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Conflict Resolution in Islam:
Document Review of the Early Sources

by
Flamur Vehapi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Conflict Resolution

Thesis committee:
Harry Anastasiou, Chair
Robert Gould
Tom Hastings

Portland State University
2013

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Abstract

Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. It is known to have an abundant and very rich amount of knowledge found in the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, and as such, this religion has tremendously contributed not only to Muslim societies but also to the West. One aspect of this contribution explicated in this thesis is its contribution to the field of Conflict Resolution.

The primary purpose of this study is to unearth the tradition of peace and conflict resolution that comes out of the religion of Islam, which is unknown to many Muslims today. In this study, existing literature in the field is examined, and a qualitative exploration is carried out, in order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of the Qur'an, hadith and other documents of Islam, as they relate to peace and conflict resolution. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, data collected for this study came from two sources: the existing literature regarding Islam and conflict resolution and the participants (Imams and religious scholars of Islam) interviewed through a questionnaire.

To begin with, the thesis introduces the fundamentals of Islam and major concepts of the faith. It proceeds with Qur'anic and hadith injunctions on peace and conflict, and how those divine revelations as believed by Muslims, were applied by Prophet Muhammad and his early followers. This work is concluded with the opinions and interpretations of the scholars regarding the original question of this study and the matters discussed in the literature review.

The thesis deals with the teachings of the Qur'an and only investigates and analyzes historical events from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphate of Islam. In the process, to further explore the concept of conflict resolution in

Islam, interpretations of Muslim scholars and imams are included in this document review of the sacred texts of Islam. Some questions addressed in this research are, how might this knowledge be valuable to Muslims today in these times of great turmoil involving the Muslim world after September 11? Where do the primary sources of Islam, the Quran and the hadith, stand as far as peace and conflict are concerned? And most importantly, what does Islam have to teach about conflict resolution?

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents who brighten my life every time I speak with them while I am away from them during my studies. It is also dedicated to my brother and sister and their families who have been tremendous supporters of my work and what I do as a student of Conflict Resolution; and to Nicole, of course. Last but not least, this work is dedicated to everyone who has come into my world, has left, and continues to leave a positive mark in this journey of mine we call life.

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Glossary

- Abd*: Literally “Servant/slave of” used in Arabic names, usually before one of the names of God, like Abdullah or AbdulAziz.
- Allah*: the Arabic word for God used by Muslim and non-Muslim Arabic speakers alike
- Caliph*: successor to Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community
- Dar al-Islam*: “abode of peace,” Islamic territory, i.e., where Islamic law is in force
- Emir/amir*: “a prince” or commander, army commander
- Fatwah*: non-binding legal opinion
- Fitrah*: the pure and original human nature as created by God
- Fiqh*: a term referring to doctrinal rules derived from the Islamic sources by Muslim jurists
- Hadith*: written narrative reports of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings, actions and approvals
- Hajj*: the pilgrimage to Makkah in the Month of Dhul-Hijjah (it is one of the five pillars of Islam)
- Halal*: something permitted by the Shariah
- Haram*: something forbidden by Shariah
- Hijab*: veil or head scarf worn by Muslim women and men
- Hijrah*: Literarily meaning emigration; it refers to the journey of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah, and it also marks year one of the Islamic calendar.
- Hudaybiyyah*: A place where a peace treaty was signed between the Prophet and the Quraysh tribe
- Ijma*: Agreeing upon; consensus of the community, particularly the learned ones.
- Ijtihad*: independent analysis or interpretation of Islamic law
- Imam*: “Leader,” prayer leader
- Iman*: the concept of faith consisting on belief in God, angels, the books of God, the prophets and the Day of Judgment where everyone will be taken into account
- Islam*: Submission to the will of God alone
- Jihad*: struggle in the path of God for the greater good
- Jizyah*: head tax paid by non-Muslims for living safely in the Islamic state
- Kabah*: The Sacred House of Islam in Makkah
- Khalifa*: caretaker, vicegerent or representative of God
- Madrassa*: School or college to teach Islamic law, etc
- Mufti*: specialist on Islamic law competent to deliver a *fatwa* (legal ruling)
- Muslim*: One who submits to the will of God, a follower of the religion of Islam
- Nafs*: soul, self.
- Quraysh*: the tribe of Prophet Muhammad
- Qur’an*: “Recitations,” the books of Muslims revealed to Prophet Muhammad by God through Archangel Gabriel
- Qiblah*: the direction of prayer (towards the Kabah)
- Ruh*: The spirit that God blew into Adam, the first human created out of clay.
- Sahabah*: Companions of Prophet Muhammad, those who met him and accepted his message
- Salaam*: peace
- Salah*: prayer (one of the five pillars of Islam)

Shahadah: profession of faith: “there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His final messenger” (the first pillar of Islam)

Shariah: Islamic law or “path,” rules and regulations that govern the day-to-day life of Muslims

Shiite/Shia: Literally “party,” one who believes that the authority of Prophet Muhammad is to pass to his descendants

Shirk: Associating others with God, the only unforgivable sin in Islam if the person dies in such a state

Shurah: Consultation and cooperation for the benefit of the community

Sunnah: Traditions (sayings, actions and approvals) of Prophet Muhammad

Sunni: One who follows the ways and customs of Prophet Muhammad, and believes that the authority of Prophet Muhammad was to pass down to any qualified Muslim through the consensus of the Muslim community

Surah: A chapter of the Qur’an

Taqwah: God-consciousness, God-wariness,

Ulama: religious scholars or clergy

Ummah: Community of the faithful, refers to the worldwide Muslim community

Vezir: adviser to a ruler, government minister

Zakah: Poor-due, obligatory on Muslims (one of the five pillars of Islam)

Preface

As our history testifies, humans have mastered the art of war. In fact billions of dollars are spent every year in military industries around the world in order to “protect” one nation from another or to dominate some other nation. So much money is spent in our war industries that weapon engineers are constantly thinking of to what weapons can be invented next and what capabilities those weapons could have. If we have almost reached the limits of development in the art of war, I only see it as fair that we now start developing our art of peace.

Having said this, a quote of Karen Armstrong, I feel, is a great opening for this work because in less than a page, Armstrong addresses the most crucial problems humanity is facing today and will continue to face if some of the issues raised below are not carefully addressed or not addressed at all as seems to be the case in many parts of the world. Armstrong writes:

Perhaps every generation believes that it has reached a turning point of history, but our problems seem particularly intractable and our future increasingly uncertain. Many of our difficulties mask a deeper spiritual crisis... Sadly, our ability to harm and mutilate one another has kept pace with our extraordinary economic and scientific progress. We seem to lack the wisdom to hold our aggression in check and keep it within safe and appropriate bounds. The explosion of the first atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki laid bare the nihilistic self-destruction at the heart of the brilliant achievements of our modern culture. We risk environmental catastrophe because we no longer see the earth as holy but regard it simply as a “resource.”

Realizing that the world is in desperate need of a paradigm shift in ways of believing, thinking and doing, Armstrong adds:

Unless there is some kind of spiritual revolution that can keep abreast of our technological genius, it is unlikely that we will save our planet. A purely rational education will not suffice. We have found to our cost that a great university can exist in the same vicinity as the concentration camp. Auschwitz, Rwanda, Bosnia, and the destruction of the World Trade Center were all dark epiphanies that revealed what can happen when the sense of the sacred inviolability of every single human being has been lost. Religion, which is supposed to help us to cultivate this attitude, often seems to reflect the violence and desperation of our times. Almost every day we see examples of religiously motivated terrorism, hatred, and intolerance. An increasing number of people find traditional religious doctrines and practices irrelevant and incredible, and turn to art, music, literature, dance, sport, or drugs to give them the transcendent experience that humans seem to require. Some are looking for new ways of being religious. Since the late 1970s there has been a spiritual revival in many parts of the world, and the militant piety that we often call ‘fundamentalism’ is only one manifestation of our post-modern search for enlightenment. (Armstrong, 2006, p. xv-xvi)

However, keeping in mind that there is still hope in the world, and that people have gone through challenges before, although none of this magnitude, this study is an attempt to show that religion can be utilized for good and the betterment of the world. Specifically, this work attempts to introduce a new approach to peace and conflict resolution taking the religion of Islam as its catalyst.

Part 1
Islam, its Major Concepts, and Misconceptions

Introduction

Many Orientalists these days, among others, speak of Islam as if this religion began in the late 1970s with the Iranian Revolution or in the 1990s with the rise of some radical groups like al-Qaeda in the Middle East. This religion, to this day, is being framed and portrayed in such a way that many Westerners today see it as something foreign and incompatible with the West, therefore having nothing to offer to the rest of the world. As a result of these imposed misconceptions, the underlying assumption has become that Muslims live in a stagnant world “and pre-modern tradition that has failed to respond to the challenges of modernity; essential values, such as progress, science, reason, freedom, and equality, have not yet set in” (Huda, 2010, p. xv). But the truth is if one only looks closely at the whole picture of the history of Islam will one understand that Islam, as a faith and civilization and as a way of life, has been anything but stagnant, backward, irrational and intellectually inactive or unproductive. Many such fabricated claims, in fact, can easily and best be refuted by the Qur’an itself which numerous calls humanity to study, reflect, know, reason and discover the bounties of the Creator.¹ The results of this divine encouragement for hard work, knowledge and service to humanity were nowhere more evident than in the world knowledge centers of Muslim Baghdad, such as the well-known “House of Wisdom, Alandulus (Muslim Spain), and those during most of the Ottoman period, at a time when much of Europe was in great darkness and social

¹ In fact the first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the Qur’an was *Iqra*, meaning read, recite, reflect, ponder, etc., which encouraged, and to this day encourages Muslims around the world to study and develop constantly in every possible aspect (see the second surah of the Qur’an).

chaos, but this topic is beyond the scope of this paper. What is important to note here, however, is that whether we want to accept it or not, our modern world is indebted to Muslim civilization since its earliest days. Writing on this issue, which many Western historians avoid addressing, Mark Graham (2006) points out that this story of the great contributions of Islam to the Western world has been constantly ignored and adds that this in fact “is a story that needs to be told... It is the story of how precious heritage of knowledge [especially from the ancient Greeks] was not simply preserved but reconstituted and re-imagined. And it is the story of how medieval Europe gave birth to the Renaissance. This is the story of how Islam created the modern world” (p. 12). At the end of his books, Graham has a piece of advice for the Western readers:

We must begin learning history by *unlearning* the cultural “truths” we have been taught about Islam... These paradigms have nestled in the muck of our collective unconscious for centuries... It was because Islam was so successful that our culture made it seem like a failure. It was because we owed Muslims so much that we pretended we owed them nothing... The Islamic world and the “West” are (and always have been) an intricately –bound system of cultural and religious interaction.

Graham closes his work saying,

It is time for memory to triumph over collective amnesia. Islam belongs to the West as much as the Egyptians and the Greeks. We are the heirs of Ibn Rushd and al-Razi as much as we are the heirs of Plato and Hippocrates... It is in the writing of that new history that we might finally unlearn what has pulled us apart and learn anew what we share as the children of Abraham and Aristotle. (p. 182)²

² Al-Razi and Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroës) were 9th and 12th century Muslim philosophers respectively.

From eye-opening works like the one above, one can easily see that Islam not only contributed to the West, it is part of the West, and this is a reality that intentionally continues to be left out in most of the Western education system. The old grand narrative has to change because history is not “black and white” as it has been portrayed for centuries in the Western world; it is a mixture of colors made out of materials from different parts of the world.

Chapter 1:

Islam, Modern Challenges and How it all Began

The Process of Enmification

People have short term memory when it comes to history. At times, the past can easily be ignored or painted with the brush of the present, and as a result the whole picture may appear as if it had always been like that, black and white, or good versus evil, but in reality that is never the case. And this is exactly what this thesis aims to do in part, to show another side of a completely ignored story: the story of the contributions of Islam to the field of Conflict Resolution and beyond.

Research in the field of philosophy, psychology and conflict resolution shows that before even learning any kind of history, from an early age, people feel the need to have an enemy of some sort. They will look for one, and if they cannot find it, they will make one! If one enemy is eliminated, however, they search out for a new one wherever they can. As has often been the case, in Western history, for instance, many “people have been targeted for broad-based hatred,” some of those being the Jewish people, Catholics,

Protestants, Africans, Gypsies, and so on (Bowen, 2012, p. 3). In the United States, as a case in point, it starts with the Native populations, African-Americans, the Irish, and so forth. Once those hard feelings against one group of people somewhat faded away, another group was labeled as the enemy as has been the case with the Soviets until the breakup of the Soviet Union. However, as John Bowen points out, today “the primary targets of hate are Muslims, whether it is in the United States or Europe” (p. 3).

On the topic of enmification³, a great documentary film worth mentioning here is *Faces of the Enemy* (1986), in which a great collection of political cartoons and artwork is shown to demonstrate how twentieth century war propaganda around the world has depicted the enemy (the process of enmification itself is hundreds of years old, of course). Sam Keen, in this film, opens with the following lines, “Before we make war, even before we make weapons, we first create the idea of an enemy whom we can fight,” and our history, especially that of the nation-states has demonstrated that clearly. This documentary emphasizes that all nations follow this basic way of thinking which automatically dehumanizes the enemy so that anyone who is not with us or like us is against us, and is consequently perceived as less human and deserving of being killed. Much of the way people view the “others” today is in this simplistic way, unfortunately. This leads us to the question of where this comes from. Some have argued that the process of enmification is in human nature, others have said it is nurture, and many others have said it is both.

An interesting aspect of the phenomenon of enmification is nicely illustrated in an article by Vamik Volkan called “The Need to Have Enemies and Allies.” In this article

³ A new term referring to the process of making enemies.

