

ARTICLES

JUSTICE, JIHAD AND DUTY: THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT OF ARMED CONFLICT

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Abstract: The Qur'an is among the most widely read books on earth, yet it is also commonly misunderstood and misquoted. Islam's critics say that it contains exhortations of violence against non-Muslims and a concept of war that is far more unbridled and indiscriminate than the western Just War theory. This study is not a general overview or critique of the Islamic laws of war, which are the varied and sometimes contradictory opinions of medieval Islamic jurists – mainly from the ninth to thirteenth centuries CE. Instead, this study analyses only the Qur'anic text itself and, by putting its verses into historical context, attempts to explain its codes of conduct in order to determine what it actually requires or permits Muslims to do in terms of the use of military force. It concludes that the Qur'an is clear: Muslims must not undertake offensive violence and are instructed, if defensive warfare should become unavoidable, always to act within a code of ethical behaviour that is closely similar to the western Just War tradition. This study attempts to dispel any misperceptions that Islam's holy book advocates the subjugation or killing of non-Muslims and reveals that, on the contrary, its key and unequivocal concepts governing warfare are based on justice and a profound belief in the sanctity of human life.

Keywords: Qur'an, Islam, war, jihad, *qital*, fighting, combat, scriptures, verse of the sword.

The world's revulsion at the outrageous, barbaric and widespread violence perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as it sought to establish and expand its self-declared caliphate in Syria and Iraq strengthened a seemingly pervasive view that Islam is inherently violent, or at least that its laws and norms are more tolerant of violence than the other major religions.

Even before the Bush Administration initiated a concentrated campaign against anti-American terrorists around the world in 2001 — a campaign which quickly came to be known as the War on Terror — several states including

America and Israel had already experienced terrorism undertaken unmistakably by Muslims. For example, the bombings of American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 brought Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to the focused attention of American security services for the first time. These terrorists and their ideological bedfellows embraced an extreme *minority* opinion within Islam. According to that opinion, militant opposition to any ostensibly oppressive political activity which weakens Islamic states and their interests constitutes a righteous struggle (جهاد, *jihad*) on God's behalf (في سبيل الله, *fi sabi Lillah*, literally "in the path of Allah"). Yet these so-called jihadists did not garner much public interest until that dreadful day when nineteen of them hijacked four aircraft and carried out history's worst single terrorist attack.

It is impossible to deny that Western attitudes towards Islam changed for the worse at that time and have not returned to the way they were before 2001. Among widely held negative views of Islam is a perception (or at least a concern) that, while Western states adhere to the 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. According to this misperception, the Western code of war is based on restraint, chivalry and respect for civilian life, whereas the Islamic faith contains ideas on war that are more militant, aggressive, tolerant of violence, and indiscriminate. The atrocities conducted by ISIS between 2014 and 2017 advanced this misperception further, with beheadings, impalements, crucifixions and prisoner burnings creating the appearance that medieval barbarity could somehow be condoned by Islam.

This study is not a general overview or critique of the Islamic laws of war, which are the varied and sometimes contradictory opinions of medieval Islamic jurists — most from the ninth to thirteenth centuries CE. How those scholars later translated the Qur'an's original framing concepts regarding the responsibilities and rights of المقاتلين, أهل القتال, and المحاربين (combatants, fighters, warriors) and غير المقاتلين and غير المحاربين (non-fighters, non-warriors) into written laws and philosophies as part of the Islamic fiqh is covered elsewhere in books of jurisprudence. Instead, this study analyses only the Qur'an and attempts to explain its codes of conduct in order to determine what it actually requires or permits Muslims to do in terms of the use of military force. It concludes that the Qur'an is unambiguous: Muslims are prohibited from undertaking offensive violence and are compelled, if defensive 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 the Just War doctrine. This study attempts to dispel any misperceptions that the holy book

of Islam advocates the subjugation or killing of unbelievers and reveals that, on the contrary, its key and unequivocal concepts governing warfare are based on justice and a profound belief in the sanctity of human life.

The Qur'an

Unfortunately, people do not tend to read the holy scriptures of other faiths so it is not surprising that, although Muslims constitute one-quarter of the world's population,¹ very few Muslims have studied the Jewish *Tanakh*, the Christian Bible or the Hindu Vedas and equally few non-Muslims have taken the time to study the Qur'an. Not many people ever even "dip" into other holy books to get a quick feel for the language, tone and message. Yet, given the geographical location of several major wars throughout the last two decades, the strategic importance of the Middle East, as well as the cultural origin of some recent terrorist groups, it is surprising that very few non-Muslims have read the Qur'an. It 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-seventh the length of the Old.² It is not deeply complex in its philosophy or written as inaccessible poetry or mystical and esoteric vagueness.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an was revealed episodically by the angel Jibril (the biblical Gabriel) to Muhammad, a Meccan merchant in what is now Saudi Arabia, through a series of revelations from Allah, 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 within two decades of his death in 632. That Arabic version has not changed in the last fourteen hundred years. The Qur'an is therefore held by Muslims to be the very words of Allah, recorded precisely as originally revealed through Muhammad. This explains why most of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims³ endeavour to learn at least the basics of Qur'anic Arabic so that they can read and more importantly *hear* Allah's literal words as originally revealed.⁴

An impartial reading of the Qur'an will draw the reader's eyes to hundreds of scriptures extolling tolerance, forgiveness, conciliation, inclusiveness and peace. These are the overwhelming majority of the scriptures and the central thrust of the Qur'anic message. A clear indication of that message is found in the fact that every one of the 114 *Surahs* (Chapters) of the Qur'an except one opens with a reminder of Allah's loving and forgiving attitude towards humans:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ (*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*, "In the name of God the All-Compassionate and the Ever-Merciful"). Muslims believe that the compassion

and forgiveness extended by God to humans must be mirrored as much as is humanly possible by their compassion and forgiveness to each other.

Yet readers will also find verses in the Qur'an that seem to be "Old Testament" in tone and message and are more warlike than, for example, Christians are used to reading in the words of Christ and the New Testament writers. 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 and blogger Robert Spencer is both the most prolific and influential⁵ — routinely highlight those Qur'anic passages to support their argument that Islam has a clear tendency towards aggressive and indiscriminate war, not inclusive peace.⁶

These writers commonly focus their attention on a few passages within the Qur'an which seem to suggest that Allah encourages Muslims to subjugate or drive out non-Muslims — and even to take their lives if they refuse to yield. The critics especially like to quote *Surah 9, Ayah* (Verse) 5, which has become known as the "Verse of the Sword" (آية السيف, *Ayat al-Sayf*). This verse explicitly enjoins Muslims to "kill pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]."

فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْضُرُوهُمْ وَأَفْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْضُرُوهُمْ وَأَفْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ⁷

The critics often add to their condemnation of the aforementioned *Surah 9:5* with equally strong attacks on *Surah 9:29*. This verse directs Muslims to "fight those who believe not in Allah and the Day of Judgment" (وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ), 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 *jizya* (جزية), a state tax after their submission.⁸ 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.⁹

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

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يِقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿190﴾
وَأَقْتُلُوا حَيْثُ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تَقَاتِلُوهُمْ
عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يَقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿191﴾
فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿192﴾
وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿193﴾

190. Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not

transgress limits: for Allah does not love the transgressors.

191. And slay them wherever you 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 [in Mecca], unless they [first] fight you there; but if they fight you, kill them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.
192. But if they cease, then Allah 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 Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.

You could not imagine gentle Buddha or the peaceful, cheek-turning Jesus ever saying such things — the critics of Islam assert — ignoring the heavily martial spirit and explicit violence of some sections of the Old Testament; a revelation passionately embraced in its entirety by Jesus. They also brush off some of Jesus' seemingly incongruous statements as being allegorical and metaphorical — such as Luke 22:36, wherein Jesus encourages his disciples to sell their garments so that they can purchase swords, and Matthew 10:34 (“Do not think I come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword”).¹⁰

The opponents of the Qur'an's message place little importance on the obvious differences of experiences and responsibilities between Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus was the spiritual leader of a small and intimate group of Jewish followers at a time of Roman occupation but relative peace and personal security 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 throughout the land without severe opposition and with no known violence. By contrast, the Prophet Muhammad found himself not only the spiritual leader but also the *political* and *legislative* leader of a massive community that wanted to be moderate, just and inclusive but suffered bitter organised persecution and warfare from other political entities which were committed to his community's destruction. Like Moses, Joshua and David, his responsibilities included the sustenance, education, governance and physical protection of tens of thousands of children, men and women.

A double-standard also seems to exist. Many of the scholars and pundits who dislike the fact that Muhammad had to fight military campaigns during his path to peace, and who consider his religion to be inherently martial, overlook the fact that many biblical prophets and leaders — including Moses, Joshua, Samson, David and other Sunday School favourites — were also warriors through

necessity. Despite our Children's Book image of these warriors, their actions included frequent killing and were sometimes couched in highly bloodthirsty language. For example, the Book of Numbers (31:15-17) records that Moses ordered war against the Midianites, his wife's own people, but was gravely disappointed when, after having slain all the men, his warriors chose not to kill the women. He therefore instructed his warriors to kill every male child and to leave alive no females except virgins, whom the Israelites were allowed to keep as slaves. This hardly fits with our Charlton Heston-esque view of a very popular Jewish and Christian prophet.

It is worth observing that among the scriptures that form the bedrock and bulk of the Judeo-Christian tradition — the Old Testament — one can find numerous verses like these that explicitly advocate (or at least once advocated) large-scale violence incompatible with any codes of warfare that Jews and Christians would nowadays condone. For instance, 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."¹¹ 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."¹²

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 raze 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."¹³

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 Jews during World War II, history's largest mass murder of civilians, involved the intended murder of around six million 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 8,300 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in and around the town of Srebrenica in July 1995.

A fair assessment of historical evidence reveals that Christianity is a faith of justice 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. Similarly, a fair assessment of Islam reveals that it is equally a faith of justice that cannot fairly be seen as blameworthy in and of itself for the Armenian Genocide, the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, the Al-Qaeda attacks on America in 2001 or the ISIS atrocities between 2014 and 2017, even though Muslims committed those disgraceful deeds. Certainly Islam's framing scriptures, the Qur'an, contains no verses which are as violent as the biblical scriptures quoted above or any Qur'anic verses more violent than those already quoted. In any event, even the most ostensibly violent Qur'anic 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.

Understanding Abrogation

While Muslims hold the Qur'an to be God'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 the Hijaz region of Arabia.¹⁴ Consequently, several legal rulings within the Qur'an emerged or developed in stages throughout that period, with some early rulings on inheritance, alcohol, law, social arrangements and so on being superseded by later passages; a phenomenon known in Arabic as "*naskh*" (نسخ) that the Qur'an itself describes. For example, *Surah* 2:106 reveals that when Allah developed any particular legal ruling beyond its first revelation and He therefore wanted to supersede the original verses, He would replace them with clarifying verses.

The removal or annulment of one legal ruling by a subsequent legal ruling in some instances certainly does not mean that Muslims believe that all later scriptures automatically cancel out or override everything, on all issues, that had appeared earlier. The Qur'an itself states in several *Surahs* that Allah's words constitute a universally applicable message sent down for "all mankind" (لِلنَّاسِ) and that it was "a reminder with both "glad tidings and warnings" (بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا) to all of humanity.¹⁵ With this in mind, Muslims believe that to ignore scriptures on the basis of a that-was-then-this-is-now reading would be as mistaken as conversely believing that one can gain meaning or guidance from reading individual verses

in isolation, without seeing how they form parts of consistent concepts which only emerge when the entire book is studied. Adopting either approach would be unhelpful, self-serving and ultimately misleading. It is only when the Qur'an's key concepts are studied holistically, with both an appreciation of the context of particular revelations and the consistency of ideas developed throughout the book as a whole, that readers will be able to understand the Qur'an's universally applicable ethical system.

Islam's critics take a different view. Incorrectly believing that all later Qur'anic scriptures modify or cancel out all earlier ones, they have devised an unusual narrative. They argue that, in the early years of his mission while still in his hometown of Mecca, the powerless 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 had to advocate an almost Gandhian or Christ-like policy of forbearance and non-violence. 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, the increasingly powerful Muhammad became bitter at his intransigent foes in Mecca and ordered warfare against them.¹⁶ Finally (the critics claim), following the surprisingly peaceful Islamic occupation of Mecca in 630, the all-powerful Muhammad realised that Jews and others would not accept his prophetic leadership or embrace Islamic monotheism, so he then initiated an aggressive war against all disbelievers.¹⁷ The critics furthermore claim that, because Muhammad did not clarify or change his position before he died two years later, in 632, after Allah'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 the year 631.¹⁸ As scholar David Bukay, a strong critic of Islam, 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.¹⁹

Islam's critics who hold this 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-violence.

They note that Osama bin Laden and other leading radical "Islamists" — who also insist that the later Qur'anic verses on war have cancelled out the earlier peaceful and inclusive verses — have justified their 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”²⁰ as well as in his February 1998 *fatwa*.²¹ The first of these *fatawa* (verdicts) 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 Muslims and their exploitation of Islamic resources in various parts of the world.

Of course, the obviously partisan Bin Laden was not a cleric, a religious scholar or a historian of early Islam. He was a murderous extremist without judgement or moderation. Like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the ISIS leader, Bin Laden was not representative of Islamic belief or behaviour and he has no recognised status as an authority in Islamic Sciences that would allow him to issue a *fatwa*. His assertions that the verse of the sword and other martial Qur’anic verses are still in place and universally applicable therefore do not hold a shred of authority or credibility, except perhaps among already-radicalised fanatics who share his worldview and consider him worth following. Thankfully they are very few in number.

