FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM AND PEACE FOR HUMANITY: IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HOLY QURAN

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Abstract

This paper highlights the fundamentals of Islam considering the Holy Quran and Hadiths. Contrary to the meanings of Islam as a religion of peace, its politicised version justifies the practice of coercion and extremism that is breeding violence and terrorism in the contemporary era. We will attempt to proceed further in the next chapter to answer the question: 'how was the practice of coercion maintained, although it goes against the verse of the Holy Quran that clearly says, "No Coercion in Religion"[1]?' An analytical study of the historical perspective of spreading Islam through the use of the sword or by using power highlights the causes of wars and Ghazwat (the wars Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH himself participated in) fought by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) during His life, while other wars were fought by later Muslim rulers for the purpose of expanding the geographical boundaries of the Islamic States within the history of Islam, with the excuse of spreading the Islamic faith. It will be interesting to explore both the expansion of boundaries through the sword, spreading Islam, or this coercive power- seeking strategy which deconstructed the very idea of Islam which is rooted in humanity and humanism.

Introduction

Religions, with a variety of definitions, have already been discussed in the Introduction and have introduced a diversity of perspectives to the world. The variant perspectives include positive perceptions spread by the believers of the religion and negative perceptions coming from those who do not believe in the religion and the existence of God or gods. The positive theory of religion, being older as a cultural tradition, has a larger number of followers than the negative one.[2] Theocracy, or "the

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[1] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No 256

[2] See also Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (2017), 3rd edition, Published by Basic Books New York

belief in Spiritual Beings"[3] seems to begin with the advent of humankind while negative attitudes toward religion advocating "there is no power in the human mind superior to human reason or human will"[4] had been coined in the 16th century as a follow-up of the Renaissance Movement and the works of University Wits - Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, as one of the most pertinent examples. The Renaissance could be viewed as an effort by European intellectuals to study and improve the secular and worldly, both through the revival of ideas from antiquity, and through novel approaches to thought.

The rennaissance period is considered the early modern period with an intellectual wave all around Europe. By the sixteenth century, it had influenced art, architecture, philosophy, literature, music, science and technology, politics, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry. It was a cultural movement. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art.[5] In the revival of neo-Platonism, Renaissance humanists did not reject Christianity; quite the contrary, many of the greatest works of the Renaissance were devoted to it, and the Church patronized many works of Renaissance art. However, a subtle shift took place in the way that intellectuals approached religion that was reflected in many other areas of cultural life.[6] In addition, many Greek Christian works, including the Greek New Testament, were brought back from Byzantium to Western Europe and engaged Western scholars for the first time since late antiquity. This new engagement with Greek Christian works, and particularly the return to the original Greek of the New Testament promoted by humanists Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus, would help pave the way for the Protestant Reformation.

This idea of secularism gained more followers in the 18th century through Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews* and expressed later at the end of the 20th century by Hancock and Lambert in *The Legacy of the French Revolution*, to give just two examples. However, in the 21st century, both perspectives have gained enough popularity to succeed in dividing humankind into theocracy and atheism; the religious believers are still the bigger figure though (84% religious believers vs 16% atheist / agnostic/ unaffiliated of the total population of the world)[7].

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[3] Tylor, Edward B (1831-1917), *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* 1st published in 1871, Cambridge University Press, print publication 2010, online publication 2012
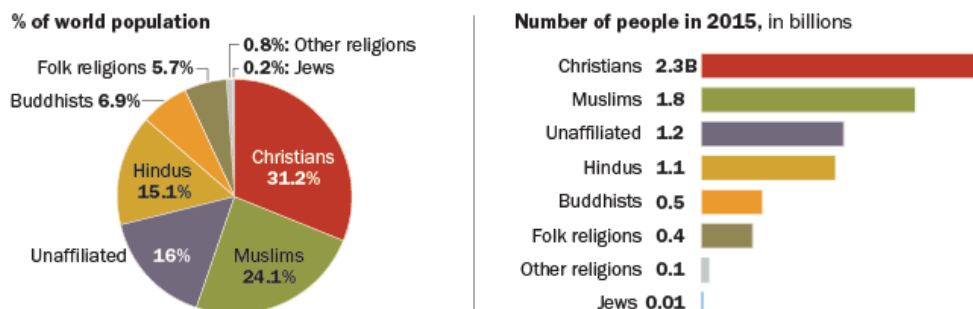
[4] Hancock, Ralph C. & Lambert, Gary (1996), *The Legacy of the French Revolution*, Chapter 1. *The Unfinished Revolution* written by Mansfield, Harvey C., pg. 22, Published by Rowman & Littlefield

