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Islam and Peacemaking in the Middle East

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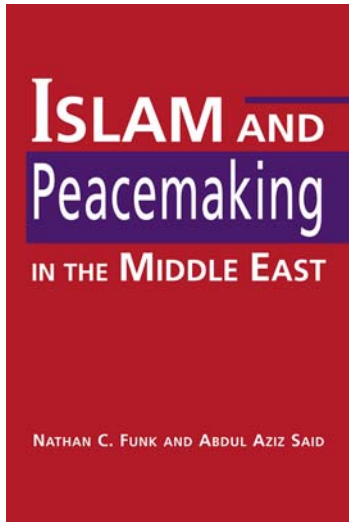

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Contents

1

Introduction

Studies of public opinion in the Arab world and in the United States since September 2001 suggest that, in recent years, alienation between Arab-Islamic and American cultures has become painfully acute. Throughout the Middle East, views of the United States have gone from bad to worse. In April 2002, 76 percent of Egyptians claimed to hold the United States in low regard, whereas by July 2004, 98 percent expressed a negative opinion. In Morocco the trend was much the same, moving from 61 percent negative in 2002 to 88 percent negative in 2004.[1] The event generally held responsible for this deterioration—the decision to invade Iraq in March 2003—has reinforced widespread perceptions that US policy is biased against Arabs and Muslims, and that the "war on terror" is really a war on Islam.

The data from North American polls are also troubling. Since 2001, increasing numbers of Americans have reported that, in their view, Islam is an inherently violent religion.[2] As American beliefs about Islam harden, so too do attitudes about the use of force to protect national security. Current trends appear particularly unsettling when considered in light of a December 2006 poll by the University of Maryland's Program on International Public Attitudes. In their responses to the poll, Americans were significantly *less* likely than citizens of the world's most populous Muslim-majority countries to categorically condemn "bombing and other attacks intentionally aimed at civilians."[3]

Trends in public opinion, of course, can be highly volatile, and not all of the polling news is negative. Recent surveys by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, for example, reveal significant declines in the number of individuals in Muslim-majority nations who are willing to justify suicide bombings as a valid means of defending Islam.[4] Despite ongoing political violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, and Somalia, and the continuing threat of a new clash between the United States and Iran, fatalism would appear both unwarranted and premature.

This book is founded on the proposition that a time has come to consider new approaches to conflicts within and with the Islamic world, particularly but not exclusively in a Middle Eastern context. To develop these approaches, diplomats, policymakers, activists, and engaged academics will need far more than familiar platitudes asserting simply that "Islam is a religion of peace" or that radical Muslim groups threaten international security. They will need well-researched information about the many different ways in which Muslims are capable of thinking about conflict, peace, and peacemaking. Contemporary conflicts are indeed about much more than Islam, but unless Western and especially US actors find a way to engage Muslims in a manner that affirms religious beliefs and identities, opportunities to foster new dynamics will be missed.

Given the damaging character of the allegations non-Muslims are raising about Islam and the profound importance of Islamic identity and values for Muslim communities, there is a vital need for nonsuperficial approaches to dialogue and engagement, with a special emphasis on ways in which Islam—a source of sacred meaning to approximately one-fifth of the world's people—can contribute to global peace. Muslims and non-Muslims alike need to transcend the simplistic assumptions that underpin contemporary debates, resulting in portrayal of Islam as a victim or perpetrator. Both need to penetrate beyond media images and suspend the temptation to settle arguments through selective and isolated references to historical events, actions of adversaries, and passages from religious texts.

In writing this volume, we have dedicated ourselves to the search for new ways of understanding the richness and complexity of the Islamic cultural and religious heritage as it relates to peace and peacemaking. We offer a framework that is intended to facilitate understanding of diverse currents in Muslim politics, and to identify values and practices that can be invoked to further the cause of coexistence. Our primary intention, however, is not to refute those who make sweeping judgments and forecast inevitable conflict. Instead, our purpose is to move beyond simplistic arguments about Islam's inherent character to reveal the many different ways in which Muslims have thought about peace and conflict resolution. In the process, we hope to provide a basis for rethinking what may be possible in Islamic-Western relations, and to provide an inventory of resources for potential peacemaking initiatives that appeal to shared and complementary values.

Beyond September 11

For most North Americans, the starting point for discussions about Islam and peace is September 11, 2001—a calendar date that is so laden with symbolism that it signifies not only a tragically destructive event but also the advent of a

new phase in modern history. What happened on that day brought death to thousands, and profound distress to millions more. Simultaneously, this date signified the beginning of a new and rapidly shifting reality, a time of danger, challenge, and uncertainty.

In the United States, the immediate reaction was utter shock. For one entire day, the nation's attention was fixed on a single, terrible drama, and Americans spent the following weeks grappling with a troubling set of questions: Why did this atrocity happen? Who were the perpetrators? Was there something that Americans had done to provoke anger and inspire hatred, or was the United States under attack simply because its values differ from those of its enemies?