Certainly most Islamic authorities on the Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad today, as opposed to scholars from, say, the war-filled 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.²² For example, according to British scholar 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 [clear in and of themselves] 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.²³

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.”²⁴ British scholar Louay Fatoohi agrees, arguing that an “overwhelming majority” of Muslim scholars reject the abrogation thesis

regarding war.²⁵ Fatoohi highlights the fact that throughout history the Islamic world has never acted in accordance with this extreme view. He observes that Muslims have almost always 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 all be at war as we speak. 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.”²⁶

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:

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَخْضِرُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ ۚ فَإِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

5. Then when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever you 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 adverb “*fa*,” translated above as “then,” 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 Hudaibiyyah, 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 the treaty was signed, the Banu Bakr tribe, which had allied with the Quraysh, attacked the Banu Khuza’a tribe, which had joined the side of the Muslims. Muhammad considered the Banu Bakr attack a treaty violation, arguing that an attack on an

ally constituted an attack on his own community.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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'aba²⁹) 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 Allah alone.³⁰ As *Surah* al-Tawbah 9:17 and 18 says:

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي
النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَحْضُرْ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ
أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

17. It is no longer proper for idolaters to attend Allah's mosques, since they have admitted to their unbelief. ...
18. Allah's mosques should be attended only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, who observe prayer and give alms and fear none but God....

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 Allah loves the righteous", (فَاتِّمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مَدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ). 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 in the sacred city, enjoined Muslims to remember that they must be merciful (“to open the way”, فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ) 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.

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

6. If anyone among the Pagans asks you for protection, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah; and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are people who do not know [the truth about Islam].³¹

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 Hudaibiyyah and the *bay'ah* (بَيْعَة, pledge of loyalty) made to Muhammad when he entered Mecca. Clearly, this *surah* is not requiring violence against all unbelievers, but only those who broke their agreements, as *Ayah* 12 makes clear:

وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أُمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَا آيَمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

12. And if they break their oaths after their agreement and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief — surely their oaths are nothing — so that they may desist.

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 purification 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 polity in its infancy. The rest of *Surah* 9, revealed a little later, also contains scriptures relating to the campaign against Tabuk, 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.³²

It is clear, therefore, that the Verse of the Sword was a context-specific verse relating to the 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 there.³³ 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 bloodthirsty or unjust, 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 Allah: 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 ibn 'Amr ibn 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.³⁴ Ibn Kathir said no such thing. He quoted an earlier authority, Ad-Dahhak ibn Muzahim, 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.³⁵ Because this earlier source referred to the Verse of the Sword “abrogating” something, Spencer mistakenly extrapolates this to claim that this one single verse cancelled out all existing inter-faith practices and arrangements and that it 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” (فَخَذُوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ) wrongdoers “wherever ye find them” (حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ). Yet this verse, *Surah al-Nisaa* 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, and those former Muslims (backsliders from the Banu Ghatafan and Banu Asad tribes) who had re-joined 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 Allah would not allow Muslims to harm them in any way (lit. “Allah hath opened no way for you against them”, اَللّٰهُ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا).³⁶ 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.³⁷

The Just Cause: Self-defence

It is worth remembering that, for the first twelve or more years of his public life (from 610 to 622 or 623), Muhammad had 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. As Ibn Hisham writes: “The Prophet had not been permitted to fight or shed blood ... He had simply been ordered to call men to Allah, to be patient when harmed, and to forgive the ignorant.”³⁸

Throughout that period he had 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 The persecution at one point was so severe that Muhammad had to send two groups of followers to seek refuge in Abyssinia. Even after he and the rest of his followers fled the persecution in Mecca and settled in Medina in 622, the developing *ummah* (Islamic community), experienced grave hardship and fear. Some of the non-Muslims in Medina passionately resented the presence of Muslims and conspired to expel them. From Mecca, the Quraysh tribe and its allies waged a relentless

campaign of hostility against Muhammad and the Muslims, who had now become a rival power and a threat to his lucrative trade and pilgrimage arrangements. The confederation of hostile tribes sought no accommodation whatsoever with Muhammad. In their minds, and according to the norms of Arabic tribal warfare,⁴⁰ the only solution was the *ummah*'s eradication. Describing his intention to destroy the Islamic polity, the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan ibn Harb once told Muhammad in a letter: "In the name of God, I swear by al-Lat and al-'Uzza [his pagan gods], surely I came to you with my allies and indeed, we vowed not to return until we had eliminated you."⁴¹ At one point, Abu Sufyan had even sworn to abstain from sexual relations until he had attacked and defeated the Islamic polity.⁴² It was not just military defeat he sought, but "extermination" also.

Shortly after the migration of Muslims to Medina in 622 CE, Muhammad finally announced a revelation from Allah that Muslims were allowed physically to *defend* themselves to *preserve* themselves through the contest of arms. Most scholars agree that *Surah al-Hajj* 22:39 contains that first transformational statement of permission.⁴³ Including the verses above and below, it says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿38﴾
 أُوذِيَ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ تَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿39﴾
 الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدٌ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿40﴾

38. Truly Allah will defend those who believe: truly, Allah does not love anyone who 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 truly, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid.
40. [They are] those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah" ...

These verses continue by pointing out that, had not Allah in previous eras allowed people to defend themselves from the aggression and religious persecution of others, there would surely have been the destruction of "monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure." The verses add that Allah 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 Allah's permission to undertake armed combat was not for offensive war, but *self-defence* and *self-preservation* when attacked or oppressed.

Qur'anic exegetes (textual analysts) believe that this divine permission to fight coincides with the Prophet Muhammad's declaration of unity issued shortly after arriving in Medina, a town populated by competing and sometimes warring Jewish and pagan Arab tribes. Wanting to create "a single community to the exclusion of other people" ("انهم امة واحدة من دون الناس"), he drafted a "constitution" that would bind all these tribes together as a community in terms of what we now call domestic and foreign policies. This constitution — the text of which survives in Ibn Hisham's *Al-Sirah al-Nabiwiyyah* and Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam's *Kitab al-Amwal* — contains a mutual defense pledge.⁴⁴ Should one tribe within the new community be attacked, the others would come to its aid.