[5] Perry, M. *Humanities in the Western Tradition*, Ch. 13

[6] Open University (Retrieved May 10, 2007), *Looking at the Renaissance: Religious Context in the Renaissance*

[7] Hackett, Conrad & Mcclendon, David (2017), *Christians remain world's largest religious group, but they are declining in Europe,* Pew Research Centre

Christians are the largest religious group in 2015

% of world population

- 0.8%: Other religions
- 0.2%: Jews
- Folk religions 5.7%
- Buddhists 6.9%
- Hindus 15.1%
- Unaffiliated 16%
- Muslims 24.1%
- Christians 31.2%

Number of people in 2015, in billions

- Christians 2.3B
- Muslims 1.8
- Unaffiliated 1.2
- Hindus 1.1
- Buddhists 0.5
- Folk religions 0.4
- Other religions 0.1
- Jews 0.01

Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details.
"The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

[8]

The twenty-first century is observing rather blunt advocates of the idea that alleges religion as "the chief source of violence and oppression"[9] that spreads terrorism. Sam Harris claims that religion plays the primary role "in justifying and rewarding it [terrorism]"[10]. The terrorists, according to Harris' conception, "actually believe what they say they believe"[11] and others blame 'extremists' who 'distort' the 'true' message of religion. Harris claims that the root of the problem is religion itself and terrorists are only following what is commanded to them by their religion; Islam. Even moderate religion, according to him with an endorsement by other atheists, is a menace because it leads us to respect and "cherish the idea that certain fantastic propositions can be believed without evidence."[12] He presents peaceful Muslims as apologists who disown radical violent extremists along with their misrepresentations regarding the true message of religion, i.e. peace for humanity. This means the neo-liberals validate the above mentioned "0.00001 percent of all Muslims,"[13] rejecting the beliefs representing true Islam and practised by 99.9 percent of the Muslims. This latest religion-as-rival phenomenon may rightly be called Islamophobia for its being more anti-Islam than 'anti' any other religion, "born in the febrile aftermath of 9/11, when belief in a deity – or, let's be honest, specifically in Allah [and Islam] – seemed to some people a newly urgent danger to western civilisation."[14] Does Islam really preach violence? To acquire a more comprehensive

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[8] Image credit: PEW Research Centre (2015), repeated to recall for clarity of the concept here. http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FT_17.04.05_projectionsUpdate_globalPop640px.png

[9] Harris, Sam (2005), *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason,* W.W. Norton Paperback

[10] Dawkins, Richard (2005), *Review on The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason,* Samharris.org, https://samharris.org/books/the-end-of-faith/

[11] Harris, Sam (2005), *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason,* W.W. Norton Paperback

[12] Harris, Sam (2005), *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason,* W.W. Norton Paperback, Samharris.Org

[13] Alnatour, Omar (12 Sep 2015, updated on 9 Dec 2016), *Muslims Are Not Terrorists: A Factual Look at Terrorism and Islam,* Huffpost.com,

[14] Poole, Steven (2019), *The Four Horsemen review - whatever happened to 'New Atheism'?,* The Guardian

understanding, we need to analyse the evident differences between the basic, foundational preachings of Islam and the politicised exploitation of Islam, fabricated and promoted later by self-appointed authorities / gatekeepers of the religion, and exploited politically.

Fundamentals of Islam

Islam is acclaimed as a religion of peace by a majority of its followers. This claim is built upon the word Islam itself that is derived from the Arabic root word *Salama* that means peace and safety. So common Muslims believe it to be a religion of peace and prosperity for humanity on the grounds of its fundamental code of conduct for leading a life in the most peaceful, tolerant and harmonious way, avoiding any act of terror, intolerance or violence. The laws of the previous scriptures that applied to earlier generations are repeated and emphasised for the Muslims in the Quran. Muslims are commanded to follow such laws. Islam teaches love and compassion for every human being, regardless of their religion, caste, colour or creed. According to the Holy Quran, humanism is the core foundation of Islam. Islam is a religion revealed to humankind with the intention of presenting a peaceful life where the limitless compassion and mercy of God manifests itself on earth. John L. Esposito highlights that Islam is not a pacifist religion, instead it "emphasizes action, performing the will of God. It more closely resembles Judaism with its focus on following the law than Christianity with its emphasis on belief. Muslims are enjoined to act, to struggle (*jihad*), to implement their belief, to lead a good life, to defend religion, to contribute to the development of a just Islamic society throughout the world."[15] In support of their belief, the Muslims present evidence from the Holy Quran, the Holy Book for Muslims consisting of the sayings and commands of Allah (God) as per their faith while non-Muslims take it as the book written by Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and also the books of hadiths which are formed by collecting the sayings and doings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during His life. Both sources of Islamic preaching for leading a proper life are believed to be the most authentic guides towards the righteous ways of living in this world, without discrimination of any kind.

