds no more weight of authority than arguments to that effect made by Spencer, Bukay and their Islam-mistrusting colleagues. Certainly most Islamic authorities on the Qur'an and Muhammad today, as opposed to scholars from, say, the more ambiguous medieval period, are firm in their judgement that the most warlike verses in the Qur'an, even those revealed very late in Muhammad's mission, do not cancel out the overwhelming number of verses that extol tolerance, reconciliation, inclusiveness and peace.²³ For example, according to British scholar Dr Zakaria Bashier (author of many books on early Islam including a thorough analysis of war), all the beautiful verses throughout the Qur'an which instruct Muslims to be peaceful, tolerant and non-aggressive are:

*Muhkam verses, i.e. definite, not allegorical. They are not known to have been abrogated, so they naturally hold. No reason exists at all to think that they have been overruled.*²⁴

Bashier adds that even the contextual information revealed within the Qur'an itself will lead readers to the inescapable conclusion that the verse of the sword related only to a particular time, place and set of circumstances, and that, in any event, claims of it superseding the established policy of tolerance are "not borne out by the facts of history."²⁵ Prolific British scholar Louay Fatoohi agrees, arguing that an "overwhelming number" of Muslim

scholars reject the abrogation thesis regarding war. Fatoohi highlights the fact that throughout history the Islamic world has never acted in accordance with this extreme view, that Muslims have co-existed very well with other faith communities and that the 1600 million peaceable Muslims in the world today clearly do not accept the view otherwise, if they did, they would be at war as we speak.²⁶ Muhammad Abu Zahra, an important and influential Egyptian intellectual and expert on Islamic law, summed up the mainstream Islamic view by rejecting any abrogation thesis pertaining to conflict and stating that “War is not justified ... to impose Islam as a religion on unbelievers or to support a particular social regime. The prophet Muhammad fought only to repulse aggression.”²⁷

Explaining the Verse of the Sword

It is quite true that, taken in isolation, Surah 9:5 (the verse of the sword) seems an unusually violent pronouncement for a prophet who had for twenty years preached tolerance, peace and reconciliation. Yet it is equally true that, when read in the context of the verses above and below Surah 9:5, and when the circumstances of its pronouncement by Muhammad are considered, it is not difficult for readers without preconceptions and bias to understand it more fully. Here is the verse again:

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war).

The fact that the verse actually starts

with the Arabic conjunction “wa,” translated above as “but,” indicates that its line of logic flows from the verse or verses above it. Indeed, the preceding four verses explain the context.

Ayah 1 gives the historical context as a violation of the Treaty of Hdaybīyah, signed in 628 by the State of Medina and the Quraysh tribe of Mecca. In short, this was a peace treaty between Muhammad and his followers and those Meccans who had spent a decade trying to destroy them. Two years after it was signed the Banū Bakr tribe, which had allied with the Quraysh, attacked the Banū Khuzā'a tribe, which had joined the side of the Muslims. Muhammed considered the Banū Bakr attack a treaty violation, arguing that an attack on an ally constituted an attack on his own community.²⁸ Then, following his extremely peaceful seizure of Mecca and his purification of its holy site (he destroyed no fewer than 360 idols in the Ka'aba), the Qur'anic revelation contained a very stern warning. (Other sources reveal that Muhammad then explained it publicly from the steps of the Ka'aba and sent out deputies to the regions around Mecca to destroy pagan shrines and idols and utter the warnings to local communities.²⁹) The scriptural warning was clear: anyone wanting to undertake polytheistic pilgrimages to Mecca (or immoral rituals within it, such as walking naked around the Ka'aba³⁰) in accordance with existing agreements with the Quraysh tribe or with Muhammad's own community should understand that henceforth they would not be permitted to do so. No polytheism (worship of more than one god) and

idolatry (worship of any man or object instead of the one god) would ever again be tolerated within Islam's holy city. From that time on it would be a city devoted to Allāh alone.³¹

Ayat 2 and 3 were revealed through Muhammad to give polytheists or idolaters living in Mecca and its environs as well as any polytheistic or idolatrous pilgrims in transit along Muslim-controlled trade and pilgrimage routes a clear warning that they should desist or leave. The scriptures generously included a period of amnesty that would last until the end of the current pilgrimage season. Thus, Arab polytheists and idolaters would gain a four-month period of grace. Ayah 4 makes clear that during that period of amnesty, polytheists or idolaters were to be left untouched so that Muslims would not themselves become promise-breakers. ("So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of the term; for Allāh loves the righteous.") After clarifying that the threatened violence would apply only to those who had ignored the warnings and continued to practice polytheism or idolatry in and around the holy city and its sanctuary, and were still foolish enough not to have left after four months, Ayah 5 — the sword verse — clearly warned them that there would be a violent military purging or purification in which they seriously risked being killed.