This permission for self-defensive warfighting (the Arabic word is قتال, *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 Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits: for Allah does not love the 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.⁴⁵ 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 Allah is "Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."⁴⁶ Thus, continued resistance could — and nowadays can — only be a proportionate response to continued serious direct oppression.⁴⁷ In every Qur'anic example in which warfighting (*qital*) is encouraged for protection against serious direct 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 serious direct 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.⁴⁸ 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. Hadiths record Muhammad instructing his followers not to look forward to combat, but if it were to come upon them then they should pray for safety and remain patient.⁴⁹

Critics of Islam are fond of quoting *Surahs* that seem to reveal a certain savagery that today seems bloodcurdling to them. They often quote *Surah Muhammad* 47:4,

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثَخِنْتُمُوهُمْ فَاسُدُّوا وُجُوهُهُمْ وَإِذَا فُتِنُوا فَمَا فِدَاءٌ حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَآتَتْكُمْ مِنْهُم لَيْلٌ مُّبِينَةٌ وَأَلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَنْ يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿٤﴾

4. So when ye meet [in combat] those who disbelieve, you can strike at their necks until, when you have subdued them, you can bind them [as prisoners of war], and [for them] afterward shall be either magnanimity or ransom until the burdens of the war are over. That is it. And if Allah had willed He could have punished them, but [thus it is] that He may test some of you by means of others. And those who are slain in the way of Allah, will not lose their good deeds.⁵⁰

In *Surah* 8:12 the Qur'an likewise commands soldiers in battle to strike at necks and fingers. Although these verses may seem out of place in a religious text, they are not out of place within advice given by a military commander before a battle. That *was* precisely the context of those particular revelations. Muhammad's community had not yet fought a battle or formed a standing army and those Muslims who were about to become warriors needed to be taught how to kill immediately and humanely. Decapitation, as opposed to wild slashes at limbs or armoured bodies, ensured humane killing instead of ineffective and brutal wounding. Even better, if a soldier could make an enemy drop his weapon by striking at his hands, he might be able to take him prisoner. Having him alive as a captive who could later be freed, even with a wounded hand, was preferable to leaving him as a corpse.

Today all military or security forces in the world teach weapon-handling skills with the same focus. Recruits and officer cadets are taught how to kill or wound on firing ranges where instructors teach them which target areas will bring humane death and which ones will cause someone's incapacitation without death. The two Qur'anic passages mentioned above should be read in that light. Moreover, they do not represent an instruction to all Muslims anytime to kill or wound all non-Muslims anywhere. That would violate every concept of justice embedded within Islam. The instructions were to one group of Muslims (the nascent *ummah*, which had not yet experienced combat) in anticipation of a specific conflict: the Battle of Badr fought in March 624.

The fact that these combat-related instructions are contained within a religious book which has powerfully clear central messages of forbearance, toleration and inclusiveness is easily explained by the fact that the Qur'an, revealed episodically over decades, was (and is) considered by Muslim's to be God's word. Every revelation on every issue was thus faithfully recorded and retained, including ones dealing with all sorts of things — war, combat, diplomacy, finance, marriage, child-rearing, divorce, death, education, science and so forth — with which the first Muslims had to deal. It is thus a manual for life, with sections on war and combat which are relevant when Muslims go to war for defensive reasons, and on, say, pilgrimage when Muslims go on the *Hajj* for spiritual fulfilment.

The Qur'an and the *ahadith* (the recorded words and actions of Muhammad) show that Muhammad took no pleasure in the fact that — as also taught in later Western Just War theory — the regrettable combatant-versus-combatant 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 Allah's revelation that warfare was something that seemed very wrong, indeed a "hateful" activity, but was morally correct and necessary nonetheless. As *Surah al-Baqarah* 2:216 says:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ
شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِعَلْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿216﴾

216. Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful to you, but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows while you do not know.

There is no moral blame for self-defensive warfare, the Qur'an says:

41. Those who successfully defend themselves after being wronged cannot be blamed.
42. The blame is only [held] against the ones who oppress the people and rebel upon the earth without right. For them [is] a painful punishment.⁵¹

Frightening and dreadful, *in extremis* war is better than continued serious persecution and attack. Not defending the persecuted would in fact be morally negligent.⁵²

Muhammad's greatest political triumph — his eventual return to his hometown Mecca in 630 CE at the head of an army of 10,000 — was itself a bloodless affair marked by tremendous forgiveness and mercy. After his forces entered the city, the panicked Quraysh tribe, which effectively surrendered after realising that resistance to the Muslim army was futile, anticipated that their leaders and warriors would be slain.⁵³ After all, for two decades they had humiliated, persecuted and tried to assassinate Muhammad and had maltreated and even waged savage war against him and his followers. Yet, aside from four murderers and serious oath-breakers who were judged to be 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. In reply, he quoted the Prophet Joseph, who had forgiven his eleven brothers for throwing him down a well and leaving him for dead. In words attributed to Joseph which are now memorialised in a Qur'anic revelation as *Surah Yusuf* 12:92, Muhammad told all Meccans:

قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

92. 'There shall be no reproach upon you this day. God will forgive you, for He is the most merciful to those who show mercy.'⁵⁴

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 Hamza ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib during the Battle of Uhud six years earlier, in 624 CE. Hind bint Utbah had cut open Hamza's body, ripped out his liver and chewed it.⁵⁵ 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 six years later she threw herself upon Muhammad's mercy. Extending clemency of remarkable depth, Muhammad promised her forgiveness and accepted her into his community.⁵⁶

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 in the Qur'an (and described as *لَا تَعْتَدُوا*, "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:

فَإِذَا تَنَقَّضْتَهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَفَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَن خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَدْعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

57. 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.⁵⁷

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 *كَفَّارَةً*, "expiation") in forgoing revenge in a spirit of charity.⁵⁸ 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 strength (*فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ مِثْلَ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ*),⁵⁹ 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 Allah's preference.⁶⁰

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.⁶¹ 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 decision, a policy practiced by his followers⁶²) 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.⁶³

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”.⁶⁴ Ibn Kathir, a noted 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.”⁶⁵ Muhammad had himself stated that these deeds are prohibited, as we see, for example, in his instructions to the army he dispatched to Mu'ta in 629 CE:

Attack in the name of Allah, and fight His enemy and yours in Al-Sham. You will encounter men secluded in monasteries, withdrawn from others. Do not attack them. You will find other people seeking out Satan and sin. Draw your swords against them. Do not kill a woman or a young child, or the old and senile. Do not destroy the date palm, cut down trees, or destroy a dwelling [“بيتاً”].⁶⁶

The Prophet's use of the word بيت ("dwelling" or "house") makes it clear that he intended for family homes to be left untouched. We also know how he felt about the need to protect not only homes, but also religious buildings. Allah had himself spoken in the Qur'an (*Surah al-Hajj* 22:40) about the evil of destroying religious buildings, including Jewish synagogues:

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمْتُمْ صَوَامِعَ وَبِيَعَ وَصَلَوَاتٍ وَمَسَاجِدَ يُدْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

40. [There are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah". And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is powerful and exalted in might.⁶⁷