Quranic Codes of Conduct for Humanity

God advises all people to live by the moral values He sets so that compassion, mercy, peace and love can be experienced all over the world. He calls, "*Ya ayyoha allazeena amanoo odkhuloo fee alSsimi kaffatan wala tattabii'oo khutuwati alShaytani annahu lakum aduwwun mubeenun.*" Translation: "O You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan. He is an outright enemy to you."[16] In this verse, Islam intrinsically calls for peace and promotes a life of absolute sincerity and honesty before God. Therefore, it is vitally important for an individual to believe in God with his own will and aspiration, and observe God's commands through personal, meticulous gratitude.[17] Allah's invitation

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[15] Esposito, John L. (2003), *Unholy War, Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pg. 5

[16] Holy Quran: Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 208

[17] Oktar, Adnan (pen name Harun Yahya) (1956), *Islam Denounces Terrorism* (January 30, 2003), Publishers: Tahrike Tarsile Quran; 1st edition, Turkey

towards Islam is called the invitation towards "*Daar alsSalaam*"[18]; *daar* means home or shelter and *Salaam* means peace, security, contentment, so the full phrase means a shelter of peace, home of contentment.

Allah shows peaceful ways of leading life to those who seek His pleasure. That means if Allah is pleased with one, He enlightens him/her with the knowledge of righteous, peaceful manners by taking him/her away from the darkness of ignorance. Regarding this in the Quran, Allah says: *"Yahdee bihi Allahu maani ittaba'a ridwanahu subula alsSalaami wa yukhrijuhum mina alZzulumati ela alNnoori bi iznihe wa yahdeehim ilaa siraatin mustaqeemin."* Translation: "By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to Subulas Salaam [the ways/manners/paths of peace] and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to Sirat Al-Mustaqeem (righteous path)."[19] Allah also commands in the Quran that no one should be forced to embrace Islam, rather it should be through free will and deliberation. "*La Ikrahu fi aldeen.*" Translation: "There is no compulsion/coercion in religion."[20] As stated in the verse, no one can be compelled to live by Islamic morals by force. Conveying the existence of God and the morals of the Quran to other people is a duty for believers, but they call people to the path of God with kindness and love and they should never rely on force. Ultimately, it is only God Who guides people to the right way. This is related in the following verse: "*Innaka la tahdi mun ahbabta wa lakinna Allaha yahdi mun yasha'o, wa huwa a'alamu bil mohtadeena*" Translation: "Indeed, you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the (rightly) guided. "[21] The Quran provides an environment where people can fully enjoy freedom of thought and freedom of religion and allows people to live by the faith and values they believe in. According to Islam, everyone has the right to live freely by his beliefs, whatever they may be. Anyone who wants to support a church, a synagogue or a mosque must be free to do so. In this sense, freedom of religion, or freedom of belief, is one of the basic tenets of Islam. There is always freedom of religion wherever the moral values of the Quran prevail. That is why Muslims are commanded to treat Jews and Christians, who are described in the Quran as "the People of the Book," with great justice, love and compassion. God says in the Quran: *"La yanha kum Allahu ani Allazeen lam yuqaatiloo kum fee aldeeni wa lam yukhrijukum min diyarikum un tabarruhum wa tuqsitoo ileihim, inna Allaha yuhibbul muqsiteena."* Translation: "God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just."[22] Allah clearly requires one to act justly and acknowledge the existence of people from different faiths and opinions and welcome cordially, because this is how He created and predestined humankind in this world: *"Likulli ja'alna minkum shira'atan wa minhajan, wa lau sha'a Allahu lajalakum ummatan*

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[18] Holy Quran, Surah Yunus, Verse No. 25