Halfway around the world, in the Middle East and other predominantly Islamic contexts, September 11 brought forth an even more widely divergent set of responses. Some, it is true, welcomed the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Others refused to believe that their co-religionists were morally or technically capable of committing such grave atrocities. Most observers, however, were both shocked and saddened by the scenes on their television screens. In Iran, large numbers of people participated in candlelight vigils. In Jordan, people left flowers at the US embassy in an expression of sympathy. Elsewhere, there were widespread expressions of dismay about the harm done to civilians. Many were shocked by the destruction of universally recognized icons symbolizing the boldness and dynamism of American aspirations. Vocalizations of concern were conditioned in no small degree by a sense of foreboding: What would come next? Would the United States seek retribution? Where would this all end?

The questions that Americans and Muslims asked immediately after September 11 were both legitimate and important. Concerned first and foremost with the nature of the threat posed by actual as well as perceived adversaries, these questions were preoccupied with a search for appropriate defensive measures. They were authentic responses to a situation of profound distress. They continue to invite serious deliberation and demand straightforward answers. These questions did little, however, to illuminate the context of September 11's fateful events, nor did they concern themselves substantively with opportunities for improving the intercultural relationships that are now viewed as sources of security threats. Focused as they were on the problem of achieving security *from* the "other" rather than security *with* the "other," these questions were not conducive to conflict transformation or intercultural cooperation between Islam and the West.

Since September 11, much has changed. The United States has gone to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now appears to have entered a period of heightened tensions with Iran. The conflict in Israel-Palestine has deteriorated markedly in recent years. Bombings and other acts of terrorism have shaken South and Southeast Asia as well as Spain, Saudi Arabia, North Africa, and

England. A new politics of international security has emerged, resulting in profound challenges for the global human rights movement.[5] With each new crisis in international affairs—including controversy over Danish cartoons, indignation over Papal comments on Islam, and outrage over an Iranian Holocaust conference—distrust has deepened, together with defensiveness, righteous indignation, and cultural insularity. The rising tensions in our world must give us pause: Have opportunities to foster deeper understanding been missed?

Though Muslims have been grappling with the impact of Western values and practices on Islamic culture for decades, events following September 11 have pushed Western analysts to engage with Islam at a deeper level than in the past. Many now realize that Islamic culture is dynamically contested. Diverse formulations of Islamic precepts have profoundly different implications for social and political practice, and Western policies have a significant impact on the outcome of debates among Muslims. Most Muslims reject terrorism as an aberration that contradicts religious norms, yet many also maintain that Western policies contribute to the appeal of radical views. Thoughtful Western commentators recognize that true security will prove elusive unless such claims receive due consideration.

Our goal is to take policy discussions one step further, toward direct consideration of resources for intercultural and interreligious peacemaking that can be found within the context of Middle Eastern Islamic culture. The time has come for active efforts that seek, through cultural and religious understanding as well as through concrete political initiatives, to "make peace with Islam." Through an exploration of different paradigms of interpretation and practice, we seek to identify opportunities for creative peacemaking partnerships. By keeping our focus primarily on the Middle East, we examine bases for constructive change in the region of the Islamic world that has most often been affected by conflict with the West.

The Middle East: Where the West and Islam Meet

Like "Islam," the term "Middle East" is richly evocative. From a North American or European perspective, it is a strategic region. Though afflicted by conflicts such as the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and the ongoing war in Iraq, the Middle East remains a vital repository of world petroleum reserves and a gateway to the Far East.

For those who reside in this region, however, the appellation "Middle East" is viewed with discomfort. Many contest the use of the term because it was invented by the British to define a particular theater of operations during World War I—the region between the Nile river in North Africa and the Oxus river in Central Asia.[6] In its actual application, the label is notoriously impre-

cise. When used narrowly it denotes the eastern Arab states, Iran, and Israel, yet in many contexts the term "Middle East" signifies a swath of territory stretching from Morocco to Pakistan. It should therefore come as no surprise that many who live in core "Middle Eastern" countries prefer to project their regional identity in other terms, in relation to a broader Arab or Islamic world.

Despite the fact that few—if any—people are passionately committed to a Middle Eastern identity, the Middle East does have a measure of coherence as an analytical construct. In political analysis, discussion of the region often includes references to the Arab states of North Africa and Southwest Asia as well as to Israel, Turkey, and Iran. It is an area that has been defined as much by the conflicts that beset it—for example, modern conflicts between Arab nationalism and Zionism, among rival claimants to Arab and Islamic leadership, and among various seekers of its vast oil wealth—as by overarching cultural and geographical unities. Yet the term "Middle East" is commonly used by Arab and Israeli as well as Persian analysts. Some Afghans and Pakistanis also view themselves as participants in a broadly defined "Middle Eastern" milieu, and although events and traditions of Afghanistan and Pakistan are not a primary focus of this book, they are invoked on occasion as they relate to happenings elsewhere.

Internal divisions notwithstanding, the "greater Middle East" retains a politically significant cultural history. Anyone who is concerned about contemporary tensions between Islam and the West must take notice of a rough correspondence between the region comprising the Middle East and North Africa, and what was historically a core region of Islamic civilization, a region administered variously by Arab, Persian, and Turkish (especially Ottoman) rulers. This region has never been homogeneous, nor have its boundaries been fixed. In modern times it has contained majority Christian and Jewish states (Lebanon and Israel, respectively),[7] and significant segments of its population—for example, the Kurds—are ethnically distinct minorities without states to call their own. Taken as a whole, this region is acknowledged by most Muslims as the historical "heartland" of their faith. This Islamic heartland faced encroachment by dynamic and expansive European neighbors in the nineteenth century and fragmented into a large number of distinct nation-states during the twentieth century, yet a majority of the region's people continue to share common historical narratives. Most affirm the central role of religion in shaping their cultural identities, while also highlighting the ways in which colonial-era boundaries, oil geopolitics, and the Arab-Israeli conflict have shaped their political horizons and lived realities.