Although this is sometimes omitted by critics of the verse of the sword, the verse actually has a secondary clause which, after the direction to root out and kill anyone who had ignored the clear and solemn warnings and continued their polytheism or idolatry, enjoined

Muslims to remember that they must be merciful ("to open the way") to those who repented and accepted their penitent obligations in terms of Islam. Moreover, the verse of the sword is immediately followed by an unusually charitable one — again ordinarily left out of Islam-critical treatments — in which any of the enemy who asked for asylum during any coming violence were not only to be excluded from that violence, but were to be escorted to a place of safety.³²

The rest of Surah 9 contains more explanation for the Muslims as to why they would now need to fight, and fiercely, anyone who broke their oaths or violated the sanctity of holy places, despite earlier hopes for peace according to the terms of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah. The controversial Ayah 29, which talks of killing polytheists and idolaters, actually comes right after Ayah 28, which speaks specifically about preventing them from performing religious rituals or pilgrimages in or around the newly purified sanctuary in Mecca. Ayah 29 thus also refers to the cleansing of Mecca and its environs as well as to the need to secure the borders of the Arabian Peninsula from greater external powers which might smother the Islamic *ummah* (community) in its infancy. The rest of Surah 9 also apparently contains scriptures relating to the later campaign against Tabūk, when some groups which had treaty obligations with Muhammad broke their promises and refused to join or sponsor the campaign. It is worth noting that, in this context also, Muhammad chose to forgive and impose a financial, rather than physical, penalty upon those who genuinely apologised.³³

It is clear, therefore, that the verse of the sword was a context-specific verse relating to the cleansing and purification of Mecca and its environs of all Arab polytheism and idolatry so that the sanctuary in particular, with the Ka'aba at its centre, would never again be rendered unclean by the paganism of those locals and pilgrims who had long been worshipping idols (reportedly hundreds of them) there.³⁴ It was proclaimed publicly as a warning, followed by a period of grace which allowed the wrong-doers to desist or leave the region, and qualified by humane caveats that allowed for forgiveness, mercy and protection. It is thus not as bloodthirsty as Robert Spencer and his colleagues portray it. Indeed, it is so context-specific that, even if it WERE still in force — and I share the assessment that it has not abrogated the scriptures encouraging peace, tolerance and reconciliation — it would only nowadays have any relevance and applicability if polytheists and idolaters ever tried to undertake and re-establish pagan practices in the Saudi Arabian cities devoted only to Allāh: Mecca and Medina. In other words, in today's world it is not relevant or applicable.

Critics apparently fail to grasp the specific nature of the context — the purification of Mecca from polytheistic and idolatrous pilgrimages and rituals — and even misquote the famous medieval Islamic scholar Isma'il bin 'Amr bin Kathir al Dimashqi, known popularly as Ibn Kathir. Spencer claims that Ibn Kathir understood the verse of the sword to abrogate all peaceful verses ever previously uttered by the prophet.³⁵ Ibn Kathir said no such thing. He quoted an earlier

authority, Ad-Dahhāk bin Muzāhim, who only stated that the verse of the sword cancelled out every treaty which had granted pilgrimage rights to Arab pagans to travel along Islamic routes, enter Mecca and perform unpalatable rituals there.³⁶ Because this earlier source referred to the verse of the sword “abrogating” something, Spencer mistakenly extrapolates this to claim, baselessly, that this one single verse cancelled out all existing inter-faith practices and arrangements and forever negatively changed attitudes to non-Muslims in general.

In case any readers are not convinced, there is another verse in the Qur'an — also from the later period of Muhammad's life — which (using words virtually identical to the verse of the sword) also exhorted Muslims to “seize and slay” wrongdoers “wherever ye find them”. Yet this verse, Surah 4:89, is surrounded by so many other explanatory and qualifying verses that its superficially violent meaning is immediately moderated by its context of tolerance and understanding. First, it threatened violence in *self-defence* only against those people or groups who violated pacts of peace with the Muslims and attacked them, or those former Muslims (“renegades”) who had rejoined the forces of oppression and now fought aggressively against the Muslims. Secondly, it stated that, if those aggressors left the Muslims alone and free to practice their faith, and if they did not attack them, but offered them peaceful co-existence, then Allāh would not allow Muslims to harm them in any way (“Allāh hath opened no way for you to war against them”).³⁷ The verse went even further. It not only offered peaceful

co-existence to those who formally made peace with the Muslims, but also to anyone, even backslidden Muslims, who merely chose to stay neutral; that is, who did not take either side in the tense relations between the Muslims on the one hand and the Quraysh and their allies on the other.³⁸

Self-defence

It is worth remembering that, for the first fourteen years of his public life (from 610 to 624), Muhammad practiced and proclaimed a policy of peaceful non-resistance to the intensifying humiliation, cruelty and violence that the Quraysh, the dominant tribe of Mecca, attempted to inflict upon him and his fellow Muslims. Throughout this period he strenuously resisted “growing pressure from within the Muslim ranks to respond in kind” and insisted “on the virtues of patience and steadfastness in the face of their opponents’ attacks.”³⁹ These were:

*desperate days for the ummah [Islamic community]. Muhammad had to contend with the hostility of some of the pagans in Medina, who resented the power of the Muslim newcomers and were determined to expel them from the settlement. He also had to deal with Mecca, where Abu Sufyan now directed the campaign against him, and had launched two major offensives against the Muslims in Medina. His object was not simply to defeat the ummah in battle, but to annihilate all the Muslims. The harsh ethic of the desert meant that there were no half-measures in warfare: if possible, a victorious chief was expected to exterminate the enemy, so the ummah faced the threat of total extinction.*⁴⁰