[19] Holy Quran, Surah al Ma'ida, Verse No. 16

[20] Holy Quran: Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 256

[21] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Qasas, Verse No. 56

[22] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Mumtahanah, Verse No. 8

wahidatan wa lakin liyabluwakum fee ma'aata kum, fastabiqoo alkheirati ila Allahi marji'ukum jamee'an fayunabbi'ukum bima kuntum feehi takhtalifoona." Translation: "We have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had God willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to God and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed."[23] Thus Muslims who share these basic values believe in the need to act together with Christians and Jews who also, according to the Holy Quran, share the same values. They therefore strive to eliminate prejudices, refrain from reacting to provocations and incitements by atheists as well as by the radicalised bigots and fanatics. Thus the violent and intolerant behaviour of Islamists go against the teachings of the Quran. The values of the Quran hold a Muslim responsible for treating all people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim (All: Christians, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists or even atheists), kindly and justly, protecting the needy and the innocent and preventing the dissemination of mischief. Mischief comprises all forms of anarchy and terror that remove security, comfort and peace. God does not like *fasaad* (terrorism, violence, anarchy, chaos, riots)[24]. Islam not only advocates freedom, peace and mutual agreement but also admonishes aggression and forbids the killing of innocent people, irrespective of the reasons, be they religious, political or social. "*Wa la taqtaloo alnnafsa allti harrama allahu illa bilhaqqi…"* Translation: "...And do not kill anyone which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except for the right."[25] God has made life sacred except in the course of justice. *Adal* (Justice) in Islam favours oppressed against oppressor, supports victim of oppression against aggressor, weighs the defensive side against offensive, voices for terrorized against terrorist, stands firmly in favour of prey against predator. However, there is a gap between what we consider different people deserve and what we see that they receive, and may cause an 'unjust' in 'just' depending upon our perceptions and intentions. This phenomenon is summed up in the following quatrain cited from Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*:

> *"The rain falls on the just*
> *And on the unjust fella;*
> *But mainly upon the just.*
> *Because the unjust has the just's umbrella."*[26]

Allah commands His believers to stay forbearing and patient in hard times and try to seek help through patience and prayer[27] instead of being aggressive. In reward for their forbearance, they will be helped by Allah because He is always with the ones who remain calm, tolerant and patient in tough times, "*Ya ayyuha allazeena aamanu istaeenu bilSsabri wa AlSsalati, inna allah ma'a alSsabireena;"* Translation:

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[23] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Ma'ida, Verse No. 48

[24] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqara, Verse No. 205

[25] Holy Quran, Surah Al-An'am, Verse No. 151

[26] Geertz, Clifford (2017), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3rd edition, Published by Basic Books New York, pg. 114

[27] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 45

"O believers, seek help through patience and prayer, indeed, Allah is with patients".[28] He also commanded believers to not only observe patience and compassion towards humanity but also advise and guide others to be more tolerant and compassionate too.

On the other side, all acts leading society towards disturbance, riots, anarchy, chaos or violence are strictly forbidden in Islam, according to Quranic teachings. Allah clearly says in the Quran: "*Wa La Tufsidoo fee alardi ba'ada islahiha...*" which means "And do not cause *fasaad* (violence/ anarchy/ chaos/ unrest/ corruption/ riots) in the Earth after the reformation..."[29] It shows that Islam advocates freedom, peace and mutual agreement and admonishes aggression, violence, coercion and corruption. Barbarous people are condemned in the Quran: "*Wa Iza qeela lahum la tufsidoo fee alardi qaloo innama nahnu muslihoona.*" Translation: "And when it is said to them (*fasaadi*: chaotic, anarchic or turbulent people) do not cause *fasaad* in the Earth, they say (in excuse), 'indeed we are *muslihoon* (reformers/ preachers/ peacemakers) only'."[30] Allah calls these *mufsidoon* who break their promise of following Allah's commands in favour of peace and work to spread fear through *fasaad* or acts of terrorism, as *khaaseroon:* the losers.[31] Allah expresses His contempt for *fasaad* violence and terrorism in these words: *"Wa iza tawalla sa'aa fee alardi liyufsida feeha wa yohlika alharsa walNasla, waAllahu la yuhibbu alfasada."* Translation: "And when he is in authority, he strives throughout the land to cause *fasaad* therein and destroy crops and living beings. And Allah does not like *fasaad*."[32] Another verse of Holy Quran declares that killing one human being is equal to the killing of the entire humanity. "*...Annahu mun qatala nafsun begheiri nafsin au fasaadin fee alardi faka annama qatal alNnaasa jamee'aa wa mun ahyaha fakka annama ahya alNnaasa jamee'aa…."* Translation: "Whoever killed a soul unless for a soul (for justice) or for causing terrorism in the land, it is as if he had slain all of mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as if he has saved all of mankind."[33] Islam condemns the killing or even the persecution of people merely because they follow a different religion. The Quran mandates absolute freedom of religion in society. It does not permit Muslims to fight except in self-defence and afterwards to resume peace. It does not allow restrictions on those who disagree on religious issues. It urges the Muslims to treat such people kindly and equitably. "*Ya ayyoha AlNaas inna khalaqunaakum min zakarin wa unsaa wa Ja'alnakum sho'uuban wa qaba'il lita'arafuu inna akramakum inda Allahe atquaakum…"*Translation: "O humankind, We created you from [same kind] a male and a female, and made you families and tribes [to give you a distinct identity] so that you may recognise one another. The noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the self disciplined person [the one who is the best