Recognizing the Middle East as the historical—and in the eyes of Muslims, beleaguered—heartland of Islam in no way detracts from the importance of major Muslim cultural and population centers in South Asia, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, or post-Soviet Central Asia. Some of the largest concentrations of Muslims in the world may be found in states that are not

Middle Eastern, including Indonesia, India, and Nigeria. Indeed, with over 200 million Muslim citizens, Indonesia is home to more followers of Islam than any other country. Still, as the traditional core of Islamic civilization, the Middle East—especially the Arab world—has had and continues to have a tremendous impact on Islamic social norms and religious thought. Approximately one-third of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims reside in the Middle East and North Africa, and the Arabic-speaking peoples who are concentrated in this area played a historically decisive role in propagating Islam. The crucial importance of the Arabic language in religious texts and interpretive discourse cannot be underestimated. Moreover, all the world's ritually observant Muslims turn to the Arabian Peninsula each day for prayers, and hope for the opportunity to visit Mecca and Medina through rites of pilgrimage.

In the present international system, the Middle East is the region in which conflict between Western (especially US) strategic objectives and popular Muslim aspirations is most strikingly evident. To a considerable extent this region and its conflicts—in Iraq, Israel-Palestine, and many other locales—mediates Western images of and relations with Islamic civilization as a whole. Middle Eastern tensions with Western powers such as the United States, in turn, affect the way in which a decisive segment of the Muslim world perceives the West.

When focusing on the Islamic dimension of Middle Eastern politics, it is important to emphasize that religious culture is by no means an independent factor driving processes of conflict or peacemaking. Any effort to reduce conflicts within the region or between regional and external actors to their religious component results in caricature rather than sound analysis, by excluding consideration of economic and political realities that shape the daily experiences of people in the region. Nonetheless, religion remains a profoundly important dimension of the social and cultural environment of the Middle East. As the region's predominant religious tradition, Islam plays a powerful role in shaping both collective identity and the values to which governments appeal in their search for political legitimacy. Protagonists of change utilize the language of Islamic beliefs and values to galvanize potential supporters, while many of their adversaries draw upon the same language in an effort to maintain the status quo. Though important nonreligious voices and movements exist, the Middle East remains a place in which religion matters.

For reasons of geography as well as geopolitics, the Middle East is a region of Islamic civilization that has long experienced strained relations with Europe and the West. Strictly speaking, none of the major conflicts in the region are purely internal or "Middle Eastern." For decades, the actions of foreign powers have exerted a decisive impact on regional processes and outcomes, and external pressures and influences have often provided impetus to Islamic movements as diverse as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Lebanon's Hezbollah, and Turkey's Justice and Development Party. Middle Eastern social and political processes cannot be understood without reference to global

cultural and intellectual currents, and to the policies of extra-regional actors toward Middle Eastern states and peoples.

Because the problems of the Middle East and the problems of the West are shared problems, much can be gained from efforts to experience North American–Middle Eastern and Islamic-Western relations in new ways. In particular, there is a need to leave behind the notion that Middle Eastern Islam is somehow strange or "an exception" among the religious cultures of the world. As we emphasize in this book, we believe that Westerners who investigate Middle Eastern culture in a spirit of fairness and genuine interest are likely to find much to respect and much that is familiar. They will notice that many of the problems currently faced by predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East are not alien to the Western experience, and that political uses and abuses of Islam are often reminiscent of historical interactions between religion and politics in Europe and North America.

Approaching Middle Eastern Islam with an eye to its distinctiveness *and* an eye to the familiar permits nuanced responses to the "Islamic factor" in Middle Eastern politics. Rather than framing Islam primarily as a basis of radicalism, this approach recognizes Islam as a system of social values with relevance to peacemaking—a system that is internally contested, and that is neither diametrically opposed to prevailing Western values nor equivalent to them.

The Clash of Symbols

Representing dynamics of Islamic-Western conflict is a delicate and perilous endeavor, especially when one considers that intellectual constructs are capable not only of reflecting the world, but also of shaping it. A prime example is Samuel Huntington's now-famous "clash of civilizations" thesis, which predicted that in the post–Cold War era, geopolitical conflict would be dominated by civilizational identity rather than by state-centric nationalism, with new threats to Western culture and alliance systems emanating particularly from the Islamic and Confucian cultural spheres.[8] Huntington's argument soon entered popular discourse, because it was easily grasped, dramatic, and linked to a phenomenon that had already become quite perceptible: the increasing salience of ethnic and religious identity in world politics following the eclipse of communism.