Volkan (1985) discusses a human developmental phenomenon identified as mankind's need to identify some people as allies and others as enemies. This work deals with the human psychological need to have enemies and friends and the consequences of the inherent need to categorize the self and the others based on ethnicity and nationality. However, the process of enmification has been observed long before the idea of nations ever existed. According to Volkan, there is a psychological benefit in having an enemy, and once one has an enemy, he or she has a scapegoat, someone to blame for a certain disaster, or whatever the case may be, and according to this logic, that enemy should be suppressed as soon as possible and as much as possible. Those who benefit the most from having enemies are certain people in positions of power with grand political agendas. Through their campaigns of fear-spreading, these elites create the situation to mobilize their followers around them in order to achieve their goals. Hitler, among others, efficiently used this opportunity through his successful propaganda machine of making his European neighbors look like his enemies and the enemies of the German people (while his enemies were simultaneously working exactly on the same manner).

Volkan further points out that people form their character through identifications and attachments to specific groups who happened to be around them during their stages of personality and identity development. As a result, anyone who does not belong to that certain group is viewed as "different," and therefore he or she must be feared. Examples of this kind of fear and hatred can be well observed in the Balkans and Cyprus, among other places, where neighbors who had lived together for centuries became each other's sworn enemies. As far as this research is concerned, September 11 was the disaster that drew the line between friends and enemies, and in this case Muslims were labeled as the

enemies of the West. The roots of anti-Muslim rhetoric and fear of Islam are older than September 11, but it is important to point out how the process of enmification works in situations like the tragic events of September 11. This point is addressed by Bowen in his book *Blaming Islam* (2012) when he writes:

When a particular narrative of us versus them circulates widely, it can be used to dehumanize huge segments of humanity. Pogroms in Russia and genocide in Europe were fueled by the poisonous Protocol of the Elders of Zion ... Communism and anti-Communism, twinned for decades, wound much of the newly postcolonial world into a web of intrigue and oppression. But after the fall of the Soviet Union there was an opening for a new them, a new enemy. Islam fit the bill. (p. 4)

Right after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many Americans identified their enemy: the Muslims, who were “out to kill the infidels.”⁴ The allies, on the other hand, became anyone who stood up in support of America that day.⁵ Immediately after the September 11 attacks many people, out of fear and confusion, took a stance; it clearly became a need for them to have enemies because of what had happened. Some strange people out there who “hated American freedom” had committed those dark acts against America, and therefore they had to be hammered down. As witnessed in the aftermath of those events, because the terrorists had come from Muslim countries, many Muslims in the West were attacked by civilians in vengeance, and even

⁴ The media picked up on Americans’ misplaced fear and mistrust, of course, and by repeatedly broadcasting the same dark images over and over, it played an important role with regards to spreading fear and making Americans, and people around the world, choose sides and draw lines between “friends” and “enemies,” between “good” and “evil.”

⁵ What is not mentioned about this time period, however, is that there were also over 60 Muslims who died in the Twin Towers that day, and additionally there were many Muslim countries that stood up in support of and sympathy for the American people that same day, but those voices were ignored and the media turned a blind eye.

non-Muslims (including Sikhs) who were mistaken as Muslim due to stereotypes of appearance.

Without a doubt, September 11 was a dark day in human history for people around the world, for people of all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds, but it should not have been a day of divisions, “us vs. them”; instead it should have been a day of coming together, because as the events showed, the world is small and we are all in it together, and what happened to the United States that day can happen to anyone at any time. On the contrary, however, that September morning seemed to have changed everything forever. Thousands of years of great efforts of cooperation and prosperity between the Muslims and the West were erased from people’s memories. Fear had filled the air, peace seemed out of question, and conflict was becoming more and more inevitable. The world was not the same anymore. On this note Esposito (2005) writes:

The September 11 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon led some to signal a new clash in the twenty-first century between Islam and Western civilization. Others countered that it was a clash between the civilized world and global terrorism. For many the belief that significant progress had been made toward a better understanding of Islam and in Christian-Muslim relations seemed an illusion. September 11 re-animated ancient and more recent fears, animosities, and stereotypes. (pp. ix-x)

Here, in the “fog of war” of the September 11 events, nationalism awoke and manifested itself by uniting Americans under its banner (nationalism works “miracles” some have said). Unfortunately for many, often unconsciously, the underlying message that propped up these feeling of nationalism was that Islam was the cause of the chaos and death, and as a result Muslims had become the new enemy. Therefore, because of how the reactions

of the aftermath of September 11 unfolded in the West and the Muslim world, hard feelings, stereotypes and misconceptions among all sides arose. Additionally, because of those events unfortunately anything that has to do with Islam is often dismissed in the West or viewed as outdated and unimportant. The same applies to a thesis like this titled *Conflict Resolution in Islam*: while working on this project, many times I was asked by surprised Westerners, “Is there really such a thing as conflict resolution in Islam?”

Islamophobia: Historical Truths and Misconceptions

Nowadays Islam and Muslims have been associated with anything but good. Books and articles written or movies made against Islam and Muslims are countless and the list is growing as you read these lines.⁶ Moreover, everyday media rhetoric driven by the far right has turned anti-Muslim slurs into the acceptable norm. The extent to which mainstream Muslims have been associated with the acts of an extremist minority is stunning. This is clearly seen in aggressive oppositions to mosque constructions in many places in Europe and the U.S., as well recently in European and U.S. presidential and Congressional elections which show how far-reaching and mainstream Islamophobia has become today (Lean, 2012, p. xii).

Not surprising considering the propaganda of the far right in the West, discrimination and feelings of hatred against Muslims have been on the rise since September 11. A survey done by the Pew Research Center released in 2005 indicated that “About a third of Americans (36%) say the Islamic religion is more likely to encourage violence among its followers.” Additionally, a *Washington Post*–ABC News Poll released in 2006 documents the dramatic increase of negative perceptions of Islam in the

⁶ See *Reel Bad Arabs* by Jack Shaheen.

United States. According to this poll, “nearly half of Americans—46 percent—have a negative view of Islam, seven percentage points higher than in the tense months after the Sept. 11, 2001” (as qtd in Ramarajan & Runell, 2007, p. 88).

Although Islam is Europe’s second largest religion, reports from Europe show similar statistics, if not worse, showing that Islamophobia in many European countries has become a political disease (Bari, 2012). According to an article by Paul Hockenos (2011), “Of all the specters haunting Europe, none are as potent -- or potentially disruptive to democracy -- as Islamophobia.” Hockenos adds that

In one recent study, between 34 and 37 percent of French, Dutch, Portuguese and Danes say they have a negative opinion of Muslims. In Germany the figure is 59 percent... Policies like Switzerland’s ban on minaret construction (approved by 58 percent of voters in 2009) and veil prohibitions in France, Belgium and parts of Germany violate basic rights. Increasingly derogatory popular attitudes toward Islam and Muslims translate into workplace and schoolyard discrimination, which only increases tensions. (Hockenos, 2011)

One can rightly ask where all this discrimination is coming from, what are its origins and why now? On these points, Esposito notes:

Islamophobia did not suddenly come into being after the events of 9/11. Like anti-Semitism and xenophobia, it has long and deep historical roots. Its contemporary resurgence has been triggered by the significant influx of Muslims to the West in the late twentieth century, the Iranian revolution, hijackings, hostage taking, and other acts of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe. (as qtd. in Lean, 2012, p. x)

From this research, I have learned that it is nearly impossible to pinpoint when

and where this anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment and rhetoric in the West began. But we do know that distortions about Islam in the West are not new; as Nasr (2004) points out, these distortions have “a thousand-year old history going back to monstrous biographies of the Prophet of Islam written mostly in Latin in France and Germany in the tenth and eleventh centuries” (Nasr, pp. xi-xii). This shows that such a phenomenon has its roots in Medieval times, even prior to the Crusades, which later continued with anti-Ottoman rhetoric and finally culminated with the advent of Colonialism, Orientalism and Imperialism, the consequences of which to this day continue to pollute many people’s knowledge about Islam and the Muslim world.⁷ However, we know that for too long Western narrative, especially that of Orientalists, has been that Islam is an intolerant religion spread by the sword. When we look at historical findings, however, we learn that such claims have very little or nothing to do with Islam. In his book *Prophets and Princes*, for example, Mark Weston (2008) writes:

The common Western belief that Islam is “a religion of the sword” is a mistake. Muslim conquerors allowed Christians, Jews and Hindus to keep their faith because the Quran forbids conversion by force. The millions of Hindus, Zoroastrians, and Syrian and Coptic Christians who converted to Islam in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries did so freely because their Muslim conquerors governed more justly than any ruler they had known before. (p. 16)⁸

To add to this point, and regarding the dealings of Muslim rulers with their non-Muslim subjects, the nineteenth century Christian missionary, T. W. Arnold (1896) writes:

⁷ See *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* by Deepa Kumar and *Orientalism* by Edward Said.

⁸ See also *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* by J. Esposito, p. 70.

... of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Mohammedan [sic] governments towards them. (p. 80)

Quite interestingly, as Arnold points out, many of the Orientalists who “bash” Islam and the Muslims almost always fail to mention any information regarding the injustices and the intolerance committed by their own, so called Western, mostly Christian civilization, namely the Crusades and the Inquisitions during which thousands of Muslims and Jews lost their lives, as well as the near annihilation of the Native Americans and the more recent atrocities of the two world wars and the Holocaust. For some reason, none of that dark history is associated with Christian history; however, when it comes to Islam, Muslims are held accountable for literally everything that has been perpetrated by the most radical factions of Muslim society since the advent of Islam. This is not to say that there have not been “bad apples” in the leadership of the Muslim world throughout history, since Islam has been around for over fourteen centuries now. Examples include leaders like Salim or Hakim who almost destroyed their own empires through poor decision making, but the mark they left on history is insignificant compared to the great and inspirational examples of Islam who have left a great legacy of tolerance and peace (a few of whom will briefly be discussed in the following chapters).

Embracing the differences and finding a way forward

Instead of blaming, the time has come for understanding: in our case an understanding of true Islam and the Muslims. Also, what should be understood is that Muslims are here, East or West, and they are here to stay because this is their home too, whether it is Europe or the Americas, Africa, Asia or Australia. Many in the West simply cannot continue to ignore the fact that Islam and the Muslims live next door to them and they are not going anywhere.

Ahmed Akbar (2002) on this point says, “The twenty-first century will be the century of Islam. Muslim civilization will be central to understanding where we will be moving in to the future.” And the fact that there are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world with “about 25 million living permanently in the West and many of them making an impact on social, political, and economic life...” understanding Islam is “imperative to anyone wanting to make sense of living in the twenty-first century” (p. 1). Reminding statements like the one call people to let their fears go and instead open their mind to a better understanding of Islam, and the world for that matter, because Islam is a part of the world we live in today.

Additionally, without any doubt, the agenda of the day, meaning the way we view our world today, needs to change radically. The West needs to be reminded that it is not made up of a Judeo-Christian civilization alone, as the narrative has been, but of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic civilization as well because Islam has interacted and contributed to the West and the world as much as any other civilization has. If such a shift in thinking is not fostered, then we have great examples in history to speak of human failures for coexistence. As the two great wars testify, at one time in Europe xenophobia became the

main cause of division among the people. Europeans in particular had become obsessed with their next-door neighbors as far as mistrust and suspicion was concerned. These feelings, of course, were further fueled by the evils of nationalism that preached the superiority of one nation over the others, and anyone who did not fit into the worldview of the nationalist became an enemy of that particular nation: whoever was “the other” was seen as a threat. As a result, diversity found no place in such societies. And it was the continuous propaganda against one another that demonized every European nation in the eyes of Europeans themselves. Not surprisingly, however, when looking at the history of the European people, one discovers that most of them are historically relatives of one another because of their Christian heritage, but during the great wars they were at each other’s throats.

What we need today, instead of blaming the other for our own faults, is a paradigm shift in the way we think of people different from us. Knowing that the world is so interconnected today, it should become hard for us to find an “other.” Looking at it more closely, as far as our topic is concerned, Islam and the Muslims are not even “the other” considering that Islam is part of the fabric out of which the Western civilization is made. On this matter Omar Faruq Abdullah says, “Islamic civilization grew up right next door to European Christian civilization. Islam was not exotic; Islam was not foreign; Islam was not difficult to understand. Islam for Christian Europe in the Middle Ages was extremely close physically and ideologically” (Discover Islam, 2009). Islam was often seen by its neighbors, both Christian and Jewish, as the religion of prosperity. Europe had learned a great deal from the Muslims and because of that early interaction with the Muslim world, Europe gave birth to its Enlightenment, many have argued (PBS, 2007).

In one case, a bishop of Cordoba laments the fact that his Christian subjects were so immersed in the contributions of Islam in the ninth century Islamic Spain that they were forgetting about the Christian background and their language, saying:

The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to correct and form an elegant Arabic [sic]. Where is the laymen who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets or the apostles? Alas! all talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian language as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their language. For everyone who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves.” (as qtd in Kumar, 2012, p. 12)

This period of great exchanges and transformation, however, has been somehow erased from our history books. What we often read and hear about today is Islamic fundamentalism, oppression, and terrorism, when in actuality these concepts are foreign to Islam. What is not often talked about is that Islam by nature is against any such evils. On this point, Abdullah Hakim Quick, a Muslim scholar from South Africa, says that Muslims by the very nature of their religion are against terrorism, and that is because “Islam means finding peace through submission to the will of Allah, so therefore, terrorism, trying to intimidate people in order to get your point across, or to take over their land or to drive them away, this very act... is totally against Islam and ...within Islamic law, and lifestyle, terrorism is completely forbidden” (Discover Islam, 2009). Western media, however, very often has completely ignored the true message of Islam, instead it has zoomed in on a few radical groups who claim to act in the name of Islam,

and as a result portray Islam as a religion of hatred and violence. Such unfair portrayals of Islam consequently have universally generated greatly skewed images of the religion and negative attitudes towards it and its followers, making people believe that Islam and Muslims are completely foreign and have no place in the West. Islam, however, and the Muslims are an integral part of the West, whether some like it or not. The challenge is, as once posed by Hamza Yusuf (2004), not whether Islam is compatible with Western values or not, but instead whether the West can truly embrace Islam. And this is a very valid challenge to a so-called and self-prided multicultural and all-inclusive West.