In the year after Muhammad's death in 632 CE, his close friend and immediate successor, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq 'Abdullah bin Abi Quhafah, famously issued to the Muslim army before a campaign against the Byzantine armies in Syria what have been called the "Ten Commandments" of Islamic warfare. There is a version in Imam Malik's seminal *Al-Muwatta*,⁶⁸ but the most common version is recorded in Al-Tabari's *Tarikh* (History). Based directly on 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, this celebrated address to the army heading north to Syria under the leadership of Yazid ibn Abu Sufyan reads as follows:

Oh people! Stop, and I will tell you ten things. Do not be treacherous; do not steal from the booty; do not engage in backstabbing. Do not mutilate; do not kill a youngster or an old man, or a woman; do not cut off the heads of 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 [priest and/or monks] who devote their lives in cloisters; leave them and their devotions alone. You will come upon people who bring you platters in which are all sorts of food; if you eat any of it, mention the name of Allah over it.⁶⁹

There is no explicit phrase or statement within the Qur'an that defines the difference between combatants and non-combatants during war, just as there is not in either the Torah or the New Testament. We should not be surprised. In

the West, the English word “civilian” (from an Old French root with a different meaning) only gained its current meaning in the nineteenth century as someone who is not in a military or paramilitary force. Yet readers of the Qur’an must not think that any man of fighting age (children under fifteen, women and the aged having been excluded)⁷⁰ is therefore to be considered fair game. The Qur’an does not allow this. The verses that talk of combat are clear that war is only permissible against those who are waging war; that is, those in combat. Aside from those combatants and anyone acting unjustly to prevent Muslims from practising their faith or trying to violate the sanctity of Islam’s holy places, *no-one* is to be harmed.

The rationale for this is clear. Central to the Qur’anic revelation and stated unequivocally in many passages is the message that the decisions that pertain to life and death are Allah’s alone, and that Allah has proclaimed that human life — a “sacred” gift — may never be taken “without just cause” (إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ).⁷¹ In the Qur’anic passages narrating the story of Cain and Abel (*Surah al-Ma’ida* 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 or “*fasad*” (فساد, which means sedition, insurrection or serious persecution), it is as though he has killed all of humanity:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ
النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ
بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿32﴾

32. For that cause We decreed for the Children of Israel that whosoever kills any person for other than murder or sedition/insurrection, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whoso saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came with clear signs, yet, even after that, many people continued to commit excesses in the land.

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.⁷²

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 jihad, that famous word and concept that nowadays is most controversial and misunderstood.

Interestingly, given that jihad is now associated with extremists who are full of hatred, like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab fighters and terrorists, the Qur'an does not allow hatred to form the basis of a military or other armed response to perceived injustices. In *Surah al-Ma'ida*, one of the very last *surahs* revealed, it explicitly states that the hatred of others must not make anyone swerve to wrong and depart from justice:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

8. O you believers, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses in justice. Do not let hatred of a people cause you to deviate from justice. Be just, for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah; for Allah is well aware of what you do.⁷³

The Qur'an likewise praises those who "restrain their anger and are forgiving towards their fellow men" (وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ).⁷⁴ These and other verses communicating the same message are clear enough to prevent crimes perceived nowadays by Muslims from turning them into criminals.⁷⁵ 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-Wudd, 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.⁷⁶ 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.

We certainly know that the Prophet Muhammad urged his followers to seek calmness and avoid anger. We have many hadiths testifying to his detestation of anger. For example, he asked:

Whom do you consider a wrestler among you? The people replied: [the man] whom the men cannot defeat in wrestling. He said: No, it is he who controls himself when he gets angry.⁷⁷

Likewise, Muhammad is recorded as having stated that even a judge in a court should refrain from making a ruling whilst angry:

‘Abdur-Rahman ibn Abi Bakrah narrated: My father wrote to ‘Ubaidullah ibn Abi Bakrah who was a judge: “Do not pass a judgement between two people while you are angry, for indeed I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: The judge should not judge between two people while he is angry.”⁷⁸

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 al-Baqarah* 2:256 is emphatic that there must be “no compulsion in religion” (لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ). Truth is self-evident, the verse adds, and stands out from falsehood. Those who adopt faith grasp “the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks.”

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ
بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿256﴾

256. There is no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clearly from falsehood: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things.

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 Allah’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 Allah 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.”⁷⁹ The Qur’an itself enjoins believers to invite disbelievers using the sweetest appeal:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ
ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿125﴾

125. Invite [all] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knows best who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.⁸⁰

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 Allah had made all of mankind "into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other."⁸¹ *Surah al-Hujurat* 49:13, revealed after the liberation of Mecca, contains that very revelation:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿13﴾

13. O People, We have created you all male and female and have made you nations and tribes so that you may know each other. The most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Allah is all-knowing and all-aware.

This desire for tolerant coexistence even included other faiths and Muhammad never stopped believing in the commonality of belief between Muslims and the God-fearing among those who identified themselves as Jews and Christians (أهل الكتاب, *Ahl al-Kitab*, the "People of the Book"). They shared the same prophetic line of revelation, after all. Despite rejection by several powerful Jewish tribes, and frustration over trinitarian concepts, Muhammad remained convinced that the Jewish and Christian faith communities — as opposed to some individual tribes which acted treacherously — should obey Allah by actually following their own scriptures. Two verses in *Surah al-Ma'ida* saying precisely this were revealed very close in time to the Verse of the Sword. The verses encourage the Jews and Christians to submit to God and act faithfully according to their own scriptures, the Torah and the Gospel. The verses state that, if they do so, they, along with Muslims (fellow submitters⁸²), will have no need to fear or grieve on Judgement Day.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُتِمُّوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ
كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم مَّا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۗ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿68﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِقُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مَن آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿69﴾

68. Say, O People of the Book! You have nothing unless you obey [lit. stand firmly on] the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord. That which is revealed unto you from your Lord is certain to increase the obstinacy and disbelief of many. But do not grieve for those disbelievers.
69. Surely those who do believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians whoever believes in Allah and the last day and do good, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve [on the Day of Judgement].⁸³

The revelation of these religiously inclusive verses very late in Muhammad's life further undermines the thesis that the verses revealed late in his life 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 religiously directed war against all unbelievers, is the ordinary Arabic word for "exertion" or "effort" and it actually describes any Muslim's struggle against the things that are difficult or 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*": نَفْس, an Arabic word that may be translated as the "lower self" and refers to the individual's ego, carnal nature and the bad habits and actions that come from failure to resist temptation or desire.⁸⁴ For example, a Muslim who consciously strives to break the habit of telling lies, or drinking of alcohol, or who struggles against a bad temper, is involved quite properly in a jihad against those unfortunate weaknesses. In *Surah at-Ankabut* 29:6 the Qur'an explains this by pointing out that if anyone strives (جَاهَدَ, *jahada*) against their personal ungodliness it will bring personal, inner (that is, spiritual) growth. 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.