Because the role of culture and religion in international affairs is easily sensationalized in ways that mask the complexity of human motivation, many scholars reacted to the "clash of civilizations" thesis quite critically, by pointing away from cultural and religious factors. In response to arguments raised by Huntington and others about the Middle East and the broader Islamic world, detractors asserted the primacy of politics. Some, for example, argued quite forcefully that religious militancy in the Islamic world cannot be understood in

isolation from several decades of US geostrategic policies that have contributed to popular discontent.[9] Others proposed that the "turn to Islam" in Muslim opposition politics was more strategic than religious; from this standpoint, religious language can be used instrumentally to galvanize resistance against repressive regimes that frustrate popular aspirations for political change.[10]

One of the more important challenges for contemporary analysts of global politics is taking the cultural and religious dimensions of conflict seriously, without enshrining these factors as independent and autonomous causes of strife. Given the extent to which culture and religion have become "securitized," it is now vital for analysts to explore multiple perspectives on the subject of cultural difference in international relations. Samuel Huntington was neither the first nor the last commentator to broach the subject of "civilizations" in world politics.[11] Whereas Huntington's framework begins and ends its analysis of culture with traditional military security concerns (and, indeed, represents external and internal cultural diversity as the new security threat to Western democracies), other frameworks manifest a more hopeful preoccupation with the challenge of fostering global solidarities as a basis for facing shared humanitarian concerns. Such approaches are premised on observations concerning the internal diversity of civilizations and cultures, the limited explanatory power of civilizational identity relative to other factors that can influence political behavior,[12] and the existence of common spiritual values that might facilitate the pursuit of superordinate goals by members of different cultural groups.[13]

Current Western-Islamic tensions testify not only to divergences in the objectives pursued by various Western and Islamic states, but also to a condition of mutual ignorance and estrangement that has deep historical and political roots. Where there is ignorance and estrangement, hostile stories find ready ears. Imprisonment in hostile narratives, in turn, makes resolving basic conflicts of interest extremely difficult. Peace becomes equated with the implementation of one's own cultural and political values; cultural difference becomes a security threat. Furthermore, superficial approaches to observing the "other" tend to become fixated on clichés and stereotypes.

In the Middle East and other predominantly Muslim cultural areas, stereotypical "Westerners" are recognizable not only by anticipated linguistic and racial markers, but also by the manner in which they dress and carry themselves; in North America and Europe, stereotypical Muslims are believed to be identifiable from a distance through the head scarves worn by women and the beards or mustaches of (presumably Arab) men. These are standard profiles through which Western-Islamic relations are experienced, the symbolic referents within which more abstract ideas about "us" and "them" are framed.

The problem with stereotypes is that they are both superficial and misleading. They are superficial because they fail to penetrate beyond the outward, symbolic forms of culture, and misleading because they overgeneralize—often

in pernicious ways—from particular cases. In reality, there is no such thing as a "typical" Westerner or Muslim. Millions of Muslims may be found within the West, and many of them trace their origins to South Asia or sub-Saharan Africa rather than to the Middle East. Middle Easterners themselves are highly diverse religiously and ethnically (including Muslim and Christian Arabs, Armenians, Berbers, Circassians, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, Kurds, Persians, and Turks) as well as culturally (compare, for example, modes of religious expression in Turkey and Saudi Arabia). Although we often find that we are pushed by language or by popular preconceptions to speak as if this were not so, our words distort the subject matter when they fail to accommodate diversity. Middle Eastern Muslim women in "modest dress," for example, may wear spandex at home and harbor fondness for Western pop music, and a less conservatively dressed Western woman might happen to be an avid reader of bestselling poetry by Rumi and Hafez, Muslim poets who wrote hundreds of years ago and are still cherished in the Middle East today. When trapped by stereotypes, we lose sensitivity to such "anomalies," and our thoughts become preoccupied with a "clash of symbols."

In addition to stereotypes that prevent deeper engagement, peacemaking is also hindered by the historical legacy of unequal power relations. For the past several centuries, the West has been dominant in its relations with the Islamic world, and Western thinkers have not generally felt a need to investigate conceptions of peace emanating from the Middle East and other predominantly Muslim regions. By default, Western policies affecting Muslims have been formulated without engaging Muslim conceptions of a peaceful, just, and desirable international order. Instead, colonial-era Western policies toward Muslim lands were driven both by the realpolitik of imperial competition among great powers (a reality that most Muslims experienced quite directly) and by faith in a "civilizing mission." Western powers such as France and England believed that they were bringing their own values—and indeed "peace"—to peoples who were perceived as having little to offer in exchange.

Such acts of moral presumption are by no means unique to the modern West. Unfortunately, the tendency to equate one's own cultural and political order with "peace" appears to have been nearly universal in human history. In every age, ascendant powers have sought support for their practices by claiming—and sometimes genuinely aspiring—to either keep the peace or teach it to others. The colonial era has ended, yet Earth's peoples have only just begun to initiate forms of cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue that might someday yield a more widely shared set of understandings about bases for global peace.

There is of course resistance to such dialogue. Unsurprisingly, contemporary Muslim reactions to Western predominance have been marked by defensiveness. Many Muslims find it difficult to acknowledge ways in which their cultures have been enriched by contact with the West, and focus instead on incompatible social mores and rivalries in the domain of international politics.

This emphasis on differences helps to maintain a clear sense of identity and a basis for fighting against perceived injustices and intrusions, but at the cost of allowing oneself to be defined negatively through contrasts to the "other" rather than positively and autonomously, on the basis of affirmations. The predominant Western approach to Islamic-Western relations also seeks differences and reinforces them, viewing Islamic culture through the lens of security threats and seemingly exotic practices. An essential task of all those who would seek new and creative options is to subject stories of Islamic-Western confrontation to critical analysis and evaluation, both by clarifying the ways in which religion and culture enter into the politics of conflict and peacemaking, and by demonstrating the relevance of cultural traditions that affirm the possibility of peaceful coexistence.