In 624, two years after he and his

followers fled Mecca and settled in Medina — two years in which the Quraysh continued to persecute them and then led armies against them — Muhammad finally announced a revelation from Allāh that Muslims were allowed physically to *defend* themselves to *preserve* themselves through the contest of arms. Most scholars agree that Surah 22:39 contains that first transformational statement of permission.⁴¹ Including the verses above and below, it says:

38. *Verily Allāh will defend (from ill) those who believe: verily, Allāh loveth not any that is a traitor to faith, or shows ingratitude.*
39. *To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged — and verily, Allāh is Most Powerful for their aid.*
40. *(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right (for no cause) except that they say, “Our Lord is Allāh”.*

These verses continue by pointing out that, had Allāh not previously used some people elsewhere to defend themselves from the aggression and persecution of others, there would surely have been the destruction of “monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of Allāh is commemorated in abundant measure.” The verses add that Allāh will surely aid those who aid him, and that he is truly mighty and invincible.

The references to defending the faithful from harm in Ayah 38, to those on the receiving end of violence in Ayah 39 and those who have been driven from their

homes in Ayah 40 reveal very clearly that Allāh's permission to undertake armed combat was not for offensive war, but *self-defence* and *self-preservation* when attacked or oppressed. Interestingly, it even extols the defence of houses of worship, including the churches of Christians and the synagogues of Jews.

This permission for self-defensive warfighting (the Arabic word is *qital*, or combat) corresponds precisely with the first Qur'anic passage on war that one reads when one starts from the front cover: Surah 2:190, which, as quoted above, states: "Fight in the cause of Allāh those who fight you, but do not transgress limits: for Allāh loveth not transgressors." Thus, the purpose of armed combat was self-defence and, even though the need for survival meant that warfare would be tough, combat was to adhere to a set of prescribed constraints.⁴² The following verse's instruction to "slay them" wherever they turn up commences with the conjunction "wa," here translated as "and," to indicate that it is a continuation of the same stream of logic. In other words, Muslims were allowed to defend themselves militarily from the forces or armies which were attacking them wherever that happened. Tremendous care was to be taken not to shed blood in the environs of Mecca's sacred mosque, but if Muslims found themselves attacked there they could kill their attackers while defending themselves without committing a sin. This series of verses actually ends with instructions that, if the attackers ceased their attacks, Muslims were not to continue to fight them because Allāh is "Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."⁴³

Thus, continued resistance could — and nowadays can — only be a proportionate response to continued oppression.⁴⁴ In every Qur'anic example in which warfighting (*qital*) is encouraged for protection against oppression or violence, verses can be found that stress that, should the wrongdoers cease their hostility, then Muslims must immediately cease their own fighting.

The Qur'anic permission for defensive resistance to attacks or oppression does not mean that Muhammad enjoyed war, or took pleasure whatsoever in the fact that defensive warfare to protect his *ummah* from extinction or subjugation would involve the loss of even his enemies' lives. He was no warmonger and forgave and pardoned mortal enemies whenever he could. This "reluctant warrior," to quote one scholar, urged the use of nonviolent means when possible and, often against the advice of his companions, sought the early end of hostilities.⁴⁵ At the same time, in accordance with the revelations he had received, he accepted that combat for the defence of Islam and Islamic interests would sometimes be unavoidable. One of Muhammad's companions remembers him telling his followers not to look forward to combat, but if it were to come upon them then they should pray for safety and be patient.⁴⁶ He took no pleasure in the fact that — as also taught in later western Just War theory — the regrettable violence inherent within warfare would sometimes be necessary in order to create a better state of peace. Explaining to fellow Muslims the need in some situations to undertake combat, Muhammad acknowledged Allāh's revelation that

warfare was something that seemed very wrong, indeed a “disliked” activity, yet it was morally necessary and thus morally right and obligatory under some circumstances.⁴⁷ Warfare was frightening and dreadful, but *in extremis* better than continued persecution and attack.⁴⁸

His greatest victory — his eventual return to his hometown Mecca in 630 at the head of an army of 10,000 — was itself a bloodless affair marked by tremendous forgiveness. After his forces entered the city, the panicked Quraysh tribe, which effectively surrendered after realizing that resistance to the pilgrim army was futile, anticipated that their leaders and warriors would be slain.⁴⁹ After all, for two decades they had humiliated, persecuted and tried to assassinate Muhammad and had maltreated and even waged savage war against his followers. Yet, aside from four murderers and serious oath-breakers who were beyond rehabilitation, Muhammad chose to forgive them all in a general amnesty. There was no bloodbath. He reportedly asked the assembled leaders of Quraysh what fate they anticipated. Expecting death, but hoping for life, they replied: “O noble brother and son of a noble brother! We expect nothing but goodness from you.” This appeal must have relieved Muhammad and made him smile. He replied: “I speak to you in the same words as Yusuf [the biblical Joseph, also one of Islam’s revered prophets] spoke unto his brothers. ... ‘No reproach on you this day.’ Go your way, for you are freed ones.”⁵⁰ He even showed mercy to Hind bint Utbah, Abu Sufyan’s wife, who was under a sentence of death for having horrifically and

disgracefully mutilated the body of Muhammad’s beloved uncle Hamzah during the Battle of Uhud five years earlier. Hind had cut open Hamzah’s body, ripped out his liver and chewed it.⁵¹ She then reportedly strung the ears and nose into a “necklace” and entered Mecca wearing it as a “trophy” of victory. When justice finally caught up with her five years later she threw herself upon Muhammad’s mercy. Extending clemency of remarkable depth, Muhammad promised her forgiveness and accepted her into his community.⁵²