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[28] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 153

[29] Holy Quran, Surah Al-A'raaf, Verse No. 56

[30] Holy Quran; Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 11

[31] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 27

[32] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 205

[33] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse No. 32

in moral conduct]...”[34] Here, it is notable that all humankind is being addressed to make it clear that the division into families and tribes and castes and creeds is merely to be identified respectively, and no one has any privilege over others except those who are more disciplined and more strict in piety and moral values. In acknowledgment of this fact, common Muslims are taught by Islam to have an inner love and compassion for people of all faiths, races and nations, for they consider them as the manifestations of God in this world and treat them with respect and love. This is the very basis of communities administered by true Islamic morality. Thus Allah Almighty cursed the ones who misrepresent Him and His message by inventing lies. “And who is more unjust than the ones who invent a lie about Allah? Those will be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, ‘These are the ones who lied against their Lord.’ No doubt! The curse of Allah is upon the *Zalimun* (oppressors).”[35]

Conclusion

Considering the evidence presented, this study establishes that the foundational teachings of Islam, as enshrined in the Holy Quran, constitute a comprehensive ethical framework oriented towards peace, justice, and universal human dignity. The analysis confirms that the very etymology of Islam - derived from Salama, meaning peace and submission - is reflected in its core doctrinal principles. These principles include the absolute prohibition of compulsion in religion (La Ikraha fid Deen), the sanctity of human life, the imperative of justice (Adl), and the mandate to foster compassion and peaceful coexistence among all people, irrespective of faith or creed.

Contrary to the assertions of contemporary critics who allege an intrinsic link between Islam and violence - a perspective epitomized by the arguments of Sam Harris and others within the New Atheist discourse - the Quranic text explicitly and repeatedly condemns aggression, terrorism (fasaad), and injustice. It positions the believer’s struggle not as one of conquest, but as an internal and external endeavour to establish equity, protect the oppressed, and invite others to righteousness through wisdom and kindness. The Quranic vision of society is pluralistic, recognizing and respecting diversity as a divine design, and commands Muslims to interact with others, particularly the "People of the Book," with fairness and benevolence.

This paper has argued that the prevalent association of Islam with violence and coercion is a profound misrepresentation. This misrepresentation stems not from the religion’s primary sources, but from a twofold exploitation: first, by political actors and radical groups who selectively decontextualize verses to legitimize power-seeking agendas; and second, by external ideologues who, often under the guise of secular critique, conflate the actions of a minority with the essence of the faith itself, thereby fuelling Islamophobia. The discrepancy between the Quran’s peace-oriented fundamentals and the violent practices attributed to Islam points not to a flaw in the doctrine, but to its political hijacking and the complex historical circumstances of the Muslim world.

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[34] Holy Quran, Surah Al-Hujraat, Verse No. 13

[35] Holy Quran, Surah Hud, Verse No. 18

However, the theological foundation of Islam rests upon two primary sources: the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (practices and sayings) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). While this Part I has systematically detailed the Quranic blueprint for peace, a complete understanding necessitates an examination of the Prophetic tradition. The Hadith literature serves as the practical exegesis of the Quran, illustrating how its principles were implemented in the life of the Prophet and early Muslim community.

Therefore, the subsequent paper, Part II, will extend this inquiry by analysing the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It will investigate His sayings, actions, and sanctions (Sunnah) that further elucidate and reinforce the Quranic mandate for peace, tolerance, and ethical conduct. Part II will demonstrate how the Prophetic model - from the Treaty of Hudaibiya to his personal interactions with non-Muslims - embodies the very values derived from the Quran, thereby providing a holistic portrait of Islam as a religion whose foundational texts and foundational figures are unequivocally committed to the welfare and harmony of humanity.