Chapter 2:

A Historical Background of Islam

Islam, as we know it today, and as one of the world's monotheistic religions, has its origins in seventh-century Arabia with Muhammad as the final messenger of God (preceded by Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and so on).⁹ Muhammad was born in 570 C.E. in the ancient city of Makkah, present-day Saudi Arabia.¹⁰ Growing up in the Quraysh tribe as an orphan, he became known for his truthfulness and sincerity, so he was often sought for his ability to arbitrate among the people.¹¹ Additionally, "Historians describe him as calm and meditative" (IAD, 1989). His character was that of a natural leader, and he was the one who brought people together through peaceful means, but this was not an easy task for him considering the time and place in which he was brought up. Therefore, for

⁹ Although Islam is not a new religion, since it is a continuation of the preceding divine messages, like Christianity and Judaism, it was during the time of Prophet Muhammad that God's message was completed with the revelation of the Qur'an.

¹⁰ The ancient city of Makkah is referred to in the Bible as Baca (see Psalms 84:6).

¹¹ Muhammad's father, Abdullah, died before Muhammad was born, and his mother, Amina, died six years later, leaving him to be raised by his uncle, Abu Talib.

the purpose of this thesis, it is important to discuss the environment where Muhammad was born and raised, and later how he came to be followed by people from all corners of the world.

Prior to the Prophethood of Muhammad, according to historians, the Arabian Peninsula was in its worse state of degradation. Idolatry, open prostitution, addiction to drinking, human abuse, infanticide, tribal killings and warfare had reached their apex. Although Arabs belonged to one race and spoke the same language, they were the most disunited people at the time. The chain of blood-feuds was never-ending; families and tribes often went to war with each other with the most trivial excuses (Ali, 1992, p. 2). It was in this environment, chaotic and lawless, that Muhammad was born. He was raised in a place where human life meant nothing if the person was born in a weaker tribe, where the strong could cruelly exterminate the weaker for the slightest mistake. It was also obvious that greed and wealth at the time “had become more important than honor” (Weston, 2008, p. 18).

According to multiple sources, even before his prophethood young Muhammad himself never agreed to or participated in any of this madness that his people were immersed in (al-Tuwaijri, 2004, p. 10).¹² Instead, he retreated to the mountains of Makkah for solace and to try to make sense of all that was happening around him and what would become of his people. One night in a cave of Makkah he was embraced by a light and asked to “read” (also translated as recite, reflect, contemplate, etc.).

Just like his predecessors, Muhammad that night in the year 610 C.E. had been entrusted with a revelation from God given to him by the Archangel Gabriel. Muhammad

¹² See also Ali, 1992, pp. 2-3.

was forty at the time, and more importantly he was an illiterate man. The revelation he received that day in the Cave of Hira, to where he used to retreat, continued to come down to him for the next 23 years of his life. This revelation is called the *Qur'an*, believed by Muslims to be the exact Word of God, and that message is known as *Islam*. The followers of this way of life are called *Muslims*¹³ (Sakr, 2004, p. 5).

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it literally means something to be recited.

According to Huston Smith (1991), the Qur'an is:

perhaps the most recited (as well as read) book in the world. Certainly it is the world's most memorized book, and possibly the one that exerts the most influence on those who read it. So great was Muhammad's regard for its contents that ... he considered it the only major miracle God worked through him – God's "standing miracle," as he called it. That he himself, unschooled to the extent that he was unlettered ... and could barely write his name, could have produced a book that provides the ground plan of all knowledge and at the same time is grammatically perfect and without poetic peer – this, Muhammad, and with him all Muslims, are convinced defies belief. (p. 231-2)

On this note, regarding some of the allegations that Prophet Muhammad authored the Qur'an, Maurice Bucaille (2003) writes:

How could a man, from being illiterate, become the most important author, in terms of literary merits, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at that time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncement on the subject? (p. 132)

¹³ The name *Muhammadan* frequently used by Orientalists is a misnomer simply because it suggests that Muslims worship Muhammad rather than God. It also suggests that Muhammad was the originator of this religion, which is simply not the case because Muhammad did not bring a new message to humanity, he only re-called people to the same message that Jesus, Moses and the other prophets had called their people to.

According to Muslim thought, the Qur'an is a book of guidance, not only for Muslims but for all of humanity. It also introduces a paradigm shift in human thinking, therefore serving as a means for positive transformation for those who study it seriously. On this point G. Margoliouth who writes:

It [the Qur'an] has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character. It first transformed a number of heterogeneous desert tribes of the Arabian peninsula into a nation of heroes, and then proceeded to create the vast politico-religious organizations of the Muhammadan [sic] world which are one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to reckon today. (as qtd in Rodwell, 1876)

It is also important to note here that, unlike as is the case with some other scriptures, from the time it was revealed to the Prophet until today, the Qur'an remains exactly the same. According to Muslim scholars, not a word of it has been changed, and one can easily verify this by comparing a present-day copy of the Qur'an to the fourteen-century copies that remain with us to this day, which can be found in places like Uzbekistan and Turkey (Islamic Awareness, 2008). *Major Concepts of Islam*

The word Islam comes from the Arabic root-word *salaam* which means "surrender" (in order to achieve peace). And this is what the essence of the message of Islam is about: to surrender oneself completely to the will of God, and God alone, in order to achieve peace (Sakr, 2004, p. 5). And this can mean achieving a peace of mind, peace with the self, with the people around us, with the environment, and so on, which according to Islam can only be done after achieving peace with God, the Creator of the

universe and everything in it. However, this surrender, as some have interpreted it to be, is not an act of blind faith by any means, because:

Islam does not ask its followers to accept anything without question. Everything in Islam, including the very existence of God, is open to critical interrogation. Islam presents itself as a rationally satisfying faith. And the faithful acquire genuine faith only after they have pondered and reflected upon the ‘sign of God’ as manifested in the laws of nature, the material universe and personal experience of the Divine. (Sardar, 2007, p. 3)

The legal sources of Islam are the Qur’an, known as the Book of God (Allah), and the *Hadith*, which include the sayings, deeds and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (Sakr, 2004, pp. 5-6). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad is the one who has best embodied the message of the Qur’an, therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim, man or woman, to follow his way of life and that of his Companions, meaning his contemporary followers, until the last day on earth.¹⁴

The fundamental beliefs of this religion are belief in One God (the Oneness of Allah, in other words, that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah);¹⁵ belief in the Prophets of God (including all of them from the time of Adam with Muhammad as the final messenger); belief in the revealed books of God (including the Psalms, Torah, Gospels, Qur’an, and so on, in their original forms); belief in angels; predestination; and the Day of Resurrection.

¹⁴ This way of Prophet Muhammad, based on the teaching of the Qur’an, is called *Sunnah*.

¹⁵ It is important to point out that Muslims do not perceive God in human terms, and most argue that it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend an Infinite God who is responsible for everything that happens in the universe. The only way to understand God, according to Muslim scholars, is through His attributes. Additionally, although usually referred to as *He*, in Islam God has no gender (Sardar, 2007, p. 1-2).

The pillars of Islam, on the other hand, are the profession of faith (that there is no one worthy of worship except for Allah and that Muhammad is His final prophet)¹⁶: to perform the five daily prayers, alms-giving, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Makkah (Bloom & Blair, 2002, pp. 35-39). It is the highest authority of Islam, the Qur'an, that prescribes these pillars as a Muslim's true commitment to this faith.

Islam and the Others

According to the teachings of Islam, every human being is an honored being; no matter what their status or background is, they are all equal in the sight of God. Therefore, the life, the honor and the property of every human being living in an Islamic society, Muslim or non-Muslim, is considered sacred. Having said this, racism, sexism or any other form of prejudice or discrimination against others is unacceptable in Islam (Discover Islam, 1998). According to the teachings of Islam, everyone is created equal and should be respected as such, and the greatest people are those who are pious in their daily dealings. On this note the Qur'an says, "O humankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware" (Qur'an, 49:13). In fact dealing "equitably and protecting the rights of every individual is the cornerstone of a Muslim society" (Discover Islam, 1998). And the Qur'an supports this calling: "O you who believe! Stand up firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not hatred of a people invite you to act

¹⁶ One simply becomes Muslim by sincerely making the declaration that "there is no god worthy of worship except the One True God and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God." This affirmation is called the *Shahadah* which means to "witness" or "testify."

inequitably; act justly, that is nearer to piety, and be conscious of (your duty to) God, surely God is aware of all that you do” (Qur'an, 5:8).

However, to many people Islam seems strange and even extreme. At times, these negative ideas and feelings, which have no basis on anything but misunderstanding, have reached to the extent that people have developed fears and prejudices against Islam and Muslims. This phenomenon, known as Islamophobia, has become prevalent especially in the West today, which is unfortunate for a number of reasons, particularly considering that Islam and Muslims have played a great role in the development of Western civilization as we know it.¹⁷ As Omar Faruq Abdullah, quoted earlier, says, Islamic civilization grew up right next to Christian Europe and it was not a foreign thing; in fact many European Christians studied in the knowledge centers of the Muslim world, mainly in Alandalus and the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Islam has historically been a religion and civilization of prosperity, and European civilization has greatly benefited from Muslim civilization and even reaps those benefits to this day, but unfortunately this is rarely mentioned in Western history (Graham, pp. 11-13). A civilization that enlightened the world with its great contributions in philosophy, technology, medicine, geography, history, language, literature, mathematics, physics, art and astronomy is often ignored as one that is outdated and out of touch with reality.

Perhaps among the reasons why Islam and Muslims are looked on as strange by many Westerners is because, in a general sense, religion does not play a dominant role in the everyday life of a Westerner today (IAD, 1989). For Muslims the opposite is true: Islam is life and life is Islam; in other words, there is no division between secular life and

¹⁷ See *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, 2007.

the sacred, and that Way of Life, known as the *Shariah*, rules a Muslim's everyday affairs whether it is inside or outside the house or in the place of worship.

The Misunderstood Shariah

Much of what has been written about Shariah¹⁸ in the West has been grossly twisted and exaggerated or reduced to nothing more than a penal code by which Muslims punish people “left and right.” Yes, Shariah is an integral part of Islam, but it is not what many Western “scholars for dollars” describe it to be. According to ICNA editors (Islamic Circle of North America),

[Shariah]... is often defined as ‘Islamic law,’ causing one to assume that it consists mostly of criminal rulings and penalties. However, Shariah encompasses much more than the conventional understanding of law. While Shariah provides the legal framework for the foundation and functioning of a society, it also details moral, ethical, social and political codes of conduct for Muslims at an individual and collective level. (Whyislam, 2011)

As far as Muslims are concerned, a more correct way to approach Shariah is to see it as Muslims’ “way of life,” or the way which leads to a source, and not as a cruel medieval set of rules and regulations. On this note, a scholar of Islam, Tariq Ramadan (2001), says:

The penal sphere is not the be-all and end-all of the Shari’a. It does not consist of adding prohibition to prohibition, and of reprimanding transgressors in the most exemplary manner. The Shari’a aims at the liberation of man and not merely of whittling down liberties. The Islamic model must not be confused with the destruction that has been perpetrated by certain dictators in the name of the Shari’a. (p. 47)

¹⁸ There are many versions of how the term is spelled. I have adopted the word *Shariah* instead of shari’a, shareeah, and so on, but those versions are present as well when used in various quotes.

On this matter, as ICNA scholars point out, “The very purpose of Shariah is to facilitate the individual and the community to establish a relationship with God and one another.” And as far as our topic is concerned, Conflict Resolution in Islam, the rules and regulations of Shariah “are designed to benefit and protect all members of the society,” both Muslim and non-Muslim (Whyislam, 2011). Here Noah Feldman (2008) asserts that “The very word ‘shari‘a’ conjures images of social control through criminal punishment...Some advocates of the shari‘a are no doubt motivated by the desire to achieve such goals. But what is less often noticed is the basic fact that the ideal of the shari‘a invokes the core idea of law in terms that resonate deeply with the Islamic past” (p. 6). In relation to this, the Qur’an says, “O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin...” (4: 135). To further explicate the matter, the renowned scholar of Islam Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) writes, “The Shariah in its entirety is justice, mercy and benefit. So any issue that leads from justice to injustice, or mercy to its opposite, or benefit to harm, then it is not from the Shariah, even if someone thought that it is” (Whyislam, 2012).

Shariah itself is derived from careful study of the Islamic text by qualified Muslim scholars. These texts include the Qur’an and the hadith of the Prophet. “However, scholars derive specific rulings from the revealed texts by using human effort and interpretation, taking into account the surrounding context.” Therefore such flexibility “enables Shariah to maintain its applicability and relevance in the light of changing social, cultural, and historical circumstances, while remaining faithful to the guiding principles of Shariah and its core objectives” (Whyislam, 2012).

Although there are differences, contrary to some Western claims, the Shariah does not contradict with the notion of democracy or Western constitutions. In fact the U.S. Constitution and Shariah have much in common, at their heart being concepts like perfect union, establishment of justice, insuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, securing liberty, protection of human rights, and so on. More than that, the Shariah explicitly addresses the rights of the society, of neighbors, of women, of children, of the poor, and even of animals. In addition, peaceful coexistence with people of all backgrounds is mandated by Shariah (ICNA, 2011). As for Conflict Resolution, the Qur'an, as the basis for Shariah, says, "...whoever pardons and makes reconciliation – his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers" (42:40), or as another verse says, "And speak good words to all people" (2:83). Lastly, looking at Shariah from such a perspective, one can deduce that Shariah is more than "Islamic law," it is a way of life, and its "guiding principles are based on mercy and compassion and its core objectives are designed to achieve welfare and justice, on an individual as well as collective level" (ICNA, 2011).