Proportionate Response, Last Resort and Discrimination

Mercy between humans, based on forgiveness of someone else’s acknowledged wrongdoing, was something that Muhammad believed precisely mirrored the divine relationship between the Creator and humans. The concepts of patience, forgiveness and clemency strongly underpinned the early Islamic practice of warfare. Proportionality — one of the core principals of western Just War — also serves as a key foundational principle in the Qur’anic guidance on war. Doing no violence greater than the minimum necessary to guarantee victory is repeatedly stressed (and described as “not transgressing limits”). So is the imperative of meeting force with equal force in order to prevent defeat and discourage future aggression. Deterrence comes by doing to the aggressor what he has done to the innocent: “Should you encounter them in war, then deal with them in such a manner that those that [might have intended to] follow them should abandon their designs

and may take warning.”⁵³ With this deterrent function in mind, the Qur’an embraces the earlier biblical revelation to the Israelites, which permits people to respond to injustice eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Yet, like the Christian Gospels, it suggests that there is more spiritual value (bringing “purification”) in forgoing revenge in a spirit of charity.⁵⁴ This passage, interestingly, is from the same period of revelation as the verse of the sword, which further weakens the abrogation thesis mentioned above. Moreover, even on this matter of matching one’s strength to the opponent’s strength⁵⁵, the Qur’an repeatedly enjoins Muslims to remember that, whenever possible, they should respond to provocations with patience and efforts to facilitate conciliation. They should avoid fighting unless it becomes necessary after attempts have been made at achieving a peaceful resolution (which is a concept not vastly different from the western Just War notion of Last Resort) because forgiveness and the restoration of harmony remain Allāh’s preference.⁵⁶

Dearly wanting to avoid bloodshed whenever possible, Muhammad created a practice of treating the use of lethal violence as a last resort which has been imitated by Muslim warriors to this day, albeit at times with varying emphases.⁵⁷ Before any warfighting can commence — except for spontaneous self-defensive battles when surprised — the leader must make a formal declaration of war to the enemy force, no matter how aggressive and violent that enemy is. He must communicate a message to the enemy that it would be better for them to embrace Islam. If they did (and Muhammad liked to offer three

days for reflection and decision⁵⁸) then the grievance ended. A state of brotherhood ensued. If the enemy refused, then a proposal would be extended that offered them peace in return for the ending of aggression or disagreeable behaviour and the paying of a tax. If the enemy refused even that offer, and did not cease his wrong-doing, they forfeited their rights to immunity from the unfortunate violence of war.⁵⁹

Islamic concepts of war do not define and conceptualise things in exactly the same way as western thinking has done within the Just War framework. Yet the parallels are striking. The reasons for going to war expressed within the Qur’an closely match those within *jus ad bellum*, the Just War criteria which establishes the justice of a decision to undertake combat. The criteria include Just Cause, Proportionality and Last Resort. The behaviour demanded of warriors once campaigning and combat have commenced also closely match those within *jus in bello*, the Just War criteria which establishes the proper behaviour of warriors that is necessary to keep the war just. The Qur’an described this as a prohibition against “transgressing limits”.⁶⁰ Ibn Kathir, a famous and relatively reliable fourteenth-century scholar of the Qur’an, accepts earlier interpretations that the “transgressions” mentioned in the Qur’an refer to “mutilating the dead, theft (from the captured goods), killing women, children and old people who do not participate in warfare, killing priests and residents of houses of worship, burning down trees and killing animals without real benefit.”⁶¹ Ibn Kathir points out that Muhammad had himself stated

that these deeds are prohibited. Another source records that, before he assigned a leader to take forces on a mission, Muhammad would instruct them to fight honourably, not to hurt women and children, not to harm prisoners, not to mutilate bodies, not to plunder and not to destroy trees or crops.⁶²

In the year after Muhammad's death in 632, his close friend and successor Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, compiled the Qur'an's and the prophet's guidance on the conduct of war into a code that has served ever since as the basis of Islamic thinking on the conduct of battle. In a celebrated address to his warriors, Abu Bakr proclaimed:

*Do not act treacherously; do not act disloyally; do not act neglectfully. Do not mutilate; do not kill little children or old men, or women; do not cut off the heads off the palm-trees or burn them; do not cut down the fruit trees; do not slaughter a sheep or a cow or a camel, except for food. You will pass by people who devote their lives in cloisters; leave them and their devotions alone. You will come upon people who bring you platters in which are various sorts of food; if you eat any of it, mention the name of God over it.*⁶³

There is no explicit statement within the Qur'an that defines the difference between combatants and non-combatants during war, so readers might think that any man of fighting age (children, women and the aged having been excluded) is considered fair game. The Qur'an does not allow this. The verses that talk of combat allow war only against those who are waging war; that is, those in combat. Aside from those combatants and anyone acting unjustly to suppress

