

God is the All-Peace, the All-Merciful

From The Quran:

God is the All-Peace Calls the Humankind to Peace:

“[. . .] He is the All-Merciful, the Mercy-giving.

God is He save whom there is no deity; the Sovereign Supreme, the Holy, the All-Peace [. . .]” (Quran 59:22-3).

“And God calls [the human beings] into **the abode of peace**, and guides one who wills onto a straight way. Those who persevere in doing good, they will get the ultimate good. . .” (10:25-6).

“O you who have attained to faith! **Enter all wholly into peace**, and follow not Satan’s footsteps, for, verily, he is your open foe” (2:208).

Condemning Destruction of Life:

“And among the humankind there is the one whose views on this world life would please you, and would cite God as witness to what is in his [/her] heart, and he [/she] is the most contentious of adversaries in dispute. As this one gets away, he [/she] goes about the earth **spreading damage and destroying tilth and progeny; and God does not love causing damage**. And whenever he [/she] is told, ‘Be conscious of God,’ he [/she] adds arrogance to guilt; and for him [/her] hell will be well-deserved, and how vile a resting place!” (2:204-6).

“Even if you draw forth your hand towards me to kill me, I shall never draw forth my hand towards you to kill you; I fear God, the Lord of the whole universe. **Let you bear my wrong-doings as well as yours**, and then you would be destined for fire and that is the requital of evildoers” (5:28-9).

“In consequence, We did ordain unto the children of Israel [and all believers who follow] that if **anyone kills a human being – unless it be [in punishment]for murder or for spreading damage on earth – it shall be as though he had killed all humankind: whereas, if anyone saves a human life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all humankind**” (5:32).

Repelling Evil with Good:

“And a requital for a wrong-doing is equal to it, but **whoever forgives and makes peace [with the other], his [/her] reward rests with God**; He, verily, does not love the transgressors” (42:40).

“But for any who defends himself [/herself] after having suffered injustice, no blame attaches to them; blame attaches but to those who are guilty of wrong-doing against [other] people and commit aggression on earth against all right [. . .] but withal, if **one is patient in adversity and forgives, this is what ought to be determined**” (42:41-3).

“And if you have to respond to an attack, respond only to the extent of the attack leveled against you; **but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better** for those who are patient in adversity” (16:126).

“And it **may well be that God will bring about affection between you and those whom you are facing now as enemies**, and God is All-Powerful, and God is Much-Forgiving, Mercy-Giving” (60:7).

“But good and evil cannot be equal, **repel you [evil] with what is better, and so the one between whom and yourself was enmity, [may then become] as though he [/she] would be a close friend**. Yet this is not given to any but those endowed with great destiny” (4:34-5).

Resources for Non-violence are at the Center of Islam:

The previously mentioned verses of the Quran – God’s revealed Book to Prophet Muhammad – indicate essential Islamic precepts which provide a solid foundation for going beyond violence. God is the All-Peace who calls on the whole humankind in general and the Muslims in particular to enter all wholly into peace. The Creator of life sharply condemns aggression and destroying life, whatever the delusive argument and rhetoric supporting such actions may be. Further, the Quran, urges to repel the wrong-doing with self-control and reconciliation, for this is much rewarding in this world in dealing with the wrong-doer, who may be turned one day into a friend, as well as it is highly rewarded in the eternal life to come. Patience and self-control are stressed in the Quran more than 85 times; forgiveness, not only patience, is stressed more than 20 times. In addition, there are basic doctrinal and moral principles which establish going beyond violence in the deepest depth of the Muslim minds and hearts.

• **A basic meeting point for all the believers in the One God including Muslims is that He is the Creator of life and the Lord of all human beings**, and the entire creation.

Accordingly, a strong, rational, and hearty relationship is felt by the human being towards all humans, the whole life and the entire cosmos. Consequently, such a believer should never be the one who acts violently towards any of the marvels of God’s creation, and humans stand in the front. All humans are equal creation of God, and enjoy life given to them by God, and the true believer in the Lord creation should extol God’s limitless glory in securing and preserving His wonders of creation. Committing any aggression against any of these wonders, is simply an attack against the believer’s faith and sensibility. The true faith in the All-Peace, the All-Merciful has to radiate peace within the human self, and through the relations will all human beings and all creation. God with all His attributes and in the Creator-creation relationship in the Abrahamic monotheism is distinguished from god in superstition, philosophy, science, and even passive mysticism. Filled with peace from the All-Peace, the believer should not be shaken by enormous power or weakness, arrogance, or despair. The believer always enjoys a state of balance and peacefulness from within, which is reflected in all his/her relations with the others, human or living or being. How can the believer violate the equal rights of equal humans in enjoying peace within themselves and with others, the invaluable blessing of the faith in the All-Peace?