The Spreading of Islam and its Contributions to the World

Even though Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet and immediately after his death in 632 C.E., it was during the seventh and eighth century that Islam reached places like the Near East, North Africa and Spain (Bloom & Blair, 2002, p. 100). Very quickly Islam reached all the way to India, China and Indonesia. Most of this expansion was achieved by the early Caliphates starting in 632 C.E., and Muslim dynasties like the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Seljuks, Mughals and later the Ottomans. These in fact were some of the largest and most powerful empires in

the world at the time.

As far as the Caliphate system is concerned, according to Esposito (2005), “The early Caliphate established the pattern for the organization and administration of the Islamic state. Islam provided the basic identity and ideology of the state, a source of unity and solidarity” (p. 38). This system further united the community of the faithful, the *Ummah* of Prophet Muhammad and even became a vehicle for the great and very rapid expansion of Islam. “Over the next few centuries this [new Islamic] Empire continued to expand and Islam gradually became the chosen faith of the majority of its inhabitants. Among the reasons for the rapid and peaceful spread of Islam was the simplicity of its doctrine...” (Discover Islam, 1998).

As far as the acceptance of Islam outside of the known Muslim lands is concerned, Esposito (2005) notes that “Islam’s universal mission had resulted in the spread of Muslim rule over Christian territories and Christian hearts. While conversions were initially slow, by the eleventh century large numbers of Christians living under Muslim rule were converting to Islam” (p. 57). But what is important here, contrary to the widely accepted belief that Islam was spread by sword, is that most of the time Islam was willingly embraced by the natives of the conquered lands, and at times the conquered people not only adopted this new religion, they also adopted the language of their occupiers (Arabic) and their ways of life.¹⁹ This point is further elaborated by Esposito (2005) noting that:

¹⁹ See also *Islam* by K. Armstrong; *Taking Back Islam* by M. Wolfe et al; *Prophets and Princes* by M. Weston, etc.

In time, through a process of conversion and assimilation, language and culture, state and society were Arabized and Islamized. Arabic became the language of government as well as the lingua franca of what today constitutes North Africa and much of the Middle East. Islamic belief and values constituted the official norm and reference point for personal and public life. (p. 40)

Egypt is a specific case here where by the 9th century, most of the Coptic Christians not only accepted Islam, they also adopted Arabic as their own language. Indonesia, however, is a different case; contrary to the calumnious narrative of many Orientalists, not a single Muslim conquest took place there. The people of Indonesia accepted Islam in masses, mainly because of their friendly interactions with Muslim traders from Arab lands and beyond. Having said this, Islam had a tremendous affect wherever it spread and that is because “Islam also repeatedly instructs human beings to use their powers of intelligence and observation. As Muslim civilization developed, it absorbed the heritage of ancient civilizations like Egypt, Persia and Greece, whose learning was preserved in the libraries and with the scholars of its cities (Discover Islam, 1998). Some of these Muslim scholars turned their attention to other civilizations and their learning centers, where as a result they translated, developed and preserved a great deal of ancient works. As it is pointed out:

Most of the important philosophical and scientific works of Aristotle; much of Plato and the Pythagorean school; and the major works of Greek astronomy, mathematics and medicine ... were all rendered into Arabic ... As a result, Arabic became the most important scientific language of the world for many centuries and the depository of much of the wisdom and the sciences of antiquity. The achievement of scholars working in the Islamic tradition went far beyond translation and preservation of ancient learning. These scholars built upon and developed the ancient heritage before passing it on to the West...Many crucial

systems such as algebra, the Arabic numerals, and the very concept of the zero ... were formulated by Muslim scholars and shared with medieval Europe. Sophisticated instruments that would make possible the later European voyages of discovery were invented or developed, including the astrolabe, the quadrant and navigational charts and maps. (Discover Islam / Transcom International, 1998)

From this, it should be noted that if Muslims had something to offer during the Dark Ages of Europe, they certainly have something to offer to the world today.

The Growth of Islam

Today, Islam is world's fastest growing religion, with over 1.5 billion followers worldwide.²⁰ According to a comprehensive demographic study of the Pew Research Center done in more than 200 countries, "there are 1.57 billion Muslims of all ages living in the world today, representing 23% of an estimated 2009 world population of 6.8 billion (Pew, 2009, p. 1). According to these findings "While Muslims are found on all five inhabited continents, more than 60% of the global Muslim population is in Asia and about 20% is in the Middle East and North Africa." On this note, Pew adds that "More than 300 million Muslims, or one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion. These minority Muslim populations are often quite large. Such examples are India, China, Russia, and so on (2009, p. 1). In addition, beside the known Muslim world, Muslim populations today have a significant presence in Europe and the Americas as well. According to Sakr (2004), the number of Muslims in North America alone may exceed 10 million (p. 34). And as far as Latin America is concerned, the number may well be over four million. As far as the United States is concerned, it is said that almost 20,000 Americans convert to Islam every year

²⁰ See CIA World Factbook.

(RT USA, 2010).

Diversity and Differences in the Muslim World

Although it is usually missed or often ignored by many, even the so-called political analysts like Samuel Huntington who somehow classified Muslims as being one homogenous entity, the Muslim world is as diverse as any other civilization known to us. Yes, many Muslims are united by one faith which is their way of life, but they are very distinct and diverse in their origins, ethnicities, cultures, languages, traditions, and so on, considering that Muslims live in all continents bringing in with them unique cultures and worldviews. As Ahmed Akbar noted, “Islam is a mosaic. Spread over the globe, with its societies speaking different languages, its peoples living in distinct political cultures, while aware of the unity of faith and vision that binds all Muslims, Islam can only be understood in its diversity” (as qtd in Miller and Kenedi, 2002, p.3).

Here it should also be noted that there are three main camps in Islam: Sunni, Shi’a and Sufi. (As far as the third, Sufism, is concerned, it has been argued that it is not exactly a separate camp within Islam because both a Sunni Muslim and a Shia Muslim can be a Sufi).²¹ The Sunnis in this case make up about 85 percent of Muslims around the world, and they too are divided into sub-groups. The Shi’a as a minority make up about 13 percent of Muslim populations mainly centered in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Pakistan. Sufism, on the other hand, which makes up the rest of the Muslim world, represents the mystical dimension of Islam, and someone who follows this tradition is known as a *Sufi*. Unlike the Shi’a minority, the Sufis are more widespread around the Muslim world and beyond it. Places where Sufis are prominent include North Africa, Turkey, the Balkans,

²¹ See *The Heart of Islam* by Nasr, p. 63.

Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan and Iran. Sufis are also found in South, East and Central Asia. According to Stephen Schwartz (2011), Sufis make up no more than five percent of Muslims around the world.

As far as the much-talked-about Sunni-Shi'a split is concerned, it goes back to the aftermath of the time of the Prophet's death over issues of succession but, as outlined by Mirbagheri (2012), the split between the two was formalized in 1501 when "Shah Ismail I established the Safavid Dynasty in Persia and declared Shi'ism as the official religion of the state," as opposed to their opposing power, the Ottomans, who were Sunni Muslim (p. 16). As for the differences between the Sunni and the Shi'a, Mirbagheri (2012) explains:

For Sunnis the four successive rulers of Muslims after Muhammad, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, [Abu Bakr], Omar, Othman and Ali were all pious men and assumed the leadership of the community in the right order and in a proper manner. The Shi'as, however, dispute that and believe Ali, the fourth successor and the cousin and the son-in-law of Muhammad, should have succeeded the Prophet immediately upon his death. The three intervening caliphs, therefore, Shi'as believe, usurped the leadership of the community by depriving Ali of guiding the Muslim community. (p. 16)

Unfortunately, from being an isolated incident and a political issue, this conflict has now become a theological matter. Today, unfortunately, Sunni-Shi'a divisions run deep!

Islam and the West

About two decades after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims took over not only the old Persian Empire of the Sassanid dynasty, but they also put under their rule great parts of the Byzantine Empire. Shortly after, the Muslim Umayyad dynasty expanded into North Africa and from there "entered into Europe in the early eighth

century” (Kumar, 2012 p. 11). Islam was introduced to the West in less than 80 years after the death of the Prophet. The first major Muslim entrance into Western Europe, took place in 711 C.E. when the troops of General Tariq ibn Ziyad from North Africa defeated the Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula.²² Having taken over most of the peninsula without any significant effort, the Muslims made this part of Europe an extension of the Umayyad Caliphate, later a separate caliphate, and called it *Al-Andalusia*. Muslims were to remain there until 1492 when the Inquisitions forced everyone to either convert to Roman Catholicism or burn at the stake, as a result most of the Muslims and Jews fled the peninsula and scattered around the globe, where many of them, as historical evidence suggests, moved to the Americas, among other places (Kennedy, 2003).²³

Although “Muslims began migrating to the Americas in large numbers only in the nineteenth and particularly, the twentieth century,” there are sources that indicate Muslim presence in America since the coming of the first Europeans to the “New World” starting with the first voyages of Christopher Columbus (Mowlana, 2010). According to Hamid Mowlana, professor at the University of Washington, “Since the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain and Portugal, the role of European Muslims in the voyages to the American continent was hardly mentioned in Western literature” (2010). Today, however their early presence is undeniable; but this is a different topic altogether.²⁴ What is worth mentioning here, however, is that Muslims have been intermingling with the West since the earliest days of Islam, and it is either the case that many in the West haven’t noticed that intermingling or have decided to deny it for reasons mentioned earlier with regards to

²² The place where he first landed was called *Jabal Tariq* (the Mountain of Tariq), now known as Gibraltar.

²³ See *Deeper Roots* by Dr. Abdullah H. Quick.

²⁴ See *Deeper Roots* by Dr. Abdullah H. Quick for more on the topic.

Islamophobia.

As far as the present-day Western views of Islam are concerned, almost all of them have been shaped by dark events like September 11, but this was not the reality of the past concerning Muslim relations with the West. On this note, John Esposito, the renowned scholar for Christian- Muslim understanding wrote that the events of September 11 "...led some to signal a new clash in the twenty-first century between Islam and Western civilization... For many the belief that significant progress had been made toward a better understanding of Islam and in Christian-Muslim relations seemed an illusion" (pp. ix-x). As a result of this, says Esposito, old fears and anti-Islam rhetoric was re-animated in the West. As can be deduced, such events led to the alienation of the Muslims and a new way of looking at the religion itself, mainly as one of violence and intolerance. In addition, such a picture of so-called "religious violence" like that of September 11 was projected onto the past of these religions. One however may ask, what were the Muslim and non-Muslim relations in the past? In his book *Islam the Straight Path*, Esposito provides a clear sketch of those relations. Historically speaking, although there were ups and downs in these relations, they were generally stable up to the time of the Crusades, and then worsened with the rise of the Inquisitions. However, this is not to say that relations of cooperation and coexistence were forever severed with these devastating events. Muslims in many parts of the world, outside of the Holy Lands where the Crusades were fought and the Iberian Peninsula where the Inquisitions took place, continued their lives peacefully living with their neighbors. In fact most of them contributed to and even took part in the development of what was to become Christian Europe. On this note Bernard Lewis (2001), for example, (whose opinion of Islam and

Muslims has often fluctuated) admits that Islam and Muslims should not be viewed as passive objects to be acted upon, but rather as active historical players who share commonalities with Christendom and are deeply rooted in Western civilization (p. 12).

Part 2

Literature Review

Chapter 3:

Following the Example of the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad as a Natural Peacemaker

Studying the concept of conflict resolution in Islam without studying the personality, character, story and way of Prophet Muhammad is pointless. For Muslims, in its degree of importance, after the Qur'an, the Revelation of God, comes the way of the Messenger of God, the *sunnah*. The Qur'an is viewed as the light of life, and the actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad are the guidance of a Muslim's daily life since the Prophet himself has always been regarded as the embodiment of the Qur'an. As such, his importance in the study of this field is paramount. The Qur'an on this note says:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination (4:59).

Muslims from all corners of the world agree that “[t]here are many lessons that can be learned from the exemplary conduct of the Prophet... who was a politically righteous person with highest moral and ethical values” (Bouheraoua, 2008, p. 1). In other words, for most Muslims, he was everything that a Muslim wishes to be in this life, and “to accept Muhammad as the Prophet of God,” which is part of the testimony of faith, “is to accept that the revelation he received is from God” (Sardar, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, anyone who accepts Islam is bound to follow the Qur'an, and the teachings

of the Prophet, the *sunnah*. As far as the Prophet's role in conflict resolution in Islam is concerned, the Qur'an reminds Muslims that they have no faith until they make the Prophet a judge amongst themselves and find no resistance against his decisions on those matters and accept the Prophet's rulings with full submission (Qur'an, 4:65).

Unlike many famous influential figures in world history, however, most of whom are now shrouded in mystery or elevated to an angelic status by their followers in which people have no way of relating to them anymore, Prophet Muhammad, among most of the Muslims, was and remains someone who people can easily relate to, identify with, and emulate. In fact many Muslims emulate the Prophet to the smallest detail of his life and livelihood because of the early recorded traditions (hadith) regarding his lifestyle and conduct. After all, the Prophet was nothing more than a human being given the mission of prophethood and that is how he has been viewed by most Muslims since the beginning of his prophetic mission (Ramadan, 2007, pp. ix-x).

On the same note, to this day, in most of the Muslim world, Muslims use the Prophet's advisement on resolving conflict. Although the Qur'an states that the Prophet had to be a "judge in all disputes" of the Muslims, after the passing away of the Prophet, who then was no longer there to be a judge in all disputes, it now meant that Muslims continue seeking his advice and judgment on various matter while looking into his *sunnah* and in the Shariah (Al Qahtani, 2007, pp. 442-443).