Islam or violate the sanctity of its holy places, no-one else is to be harmed. The reason for this is clear. Central to the Qur'anic revelation is the message that the decisions that pertain to life and death are Allāh's alone, and Allāh has proclaimed that life — a "sacred" gift — must not be taken without "just cause".⁶⁴ In the Qur'anic passages narrating the story of Cain and Abel (Surah 5:27-32, revealed very late in Muhammad's life) one can read an explicit protection of the lives of the innocent. Surah 5:32 informs us that, if anyone takes the life of another human, unless it is for murder, aggressive violence or persecution, it is as though he has killed all of humanity. Likewise, if anyone saves a life, it is as though he has saved all of humanity. To discourage war, the very next verse is clear: those who undertake warfare against the innocent do not count as innocent, nor do those who inflict grave injustice or oppression upon the innocent. They forfeit their right to what we would nowadays call "civilian immunity," and are liable to be killed in battle or executed if they are caught and have not repented.⁶⁵

Jihad

It should already be clear that, far from serving as the foundation of a callous faith in which human life is not respected, or a bellicose faith in which peace is not desired, the Qur'an presents warfare as an undesirable activity. It should be undertaken only within certain constrained circumstances and in a manner that facilitates the quick restoration of peace and harmony and minimises the harm and destruction that war inevitably brings. An analysis of such matters

would not, of course, be complete without making some sense of the famous word and concept that is most controversial and misunderstood: *jihad*.

Interestingly, given that *jihad* is now associated with extremists who are full of hatred, like Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, the Qur'an does not allow hatred to form the basis of a military or other armed response to perceived injustices. It explicitly states that the hatred of others must not make anyone "swerve to [do] wrong and depart from justice. Be just."⁶⁶ The Qur'an likewise praises those who "restrain their anger and are forgiving towards their fellow men".⁶⁷ These and other verses communicating the same message are clear enough to prevent crimes perceived nowadays by Muslims from turning them into criminals.⁶⁸ They certainly made an impact on Muslims during Muhammad's lifetime. During the Battle of Khandaq in 627, for example, Ali ibn Abi Talib (who later served as Caliph) reportedly subjugated Amr ibn Abd al-Wud, a powerful warrior of the Quraysh. Ali was about to deal a death blow when his enemy spat in his face. Ali immediately released him and walked away. He then rejoined battle and managed to slay his enemy. When later asked to explain why he had released his foe, Ali replied that he had wanted to keep his heart pure from anger and that, if he needed to take life, he did it out of righteous motives and not wrath.⁶⁹ Even if the verity of this story is impossible to demonstrate (it is first found in a thirteenth-century Persian Sufi poem), its survival and popularity attest to the perceived importance within Islam of acting justly at all

times, even during the heightened passions inevitable in war.

Despite some popular misperceptions that *jihad* is based on frustration or anger that many non-Muslims consciously reject the faith of Islam, the Qur'an is quite clear that Islam can be embraced only by those who willingly come to accept it. Islam cannot be imposed upon anyone who does not. Surah 2:256 is emphatic that there must be "no compulsion in religion." Truth is self-evident, the verse adds, and stands out from falsehood. Those who accept the former grasp "the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks." Those who accept falsehood instead will go forth into "the depths of darkness": the same hell that Christ had preached about. The fate of individuals, based on the choice they make, is therefore Allāh's alone to decide. The Qur'an repeats in several other verses that coerced religion would be pointless because the submission of the heart wanted by Allāh would be contrived and thus not accepted as genuine. When even Muhammad complained that he seemed to be surrounded by people who would not believe, a divine revelation clarified that Muslims were merely to turn away from the disbelievers after saying "peace" to them "for they shall come to know."⁷⁰ The Qur'an itself enjoins believers to invite disbelievers "to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious ... if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (cause) for those who are patient. ... For Allāh is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good."⁷¹ At no point in Muhammad's life did he

give up hope that all peoples would want to get along harmoniously. Despite his grave disappointment whenever communities competed instead of cooperated, in one of his later public sermons he revealed the divine message that Allāh had made all of mankind “into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other).”⁷² This desire for tolerant coexistence even included other faiths. Despite rejection by several powerful Jewish tribes, Muhammad remained convinced that the Jewish and Christian faith communities (as opposed to individual tribes which acted treacherously) were eminently acceptable to Allāh. A verse saying precisely this was revealed very close in time to the verse of the sword⁷³, which again undermines the thesis that the latter undid all of the inter-faith outreach that Muhammad had preached years earlier.