- **A Spirit from God is in every human being:**

Dignity is conferred by God on all humans; and the human mind is God's invaluable gift for human conception and interaction whatever one's ethnicity, gender, belief or opinion may be. The Quran states that God mentioned to the angels about the creation of the human being: "And when I have fully formed him and breathed into him **of my spirit**, fall down before him in prostration" (15:29; 38:72). The Quran clearly indicates that this **spirit from God is in all children of Adam**, in their successive generations, "And whenever your Lord brings forth from the loins of the children of Adam their offspring, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' And to that they say, "Yes, indeed, we bear witness thereto!" (7:172). Accordingly, every human being is a potential believer, as well as he/she is **favored by dignity from God as a human being**: "We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and have born them over land and sea, and have provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and have favored them far above most of Our creation" (17:70).

Besides this spiritual compass, the human mind is a common human merit granted by the Creator, so the whole humankind should communicate together through this divine blessings using reason and common sense. The Quran addresses and motivate the human senses and sensibility in about a hundred verses. **Violence is a rebellious denial of God's blessings and human virtues as well.** In the Islamic terminology, "the good" or virtue is called "**the well-recognized by all 'al-ma'ruf'**" and "the bad" or evil is called "**the well-rejected by all 'al-munkar'.**"

- **Human diversity:**

Human diversity which can never be ignored or stopped, should not provoke hostility nor obstruct reasonable communication among human beings; on the contrary it enriches human experience and allows a complementation of different human views and efforts. Human diversity is one of God's wonders in His creation (30:22), and it is meant to let the humankind know one another and complement one another through a universal intellectual and practical cooperation: "and We have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another" (49:13).

People naturally have their inborn or acquired differences, but they can **argue fruitfully and ethically together and reach common grounds**: "And had your Lord so willed, He could surely have made all humankind one single community, but [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to have divergence, [all of them] save these upon whom your Lord has bestowed His grace [by following God's guidance in handling the differences conceptually and ethically], and to this end [of testing human beings through handling their differences] He has created them [all]" (11:118-119).

Even with regard to religion, the Quran teaches that human diversity also applies: "**Unto every [community] of you [humans] have We appointed a [different] law and practical way of behavior;** and if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community, but [He willed it otherwise] so as to test you through what He has given unto you. **Vie, then, with one another in doing good works.** Unto God you all must return, and then He

will make you truly understand all that on which you were used to differ” (5:48; see also 2:148). That the judgment of one’s faith has to be left to God on the Day of Judgment is repeatedly emphasized in various phrasing about 25 times over the Quran. Conceptual and ethical guidance in argument is indicated in numerous Quranic verses through the entire Book (e.g. 4:59; 6:152; 7:148; 16:125; 17:53; 23:96; 29:46; 39:18; 41:34; 49:6, 11-12). The Quran stresses the principle of “conversation in the most proper and constructive way [al-jidaf-bi-allati hiya ahsan]” between different parties: within the family, the community and all different communities and groups (e.g. 2:233; 16:125; 29:46).

- **No coercion is ever allowed in matters of faith” (2:251). :**

Naturally, the only way for a faith is through voluntary conviction and acceptance. Accordingly, any use of force to impose whatever related to the faith is meaningless and contradicts the psychological and the religious principles. The Quran sharply prohibits any coercion in matters of faith (2:251). Further, the Quran reads, “And had your Lord so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained to faith, all of them; **do you then think that you could compel people to believe?”** (10:99). This has been repeatedly emphasized through the Quran (e.g. 10:99; 11:28; 22:87-88; 50:45). Whoever thinks that violence can be a way to establish the faith is not really aware of the nature of each, and how contradictory both are.