The Prophet himself believed in education by example. His teachings, which established a tradition based on human love and respect, taught people to be honest and responsible citizens. This was one of the main reasons why people from all walks of life accepted Islam in great numbers during the time of the Prophet; they were impressed by

his manners, especially in dealing with other people, friend or enemy. After taking over of Makkah, for example, the Prophet had all the means to annihilate all of his enemies who had oppressed him brutally in Makkah, but he let them go free instead. By doing so, and by showing mercy towards them, all of Makkah became Muslim and soon after all of Arabia in turn accepted Islam in his lifetime. This was certainly unseen in human history (Hussain, 2009, p. 35).

His merciful nature should not be taken as a sign of weakness of his character, however, for after his return to Makka in 630 C.E., the Prophet had the military power to destroy any of his enemies in the Arabian Peninsula, but he chose not to. “The battlefield was for him the last resort for defending a righteous cause. But when forced into fighting for human rights, he did not flinch” (Iqbal, 1975, p. xvi-xvii). Prophet Muhammad’s successful work was clearly evident in the way he completely transformed a war-loving and backward people into a civilized one, who later ruled from Spain to China for almost a thousand years. As Weston (2008) points out, the Prophet and “his followers created a way of life that was more equitable and just than anything that Arabs” and the region as a whole had ever known (p. 13). However, in order to understand the values of Islam and its many contributions to human civilization, one needs to understand Prophet Muhammad before, during and after the coming of the message of Islam.

Muhammad before the Prophethood

For some strange reasons, Prophet Muhammad has been greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted by many in the West, and no other personality in history has generated more debate than he. Furthermore, as noted by Montgomery Watt (1953) “none of the

great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad” (p. 52).²⁵

Some have gone as far as questioning his very existence when such a fact been has confirmed even by non-Muslim accounts starting from Seboes, as a point in case. Saboes was an Armenian chronicler of the 660s who attested that “Muhammad was a merchant, and confirms the centrality of Abraham in his preaching” (Cook, 1983, p. 73-74).

However, for those who are able to put those old stereotypes aside and carefully inspect Muhammad’s life and character, they will soon find themselves struck by his extraordinary personality and approach to life. Annie Besant (1932) once said:

It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher. (p. 4)

Without a doubt, the character of Muhammad, even before Islam, was a rare one in all of Arabia. It is said that he was a man of compassion who felt deeply troubled for his fallen society. He is recorded as having had great love and care for the poor and the orphans of his city, for the weak, the slaves and the helpless widows (Al Qahtani, 2007, pp. 87-90). Without even having had the financial means at the time, spending what he had, he had become a member of a group that “took an oath to stand by the oppressed and formed themselves into a league as champions of the injured” (Ali, 1992, p. 3). And when he married a business woman, with whom he worked for years, they both spent

²⁵ For how Prophet Muhammad has often been described in Western literature, see Allison (1995) *The crescent obscured: the United States and the Muslim world, 1776-1815*.

most of their wealth freely in helping the needy.

As has been observed from the hadith and his biographies, Muhammad, among other things, was a visionary. He knew that for a society to prosper it needed to be just and take care of the needs of the people, especially the poor, otherwise hunger and discontent can lead society to greater challenges and contempt.²⁶ Therefore, even before his prophethood, Muhammad took this as his duty to help the needy, as a result, whoever knew him showed great respect for him, even giving him the title “Protector of the orphans and the widows” (1992, p. 4). (It is known that after the coming of Islam, the Prophet increased his practices of good deeds and would tell his people that taking care of the needs of the poor and widows is like praying all night and fasting all day without getting tired and without breaking the fast (Al Qahtani, 2007, p. 90).

On the same note, Muslims feel that even before Muhammad was chosen to become a prophet, God was building his excellent character and was preparing him for a sacred duty: to deliver God’s Message to humanity. According to Muslim thought, the way Muhammad grew up and the way he lived his life, never bowing down to the pagan deities, and avoiding the ways of the ignorant people of his time, for example, and later becoming known as the trustworthy one among the pagans, all indicate that he was kept in a state of purity to later carry on the divine task of prophethood (Ali, 1992, pp. 2-4).²⁷

As for his early peaceful character and dealings with situations of conflict and conflict resolution, historical accounts describe Muhammad as having always been

²⁶ As we observe today, in many of the underserved communities in the world, especially where the government is corrupt, the needy are left with no choice but to result to revolt and destruction. This is one of the main reasons why Hosni Mubarak, the former-President of Egypt was rooted out of his corrupt cycle, followed by Qaddafi, and others.

²⁷ See also IIPH eds, 2004, p. 10.

trusted by the people “as a mediator between two conflicting parties in his homeland, Makkah” (IIPH, 2004, p. 10). This was not an easy thing to do in a seventh-century tribal Arabia. The following is one of the many examples of how young Muhammad handled a very challenging and delicate situation of dispute during the time he was being prepared by God to become His final messenger.

Once the clans of early Makkan society had renovated the *Kabah* (the Sacred House of Islam in present-day Saudi Arabia) following a major fire which had damaged this holy shrine.²⁸ The Black Stone, as a part of the shrine, had been temporarily removed during this renovation.²⁹ However, after the work was finished, the clans could not agree on which one of them should have the honor of setting the Black Stone back in its place. The tribes who had worked hard together in this construction now were greatly divided, formed side-alliances, and even threatened to fight (Iqbal, 1975, pp. 1-2). As the arguments continued, four days later the clans somehow decided to wait for the next man to come through the gates of the city so that they could ask him to make the decision of the placing of the Black Stone. That individual who first entered the gate happened to be the young Muhammad. Realizing that it was him, all sides felt a relief because Muhammad was known for his honesty and trustworthiness, even before his prophethood (Ramadan, 2007, p. 25).

Seeing the tensions between the parties, Muhammad accepted the challenge of mediating them, but the slightest error would have turned the town of Makkah into a

²⁸ Kabah is the Arabic word for “cube.” The Kabah is said to have been built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael, long before the Arabs filled it with idols. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the Kabah is said to have contained over 360 idols that the Arabs used to worship before Islam (See Weston, 2008, p. 16). The Kabah is the building towards which Muslims pray, and it is known as the Grand Mosque in Makkah.

²⁹ The Black Stone is in the eastern cornerstone of the Kabah.

bloodbath. With no signs of unease, Muhammad asked the leaders of the clans to bring him a cloth and put the Black Stone in its center. Then, he asked each clan leader to hold one corner of the cloth and carry the Black Stone to the right spot, where it had always been. Then Muhammad himself set the stone in its place, satisfying the honor of all of the clans involved in the dispute (Dairesi & Aydin 2004, p. 162). In this case, he saved the situation from getting out of control by putting the stone in its place with his own hand without the slightest protest from any of the sides (Iqbal, 1975, p. 3). This truly speaks of the respect people had for Muhammad and his ability to treat fairly all sides in a dispute.

After such an event, it had become clear to the clan leaders that young Muhammad had saved the day, and the Makkan tribes continued their usual daily affairs as usual. But for Muhammad this meant nothing since this was one of the hundreds of other problems he saw that needed attention in the city. This dispute resolution for him was only a temporary treatment of his societies' ills which could reemerge at any moment erupting in violence and bloodshed, as it was the case in the pre-Islamic Arabia. Therefore, worried and saddened about his peoples' condition, Muhammad frequently used to retire in the cave of Hirah, where he fasted and prayed, until one night he found himself overpowered by a divine presence and was given the first verses of the Qur'an (Armstrong, 2000, pp. 3-4). The first verses said:

Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created—
Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord
is Most Bountiful— He Who taught (the use of) the Pen— Taught man that which
he knew not... (Qur'an, 96:1-5).

Muhammad during his prophethood

Right after Prophet Muhammad received his first revelations, he began to preach Islam privately and publicly to the Makkans, but faced immediate rejection from his own people. The same people, who had previously respected him greatly and called him the trustworthy one, were now calling him degrading names and even violently attacking him day and night, and later even tried to assassinate him. According to the Quran, however, such rejection was not unique to Prophet Muhammad considering that most of the earlier prophets, like Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Noah, and others, were also harshly rejected and persecuted. And, like the other Prophet's, Prophet Muhammad was very patient with the people and persistent with his mission. So patient was he that, for the sake of peace and avoidance of conflict, he endured all the hardships put on him and his followers by the Makkans. He understood that patience was an integral component of success (Al Qahtani, 2007, pp. 221-222). In fact, patience turned out to be his key to long-term success in changing the ways of his society.

As it is observed in the spirit of the Qur'an, the Prophet's first revelations mainly focused on the oneness of God, and the matters of faith. Fighting, even in self-defense, had not yet been prescribed to the Prophet and the new Muslim community. Therefore, Muslims were faced with two difficult choices: to bear the tortures of the Makkan pagans or leave their birthplace, the city of Makkah.³⁰ However, seeing the hardships that Muslims were going through, such as starvation, torture and murder, the Prophet, *for the*

³⁰ It is important to point out here that, contrary to the Orientalist rhetoric, Prophet Muhammad for the first 13 years of his prophethood had struggled against the tribal attacks not through the use of force, but through means of nonviolence, a practice today usually, if not exclusively, is attributed to Gandhi.

first time, advised his followers, not to fight or defend themselves but to migrate to Abyssinia, the land of a Christian king known as Negus (Najashi). The Prophet himself, however, stayed in Makkah with his cadre in order to continue with his mission of teaching the new faith to people (Ali, 1992, p. 5).

Nevertheless, after a short period of time, in order to avoid a plotted assassination by the Makkan tribes, the Prophet too, in 622 C.E., had to escape Makkah and move to the city of Yathrib (later to be called Madinah) where other Muslims earlier had sought refuge (Lings, 1983, pp.118-124). Historians agree that something very unusually occurred in seventh century Arabia at this time, something never heard of before in which a stranger was invited to straighten the affairs of some unknown subjects. The disunited clans of Yathrib welcomed the Prophet, who had agreed to bring peace among them, particularly to the two major warring tribes of Aws and Khazraj. And in return, after a short period of time, all of Yathrib gave their pledge of allegiance to the Prophet, and that is when and where the first Muslim community, the Ummah, set its roots and it was also there that the Prophet established the first seat of Islamic governance. Soon after the arrival of the Prophet, the people, both native and migrant, named their city *Madinah tun Nabih* (the City of the Prophet).³¹ It was there, in Madinah that a new phase of life began for the Prophet and the new Muslims. As Zahid Aziz (2007) writes:

He [the Prophet] was now the head of a community...It was here, over the next ten years, that the teachings of Islam relating to practice, as distinct from faith and doctrine, were revealed. These related both to purely religious functions, such as prayer and fasting, and to all material aspects of human life, such as social institutions, financial dealings, war and peace, state organisation. (p. 9)

³¹ The native helpers are known as *Ansar*, and the immigrants as *Muhajirun*.

It was also here, after the Hijrah, when for the first time the Prophet received the following verses giving the Muslims permission to defend themselves: “Permission to fight is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and God is Able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly, for no cause other than their saying: Our Lord is God” (Quran, 22:39-40).³² This was the case because even in their new place, the Muslims were never left alone; not to mention the sanctions on their livelihood or the religious restrictions put on them by the Makkans when Muslims and the Prophet wanted to perform pilgrimage at the Kabah (Ramadan, 2007, p. 97). Therefore, with such permission from none other than God, they could finally fight for their rights, but never transgress the limits, as they were warned by the Qur’an (2:190).

History records several clashes between the Makkan pagans and the Muslims of Madinah. Those are the Battle of Badr, of Uhud, and of the Trench, to mention a few, during which Muslims were almost wiped from the face of the earth, considering their small numbers and the poorly equipped able-to-fight men. In the case of Uhud, for example, the Muslims were outnumbered by over three to one, yet still were victorious despite heavy casualties (Ibn Ishaq, 1955, pp. 370-391). In instances like these, if Muslims had not received permission to fight in self-defense, the world of Islam today, would most probably, would have looked much different than it is. However, according to the scholars of Islam, fighting is always the exception in the tradition of Islam (Malik, 2008, p. 21).

³² See also *Muhammad* by Lings, 1983, p.135.

Chapter 4:

The Nature of the Prophet and his ways of Resolving Conflict and Making Peace

Fourteen centuries ago, the Prophet Muhammad said to his followers, “Shall I inform you of a better act than fasting, alms and prayers? Make peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by roots” (as qtd in Alsuhrawardy, 2001, p. 90). Today, almost anyone has an opinion about the Prophet and his nature; most of these opinions are unfortunately negative and rarely associate him with peace for reasons that were mentioned earlier. Most often this is the case because of people’s ignorance about the life of the Prophet. Little do many know that Prophet Muhammad was a man of great character with a forgiving and merciful nature, always in pursuit of peace, which is why the Qur’an refers to him as “a mercy to the worlds” (21:107). In one case the Qur’an indicates that his character is most sublime (Qur’an, 68:4); and that is why it is said that anyone who met him once would long to meet with him again (Hussain, 2009, p. 29).

A Character of Peaceful Resolve

In the teachings of Islam, sound character is a sign of good faith. As indicated in a hadith, the Prophet said, “The best amongst you are the best in character and manners” (Al-Bukhari, Hadith 8:61). This is important here because through good character, as was that of the Prophet, one can repel the evils around oneself and others and oppositely through bad character one can cause a lot of damage. Therefore, having a good character is easier to resolve conflict and make peace, and according to Muslim thought, the Prophet had the best character (Hussain, 2009, 29-47): this is why he is seen as the peacemaker in the Muslim tradition.