So what, then, is *jihad* and why does it seem so threatening? The answer is that *jihad*, far from meaning some type of fanatical holy war against all unbelievers, is the Arabic word for “exertion” or “effort” and it actually describes any Muslim’s struggle against the things that are ungodly within him or her and within the wider world. One major form of *jihad* is the Muslim’s struggle against his or her “*nafs*”: an Arabic word that may be translated as the “lower self” and refers to the individual’s carnal nature and the bad habits and actions that come from failure to resist temptation or desire.⁷⁴ For example, a Muslim who consciously strives to break the habit of telling white lies, or the drinking of alcohol, or who struggles against a bad temper, is involved quite properly

in a *jihad* against those unfortunate weaknesses. In Surah 29:6 the Qur’an explains this by pointing out that the striving (*jihad*) of individuals against their personal ungodliness will bring personal, inner (that is, spiritual) growth. Yet the very next verse goes further by exhorting believers not only to work on their personal faith, but also to do “good deeds” to others. Devoting time and giving money to the welfare of the poor and needy (of all communities, not just Muslims), and to the upkeep and governance of the *ummah*, is mentioned in several scriptures as this type of divinely recommended effort (*jihad*). Winning souls to Islam through peaceful preaching is likewise a worthy effort. Muhammad himself revealed a divine exhortation to “strive” with “all effort” (in Arabic it uses two forms of the same word *jihad*) using the powerful words of the Qur’an to convince unbelievers.⁷⁵

Jihad is also used in the Qur’an to mean physical resistance to external ungodliness. It appears in thirty verses, six of them revealed during Muhammad’s years in Mecca and twenty-four revealed during the years of armed attack by the Quraysh tribe and its allies and then the protective wars to create security within and around the Arabian Peninsula.⁷⁶ All the verses mentioning armed struggle are exhortative in nature: with pleas for effort, urgings of courage and a fighting spirit, assurances of victory and promises of eternal rewards for those who might die in the service of their community. This emphasis reveals that Muhammad recognised that wars were so unpalatable to his peace-loving community that, even though the causes of Muslim warfighting (*qital*) were just, he had

to go to extra lengths — much as Winston Churchill did during the dark days of the Second World War — to exhort weary people to persevere, to believe in victory and to fight for it. On 4 June 1940 Churchill gave a magnificent speech to inspire the British people to continue their struggle against the undoubted evils of Nazism, even though the German armed forces then seemed stronger and better in battle. His speech includes the fabulous warlike lines:

*We shall fight on the seas and oceans
We shall fight with growing confidence
and growing strength in the air, we
shall defend our Island, whatever the
cost may be
We shall fight on the beaches
We shall fight on the landing grounds
We shall fight in the fields and in
the streets
We shall fight in the hills
We shall never surrender.*⁷⁷

No-one would dream of calling Churchill warmongering, much less murderous. Muhammad's exhortations for Muslims to do their duty — a phrase used by Churchill in that speech and others — and to struggle against the threat of defeat at the hands of the Muslims' enemies are best seen in the same light. Indeed, most of the verses which urge struggle (*jihad*) against enemies relate to the self-defensive wars mentioned above, with the remaining verses relating to the broader need to protect the *ummah* from both the local spiritual pollution of intransigent Arab polytheism and idolatry as well as the external threat to unsafe borders around the perimeter of the *ummah*. No verses in the Qur'an encourage or permit violence against

innocent people, regardless of faith, and no verses encourage or permit war against other nations or states that are not attacking the Islamic *ummah*, threatening its borders or its direct interests, or interfering in the ability of Muslims to practice their faith. Armed effort against any states that do those oppressive things is still permitted to this day, at least according to a fair reading of the Qur'an⁷⁸ — just as it is within western Just War. Yet such a situation would involve a very different set of circumstances to those existing in the world today; those which somehow wrongly prompted a very small number of radicalised terrorists to undertake aggressive and offensive (not justly motivated and defensive) struggles. Their reprehensible actions, especially those that involve the taking of innocent lives, fall outside the behaviours permitted by a reasonable reading of the Qur'an.

Conclusion

This article is not an attempt at religious apologetics. It is written by a scholar of military strategy and ethics for a military audience in an endeavour to demonstrate that the world's second largest religion (only Christianity has more adherents) includes at its core a set of scriptures that contains a clear and very ethical framework for understanding war and guiding the behaviour of warriors. That framework only supports warfare when it is based on redressing substantial material grievances (especially attack or persecution), when it occurs after other means of addressing the grievances have been attempted, and when it includes the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of

peace as soon as a resolution has been attained. It demands of warriors that they uphold the concepts of proportionality (doing no more harm than is necessary) and discrimination (directing violence only at combatants whilst minimising harm to civilians and their possessions and infrastructure). That framework is very compatible with the western Just War philosophy that, for example, gave a moral underpinning to the United Kingdom's war against Argentinean troops occupying the Falkland Islands in 1982, the US-led Coalition's eviction of Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait in 1991, and NATO's seventy-eight day air war against Slobodan Milošević's Yugoslavia in order to protect Kosovars from ethnic violence in 1999.

So, then, if the Qur'an itself condemns any violence that exceeds or sits outside of the framework for justice revealed within its verses, how can we explain the barbarous 9/11 attacks, the home-grown 7/7 attacks and other suicide-bombing attempts within our country and the murder of civilians by terrorists in other parts of the world who claim to act in the name of Islam? British scholar Karen Armstrong answered this obvious question so succinctly in the days after 9/11 that her words make a fitting conclusion to this article. During the twentieth century, she wrote, "the militant form of piety often known as fundamentalism erupted in every major religion as a rebellion against modernity." Every minority fundamentalist movement within the major faiths that Armstrong has studied "is convinced that liberal, secular society is determined to wipe

out religion. Fighting, as they imagine, a battle for survival, fundamentalists often feel justified in ignoring the more compassionate principles of their faith. But in amplifying the more aggressive passages that exist in all our scriptures, they distort the tradition."⁷⁹

Notes

¹ Two works are highly recommended as a next step: Youssef H. Aboul-Enein and Sherifa Zuhur, *Islamic Rulings on Warfare* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College: October 2004); Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000. Orion edition, 2002).