- **Favorable moral climate, cooperation, and competition in good-doing with all humans under peace:**

If hostility and violence have to be avoided, the minds and hearts would be open for more friendly and constructive relations. Good feelings, justice, and care ought to be nurtured in Muslims’ relations with others (e.g. 60:7-8); and meeting the other’s feelings, thoughts or actions even if they are not good with “that is better, magnanimous, and more rewarding” in this world life and in the eternal life to come, is an expression which is stressed many times in the Quran. The believer is urged to understand patience not as a mechanical practice, but to make one’s patience untainted, wholesome, virtuous, and in one word “beautiful” as the Quran describes it (2:18, 83; 70:5); and the same is required in case of forgiveness (15:85), and even in case of dissociation from a person or group (33:28, 49; 73:10). Justice has to be conducted in the **best** and most effective and noblest way, and **going beyond justice to what is better** and more rewarding in human relations and in God’s valuation is underscored through the Quran (e.g. 2:178, 229, 231, 237, 280). Universal cooperation in good-doing is urged (5:2; 60:7-8). Further, constructive competition within the diverse humanity is urged in the Quran, “And every community has its direction of which He lets them turn towards it. **Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works.** Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Him” (2:148), “Unto every of you have We appointed a [different] law and practical way of behavior [. . .]. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works. Unto God you all must return, [. . .]” (5:48).

- **Muslims should never initiate war, and in self-defense they have to return to peace whenever it is offered:**

War is not allowed by the Islamic law “Shari’a” and was never practiced in the time of the Prophet except for self-defense against aggression (22:39-40; 4:75). Legal and ethical principles

in confronting the enemy in the battle-field paves the way for restoring peace, by trying to reduce the bitterness of the hostility through restricting military operations to the combatants only, honoring any promise or agreement and caring about the wounded and the prisoners of war. Meanwhile, any attitude towards peace from the aggressors **has to be seriously considered, whatever doubts** about their intentions may be, “And if they incline to peace, incline you to peace and place your trust in God; verily, He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. And should **they seek to deceive** you, behold, God is enough [security] for you [. . .]” (8:61-2). Any agreement should be based on justice, not on military prevalence: “and if they revert, make peace with them according to justice, and deal equitably with them, for verily, God loves those who act equitably (49:9). Agreements with any parts during peace or after war should be observed and carried out honestly, and any breach of an agreement even if it was through a word of mouth is a deadly sin (e.g. 5:1; 13:20; 16:91-95; 17:34; 23:8, 70:32).

The Resources Have not Been Well-functioning among the Adherents: How And Why? :

- **Malpractice and misconceptions of “jihad” :**

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 11H./632), war was only an answer to an attack and its only purpose was self-defense. Under the early two caliphs Abu Bakr (11-13H./632-4) and Umar (13-23H./634-644), **securing the borders** of the Arabian peninsula which had entirely become a Muslim land, was not left to go smoothly from the **two great near eastern powers** in the middle ages: the Byzantine and the Sasanian empire which neighbored Arabia from the north and the east respectively. Early worry about the emerging message and authority in Arabia had been signaled by each in the time of the Prophet, but the actual engagement with their extensive well-trained and well-equipped armies occurred under the early two caliphs, who were both unwilling and unprepared for it.

However, it may be said that the **expansion for the sake of expansion took place later**. The Umayyads who reached power in the Muslim state by force not through a free public choice as before, established a hereditary dynasty and ruled harshly, tried – as all despots – to turn the attention of their oppressed people to external fronts and victorious expansion. Under the founder of the Umayyad dynasty Mu’awiya (40-60H./660-680), conquests in Asia eastward of the Sasanian lands continued, as well as in North Africa, and Constantinople which besieged by land and sea, under the leadership of the crown prince Yazid in the year 48H./668. Under al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik (86-96H./705-15), conquests of Transoxiana, Northern India and Southern Spain (al-Andalus) went on. Alongside with such Umayyad expansion, civil wars, rebellions, and oppressions never ceased: al-Husayn the grandson of the Prophet, and another descendant of the Prophet were killed; and ironically as Constantinople witnessed an Umayyad siege which failed, Mecca and Medina, the two sacred cities in Islam: were also besieged by the Umayyad armies in 61H./680 and 73H./692 because of their rebellions against the Umayyads which were fiercely crushed.

When the Umayyad dynasty fell down as a result of its internal cracks and the finishing stroke of the Abbasids, their successors followed the same policy of internal suppression and external wars. It was reported that the distinguished Abbasid caliph al-Rashid (170-193H./786-809) used

to go regularly to Mecca for pilgrimage a year and go for conquest the other year, and he had a head-dress on which his characteristics “**conqueror-pilgrim**” were embroidered! Such an expansionist trend continued through successive dynasties; it extended and even grew among the converted peoples to Islam, tempted by the circumstantial and communal admiration of conquests and conquerors in the name of Islam.