A Prospective Approach to Peacemaking

At a time when the rift between Islamic and Western cultures appears to be growing, it is crucial to take note of common values, among the most significant of which is a simple desire to live in peace. Because understandings of peace are culturally inflected, however, understanding the diversity of thinking about peace is an essential prerequisite for intercultural cooperation.

In many respects the most important conflicts in the world today are being played out *within* rather than between civilizations, among divergent ways of articulating what "peace" actually means.[14] Most cultural and religious traditions include multiple paradigms for defining, understanding, and pursuing peace. A student of cultures and religions, therefore, should not be surprised to find divergent subcultures within any macro-cultural tradition, with differing understandings of history's lessons and of the manner in which sacred values are to be embodied. In some subcultures, history is remembered and texts are read to support the notion that peace depends first and foremost on military strength, and is largely reducible to an absence of war or a cease-fire. In others, peace is idealized as much more than a simple absence of war, and is understood to depend less on military prowess than on human solidarity in efforts to advance values such as human dignity and ecological balance. Still other subcultures highlight the spiritual significance of peace, as a state of integration, harmony, or wholeness.

Both in the West and in the Islamic world, there are many who regard peace as a distant goal—as a temporary absence of violence or as an ethereal value that cannot guide practical politics. Among those who adhere to this "minimalist" understanding of peace, military assertiveness in confrontations with adversaries is a primary basis for maintaining moral and political order. Yet each tradition also encompasses more actively pacific tendencies, within which peace is understood as a value that pertains not only to ends but also to

means. For those who embrace this "fuller" understanding, peace is not only an absence of war and violence but also a presence of justice and conditions for human flourishing.[15]

Which conceptions of peace will prevail? The answer to this question depends not only on the imagination and energy of Muslims and Westerners, but also on the extent to which common ground is sought and established across cultural and religious boundaries. Recent years have been characterized to a considerable extent by a cycle of confrontation and mutual reinforcement between Westerners and Muslims who underscore the importance of military means for establishing peaceful conditions. Post–September 11 efforts by the United States to extend military, cultural, and economic influence in the Middle East have been met by rising activism among Muslims who believe that Islamic values can only be protected and advanced through armed struggle against external adversaries. The voices of Westerners as well as Muslims who are skeptical of "peace through war" thinking have too often gone unheard, even though their struggles continue. A central task of this book is to draw increased attention to bases for active peace-seeking within the Islamic world and, in the process, to identify ways in which Western Christians and Jews as well as secularists and followers of other traditions might reach out to engage Muslims in collaborative peacebuilding ventures.

Peacemaking between the Islamic Middle East and the West requires willingness to face both intellectual and practical challenges. Intellectually, the challenge is to find terms of reference that empower constructive actions, and that do not promulgate stereotypes or conflate appearance with substance. New and creative ways of thinking about the Middle East and its role in global politics are needed, starting with a new set of questions. These questions should emerge from a clear, positive vision of the desirable (peace, social justice, political participation, cultural diversity, broad-based economic development, and ecological sustainability), and not only from a negative vision of threats and fears (terrorism and political violence). How can peaceful coexistence be established, both in the Middle East and between Middle Eastern Muslims and Westerners? What, exactly, does Islam teach about peace, and how do Islamic standards for peacemaking relate to Western ideas and traditions? How do Western peace paradigms speak to paradigms that may be characterized as Middle Eastern or Islamic? What combinations of steps, unilateral as well as collaborative and reciprocal, might address root causes of war and terrorism, building upon the *best* that is to be found in Middle Eastern Islam and in the West rather than bringing out the worst?

In practical terms, Islamic-Western peacemaking means working to "make the world safe for diversity." This objective depends in no small part on discovering ways to strengthen peace processes through *prospective* research with an explicit purpose: to identify consequential debates within Middle Eastern societies that have a bearing on possibilities for peaceful change and coexistence.

To respond to this challenge, we seek to provide an academically based yet accessible text that clarifies the diversity of Islamic understandings of peace, and that offers examples of how these peace traditions have been and *might be* used to advance peacebuilding within and beyond the Middle East region. In our present time, in which the West perceives Islam as a hostile and alien force and Muslims feel that they are under siege by the West, it is vitally important to recognize resources for peace within the Islamic tradition. This book therefore aims to explore various Islamic principles, precepts, practices, precedents, and paradigms that can inform peacebuilding, utilizing a mode of inquiry that could also be applied to other religions.

It is not the goal of this book to demonstrate that Islam is intrinsically either more peaceful or less peaceful than other religious traditions. In our opinion, too much ink has already been spilled in arguments concerning the innate peacefulness or nonpeacefulness of the Islamic tradition. While we are predisposed to agree with Assad Ali, a prominent scholar of Islam at the University of Damascus in Syria, that in its purest form the religion of Islam is a "*fatwa* [command] of peace," we do not in any way wish to deny that this spirit has not always been expressed in Muslim thought and practice. Sadly, many misdeeds have been committed in the name of Islam, and in the names of the world's other major religious and ideological systems. Misdeeds, however, are not the primary subject of this book. By exploring the many meanings of peace within Islamic culture—from strict order to spiritual universalism—we hope to provide readers with inspiration for their own engagement with Islam, whether that be as non-Muslims interested in reaching out to Muslims in an appeal for new beginnings, or as committed practitioners intrigued by a view of their tradition through the lenses of peace and conflict resolution studies.