² Muslims make up 23 percent of the world's 6.8 billion humans. See the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, October 2009), p. 1. Cf.: <http://pewforum.org/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

³ The King James Version of the Holy Bible contains 788,280 words: 609,269 in the Old Testament and 179,011 in the New Testament. Cf.: <http://www.biblebelievers.com/believers-org/kjv-stats.htm>

⁴ *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*.

⁵ The very first word revealed to Muhammad was *Iqra*, which means "recite" and the word Qur'an itself originates from the root word *Qara'a*, which means "to read out" or "to recite".

⁶ The title of Spencer's most controversial bestseller is: *The Truth about Muhammad, Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion* (Washington, DC: Regnery Press, 2006). Spencer's other books include:

Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World's Fastest Growing Faith (New York: Encounter Books, 2002); Ed., *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance: How Islamic Law treats Non-Muslims* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005); *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (And the Crusades)*, (Regnery, 2005); *Religion of Peace? Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't* (Regnery, 2007).

⁷ Cf. the published works, journalism and internet articles of Daniel Pipes, Benny Morris, David Horowitz, Bernard Lewis, Sam Harris, David Bukay and David Pryce-Jones, among others. I need to make my position clear. As a liberal and an academic I strongly support the liberal arts education model and the enhanced societal contributions made by critically educated minds. At the heart of my philosophy lies a passionate belief in the value of dialogue and debate. I therefore do not challenge the right of these scholars and pundits publicly to express their concerns about Islam, even though I do not share them.

⁸ There are numerous English language translations of the Qur'an which give slightly different wordings, but the translation that I consider easiest to read and closest to the meaning of the Arabic text is: *Tajweed Qur'an with Meaning Translation in English by Abdyllah Yusuf Ali & Transliteration by Dr Eng. Subhi Taha* (Damascus: Dar-Al-Maarifah, 2003. 2010 edition). All long quotes from the Qur'an in this article are from this excellent translation or, where it aids my desire for maximum clarity, from Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, trans., *The Quran* (New Delhi: Goodword, 2009). Another very popular modern translation that is even easier to follow is the so-called

"Wahhabi translation": *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabarī, Al-Qurtubī and Ibn Kathīr with Comments from Sahīh Al-Bukhārī: Summarised in One Volume by Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khān and Dr Muhammad Taqī-ud-Din Al-Hilālī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1996. Revised edition 2001). It must be pointed out, however, that this easy-to-read translation has not been immune from criticism, particularly with regard to many interpolations that seem to provide a deliberately negative portrayal of Christians and Jews. For that reason I do not use it, and I believe others should read it, should they wish, with this caveat in mind. Cf. Khaleel Mohammed, "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an," *Middle East Quarterly*, Volume 12 No. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 59-72.

⁹ Cf. Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, p. 28. After negatively quoting a statement praising Muhammad as "a hard fighter and a skillful military commander," Samuel P. Huntington writes that "no one would say this about Christ or Buddha." He adds that Islamic doctrines "dictate war against unbelievers ... The Koran and other statements of Muslim beliefs contain few prohibitions on violence, and a concept of nonviolence is absent from Muslim doctrine and practice." Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 263.

¹⁰ *Jizya* was a tax levied by the Islamic state on non-Muslims. In return they gained exemption from military service and guarantees of safety within the state. This taxation

arrangement, essentially a type of tribute, was a pre-Islamic practice merely continued by the Muslims. Cf. Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), p. 178.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 163; Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 165.

Spencer, ed., *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance*, pp. 43-44.

¹² Joshua 6: 21.

¹³ Deuteronomy 7: 1-3 and 20: 16-17.

¹⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, XXXVIII.21.

¹⁵ Sohail H. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 196.

¹⁶ Surah 34:28, Surah 39:41 and Surah 81:27.

¹⁷ Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, pp. 24-26. Cf. also: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.html>

¹⁸ Cf. David Bukay, "Peace or Jihad: Abrogation in Islam," in *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2007, pp. 3-11, available online at: <http://www.meforum.org/1754/peace-or-jihad-abrogation-in-islam>

¹⁹ Zakaria Bashier, *War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), pp. vii—viii; Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 105.

²⁰ Bukay, "Peace or Jihad," cited above.

²¹ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html

²² http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html

²³ This is clearly the judgement of prominent intellectual Tariq Ramadan. Cf. his biography, *The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of*

Muhammad (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 91.

²⁴ Bashier, *War and Peace*, p. 284. An interesting introductory book for anyone unfamiliar with Islam is Sohaib Nazeer Sultan's amusingly titled, *The Koran for Dummies* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2004). Sultan makes the same point (pp. 278, 281) that the martial verse and the sword and those like it do not abrogate the more numerous peaceful, tolerant and inclusive verses.

²⁵ Bashier, *War and Peace*, p. 288.