When speaking of character, integrity and honesty, which are virtues crucial to peacemaking and conflict resolution in many cultures, the Makkans always knew that the Prophet had these characteristics even before his prophethood, which is why they had nicknamed him “the truthful one.” On this important point, after the coming of Islam even his bitter enemies never denied the Prophet’s truthfulness and honesty. When one of his staunch enemies, Abu Jahl, was once asked of the Prophet’s integrity, he swore by God that “Muhammad is a truthful man and never lies” (Hussain, pp. 30-31). What is even more important here is that the Prophet fostered this sense of high integrity among his disciples as something to be embodied and applied by Muslims all over the world.

When humility is discussed in Islam it means being conscious of one’s shortcomings, but also being unpretentious and having no expectations of praise from others. Even when he became a Prophet, Muhammad never gave up doing the humble jobs that he had done before even though the treasuries of the Muslim world were under his control; he still did domestic chores, milked the goats, and went to the marketplace. Regarding his public demeanor, it is said that during the conquest of Makkah, although victorious, the Prophet entered the city in such a manner that while bowing in humility his head was touching the saddle of his camel (Hussain, pp. 38-39).

To make peace, on the other hand, one has to be at peace with oneself by fostering patience within the heart. “To have patience means to remain calm and composed in times of difficulty”; this virtue is very useful in conflict prevention (Hussain, p. 37). The Qur’an stresses this by calling Muslims to be patient (Qur’an, 3:200). It further says that God will try those who believe “with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere”

(Qur'an, 2: 155). The following lines show how the Prophet applied this need for patience in one occasion. One day he passed by a woman who was weeping beside a relative's grave. He told her to be patient. Not recognizing who he was, the woman said to him, "Go away, for you have not been afflicted with a calamity like mine." Later she was informed that he was the Prophet, so she went to his house and said to him, "I did not recognize you." He said, "Verily, patience is at the first stroke of a calamity" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 23, Hadith 372).

Another characteristic closely associated with patience that the Prophet possessed was his gentleness in ways of dealing with people (this is of course paramount when it comes to resolving conflict between parties). A Muslim scholar defined gentleness as "a state of dignified bearing, and remaining calm despite provocation" (as qtd in Hussain, p. 44). On this note, anyone who has read any of the biographies of the Prophet will quickly notice the hardships that the Prophet bore in Makkah before his migration to Madinah. The people of Makkah almost starved to death the Prophet, his family and the early followers by boycotting them and their businesses for three years (Emerick, 2002, pp.88-89). It is said that it was because of this starvation that both the wife and the uncle of the Prophet died. And as mentioned earlier the Prophet and his followers were tortured by the Makkans, and later plotted an assassination attempt against him, yet he refused to respond.

Another great virtue of the Prophet's character was forgiveness, which is an important factor in building peace and reconciliation among people. "Forgiveness is to forsake revenge when one is capable of exacting revenge" (Hussain, p. 34).

Unfortunately, such a virtue is often missing in our societies today. In one case, the Angel

Gabriel told the Prophet that God had ordered him to “befriend those who break off from you, give to those who refuse to give to you and forgive those who are unjust to you” (as qtd in Hussain, p. 34). An application of this is obvious when looking at the Prophet’s visit to the town of Ta’if where the Prophet hoped to gain supporters. The people there not only refused to accept him and his message, they threw him and some of his companions out of town and had the vagabonds and the children throw stones at them. By the time the Prophet escaped the crowds, it is said that his sandals were filled with blood from the injuries he received, yet when one of the angels offered to destroy the town, the Prophet refused and instead prayed for their guidance to Islam (Hussain, p. 35).³³ The capturing of Makkah, mentioned earlier, also speaks of the justice and the forgiveness of the Prophet regarding his staunch enemies (see Armstrong, 1992, pp. 243-246).

As far as the Prophet’s views on fighting are concerned, Iqbal (1974) points out that war was the Prophet’s last resort, but he did fight when he was left with no other options; the Battle of Badr (624 CE), and that of Uhud (625 CE) show just that. However, what is often not mentioned is that during his life time, the Prophet made a number of peace treaties with the Makkan pagans, the Jews of Madinah, the neighboring Christians and other surrounding Arab tribes (Engineer, 2011, p. 48). What is most significant here is that he never broke a treaty made with his neighbors or enemies, knowing that Islam strictly forbids the breaking of any agreement or covenant (Qur’an, 8:55-56).³⁴ Some of those well-known treaties, to name a couple, are the treaty of the Prophet with the Jews, Christians and the pagans of Madinah, known as the Constitution of Madinah (622 CE),

³³ Decades later the inhabitants of Ta’if became Muslim.

³⁴ See also Qur’an, 17:34, or 2:177, etc.

and the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah (628 CE) made between the Muslims of Madinah and the Makkan opposition (Armstrong, 1992).

Peace Treaties of the Prophet and his dealings with his opponents

It is recorded in hadith literature that the Prophet would say to his followers to make matters easy for people, and also to give glad tidings to others and to not create conflict (Hussain, p. 44).³⁵ As the biographers of the Prophet illustrate, the Prophet himself was much more interested in peace and understanding than in any kind of conflict that is associated with him today. Ibn Ishaq (2010) writes that at one point in the Prophet's early days in Madinah, for example, something very interesting happened in his new hometown: a delegation of sixty Christian priests from the region of Najran went to debate and learn from the man whose teachings were attracting so many of their coreligionists (pp.270-277). Later on, the delegation was joined by Rabbis and representatives of Judaism so that people of three faiths met in an open forum with Prophet Muhammad. This "Congress of the Three Religions," as Emerick (2002) calls it, "was lively as each side attempted to make its position known" (p. 146). They mostly debated on the nature of Jesus and the question of Muhammad's prophethood. Here, the Prophet reminded his guest that Islam recognizes the previous revelations like the Gospels and the Torah, as the Qur'an indicates:

Allah! There is no Allah but He—the Living, the Self-Subsisting Eternal. (2) It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (Of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) (3) Before this as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong) (Qur'an, 3:1-4).

³⁵ Hadith in al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Then during the Congress the Prophet called them to look for commonalities between their faiths since Islam too is a monotheistic faith, as the Qur'an says:

Say: 'O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than Allah.' If then they turn back, say: ye! 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will)' (Qur'an, 3:61).

After this Congress, before taking leave, the Christian guests requested to pray, and the Prophet permitted them to pray in his mosque, which today is the second holiest site in Islam. Furthermore, having been impressed with the teachings of Islam, the Christian guests "invited the Prophet to send with them an envoy who would live with them, answer their questions, and, if needed, judge some of their affairs" (Ramadan, 2007, p. 116). Firstly what is important here is that such a Congress took place at that point in history when such gathering cannot be held today in many parts of the world.³⁶

The second peace pact important to this thesis topic is that made between the Muslims and the various tribes of Madinah. Considering the tribal and religious diversity of Madinah in 622 C.E., in order to maintain peace between all groups, the Prophet drafted the famous document now called the Madinah Charter or the Constitution of Madinah (See Appendix F). The document which has survived to this day "was a series of formal agreements of nonaggression" among the Muslims, the emigrants, the natives of Madinah (the Ansar) and the rest of the clans of Madinah, both Jewish and pagan

³⁶ For details on this Congress see Ibn Ishaq (Trans. A. Guillaume), pp. 270-277.

(Aslan, 2006, p. 55). The document “delineated the reciprocal relationships between the Muslims and the Jews with a statement of the right of each party in the civil functioning of the city” (Emerick, 2002, pp. 131-132). According to Emerick:

The main thrust of the document was in creating a shared sense of identity as citizens of one state. The shared identity by no means meant that Jews were asked to give up their religion or to accept Muhammad as a prophet. The pact merely stated that Muslims and Jews would have equal status before the law. (p. 132)

Needless to say, such a treaty, pre-dating the English Magna Carta by six centuries, was a rare one at the time. It not only unified all of Madinah, it was also able to keep any foreign enmity from harming any of the citizens for the next ten years (Al-Qahtani, 2007, p. 282).

One other such peace treaty, paramount to this research, was the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah made in 628 C.E. between the Prophet and the Quraysh tribe of Makkah. This treaty came about when the Quraysh did not grant the Muslims access to the holy site of the Kabah. As a result, in order to make peace and enable the Muslim community to perform their pilgrimage the following year, the Prophet compromised more than the Quraysh had originally expected. As outline by Qur'an translator and commentator Muhammad Malik (1997), some of the terms of this treaty were:

1. War would be suspended for ten years, and no party would engage in any hostility, open or secret against the other.
2. If anyone during that period from among the Quraish defected to Muhammad's camp, without his guardian's permission, he would be returned back to Makkah. But if a companion of Muhammad were to defect to the Quraish, there will be no requirement for his return.

3. Every Arab tribe would have the option to join either side as its ally and enter the treaty.
4. Muhammad and his men would go back [to Madinah] that year. They could come the following year for Umrah [minor pilgrimage] and stay in Makkah for three days, provided they bring only one sheathed sword each, and no other weapon of war. In those three days, the Makkans would vacate the city for them (so that there was no chance of conflict), but they would not be allowed to take along any Makkan on return (p. 564).

This treaty was not only significant for the time when the formation of the *Ummah* was taking place and the Qur'an was being revealed, it also helped decrease the tensions between the two rival groups, and most importantly, it affirmed a 10-year period of peace between both sides. Two years later, however, the Makkans violated the treaty which consequently resulted in the conquest of Makkah by the Muslims (Armstrong, 2000, p. xiv).³⁷ (See Appendix G for more details on the treaty.)

By the time the treaty had been broken, of course, the balance of power had shifted on the side of the Muslims. But, as an extension of that promise of peace made in the treaty, though it had been broken by the Makkans, with ten thousand Muslims, in year 630 C.E., the Prophet headed towards his beloved city of Makkah peacefully. Upon entering the city, everyone got out, new and old enemies; all went to him with their heads down waiting for the Prophet's revenge. Not surprisingly knowing his benevolent nature, the Prophet spoke to them in words of forgiveness, just as Prophet Joseph had spoken to his brothers who had neglected and mistreated him. The Prophet said to the people of Makkah, "Verily I say as my brother Joseph said: *This day there shall be no upbraiding of you nor reproach. God forgiveth you, and he is the most Merciful of the merciful*"

³⁷ Conquest here may not be the appropriate word considering that the city was not conquered in a way that involved any force or resistance from either side.

(Lings, 1983, p. 301).³⁸ As Armstrong (2000) describes the event, the Prophet entered Makkah “without bloodshed and without forcing anyone to convert to Islam” (p. xiv).

As historians describe it, the conquest of Makkah was the “crowning event of Muhammad’s career”; not taking any retribution on his foes “was the culmination of his mission whereby the tribal law of unrelenting retaliation was abrogated” (Iqbal, 1975, p. xvi). And most importantly, forgiving those who had caused so much harm to the Prophet and his companions showed everyone the true nature of Islam, which took less than half a century to conquer people’s hearts around the Arabian Peninsula. On this point, Armstrong (2000) rightly notes that “Single-handedly, Muhammad had brought peace to war-torn Arabia” (p. 23), and none had achieved such success before, when it comes to bringing a people together in a very short period of time and establishing a permanent rule in the region.

Regarding the Prophet’s forgiving nature, Muhammad Rahbar writes, “That is why the eyes of Muslims are moistened by tears at the mention of [Prophet] Muhammad. That is why the Muslims call him [as described in the Qur’an] the Mercy of the Worlds,” it is because of his merciful nature towards everyone he came across (Iqbal, 1975, p. xvi). However, the example of tolerance and forgiveness of the Prophet in the conquest of Makkah did not stop with his passing away; instead this example was followed by numerous Muslim leaders throughout the centuries that came after. Such leaders, to point out a few, were Umar bin al-Khattab with the conquest of Jerusalem in 637 C.E., Salahudin al-Ayyobi also with the conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 C.E., and Sultan Mehmet (Muhammad) Fatih with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 C.E. All of

³⁸ See Qur’an, 12:92.

these great leaders, like the Prophet, took their conquered cities and left their inhabitants, Muslim or otherwise, go on with their lives without fear of persecution or the pressure of conversion (See Appendix H for details on these accounts).

In conclusion, no matter who the Muslim is, a king or a warrior, a worker or a parent, an adult or a youth, they all try to emulate the example of the Prophet, because for a Muslim the only people worth emulating are the Prophets, with Prophet Muhammad being the last and the final one. On the extraordinary example of the Prophet, Alphonse de Lamartine (1854) wrote:

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only they founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then-inhabited world; and more than that he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls.... His forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire, his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. ... Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he? (pp. 276-77)

Not surprisingly, Michael Hart in his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, ranks Prophet Muhammad as number one. Hart opens the chapter with the note “My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only

man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and the secular levels” (Hart, 1978, p. 3).

Chapter 5:

Human Nature, Anger and Conflict

Unlike as is the case with the nature of the prophets, which is stable and upright, the nature of people in general has repeatedly proven itself to be much more fragile and prone to wrongdoing, and the Qur’an points that out several times (as in 4:28). As will be discussed in this chapter, the [instability] of human nature involves the weaknesses of people’s character that manifest in negative and potentially harmful feelings and emotions, including greed, arrogance, hatred and anger, all of which originate in the diseased heart, that will be addressed few paragraphs down. Despite that fragility, in Islamic thought humans have been created superior to other creatures: they have been given free will, for example, and have been put in charge of all other creation as caretakers of God’s creation on earth.³⁹ The Qur’an states that Allah created humans, fashioned them in the image He wanted, and then in honor of this beautiful creation He said to the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam, the first of His human creation (Qur’an, 7:11). Yet because of humankind’s free will, many people have arrogantly chosen to ignore the commends of their Creator, and instead of fulfilling their duties as servants of God and as *the* caretakers of God’s creation on earth, they have left out the “care” part of it and instead have become “takers”; instead of caring and sharing, they

³⁹ The word used in the Qur’an for caretakers is “khalifa”, Romanized as “caliph,” which is mentioned in chapter 2, verse 30 of the Qur’an. The root of the word is the Arabic verb “khalafa,” which means “came after or succeeded.” However, several derivatives of the verb are used in many other verses, but in our case it means that God has chosen humans to be His successors and caretakers on Earth, ruling it according to His divine law.

aspire to take everything for themselves (Başar, 2008).