Despite the fact that Islamic and Western cultures have been interacting with each other for centuries, cultivating a history of shared experiences and values, the common ground shared by Islam and the West remains easy to overlook.[16] Although voices of exclusivity and confrontation have not succeeded in silencing all other voices, they have proved quite successful at defining the parameters of public discussion. The exact details of contention vary, but several themes resurface with disconcerting regularity. The common discourse is that Westerners and Muslims—especially Middle Eastern Muslims—share few, if any, common values. "Our way of life" (be it "Western" or "Islamic") and "their way" are incommensurable. "Our way" is more civilized, peaceful, and true than "their way." Discord is inevitable, at least so long as "they" do not hold sacred the values "we" esteem.

Are such claims justified? Insofar as Islam and the West constitute distinct and separate civilizations (and this is, in fact, debatable), each civilization is commonly understood to prioritize a somewhat different response to perennial dilemmas of human social life, such as individual autonomy versus communal authority, personal interest versus collective interest, and free exercise of prac-

tical reason versus transmission of traditional wisdom. The word "civilization" can indeed provide a convenient way of referring to such broad cultural patterns of value differentiation and, when used appropriately, neither glosses over the rich internal diversity of subcultures and traditions nor draws attention to differences at the expense of those similarities in human values that make civilizations "civil." It is unfortunate, however, that most contemporary discussions of civilizations draw far more attention to differences than to similarities, or to ways in which multiple cultural heritages have cross-fertilized one another throughout human history.[17]

Islamic and Western cultures embrace remarkable internal variation, and each is distinguished more by allegiance to shared symbols and by broadly patterned value priorities than by allegiance to a pure and unique conception of how to lead a "good" human life. Furthermore, differences in value priorities are no more fundamental to the genesis of most conflicts than competing material claims. Sadly, strategic *manipulation* of culture and identity—the use of sacred symbols to justify actions that may constitute their antithesis—has sharpened conflicts to the point where a spirit of confrontation threatens to develop autonomous dynamism.

Rather than focusing narrowly on retrospective assessments of "what has gone wrong" in Islam or in Islamic-Western relations, this book is primarily intended to stimulate prospective thinking about how Muslims and non-Muslims might work together to "make things right." While conducting our research on Islamic teachings about and experiences of peacemaking, we have sought to identify *resources* within Islamic religious and cultural experience—some of which are rooted in the past, and others emergent among contemporary interpreters—that can be tapped to support present efforts. In the Islamic tradition as in other religious and cultural traditions, precept and practice are rarely a perfect match, and often there are serious divergences as well as disagreements even among those who believe themselves to be pursuing the same goals. The cases we present here reflect these human tendencies, but in our view they also challenge us to imagine scenarios in which conscious effort could bring about a closer alignment of ideals and actions.[18] We hope that readers will feel inclined to join us in thinking prospectively, with critical openness to new possibilities and relationships as well as with awareness of challenges that remain to be faced.

Looking Forward

In the emerging twenty-first-century world, much depends on positive Islamic-Western relations, and on the development of constructive ways to engage the cultural, political, and spiritual aspirations of Muslims within the context of a pluralistic and still fragile world community. To meet this challenge, Westerners

and Muslims alike need a clear understanding of Islamic resources for peace, and of their relevance to peacebuilding challenges within and beyond the Middle East.

Because the issue of Islam and politics is an immensely important and also sensitive issue, we begin our investigation with an overview of contending narratives about Islamic-Western relations. In Chapter 2, we propose that present difficulties in relations between Muslim-majority and predominantly non-Muslim (especially North American and European) societies are the product both of a tragic historical legacy and of the ways in which this legacy is continuously recycled and recast by decisions that we make today. Reframing relations between Islam and the West by making the challenge of peaceful coexistence a central priority is crucial for achieving a more harmonious post–Cold War, post–September 11 era.[19]

We regard this focus on remembered history to be vital, because in the transformative period that lies ahead we will need to carefully distinguish between two types of narratives: narratives of inevitability and narratives of possibility. Narratives of inevitability are based on simple extrapolations from retrospective thinking about past conflicts. They tell us that what we do today is of little consequence, or can at best enable us to "manage" the conflict we are fated to experience in our dealings with current adversaries. Narratives of possibility are inherently open to prospective thinking about ways in which we might break free from past patterns. They remind us that, as participants in an unfolding human drama, we have the freedom and responsibility of choice.

In Chapter 3, we place our investigation of resources for peacemaking within Islam in a theoretical and comparative context, and attempt to distill some of the most central precepts of Islam as they pertain to peace and conflict. We note that, though there is broad consensus among Muslims on essential religious precepts, the Islamic tradition as a cultural and historical phenomenon has developed considerable internal diversity as a result of the many ways in which Muslims, motivated by conviction and by the need to respond to a range of worldly challenges, have sought to apply Islamic values.