²⁶ Louay Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an: The Truth from the Source* (Birmingham: Luna Plena, 2009). Email from Dr Louay Fatoohi to Dr Joel Hayward, 23 August 2010.

²⁷ Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Concept of War in Islam* (Cairo: Ministry of Waqf, 1961), p. 18, quoted in Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, p. 208.

²⁸ Sayyid Ameenul Hasan Rizvi, *Battles by the Prophet in Light of the Qur'an* (Jeddah: Abul-Qasim, 2002), pp. 88-89. Bashier, *War and Peace*, pp. 224-226.

²⁹ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 4 (Surat Al-A'raf to the end of Surat Yunus) (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003 ed.), pp. 371-375; Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1979. 2002 ed.), pp. 351-353; Lt. Gen. A. I. Akram, *The Sword of Allah: Khalid bin al-Waleed, His Life and Campaigns* (New Delhi: Adam, 2009), pp. 97-98; Bashier, *War and Peace*, pp. 237-238, 241.

³⁰ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 4, p. 371.

³¹ Ali Muhammad Muhammad As-Sallaabee, *The Biography of Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), pp. 150-151.

³² Surah 9:6.

³³ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 4, pp. 369ff.;

Rizvi, *Battles*, pp. 126-130.

³⁴ As-Sallaabee, *The Biography of Abu Bakr*, p. 150-151.

³⁵ Spencer, *Religion of Peace?*, p. 78.

³⁶ Although Ad-Dahhāk bin Muzāhim, as quoted by Isma'il ibn Kathīr (*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 4, p. 377) — sees this as a repudiation of Muhammad's pilgrimage agreements with all pagans, other early sources insist that this was not the case and that it would have reflected intolerance that Muhammad was not known to possess. Rizwi Faizer, "Expeditions and Battles," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), Vol. II, p. 151.

³⁷ Surah 4:90.

³⁸ Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, p. 34.

³⁹ Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, p. 201.

⁴⁰ Armstrong, *Islam*, p. 17.

⁴¹ This is certainly the view of the influential eighth-century biographer, Ibn Ishaq: Alfred Gulillaume, trans., *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford University Press, 1955. 1967 ed.), p. 212. For modern writers who agree, see: Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, p. 31; Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix, 1991. 2001 edition), p. 168; Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life based on the Earliest Sources* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983. Islamic Texts Society edition, 2009), p. 135; Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, p. 183; Sohail H. Hashmi, "Sunni Islam," in Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and War* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 217. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, p. 198.

⁴² *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 1 (Parts 1 and 2 (Surat Al-Fatihah to Verse 252

of Surat Al-Baqarah)), p. 528.

⁴³ Surah 2:192.

⁴⁴ Surah 2:193.

⁴⁵ Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, p. 204.

⁴⁶ *Sahīh Al-Bukhāri*, 3025, trans. Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan Vol. 4 Ahādith 2738 to 3648 (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), p. 164.

⁴⁷ Surah 2:216 and see Surah 42:41.

⁴⁸ Surah 2: 217, 2:191 and 4:75-78.

⁴⁹ Bashier, *War and Peace*, pp. 229-233.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ishaq, p. 553; Ramadan, *The Messenger*, p. 178; Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, pp. 349-350.

⁵¹ Ibn Ishaq, p. 385.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 553; Lings, Muhammad, p. 303; Armstrong, Muhammad, p. 244.

⁵³ Surah 8.56.

⁵⁴ Surah 5:45.

⁵⁵ Cf. Surah 2:194.

⁵⁶ Cf. Surah 42:40-43.

⁵⁷ Cf. Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 96-98.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Imam Muhammad Shirazi, *War, Peace and Non-violence: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Fountain Books, 2003 ed.), pp. 28-29.

⁶⁰ It even applied to the quarrels that the Qur'an criticises most: those between different Muslim groups. If one side aggressively "transgressed beyond bounds," the other side was permitted to fight back in self-defence, but only until the aggressor desisted, at which point war was to end and reconciliation was to occur. Cf. Surah 49:9-10.

⁶¹ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Volume 1, p. 528.

⁶² Shirazi, *War, Peace and Non-violence*, p. 29.

⁶³ Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, p. 211; Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, I, 1850, quoted in Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 102 and in As-Sallaabee, *The Biography of Abu Bakr*, p. 327.

⁶⁴ Surah 6:151 and 17:33.

⁶⁵ Surah 5:33-34.

⁶⁶ Surah 5:8 (and see 5:2).

⁶⁷ Surah 3:134.

⁶⁸ Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, p. 73.

⁶⁹ *Mathnawi I*: 3721ff. published online at: <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/n-I-3721.html>

⁷⁰ Surah 43:88-89.

⁷¹ Surah 16:125-128.

⁷² Surah 49:13. The clause in parentheses is a contextual explanation by the translator.

⁷³ Surah 5:69.

⁷⁴ Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, pp. 25-25.

⁷⁵ Surah 25:52.

⁷⁶ Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, p. 87.

⁷⁷ <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/1940-finest-hour/128-we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches>

⁷⁸ Cf. Chapter V in Khadduri, *War and Peace*.

⁷⁹ Karen Armstrong, "The True, Peaceful Face of Islam" *Time*, 23 September 2001, available online at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101011001-175987,00.html>

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