The distinguished jurist **Sufyan al-Thawri** (d. 161H./778) in Iraq, was among others who persistently emphasized that “jihad” is only a religious duty in case of defense. However, others like **al-Awza’i** (d. 157H./774) in Syria, **Abu Hanifa** (d. 150H./767) in Iraq, and a pillar of the Hanafi school **Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani** (d. 189H./804) represented the expansionist trend, and held that war is legitimate to spread the message of Islam in a land that its authorities do not accept voluntarily the faith or the payment of a tribute “jizya.” The obligation for such a war is collective and considered according to the ability to fulfill its “fard kifaya.” The whole Muslim community, “umma,” is held responsible for this obligation and whenever any part of it is able to fulfill it, this would be a fulfillment for the entire community, differently from the case of responding to an attack on the Muslims, when every Muslim individual in this case is held responsible for defending the attacked people and land (fard’ayn). Since the Byzantines turned to attack the Muslim lands instead of receiving the Muslim attacks, the trend for aggressive war increased and prevailed, especially when it was supported by the distinguished jurist **al-Shafi’i** (d. 204H./820). The distinguished jurist **Malik ibn Anas** (d. 179H./795) in Medina seemed through his answers to questions about jihad under the Umayyads not wholeheartedly supportive, but merely not objecting in consideration of the late detrimental development against the Muslims at the Byzantine borders.¹

Islamic jurisprudence on “jihad” grew up under a climate of expansion, and carried on such a trend through different periods and rulers. The Ottoman sultans were keen and proud to have the title “*ghazi* – conqueror,” and even “Kemal Ataturk” (d. 1938) the founder and the first president of modern secular Republic of Turkey in 1922, was sometimes called “*ghazi*” when he confronted successfully the European occupiers of Turkey after the Ottoman defeat in World War I (1914-18). Even in late centuries of weakness, jurists just maintained and repeated the views of earlier leading imams, since the practice of “ijtihād”: the intellectual effort for reaching new rulings according to the developing circumstances, had already stopped. This visionless repetition of what had been compiled before simply echoed the view of a continuous war for spreading Islam all over the world, which might be merely a consolation for Muslims in these times of weakness. **Under European colonization**, jihad was reviewed and raised as a banner of resistance and struggle.

- **The impact of colonization: Polarization of ‘Salafism’ and ‘Modernism’:**

Through the confrontation with the European colonialism, the hostile and aggressive trend among Muslims against “**the others**,” now the advanced European colonists, was nurtured.

¹ Al-Shaybani, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, *al-Siyar al-Kabir*, as dictated and commented on by al-Sarakhsi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, ed. Al-Munajjid, Salah al-Din, Ma’had al-Makhtutat al-Arabiyya, League of Arab States: Cario, 1971: vol. 1, p187-191. See also: Mottahedeh, Roy Parviz, and al-Sayyid, Ridwan, “*The Idea of the Jihad in Islam Before the Crusades*,” in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantine and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki, E. Laiou, Mottahedeh, Roy Parviz, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection: Washington D.C. 2001: p23-27.

Oversimplifying the problems, Muslims in modern times thought that sticking to the **juristic heritage** about “power” – not the “moral” power which is the essence of the faith in God and is always supportive and productive, but the “physical” power - and about universal confrontation would let them pass **the present** with all its weakness and humiliation and restore **the past** with all its glories!

However, some Muslims have thought that the “power” in modern times belongs to Europe, and they have to follow its model in order to gain power. This attitude failed to preserve the authentic roots in their pure essence, maintaining the positive and evergreen of the heritage, and building on such solid grounds what may be positive in modern times. A polarization has occurred between advocates of the **historical model of power in the Muslim heritage**, which may be called “**the Salafism**” in its narrowest representation – or misrepresentation, and the **modern model of power in Europe** which may be called “Modernism” whose advocates might not be less extreme than the “Salafis.” Selective extracts from the Muslim heritage, or from the European modern thought and practices, especially from the views of some anti-religion or anti-Islam thinkers, have made the polarization unsurpassable. Later, Muslim **apologetics** could not attract many in both parties.