A basic conceptual differentiation between "Islam" and "Muslims" is vital for any study of Islam and the politics of peacemaking. As a religion that is concerned with all aspects of a believer's life, Islam offers its adherents both a bonding culture of ideal precepts and a concrete set of received practices and examples. It is at once a theological doctrine that finds its reflection in such affirmations of faith as *Allahu akbar* (which translates literally as "God is greater," and connotatively as "God is greater than any obstacle, and beyond any human concept or image"), and a historical dynamic with multiple, emergent syntheses that have been shaped by the interpretations of Muslims. In principle, Islam is a singular religion, but in the lived experiences of Muslims it takes many forms.[20] This becomes particularly apparent in situations of con-

flict, and as a result Islam has developed multiple paradigms for peacemaking: Muslims have heard different overtones in their religion's call to peace.

We outline the diversity of Islamic peace paradigms in Chapters 4 through 8: peace through coercion, peace through equity, peace through conciliation, peace through nonviolence, and peace through universalism. Each of these paradigms conveys a distinctive Muslim response to foundational texts, to specific types of problems, and to historically accumulated experiences and precedents.

By using this five-paradigm template, we seek to clarify common patterns in Muslim understandings of peace, and of the means by which peace can be realized. Differences among paradigms can be quite dramatic. For those who stand within the "peace through coercion" paradigm, peace is preeminently to be sought as an absence of war secured through power or force to compel and protect. Those who object to this minimalist approach to peace and instead emphasize the demands of justice evoke a "peace through equity" paradigm, which relates Islamic understandings of peace to the advancement of a more just and cooperative world order. Another peace paradigm, "peace through conciliation," has developed historically among those who have been entrusted with resolving disputes and preserving communal equilibrium through mediation, arbitration, and rituals of reconciliation. The "peace through nonviolence" paradigm provides an Islamic framework for resisting oppression without violence, and has been expounded by those who seek to make traditional injunctions against both bloodshed and unjust rule speak to contemporary demands for political participation, self-rule, and human dignity. Still others, drawing upon Islam's spiritual traditions, have contributed to a "peace through universalism" paradigm that regards peace as an all-encompassing harmony in which human beings can participate when they correctly perceive their relations to Creator and creation, and implement Islamic prescriptions for coexistence.

Although most of these paradigms are not mutually exclusive—many Muslims have, at one time or another, subscribed to views that incorporate aspects of more than one paradigm—categorization is useful for understanding different orientations toward peace that derive their legitimacy from Islam and from the historical experiences of Muslims. While some pundits would question the Islamic credentials of one approach or another, each has been advocated by Muslims on the basis of religious precepts, and all five represent ongoing conversations as well as fields of experimentation in theory and practice.

Exploring the multiple ways of imagining and pursuing peace on an Islamic basis—some adversarial, and others deeply committed to cooperation and respect for differences—can become a vehicle for transforming the legacy of modern conflicts. The concluding section of the book relates our findings to

a positive imperative of our times: enabling Muslims and Westerners to bring out the best in their respective traditions rather than provoke the worst. More nuanced understandings of Islamic perspectives on peace and conflict can enhance intercultural dialogue and strengthen cooperative efforts—starting with applications in the Muslim Middle East and with redoubled Western policy initiatives.

Chapter 9 reviews the five Islamic peace paradigms to examine their suitability for this task of transforming conflict, identifying multiple points of contact and complementarity between Islamic and Western cultures as well as core principles for intercultural engagement and rapprochement. In Chapter 10, we seek to pinpoint crucial issues for addressing root causes of Middle Eastern and Islamic-Western conflict, and provide a set of recommendations for Western policy initiatives that might improve Islamic-Western relations and support peacemaking in the Middle East.

This book is premised on the notion that relations between the Middle East and the West have become precarious in no small part because Muslims and Westerners understand each other too superficially. Dialogue premised on a respectful search for understanding has occurred too infrequently, and without sufficient persistence, participation, and purposefulness.[21] The dominant framework for intercultural relations, which we call a "story of confrontation," is predicated on an assumption of uniformity within cultures and on a presumption that conflict between them is inevitable. Such thinking leads to programs of conquest at worst or to agendas of peaceful assimilation at best, but rarely to authentic dialogue.

As authors, we write with the conviction that the ultimate significance of the present turbulent period has yet to be determined. Will Westerners and Muslims seek to transcend their immediate, emotional reactions to violent and painful events, or will they withdraw into more deeply ethnocentric and aggrieved frames of reference? Will they aspire to gain more authentic knowledge about their counterparts' fears and aspirations, or will they allow their mutual perceptions to become more polarized, partisan, and self-serving? Will they move toward broader and more humane understandings of their respective cultural and political traditions, or will they amplify belief systems that deny the virtues of tolerance and cultural pluralism? Such questions are vitally important, and only a prophet could presume to answer them with any certainty.

What is clear, however, is that we need not remain prisoners of the stories we once told about one another. We have the opportunity to create a *new story* by moving beyond the scripted tropes that have been recited too often in relations between Islam and the West. We may lack perfect freedom to choose our future, but it is our fundamental responsibility—to this generation as well as the next—to capitalize on the degrees of freedom that *are* available to us as we make conscious choices between war and peace, isolation and engagement, pessimism and hope.