The fragility and some of these weaknesses of people are outlined in one of the works of Alaaddin Başar. Turkish Prof. Başar (2008) writes that one such weakness in people is their tendency to quickly forget, especially with regards to their purpose of life. Even Adam, the Prophet of God, forgot after he was specifically told not to eat from the forbidden tree (Qur'an, 20:115). And the worst form of forgetfulness, says Başar, "is man's forgetting himself and not recalling why he was created." The following weakness mentioned (no prioritization intended) is greed and meanness, he says. People are mean to each other, and are never satisfied with what they have; concerning this he quotes a hadith that says, "If man had a valley full of gold, he would like a second valley full of gold."⁴⁰ After greed and meanness is the hastiness of human beings. The Qur'an says that "man is given to hastiness,"⁴¹ and Başar says that in this state of hastiness man wants to attain his goals in a matter of minutes, however "you need patience and perseverance for this world. The ultimate reality is not the happiness of this world but the prosperity of the Hereafter." The next one pointed out is man's desire to be praised, however, according to Başar, man has very little share in the success he has achieved, and that is because all he has achieved is by the Will and Grace of God. He adds that "In fact, man is created to praise Allah, not to praise himself." The last two are negligence and finding excuses. Man, he says, has the tendency to avoid service to humanity out of his negligence; however, everyone seems to want a share of the payment and of the reward without having done the work for it. As for man's weakness of finding excuses, he is full of them.

⁴⁰ Hadith in *Sahih Muslim*, Book of Zakah, Number 117.

⁴¹ Qur'an, 17:11.

All these weaknesses, however, says Başar, “are essential to man’s spiritual progress,” adding that without such weaknesses there would not be struggle for self-improvement and the betterment of society; when there is no struggle, there is no progress. In conclusion he says, “Those weaknesses can be overcome because Allah does not place a burden on anyone greater than one can bear” as it is stated in the Qur’an (2:286).

Islam on Human Nature

Understanding human nature is one of the most important steps in anger management, and eruption of conflict for that matter, because without this understanding the actions of people that lead to conflict and violence cannot be explained and/or prevented. The Qur’an in this case, which primarily concerns itself with guiding people “to right beliefs and righteous conduct,” among other things “provides valuable insights about man and his nature” and also “the inner nature of man – the social, moral and spiritual aspects –that forms the central theme of the Qur’anic discourse about man” (Ansari, 1992, p.1).⁴²

According to the teachings of Islam, human beings are not created inherently sinful. In fact both the Qur’an and the hadith clearly state that every human being is born in a state of purity (Qur’an, 30:30)⁴³ recognizing the oneness of God;⁴⁴ it is later in life that such a state is often altered because of various external factors, such as family and societal influences. However, humans are also seen as equally capable of both good and evil. On this note, the Qur’an, like the previous scriptures refers to the “fall” of Adam and

⁴² Note here that in the Qur’an the term *man* (and *men* in other cases) refers to both male and female.

⁴³ See also hadith in *Sahih Muslim*, Book 33, Number 6423.

⁴⁴ The concept of the oneness of God in Islam is known as *tawhid*. As an indication of monotheism, *tawhid* is Islam’s most fundamental concept holding that God is One and Unique.

Eve, but it does not conclude from it the doctrine of original sin (Religionfacts, 2005).⁴⁵

In the Qur’anic version of the story, after their sinful act, “Adam and Eve begged God’s forgiveness (7:23) and [H]e punished them with a mortal life on earth but added, ‘from it [earth] you will be taken out at last’ (7:25).⁴⁶ Since Allah forgave the sins of the first pair, Muslims believe, all [human beings] are born in *Al-Fitra*⁴⁷, a natural state of [purity and] submission to Allah” (Religionfacts, 2005). Therefore, sincere repentance from sin, according to the teachings of Islam, returns a person to this original state of purity.⁴⁸ Concerning this, Absar Ahmad writes, “if a person does not repent or pray for forgiveness, the stains [of sin in the person’s heart] deepen and spread more and more, until the heart is sealed and eventually the man dies a spiritual death,” and the Qur’an says “God has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil... (2:7)” (as qtd. in Ansari, 1998, p. 34). On this note Ahmad adds that:

A person goes down the path of sin, his penalty gathers momentum, just as goodness brings its own capacity for greater goodness. In other words, when a person persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to listen to the voice of truth, he gradually loses the ability to perceive truth, so that finally, as it were, a

⁴⁵ It should be noted that, unlike with Christianity, the Islamic view of the fall of Adam and Eve does not put the blame on Adam or Eve alone, but instead it points out that they both slipped, and both of them acknowledged their error and then asked for forgiveness (Murata & Chittick, 1994, p. 142).

⁴⁶ As Murata and Chittick point out, in “the Islamic perspective, it would be wrong to conclude that Adam and Eve would have been better off if they had not slipped.” This is because God measures everything out, so whatever happens, it is for the good of that person, even though they might not realize that. After all, God “created Adam for the earth, not for the Garden” because even before the creation of Adam He said in the Qur’an (2:30), “I am placing in the earth a vicegerent” (Murata & Chittick, 1994, p. 143).

⁴⁷ According to the teachings of Islam, as noted by Murata and Chittick, *fitra* is the primordial nature of human beings and “The root meaning of the term is to split or to cleave, and hence it implies opening up and coming out. The verb also means to bring forth and to originate... The Koran calls God the *fatir* of the heavens and the earth, which translators usually render as ‘creator’ or ‘originator’” (p. 137).

⁴⁸ Sincere repentance in Islam is to feel remorse for the committed sin, remove the self from that sin, resolve not to commit such a sin again, and ask only God for forgiveness every time that sin is remembered.

seal is set upon his heart. But surely it is a consequence of man's choice and not an act of 'predestination.'" (as qtd. in Ansari, 1998, p. 34)

Having said this, according to Islamic theology, no human being is born sinful since everyone is given free will to choose good and evil, and therefore, having this opportunity in their hands, in the end they are all responsible for their own actions. This is clearly explained by 'Abd al 'Ati (1998) when he writes:

Man is a free agent endowed with a free will. This is the essence of his humanity and the basis of his responsibility to his Creator. Without man's relative free will life would be meaningless and God's covenant with man would be in vain. Without human free will, God would be defeating His own purpose and man would be completely incapable of bearing any responsibility. (p. 52)

Here, in other words, human beings are taken into account for the good and the evil they do in the world. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the doctrine of original sin has no basis in Islam because in Islamic theology each "person must bear his/her own burden and be responsible for his/her own actions, because no one can expiate for another's sin" ('Abd al 'Ati, 1998, p. 17). For this reason, in Islam, through true faith in God *and* doing good deeds, promoting what is praiseworthy and just, can one hope for his/her forgiveness of sins and ultimate salvation.

In his book *War and Peace in Islam*, Mirbagheri (2012) notes that in Islam human beings have been gifted with *ruh*, Divine Spirit (Qur'an 15:29)⁴⁹, however this human

⁴⁹ According to Absar Ahmad, "The term *ruh* (literarily 'spirit', 'soul' or 'breath of life') is used in the Qur'an to refer to numerous metaphysical verities like angels, revelation or divine inspiration. But quite often it connotes the inner divine human nature 'or soul' of metaphysical parlance" (as qtd. in Ansari, p. 25).

being according to the Qur'an "is made of the lowest substance, the slime"⁵⁰; this combination of a sublime quality and low substance makes for the presence of potential extremes in the unique entity of humankind" (p. 53). Because of this, twelfth century Muslim historiographer and sociologist, Ibn Khaldun, believed that "God has put both good and evil into the nature of humankind," however "[a] human can decide to elevate himself/herself to the highest status or descend to the abject sludge-like levels of existence. The choice rests with the individual." According to Mirbagheri, "This resembles Sartre's exposition on humanity in the sense that the human being is the only entity we know whose existence precedes his/her essence," and adds that:

[T]he similarity between Sartre's existentialism and Islam on human nature rests on the question of choice. The essence of human kind is subject to mutation depending on what choices the individual makes (unlike the rest of being or entities in nature) and it is this choice that contrary to historical determinism in Marxism or doctrines based on pure *kismet* (fate), empowers humanity to rise above their 'state of nature' and reshape themselves. All humans, however, as stated by Ghazzali, are born with the same nature, and differences relating to their religion are due to environmental conditions. (2012, p. 53)

Essentially, human beings by nature can be cruel and unjust but they can also be good and just depending on the circumstances and most importantly depending on their "closeness" to God, a phenomenon that will be discussed later. But what is important to point out here is that, according to the teachings of Islam, "mankind's chief failing is pride and rebellion. In their pride, humans attempt to partner themselves with God and thereby damage the unity of God. Thus pride is Islam's cardinal sin. The cardinal virtue,

⁵⁰ Qur'an, 23:12.

then, is submission or *islam*” (Religionfacts, 2005). In one instance, for example, God says in the Qur’an that He will deprive of His magnificent signs those who are arrogant and wrongfully proud in the world (7:146); and in another he says “Lo! He loveth not the proud” (16:23).⁵¹

As far as pride is concerned, especially when talking about the fall of Iblis (Satan) who caused Adam and Eve to slip (Qur’an 2:36), the texts of Islam show that pride is disliked **by** God. In fact when God asked the angels and Iblis to prostrate themselves to the first human, Adam, because of the knowledge of things God had given to him, Iblis had refused to do so and said to God, “I am better than he [Adam]. You created me from fire, and You created him from clay” (Qur’an 7:12, 38:76). And when God expelled Iblis from the Garden, Iblis asked for a respite until the Day of Judgment and God granted him his wish; and here Iblis addressed God saying, “Now, because You have led me astray, I shall surely sit in ambush from them [people] on Your straight path. Then I shall come on them from before them and from behind them, from their right hands and their left hands. You will not find most of them grateful” and God replied to Iblis saying, “Get out therefrom, despised and defeated. Those among them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all” (Qur’an 7:18). From this it can be seen that Iblis had become the enemy of human beings (Murata & Chittick, 1994, p. 140). Therefore, the motivation of Iblis is inciting pride, arrogance, anger and envy in people, and he himself “is proud because of his fiery nature, he is angry at God for asking him to prostrate himself before a handful of clay. He is envious of Adam because God has shown him a special favor” (p. 140). Pride,

⁵¹ As translated by M. Pickthal.

in this case, is usually expressed through feelings of superiority over others⁵²: arrogance, envy, and so on, which all in turn lead to anger and other harmful emotions for both the oppressed and the oppressor. Such feelings will inevitably corrupt the heart, and might even lead it to transgression, violence and destruction (p. 141).

Like many religious traditions, including Buddhism among others, Islam also instructs its followers to live a certain way of life, one of discipline. According to the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all of humanity, and only by following the Prophet's example and his teachings can a Muslim live a happy and healthy life, as an injunction indicates, "Verily in the Messenger of Allah you have the best example for him who looks unto Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much" (Qur'an, 33:21). When it comes to dealing with daily issues of life, including handling anger, as one of the leading causes for conflict and violence, a Muslim finds no refuge but to surrender to God and ask for guidance as the Prophet did fourteen hundred years ago (Yusuf, 2004, pp. 101-114).

At least for the last fifty years, however, Muslims around the world have been portrayed as an angry people, too often resorting to acts of violence, which in fact has been the case in some Muslim countries who have been trying to get rid of colonial and imperialist influences through nationalist movements. But this idea of "inherent Muslim anger," or as Barnard Lewis once called it "the Muslim rage," is absurd, unfair and unacceptable because it lumps Muslims from all corners of the world into one single category, as if 1.5 billion people think the same way, and ignores the true dynamics and the plurality of the Muslim world (Said, 2001). This is dangerous propaganda to play

⁵² Nationalism is one form of such pride and feeling of superiority over others.

with because it labels any Muslim as an angry “Islamic fundamentalist.” In reality the sources of Islam, the Qur’an and the hadith, teach and nurture quite the contrary; and that is what we will attempt to explore in this section.

The State of the Heart

Unlike as is the case with many Western philosophies in which the brain and the mind are viewed as the center of beings, in the classical Muslim tradition it is the heart that is seen as the center of every human being. And the heart is said to house the “spiritual heart” or the soul (Yusuf, 2004, p. 1). In one occasion, Prophet Muhammad is recorded as having said, “Surely there is in the body a small piece of flesh; if it is good, the whole body is good, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted, and that is surely the heart” (Al-Bukhari, Book 2, Number 49). The Qur’an speaks of the human heart on many occasions. At times, it points out that some people have diseased hearts, and it indicates that the purification of the heart can be achieved only through turning to God and the remembrance of Him, whether through prayer, supplication or simply contemplation. In one injunction the Qur’an says, “Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah; for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction” (13:28). According to Hamza Yusuf (2004), when God is not remembered, “the heart falls into a state of agitation and turmoil. In this state the heart becomes vulnerable to disease because it is undernourished and cut off” from its Creator who gives it life and without this connection the spiritual heart dies (p. 6). As a result, people “with such a condition have ‘eyes with which they do not see, ears with which they do not hear’” says the Qur’an (7:179) (as qtd. in Ansari, 1998, p. 6). Zafar Ansari (1998) says on this point that perceptual processes like seeing and hearing “can be

reduced to mere sensations. They can become stimulations without meaning, because the *qalb* [heart] is blocked or sealed.⁵³ He also adds that:

According to the Qur'anic statements, the blocking of the cognitive processes take place under special circumstances; when a person is faced with a situation of conflict and resorts to a special type of defence mechanism in which he rationalizes actions that are emotionally impelled. Such a person starts with a state of conflict between what his moral judgment demands, and what is his need for immediate, ultimate and unjustified gratifications. His belief and his practice become completely at variance. Such people begin with a conflict between their conscience and their overt behaviour. But behaviour is a public commitment, and soon they are taken over by the need to resolve this conflict, and to justify their behaviour. (Ansari, pp. 6-7)

Here Ansari notes that these people whose hearts are blocked are weakened in their conscience, therefore they cannot continue to keep their belief and “have to resolve this situation by believing in what they are practicing, rather than the other way around.” This, Ansari says, is a situation when the belief of the person is “so subdued that it completely loses all practical meaning or relevance for life” (p. 7). On this note, the hadith of the Prophet has explained that if the heart of a person is good or healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if the heart is unhealthy or corrupt, then the whole body becomes unhealthy or corrupt.⁵⁴ In such a case, when the heart is full of stains from the sin that the person has committed, the Prophet has advised that if the person repents and seeks forgiveness from Allah, and then such a heart becomes spotless, free of stain from all sin (Ansari, 1998, p. 7).⁵⁵

⁵³ *Qalb*, according to Ansari (1998), refers to the heart and “is presumably the opening agency of psyche which transforms the spiritual potentiality into actuality.” (p. 6).