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿6﴾

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿7﴾

6. And if any strive [*jahada*], they do so for their own souls: for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.
7. And [as for] those who believe and do good deeds, We will most certainly blot out their evil deeds and We will certainly reward them the best of what they used to do.

In verse 69 of the same *surah* we find another statement identifying striving [*jihad*] as the doing of good deeds:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿69﴾

69. And those who strive hard [*jahadu*] for Us, We will certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is surely with the doers of good.⁸⁵

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*). We find in *Surah al-Hajj* 22:78, for example:

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۗ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۗ مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۗ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۗ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۗ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿78﴾

78. And strive hard [*wajahidu*] in the cause of Allah. Such striving [*jihaduhi*] is due to Him; He has chosen you and not laid upon you any difficulty in religion, which is the faith of your father Abraham; He named you Muslims before and in this, that the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you, and you may be bearers of witness to mankind. Therefore, keep up prayer and give charity and hold fast to Allah; He is your Guardian; how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper!

This identically matches the spirit of a beautiful *hadith*: “One who strives to help a widow or the poor is like one who strives in the cause of Allah.”⁸⁶

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.⁸⁷

Jihad is also used in the Qur'an to mean physical defensive resistance to external danger. 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 Islamic polity.⁸⁸ Islam's claim that this ratio reveals that *jihad* and *qital* (warfighting) are effectively synonymous regardless of context. This is incorrect. The exertion against ego and personal vice is a greater, non-contextual and ever-required struggle, as Muhammad revealed. After returning from a battle he told his supporters: “You have come back from the smaller *jihad* to the greater *jihad*” (قَدِمْتُمْ حَرَبَ مَقَدِمٍ مِنَ الْجِهَادِ الْأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الْجِهَادِ الْأَكْبَرِ). When asked what the greater *jihad* was, Muhammad replied: “The striving of [Allah's] servant against his desires” (مُجَاهَدَةُ الْعَبْدِ هَوَاهُ).⁸⁹

Some scholars doubt the authenticity of this particular hadith, not because of its content but because of what is considered a weak chain of narration, yet in any case there are many similar reliable hadiths showing that various forms of spiritual effort were considered the optimal *jihad*. For example: “it was narrated by Tariq ibn Shihab that a man asked the Prophet Muhammad, when he had put his leg in the stirrup: “What kind of exertion [*Jihad*] is best?” He said: “a word of truth spoken before an unjust ruler.””⁹⁰ Another hadith records that Muhammad himself exerted himself (يَجْتَهِدُ, *yajtahid*) during the last ten days of the Ramadan fast more than he had to exert (*yajtahid*) during the rest of it.⁹¹

Moreover, the Verse of the Sword and the other supposedly bloody verses quoted in this article do not even use the word “*jihad*” for the recommended defensive warfighting. They use “*qital*,” which simply means fighting or combat. Yes, *qital* is permitted as part of a defensive struggle against serious oppression or persecution, but that does not mean that all *jihad* is fighting. That would be using logic similar to saying that, because all fox terriers are dogs, all dogs are fox terriers. All lawful *qital* is *jihad* — a legitimately approved and rigorously constrained military struggle against evil — but not all *jihad* (or even much of it or the “greater” type) is warfare. Questions about who can legitimately call for or initiate *qital* as part of any *jihad*, in a world which no longer has caliphs ruling Islamic empires, are debated by Islamic scholars, with a vast majority arguing that only state leaders in Islamic (or Muslim-majority) lands would be legitimately able to do so if a genuine just cause emerged. The fact that *fatawa* and other calls for fighting made in recent years by Al-Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS,

Boko Haram and other leaders have not been accepted by the overwhelming majority of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims is a clear sign that very few Muslims see them as legitimate leaders or agree that armed fighting would be a just and appropriate response to the alleged grievances.

Interestingly, all the verses mentioning jihad as armed struggle in defence of the Islamic people and polity 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 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 frightened or 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.⁹²

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 *qital* as part of the struggle (jihad) against enemies relate to the self-defensive wars mentioned above, with the remaining verses relating to the broader need to protect the nascent Islamic polity 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 state. 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 state, threatening its borders or its direct interests, or interfering in the ability of Muslims to practice their faith.

Armed effort against any states that might do those oppressive things would still be permitted to this day, at least according to a fair reading of the Qur'an⁹³—just as it is within Western Just War theory. 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 analysis is not an attempt at religious apologetics. It is written by a scholar of military wars, laws and ethics in an endeavour to demonstrate that the world's second largest religion 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 serious direct 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, countless suicide-bombings around the world, and murders and atrocities by ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other groups, all of them claiming to act in the name of Islam? British scholar of religion Karen Armstrong answered this obvious question so succinctly in the days after 9/11 that her words make a fitting conclusion to this study. 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.”⁹⁴ Armstrong is correct, but her word “distort” is too weak for Al-Qaeda-style terrorists and ISIS murderers. They have not merely distorted the Qur’anic message; they have entirely perverted it and in the process created additional unhelpful hostility towards Islam — a faith of justice that seeks to create peace and security for its believers and a state of harmony and peaceful co-existence with other faiths.

Notes

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1. Muslims make up 23 percent of the world’s 6.9 billion humans. See the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2 April 2015), 7.
 2. 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>
 3. Mapping the Global Muslim Population.
 4. The very first word revealed to Muhammad was “*Iqra*,” (ٱقْرَأْ), which means “recite” and the word Qur’an itself originates from the root word *Qara’a*, which means “to read out” or “to recite”.
 5. The title of Mr 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).
6. 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 political 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.
 7. There are numerous English-language translations of the Qur'an which give slightly different wordings, but the translation that I consider most reliable, easiest to read and closest to the meaning of the Arabic text is: *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* by 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali (in very many editions). I also recommend the readability and reliability of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's translation, *The Quran* (New Delhi: Goodword, 2009). Another very popular modern translation is the so-called "Wahhabi translation": *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language: A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari: Summarised in One Volume* by Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Dr Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali (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), 59-72.
 8. *Jizya* was an annual tax levied by the Islamic state on adult male 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), 178.
 9. Cf. *Ibid.*, 96, 163; Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 165. Spencer, ed., *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance*, 43-44.
 10. Cf. Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, 28. After negatively quoting a statement praising Muhammad as "a hard fighter and a skillful military commander," Samuel 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), 263.