“**Secularism**” of the modern state could not be objectively understood nor fairly judged by the advocates of the heritage, who have restricted themselves to the model of the Muslim past, or even the model of the early Muslim past. They have failed to perceive any positive or constructive element in a ‘secular’ state, or merely any acceptable definition of the word which may have various ones in different times and places. The Muslim historical civilization as it was known in Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Fez and Cordova, which might be so close to the essence of being called ‘secular’ in a sense, has been rejected by the Salafis as un-Islamic or at least non-Islamic, while it has been completely disregarded by the wholesale advocates of modernity including secularism!

The Salafi trend, with a connection to jihad among some groups, has used the negatives of the post-colonial national governments, whether they have a democratic pretense or autocratic nature, to attack modernism, which could not be judged for many Muslims separately from Europe and later **the West in general**. These governments have been often supported by one Western power or another, however oppressive and corrupted they may have been. Further, **the Western attitude towards political and economical domination** supported by technological and military superiority has added to the ammunition of the supporters of Salafism against modernism, especially the **proponents of jihad**, which has become **directed against both of the Western powers and their internal allies**. Recently, we have experienced in the American British war in Iraq an example of issued religious rulings (fatawa) from the Iraqi opposition side against Saddam Husayn, or from the opponents of the American British attack against it. Such a climate has allowed the **juristic heritage of jihad and militancy, to be strongly revived, with inevitable tones and actions of violence**.

- **Problems in dealing with the ‘Sacred Sources’:**

As Salafism and militancy has found a favorable climate in the external and internal circumstances of the Muslim peoples, it has been affected by certain problems in dealing with the sacred sources. No distinction has been in general realized between the permanent divine

sources and the human elaborations on and derivations from these, which have been inevitably influenced by the changing circumstances of time and place, including the socio-cultural situation of the community and the author. Besides, no comprehensive pursuit of the difference in views on a certain issue through different times and places, and the causes of difference although the divine sources are always the same, and the reasoning given for each view. Such a tracing – if it happens – could clarify and stress the **human side of the religious thought** and the changeability, dynamism and limitations in the sametime, of this human product. However, the Quran and the Prophet’s traditions (Sunna) came out through the whole message of Islam which took 23 years, and they have to be considered in **their development and entirely, no in detachment or split.**

According to certain structural and circumstantial indicators, the **command has various grades of:** obligation, encouragement, or mere guidance, as well as the **interdiction has various grades of:** prohibition or discouragement. **Everything is in principle allowed unless it is proven rightfully to be interdicted. The goals and general principles** of the Islamic law “Shari’a” should be considered in discussing an issue, differently from the dominant approach of splitting and isolating certain text. With regard to the Sunna, some traditions might present the Prophet’s view according to this human experience, as an individual or as a leader of his community in its given circumstances. In both cases, such a view cannot be considered a permanent legal rule.²

Further, the Quran and the Sunna addressed directly and momentarily the **Arabian actual situation to reform it, as well as they address the Muslims and all humanity in every time and place.** If the message of Islam should only care about the general, it would never attract or convince the Arabs in the 7th century, and accordingly could never reach others in different times and places. On the other hand, if it only addressed the Arab particular situation in the time of the message, it would never find an acceptance among other peoples in different circumstances. The **sacred sources have addressed the particular and the universal** concerns side by side, sometimes explicitly and in most times implicitly. One has to find out the **structural and historical indicators to make distinction** between the permanent universal and the transient particular, a research that considers **the circumstances** in which the particular Quranic verse or the Prophet’s tradition came out, as well as the socio-cultural history of Arabia before Islam and in the time of the message in general. Many verses in the Quran may be merely historical, reporting certain events which happened in the time of the Prophet, from which people in any time get a **moral message, not a legal rule.** The Quran includes more than 375 verses related to jihad, within 6,246 verses in the entire Book related to the faith, moral values, previous prophets and their messages, acts of worship, and laws in their various areas. Among these more than 375 Quranic verses related to jihad and the battles of the early Muslims, only about 61 verses present permanent legal rules about war: its legitimate reasons, practice, consequences, etc.