Notes

1. Linzer, "Poll Shows Growing Arab Rancor at U.S.," 2004.
2. Deane and Fears, "Negative Perception of Islam Increasing," 2006, p. A1.
3. Ballen, "The Myth of Muslim Support for Terror," 2007.
4. Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Global Opinion Trends 2002–2007." Such findings are obviously welcome, especially when considered in relation to C. Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd's survey on Muslim attitudes ("Who Supports Terrorism?" 2006), which found belief that Islam itself has come under attack to be the most significant predictor (not social class, gender, or level of education) of willingness to justify suicide bombings and other attacks against civilian targets.
5. Mertus, *Bait and Switch,* 2004.
6. Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia,* 1998, p. 5; Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam,* 1974, pp. 60–61.
7. Lebanon, when it emerged as an independent state in 1943, was a majority-Christian state. At present, however, Muslims constitute a majority of Lebanese citizens.
8. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" 1993; Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* 1996.
9. See, for example, Zunes, *Tinderbox,* 2003; Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire,* 2004; Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim,* 2004.
10. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel,* 2003.
11. Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History,* 1960; Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means,* 1996; Havel, "The Divine Revolution," 1998; Segesvary, *Dialogue of Civilizations,* 2000.
12. Fox and Sandler, *Bringing Religion into International Relations,* 2004, pp. 118–125.
13. Havel, "The Divine Revolution," 1998.
14. Said, Funk, and Kadayifci, *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam,* 2001.
15. Although peace as an "absence of war" is a primary usage in the field of international relations, the field of peace research devotes particular attention to the practical implications of "fuller" conceptions of peace that include conditions such as a presence of social justice and other bases for human well-being. For further discussion of the distinction between "peace as absence" and "peace as presence," and of the internal diversity of peace definitions within Western and Islamic cultures, see Chapter 3.
16. Western observers and Muslims alike tend to paint with broad brushstrokes when they make generalizations about "Islam and the West." So perilous is the effort to compare Islamic and Western civilizations that many intellectuals have rejected efforts to frame problems in North American or European relations with the Middle East in cultural terms. We recognize these dangers, and do not in any way wish to deny that labels such as "Western" and "Islamic" can distort more than they clarify. For further exploration of these challenges, see Chapter 2.
17. We use the term "civilization" to refer to complex cultural conglomerates that, through shared historical narratives and symbols, provide a sense of bounded identity and cultural authenticity for those who claim membership within them. In offering this definition, we recognize that de facto cultural norms and value systems of civilizations are much more variegated than their members tend to recognize. A civilization is, to use a term Benedict Anderson coined for the study of nationalism, an "imagined community" in which membership is determined by perceptions of belonging and by shared symbolic reference points rather than by a singular, authentic set of cultural values and traits. In contrast to Samuel Huntington, who describes a civilization as the "broadest

level of identification with which [a person] intensely identifies" ("The Clash of Civilizations?" 1993, pp. 24, 44–45), we believe it is important to acknowledge that, in the current world historical context, a small but growing number of people intensely identify with a global or "human" sense of identity, and even with the idea of a single, emergent global civilization. Moreover, the differences within civilizations can be every bit as divisive as differences between them (take, for example, relations between Sunni and Shia Muslims in many contexts, and historical Western clashes between groups divided by religious, economic, and nationalist ideologies). Hence we will refer to "Islamic and Western cultures" more frequently than "civilizations," to avoid attributing a misplaced concreteness and uniformity to phenomena that are, in real terms, diverse. There are multiple Islamic and Western cultures, and though bonds of affinity within each cluster of cultures tend to be stronger than relationships that cut across symbolic boundaries, we do not wish to contribute to totalizing discourses and to the divisive politics that go with them. We use such labels as "Muslim" and "Western" as a matter of necessity—they are terms that reflect real patterns of culture and identity—but concur with those analysts who argue against static and overgeneralized conceptualizations of human differences.

18. As constructivist thinkers have argued, the social world is a domain of collective intentionality and its institutions and practices do not exist independently of human analysts. Institutions and practices are woven on the latticework of deeply embedded ideas and meanings, and by the mere act of choosing to explore these ideas and meanings the researcher becomes at least to some extent a participant in the social processes studied. Although analysts should not uncritically adopt "categories of practice" (the meanings of everyday life) as academic "categories of analysis" (Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed,* 1996, pp. 15–16, 22), close and respectful academic engagement with cultural meanings and forms can generate new opportunities for public reflection and dialogue.

19. We place quotation marks around "other" and, in many cases, around such terms as "the West" and "Islam" to acknowledge the intrinsically problematic nature of these terms when they are used to suggest boundedness and homogeneity across time and space. What is considered "other," "Western," or "Islamic" varies historically and geographically, and human cultures are inevitably more complex and dynamic than the overarching categories within which we perceive them.

20. Readers seeking deeper treatment of theological issues raised by our exploration would be well advised to explore some of our references or to delve into one of the many accessible primers on Islamic beliefs and values.

21. In stating that there is a need for greater commitment to dialogue, we do not in any way wish to discount serious initiatives that have been under way for many years. See, for example, Kung and Kuschel, *A Global Ethic,* 1993; Herzog, *Preventing the Clash of Civilizations,* 1999; Tehranian and Chappell, *Dialogue of Civilizations,* 2002.