11. Joshua 6: 21.
12. Deuteronomy 7: 1-3 and 20: 16-17.
13. Polybius, *Histories*, XXXVIII.21.
14. Sohail H. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 196.
15. Q. *Surah* 34:28, Q. *Surah* 39:41 and Q. *Surah* 81:27.
16. Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*, 24-26. Cf. also: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.html>
17. Cf. David Bukay, "Peace or Jihad: Abrogation in Islam," in *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2007, 3-11, available online at: <http://www.meforum.org/1754/peace-or-jihad-abrogation-in-islam>. Access date: 1 April 2011.
18. Zakaria Bashier, *War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), vii—viii; Khadduri, *War and Peace*, 105.
19. Bukay, "Peace or Jihad," cited above.
20. https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2010/MVZ448/OBL__AQ__Fatwa_1996.pdf
21. <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>
22. See for example, Louay Fatoohi's thorough analysis of abrogation: *Abrogation in the Qur'an and Islamic Law: A Critical Study of the Concept of Naskh and its Impact* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust ed., 2013. First published by Routledge in New York and Oxon, 2013).
23. Bashier, *War and Peace*, 284.
24. *Ibid.*, 288.
25. Fatoohi, *Abrogation in the Qur'an and Islamic Law*, o cit., 180. See also Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an: The Truth from the Source* (Birmingham: Luna Plena, 2009).
26. Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Concept of War in Islam* (Cairo: Ministry of Waqf, 1961), 18, quoted in Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, 208.
27. Muhammad ibn 'Umar-al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi* (Beirut: Muassassat al-'Alami, 1989), Vol. 2, 780-95.
28. Ismail Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir ibn Kathir* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Assrya, 2013 edition), Volume 4, 332ff; Lt. Gen. A. I. Akram, *The Sword of Allah: Khalid bin al-Waleed, His Life and Campaigns* (New Delhi: Adam, 2009), 97-98; Bashier, *War and Peace*, 237-8, 241.
29. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 4, 332.
30. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford University Press, 1956. 2004 Edition), 311; Ibn Kathir, *The Life of Muhammad* (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 2004), 516, 522; Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), 182.
31. Q. *Surah* 9:6.
32. Sayyid Ameenul Hasan Rizvi, *Battles by the Prophet in Light of the Qur'an* (Jeddah: Abul-Qasim, 2002), 126-130.
33. Ibn Kathir, *Life of Muhammad*, 516, 522.
34. Spencer, *Religion of Peace?* 78.
35. Although Ad-Dahhak bin Muzahim, as quoted by Isma'il ibn Kathir (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 4, 338) — 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, 151.
36. Q. *Surah* 4:90.
 37. Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, 34.
 38. Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: Maktaba Allassrya, 2012), 249.
 39. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, 201.
 40. Cf. Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, 74.
 41. Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, Vol. 2, 492.
 42. Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, 435.
 43. This is certainly Ibn Hisham's view: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, 249. For modern writers who agree, see: Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, 31; Zakaria Bashier, *War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), 2-4; Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life based on the Earliest Sources* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983. Islamic Texts Society edition, 2009), 135; Sohail H. Hashmi, "Sunni Islam," in Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and War* (London: Routledge, 2004), 217. Sohail H. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 198.
 44. Cf. Michael Lecker, *The Constitution of Medina: Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 2004).
 45. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 1, 609.
 46. Q. *Surah* 2:192.
 47. Q. *Surah* 2:193.
 48. Hashmi, ed., *Islamic Political Ethics*, 204.
 49. *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Cairo: Dar Al-Afaq al-Arabia, 2004), 607, hadith 3025: حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ بْنُ مُوسَى، حَدَّثَنَا عَاصِمُ بْنُ يُونُسَ الْبِرْبُوعِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ الْفَرَارِيُّ، عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ عَقْبَةَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي سَالِمُ أَبُو النَّضْرِ، مَوْلَى عَمْرِ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ كُنْتُ كَاتِبًا لَهُ قَالَ كَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أَوْفَى حِينَ خَرَجَ إِلَى الْحَرُورِيِّ فَقَرَأَهُ فَيَا فَيَا فِيهَا إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي بَعْضِ أَيَّامِهِ الَّتِي لَقِيَ فِيهَا الْعَدُوَّ انْتَهَرَ حَتَّى مَالَتِ الشَّمْسُ. ثُمَّ قَامَ فِي النَّاسِ فَقَالَ " أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ لَا تَهْتَمُّوا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ وَسَلُّوا اللَّهَ الْعَاقِبَةَ، فَإِذَا لَقَيْتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِ الشُّيُوفِ - ثُمَّ قَالَ - اللَّهُمَّ مَنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَجْرِي السَّحَابِ وَهَارِمِ الْأَحْزَابِ اهْزِمْهُمْ وَأَنْصِرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ ". وَقَالَ مُوسَى بْنُ عَقْبَةَ حَدَّثَنِي سَالِمُ أَبُو النَّضْرِ كُنْتُ كَاتِبًا لِعَمْرِ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُ كِتَابَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي أَوْفَى - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَا تَهْتَمُّوا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ "
 50. Q. *Surah* 47:44.
 51. Q. *Surah* 2:216 and see Q. *Surah* 42:41.
 52. Q. *Surah* 2: 217, 2:191 and 4:75-78.
 53. Bashier, *War and Peace*, 229-233.
 54. Q. *Surah* 12:92.
 55. Ibn Ishaq, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, Vol. 1, 285-286; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (Beirut: Dar al-Sadr, 2008), Vol. 1, 397.
 56. Ibn Ishaq, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, Vol. 2, 850; Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, 459.
 57. Q. *Surah* 8.57.
 58. Q. *Surah* 5:45.
 59. Q. *Surah* 2:194: "if any one transgresses against you, you may retaliate against them to an equal extent".
 60. Cf. Q. *Surah* 42:40-3.
 61. Cf. Khadduri, *War and Peace*, 96-8.
 62. *Ibid.*, 98. Cf. *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1999), Vol. 3, 526, hadith 1548: Abu al-Bakhtari narrated that an army of the Muslims, commanded by

Salman al-Farisi, besieged one of the Persian fortresses. They said: ‘O Abu ‘Abdullah! Should we attack them?’ He said: ‘Leave me to call them [to Islam] as I heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) call them.’ So Salman went to them and said: ‘I am only a man from among you, a Persian, and you see that the Arabs obey me. If you become Muslims then you will have the likes of what we have, and from you will be required that which is required from us. If you refuse, and keep your religion, then we will leave you to it, and you will give us *jizya* from your hands while you are submissive.’ He said to them in Persian: ‘And you are other than praiseworthy and if you refuse then we will equally resist you.’ They said: ‘We will not give you *jizya*. We will fight you instead.’ So they said: ‘O Abu ‘Abdullah! Should we attack them?’ He said: ‘No.’ He said: “So for three days he made the same call to Islam, and then he said: ‘Attack them.’” He said: “So we attacked them, and we conquered the fortress.”