In addition, in every religion, you see statements with an **inclusive** character, alongside with others which seem **exclusive.** They together make a right equation, and both have to be taken in perspective. The Quran addresses sometimes the “children of Adam,” sometimes “the people,”

² See any book on “‘Usul al-Fiqh;” e.g. Khallaf, ‘Abd al-Wahhab, ‘Ilm ‘Usul al-Fiqh, Dar al-Qalam: al-Kuwait, 1978: p43-44; also: al-Qarafi, Ahmad ibn-Idris, al-Ihkam fi Tamyiz al-Fatawa’an al-‘Ahkam wa Tasarrufat al-Qadi wa al-Iman, ed. Abu Ghudda, Abd al-Fattah, Maktab al-Matbu’at al-Islamiyyah: Aleppo, 1967: esp. p86-109.

and sometimes “the individual human being,” as well as it also addresses “the believers.” Each address has its significance and indication.

- **The impact of present socio-cultural factors:**

Contemporary Muslims, then face formidable challenges with regard to:

- the impact of colonialism followed by post-colonial domination of the West,
- the polarization and conflict of Salafism and modernism,
- and the problems of dealing with the religious heritage.

They have been facing such an appalling complex defiance, while they have been suffering from the huge burden of successive centuries of political powerlessness, socio-economic lag, and cultural impotence. Illiteracy has been dominant, and the absence of freedom of opinion, expression, and association have been crippling the educated small minority from a serious and fruitful tackling with the challenges, interacting with the masses, and developing the simple vague aspirations into a serious intellectual and social progressive movement. Such a climate enhances hostilities within the Muslims and with the others, and is most likely favorable for **thinking about violence and practicing it.**

The ideas about the universal struggle of the oppressed, and mass revolutions, especially the **Marxist Leninist ideology**, supported by the **technological development** in producing means of violence at reasonable costs, have provided the discontented with **ideological and practical tools** which they easily “**Islamized,**” by building on the partial selective understanding of “jihad” in the heritage of the past, without making any distinction between the interim particular and the permanent universal, nor between the difference in given circumstances of time and place. The technological development of oppressive measures and war weapons on the side of the state has made such conflicts with such violent militants dreadful on both sides, for both suffer in the final account, and the most who suffer are the public majority and the humanity, and before all the message of God, the All-Peace, the All-Merciful, which is erroneously thought that it might **be served with what contradicts its essence: hostility, violence, and bloodshed.**

In the Ten Commandments: “**Thou shall not kill**” (Exodus 20:13); in the Gospel, according to Saint Matthew, Jesus said to the one who drew out his sword against those who came to seize him, “Put up again thy sword into his place; **for all that they take the sword shall perish with the sword**” (Matt 26:52). The Quran states: “And [an attempt at] **requiting evil may, too, become an evil**; hence, whoever pardons and makes peace, his reward rests with God; for, verily, He does not love evildoers” (42:40). On this verse, the late European thinker Muhammad Asad (d. 1992) commented: “In other words, successful struggle against tyranny [which is mentioned in the previous verse ‘*baghy*, in Arabic’ as a reason for confrontation] often tends to degenerate into a similarly tyrannical attitude towards the erstwhile oppressors.”³

³ Asad, Muhammad. The Message of the Quran, Dar al-Andalus: Gibraltar, 1984: comment on verse 42:40, p746, note 40.

Conclusion:

Gilles Kepel wrote in the Time special issue of “9/11 One Year Later” under the title: “**Will the Jihad Even Catch Fire?**” :

The extremist supporters of the U.S. attacks have posted a **disastrous record during the past year. In their principal objective – to mobilize the Muslim masses behind a victorious jihad that would overthrow existing regimes and replace them with Islamic states – the extremist have failed utterly.** [. . .] The attacks had only limited consequences and **did not destabilize pro-Western regimes to any degree or permit radicals to seize power** [. . .] [As for directing the jihadists’ violence towards Israel,] **suicide attacks have proved so repugnant in Europe and the U.S. that they have begun to erode support for the Palestinian cause there.** They have contributed significantly to the **free hand wielded by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon**, who has completely **destroyed the infrastructure of the West Bank.** Palestinian intellectuals and members of civil society have also recognized the bombings as a political disaster and are leading calls for their immediate halt. [. . .] The price will eventually undermine the reputation and allure of the most radical Palestinian militants, as it did in the 1990s, when **terror strategies were curtailed in Egypt and Algeria.** The question is **how many innocents** will die before the zealots move on.⁴

On the other hand, meeting violence from below by violence from above has crystallized in all minds the wisdom and foresight of Jesus’ words, “All that they take the sword shall perish with the sword.” The Russian President **Vladimir Putin**, the former KGB man, “is already using [the] resurgent nationalism to build support for a new offensive in **Chechnya** [. . .] but Putin’s **war is going nowhere.** Russian soldiers in Chechnya have **killed more than 13,000 Chechen rebels** since 1999, but the brutality of the army’s tactics **has spawned new, more fanatical fighters faster than it has eliminated the old ones.** Before the hostage siege [at the Moscow theater], 57% of the public supported talks with the rebels; last week that number had slipped, but not by much, to 44% [. . .] Russians are still waiting for Putin to prove he can deliver more than tough talks.”⁵

It is the responsibility of the **believers in God**, to rethink over and over how by all means can such a fierce attitude towards violence from below and from above be turned towards “**beyond violence**” in solving deeply-rooted psychological-mental complexes, as well as emerging problems. **Secularism** means the separation of state from any religion in its particularities and clerical institutions not from the universal moral principles, on the top of which is the sanctity of human life. The concepts of “**self-defense,**” “**just war,**” and “**jihad**” have to be reviewed in the light of the modern technological development, and the horrible destructive products which it provides for terrorist groups and government military forces as well. The efforts and costs of violence can be more rewarding if they would be directed to **support democracy and social**

⁴ Kepel, Gilles. “*Will the Jihad Ever Catch Fire?*” Time 11 Sept. 2002: p94-95.

⁵ Ratnsear, Romesh, and Quinn-Judge, Paul. “*Russian to the Core.*” Time 11 Nov. 2002: p56.

cultural development in Muslim countries through productive and peaceful means, and to strengthen the **United Nations** and its bodies in settling the disputes about human rights within the Muslim countries, or in the relations between Muslim countries or between them and others, in addition to assisting the development in all developing countries.

Schools and the **media** have an essential role to nurture a trend of common moral peaceful responsibility, that replaces the dominant exaggerated individualist and materialist tendency under a climate of ego-centrism within the individual, the community, or the nation. Nothing like the call of God the All-Peace, the All-Merciful, can heal the wounds in the deepest depth of the human hearts and minds and over the various areas of human activities. Specialists in all areas have to be involved. Those who are sincere and serious in going “**beyond violence**,” have to act soon, in a **united front**, for this challenge is grave, and such a stand, if it is made without delay, may be a turning point in the cultural history of the world, and hopefully in the political and military history also.

We have to rush for the rescue of the mounting numbers of victims of frustration and lack of depth in our current life in spite of amazing material achievements. **John Walker Lindh**, the bright young boy from suburban America ended up alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan, and numerous Muslim boys have been similarly going through “*a story of love, loathing and an often reckless quest for spiritual fulfillment* [. . .] [they] went off to find purity and peace, and found fanaticism and war”⁶ as John’s story has been put in Time.

Sana Shah is a young victim of the violence from above, “she has been to the U.S. and has an expansive, tolerant outlook on global affairs [. . .] her mother is the daughter of a famous army general, her father an economist [. . .] after September 11 she felt caught between the two worlds she loves. Rising Islamic militancy in Pakistan made her question the roots of her faith, but America’s military response to the New York City and Washington attacks made her profoundly disillusioned [. . .] she felt revulsion at the U.S. air strikes, which left hundreds of Afghans dead and thousands more wounded [. . .] ‘Why is an Afghan’s life worth any less than an American’s?’ she asks. . . Suddenly to Sana, America went from being the ‘next best thing to home’ as her mother put it, to being an arrogant bully [. . .] Sana’s parents are tolerant but pious, and their example helped her resist the radicals’ taunts at Lahore Grammar School [. . .] Sana still feels trapped between worlds [. . .] She is still a moderate citizen of the world and still believes in peace [. . .]”⁷

Shouldn’t we mobilize all believers in God and in peace, and sharpen our minds and wills, to keep such invaluable assets of young men and women “**beyond violence**,” beyond disillusion and confusion, and beyond frustration?

Certainly we should, and we pray the All-Peace, the All-Merciful for guidance and strength.

⁶ Roche, Timothy, et al. “*The Making of John Walker Lindh*.” Time 7 Oct. 2002: p44,46.

⁷ Mc Grik, Tim. “*MTV or the Muezzin*.” Time 11 Sept. 2002: p90-93.