حدثنا قتيبة، حدثنا أبو عوانة، عن عطاء بن السائب، عن أبي البختري، أن جيشا، من جيوش المسلمين كان أميرهم سلمان الفارسي حاضرا قسرا من قسور فارس فقالوا يا أبا عبد الله ألا تنهد إليهم قال دعوني أدعهم كما سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يدعوهم. فاتاهم سلمان فقال لهم إنما أنا رجل منكم فارسي ترون العرب يطعونني فإن أسلمتم فلکم مثل الذي لنا وعليكم مثل الذي علينا وإن أبيتم إلا دينكم تركناكم عليه وأعطونا الجزية عن يد وأنتم صاغرون. قال ورطن إليهم بالفارسية وأنتم غر محمودين. وإن أبيتم نأبذناكم على سواء. قالوا ما نحن بالذي نعطى الجزية ولكننا نقاتلكم. فقالوا يا أبا عبد الله ألا تنهد إليهم قال لا. فدعاهم ثلاثة أيام إلى مثل هذا ثم قال انهذوا إليهم. قال فهدنا إليهم فقتلنا ذلك القصر. قال وفي الباب عن بريدة والنعمان بن مقرن وابن عمر وابن عباس. وحديث سلمان حديث حسن لا تعرفه إلا من حديث عطاء بن السائب. وسمعت محمدا يقول أبو البختري لم يدرك سلمان لأنه لم يدرك عليا وسلمان مات قبل علي. وقد ذهب بعض أهل العلم من أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إلى هذا ورأوا أن يدعو قبل القتال وهو قول إسحاق بن إبراهيم قال إن تقدم إليهم في الدعوة فحسن يكون ذلك أهدى. وقال بعض أهل العلم لا دعوة اليوم. وقال أحمد لا أعرف اليوم أحدا يدعو. وقال الشافعي لا يقاتل العدو حتى يدعو إلا أن يخجلوا عن ذلك فإن لم يفعل فقد بلغتهم الدعوة.

63. Imam Muhammad Shirazi, *War, Peace and Non-violence: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Fountain Books, 2003 ed.), 28-9.
64. 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.
65. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 1, 609.
66. Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, Vol. 2, 758.
67. Q. *Surah* 22:40.
68. *Al-Muwatta Iman Malik bin Anas* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2005), page 319, Book 21, Chapter 3, Hadith 10: “Do not kill a woman or a child or an aged person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy any place of dwelling. Do not slaughter sheep or camels, except [if you need them] for food. Do not burn bees and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly.”
- وحدثني عن مالك، عن يحيى بن سعيد، أن أبا بكر الصديق، بعث جيوشا إلى الشام فخرج يمشي مع يزيد بن أبي سفيان - وكان أمير ربيعة من تلك الأرباع - فزعموا أن يزيد قال لأبي بكر إنما أنزل . فقال أبو بكر ما أنت بتاريل وما أنا براكب إبي أحتسب خطأي هذه في سبيل الله ثم قال له إنك ستجد قوما زعموا أنهم حسبوا أنفسهم لله فذرهم وما زعموا أنهم حسبوا أنفسهم له وستجد قوما فخصوا عن أواسط رؤوسهم من الشعر فأضرب ما فخصوا عنه بالسيف وأبي موصيك بعشر لا تقتلن امرأة ولا صبيا ولا كبيراً هراماً ولا تقطنن شجراً مثمراً ولا تحزبن عابراً ولا تقفرن شاة ولا بغيراً إلا لبأكله ولا تحرقن نحلاً ولا تفرقنه ولا تغلن ولا تجبن.
69. Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, 518.
70. Muhammad Munir, “The Protection of Civilians in War: Non-Combatant Immunity in Islamic Law”, *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (October-

- December 2011), 7-39; Ahmed Mohsen Al-Dawoodi, *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 111-4.
71. Q. *Surah* 6:151, 17:33, 25:68.
72. Q. *Surah* 5:33-4.
73. Q. *Surah* 5:8 (and see 5:2).
74. Q. *Surah* 3:134.
75. Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, 73.
76. *Mathnawi* I: 3721ff. published online at: <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/n-I-3721.html>
77. *Sunan Abu Dawud* (Riyadh: Dar al-Haddarah lil-Nasha wa al-Tawziyyah, 2015), 599, hadith 4779:
 حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، عَنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ النَّيْمِيِّ، عَنِ الْخَارِثِ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ، عَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "مَا تَعْدُونَ الضَّرْعَةَ فِيكُمْ". قَالُوا الَّذِي لَا يَضْرَعُهُ الرَّجَالُ. قَالَ "لَا وَلَكِنَّهُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ".
78. *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Vol. 3, 400, hadith 1334:
 حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ، عَنِ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ عُمَيْرٍ، عَنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ كَتَبَ أَبِي إِلَى عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ وَهُوَ قَاضٍ أَنْ لَا تَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَنْتَ غَضْبَانٌ. فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ "لَا يَحْكُمُ الْحَاكِمُ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ وَهُوَ غَضْبَانٌ". قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ. وَأَبُو بَكْرَةَ اسْمُهُ نُفَيْعٌ.
79. Q. *Surah* 43:88-9.
80. Q. *Surah* 16:125-8.
81. Q. *Surah* 49:13.
82. Q. *Surah* 2:62.
83. Q. *Surah* 5:69.
84. Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, 25-6.
85. Q. *Surah* 29:69.
86. *Sunan an-Nasa'i* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1999 edition), 357, hadith 2578.
87. Q. *Surah* 25:52.
88. Fatoohi, *Jihad in the Qur'an*, 87.
89. This hadith is found in Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's book, *Al-Durar al-Muntathira fi al-Ahadith al-Mushtahara*, ed. by Muhammad 'Ab-al-Rahim (Beirut: Dar al-Fiqh, 1995 ed.).
90. *Sunan an-Nasa'i*, 587, hadith 4214:
 أَخْبَرَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ مَنْصُورٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنِ سُفْيَانَ، عَنِ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنِ مَرْثَدٍ، عَنِ طَارِقِ بْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَنَّ رَجُلًا سَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَدْ وَضَعَ رِجْلَهُ فِي الْغُرْزِ أَيْ الْجِهَادِ أَفْضَلَ قَالَ "كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ عِنْدَ سُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ".
91. *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Vol. 3, 100, hadith 796:
 حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ بْنُ زِيَادٍ، عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنِ الْأَسْوَدِ، عَنِ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَجْتَهِدُ فِي الْعَشْرِ الْأَوَاخِرِ مَا لَا يَجْتَهِدُ فِي غَيْرِهَا. قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ غَرِيبٌ Cf. *Sahih Muslim* (Cairo: Dar Al-Ghad Al-Gadid, 2007), 398, hadith 1175.
92. <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/1940-finest-hour/128-we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches>
93. Cf. Chapter V in Khadduri, *War and Peace*.
94. 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>. Access date: 1 April 2011.