⁵⁴ Hadith in al-Bukhari.

⁵⁵ Hadith in Ibn Majah.

According to the teachings of Islam, if people examine their trials and tribulations, including excessive anger, hatred, fighting, injustice, etc., they will find that these are all rooted in the human heart, and that is because those hearts are diseased for the simple reason that they have forgotten their Creator. If people want to make this world a safer and better place, they have to change their inward state first, and this is where the concept of *jihad* comes in, the most misunderstood term of Islam, which essentially means struggle to conquer the evil within the self first and then try to change or improve the situation around oneself (Smith-Christopher, 2007). Through this inner-struggle a Muslim is advised to first change himself or herself in order to make positive change in the world we live in.

When wrongdoing is perpetrated, which usually occurs as a result of anger and frustration, Muslims are commanded to look at the example of Prophet Muhammad and learn how he dealt with such emotions in certain situations. In the first years of his prophethood, Prophet Muhammad was being oppressed daily by the people of his own tribe but he dealt with his oppressors patiently because those who were treating him and his followers harshly were a people that the Qur'an referred to as ones whose hearts were diseased. And because of the Prophet's patience, within a decade his former enemies became his devout followers. Had the Prophet dealt harshly with the Makkans, they would have run from him and not towards him (Armstrong, 1992, pp. 243-246).

In the aftermath of the taking of Makkah, as mentioned previously, the Prophet forgave all of his former oppressors and admitted them into the brotherhood of the Muslim community. According to Yusuf (2004), this is the difference between someone whose heart is pure and someone whose heart is corrupt and diseased: "Impure people

oppress, and the pure-hearted not only forgive their oppressors, but even elevate them in status...” and this really is the true spirit of Islam (Yusuf, 2004, p. 101).⁵⁶

According to the teachings of Islam, the diseases of the heart are many, but among the diseases that classical scholars of Islam, like Imam al-Mawlid in his book *Purification of the Heart*, have listed are envy, vanity, fraud, iniquity, miserliness, wantonness, hatred, and many more, including anger that will be discussed more in the following paragraphs. It is because of these diseases that people often fight and go to war with each other (Yusuf, 2004, p. vi).

Anger and Conflict

Conflict resolvers will admit that anger is a great challenge to the process of conflict resolution; it often brings the process to a halt because the people involved struggle with it and usually suppress it, in an unhealthy way, or tend to express it in an uncontrollable manner (Runde, 2011). Therefore, in such cases, in order to resolve conflict, anger has to be taken care of first and it is never to be ignored.

Every culture has its own definition of anger and its ways of dealing with it, including Islamic tradition. In Islam, although some scholars have referred to it as a “swelling ocean” because of the swelling of hard-to-control emotions, anger is not always a bad thing: it is actually a natural human reaction to certain situations. However, the way we express and manifest anger within and around us is usually what causes concerns; when anger leads to hateful acts, for example, it becomes a serious problem (Yusuf,

⁵⁶ Abu Sufyan, for example, who was a staunch opponent of the Prophet before Islam, was the leader of the tribe of Quraysh in Makkah, and after the taking of Makkah by the Prophet in 630 C.E., Abu Sufyan was honored with a greater status by the Prophet himself; and to this day over a billion Muslims mention his name.

2004, p. 101). Harriet Lerner (2005) rightly said that the real question is how that anger is expressed in a constructive or deconstructive way! In Islam, anger is to be kept in check at all times, and if that is not done, then it can give birth to various complications among people. This is why the Prophet said that the strong man is not one who can wrestle people, but the man who controls himself when he is angry (as qrd in Yusuf, 2004, p. 112).

It is obvious from the hadith that Islam recognizes this negative side of anger and recommends Muslims to guard themselves against it. Imam Mawlud, for example, compares anger to “a swelling mass of emotion that is difficult to hold back once it is unleashed” (Yusuf, 2004, p. 101). Naturally, we know that once anger surfaces, it can easily get out of control, making a person say and do things that he/she would otherwise never even think of. In this sense, anger is indeed a swelling ocean.

When it comes to the expression of anger, even the Prophet himself told his followers, “I am a human being and I become angry like you.” According to Yusuf, anger in and of itself is not a negative emotion, but a part of human creation, “as our flesh and limbs are,” and without the feeling of anger there are many things we have today that would not have been achieved, opposing an unjust act, for example (2004, p. 102).

However, despite what is said on the negative nature of anger, this does not mean that anger cannot be controlled. Once a man asked Prophet Muhammad to give him advice, and the Prophet told him, “Do not become angry.” This man repeated the same question again and got the same reply. For the third time the man asked, and the Prophet said again, “Do not become angry.” By repeating the advice it became obvious that the Prophet wanted to stress the importance of this borderless feeling that can lead people to

destructive behavior. Muslim scholars have commented on the statement of the Prophet saying that when he said “Do not become angry” he really meant “do not allow anger to lord over oneself,” because once that occurs people can cause great damage to themselves and others around them (Yusuf, 2004, p.102).

When it comes to controlling anger, some have compared human anger to a hunting dog: “without training, it will never retrieve what its owner needs, nor will it point the person in the right direction” (2004). According to many scholars of Islam, anger is a human response that needs to be trained in order to maintain a certain balance. This does not mean that anger should be completely abolished because if that were the case then no one would react to the injustices that are done in the world today; through balanced anger tyrants and oppressors can be kept in check (Yusuf, 2004, p. 102). The same goes for hatred; it too should not always be seen as a negative thing. Hating corruption, killing, evil, stealing, and other such acts is something that should be encouraged. Nowadays, however, deconstructive anger has led to rage and hatred and has become an obstacle to the process of peace and conflict resolution (2004, p. 103).

Chapter 6:

War, Peace and Everything in Between

Peace as the Norm

Peace, as most scholars in the field would agree, is a very difficult concept to define knowing that our human civilization has paid much more attention to war than to peace. In fact peace has often been ignored by the prevailing culture of war, especially in the last century, and until very recently in western academia there was no such a thing as

a “study of peace.” Take the prominent *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for instance, which when searched online produces more than 120 entries on war and only 20 related to peace (Gettings, 2012, p. 6).

Under such circumstances, one may rightly ask as to how we should define peace. Some have said that peace is the opposite of war or the absence of war, but Johan Galtung, a peace studies pioneer, described peace as the “‘absence of personal violence’ to a much more ample definition of the ‘absence of structural violence’ or, put positively, as the existence of violence-free ‘social justice’” (as qtd in Gettings, 2012, p. 2). According to the Online Cambridge Dictionary, however, peace means “freedom from war and violence, especially when people live and work together happily without disagreements” (2011). Regarding the definition of peace, Gettings writes:

The definition of peace may be complicated, but it is a condition of life without which we would not continue to exist. As the Greek historian Thucydides put it long ago, peace brings its own ‘honours and splendours and countless other advantages, which are free from danger and would take as many words to enumerate as when we describe the evils of war.’ (p. 4)

According to Gettings (2012), a conceptual approach to peace is one which begins with its individual aspect in which peace comes from within, in other words an “inner peace” that should expand outwards towards the surrounding humanity, which is known as “outer peace” (p. 2). In the words of peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh (1992), “without peace, we cannot do anything for peace. If we cannot smile, we cannot help other people smile” (p. 80). On this note, stressing the importance of smiling and its effects on the people around us, especially with regards to spreading inner peace, Prophet Muhammad

has said that even smiling at one another is charity. Concerning this concept of inner peace, Mirbagheri (2012) notes that “This peace within also resonates peace with our Maker, peace with the Universal Wisdom, with the entire Creation and with the beauty and majesty of life in all its varieties” (p. 83).

Regarding the concept of peace in the Muslim tradition, Rachida El Diwani (2003), noted that “Islam sets up certain principles that constitute, when followed, solid ground for the achievement of peace among various peoples of the world.” And according to her, those principles include the following:

- 1) *Equality of Mankind Before God*: All human beings are equal in the sight of God. Piety and God-consciousness are the criteria on which one is judged by God, as He tells us in the *Quran*. Nothing else count[s]: color, race, material or physical advantages, etc... are not criteria for superiority when one will stand alone before God in the day of judgment. This equality is an important basis for mutual respect and understanding and consequently peace among individuals and communities.
- 2) *Justice in all Circumstances*: Meaningful peace cannot be achieved without justice. Injustice leads to wickedness and anarchy, as we can see today. The Islamic sense of justice demands that we should love for others what we love for ourselves and treat others as we would like to be treated. The *Quran* says: “*O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witness to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety*” [5:8].
- 3) *Defense Readiness*: Those who are inclined to peace become an object of attack by the wicked ones if they fail to plan for their self-defense. Islam has taken this into consideration and urged Muslims to equip themselves and to improve their capabilities in defense of peace and justice and in the wording off of oppression and injustice. Islam has however, balanced this by prohibiting aggression, hostility and wanton destruction of lives and properties.
- 4) *Peaceful Disposition to Others*: Muslims are commended to stretch the hand of friendship to others among mankind and are forbidden to open hostilities or start aggression. The way for peace should be kept open and whenever the enemy inclines toward peace, the opportunity must be seized.
- 5) *Cooperation with Others for the Good of Mankind*: Islam recognizes the need of cooperation among nations and cultures for the good of all. (El Diwani, 2003)

As far as this Islamic view of peace is concerned, peace is held in high esteem because it “was the condition of life in Paradise, the original designated residence of humankind, before it was replaced by enmity and war on earth, the place of exile for humanity after it succumbed to the temptation of defiance by Satan (Mirbagheri, 2012, p. 82). Therefore, since peace is a divine condition, in the teachings of Islam Muslims are commanded to strive for peace daily in all its aspects, such as inner peace and peace at home, in society and the world. The Arabic word *salaam*, meaning “peace,” which is used daily by Muslims to greet one another, has the same root as the word *Islam*. In this regard, knowing that Islam means submission to God, only after having submitted oneself completely to the will of God can a person achieve true peace, which is the state of Islam. As Mirbagheri (2012) points out, this peace through submission to the will of the Giver of Peace “transcends the silence of guns and engulfs a more pervasive, all-inclusive and deeper precept that permeates every level of existence.” He further adds that by this “outlook individual peace is not separated from social and political peace, and all facets of peace, including the spiritual and political, are viewed as interdependent” (pp. 82-3). Consequently, this brings us back to the concept of inner peace achieved through submission to God because “there will be no peace in the world unless the individual is at peace with himself [or herself]. Therefore, to establish a firm basis for international peace, one must first implant peace in man’s innermost conscience” (Qutb, 1977, p. 16). Without inner peace, and then peace at home and in society, there cannot be world peace. That is the purpose of Islam: to fundamentally transform the human being starting from the lowest dimension of his inward existence. The problem today, however, is that people take a few classes on Peace Studies and think that they have mastered this science and are

ready to make peace and take on the world, but peace is not something that is learned overnight, it is an experience that resonates from within to be absorbed by others around you (Qutb, 1977, pp. 16-17).

Regarding the concept of peace, in his book *Islam and Universal Peace*, Qutb (1977) notes that a general study of this comprehensive theory is required “because it is of primary concern to Islam” since:

Islam is the religion of unity in this great universe, a unity which comprises all elements, from a single particle to the most advanced species...It is the unity of all existence; inanimate, plant, animal and human. All activities in the cosmos are included and integrated in this unity...Islam finds unity in the planets when following their eternal laws as well as in souls when responding to their natural inclinations to acquire knowledge and implement justice... There is unity among all living beings. (p. 5)

Therefore, Qutb adds, “Islam begins by establishing the principle of the oneness of God as it is from Him that life issues and unto [Him] that it returns” (p. 5). In other words, knowing that there is only one God,⁵⁷ Creator of the universe, there is balance and harmony in the world, and when there is balance, there is peace.

It was in this state of balance that God created Adam and Eve from a single soul and from them descended all of humanity, says the Quran (4:1). The fact that people are different by nature, says Qutb, “is not a reason for dispute among themselves. On the contrary, it should be a reason for mutual acquaintance and cooperation,” as the Quran (49:13) calls, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may

⁵⁷ See Quran 21:22; 112:1-4, etc.

despise each other)” (Qutb, p. 8). Having reminded people that all of humanity comes from one bloodline, that of Adam and Eve, and that every individual is essentially of the same nature, the Qur’an adds that all of humanity is united under one faith too because every prophet of God called his people to the worship of the One True God (Qutb, 1977, pp. 16-18). It further reminds people that:

The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah—that which We have sent by inspiration to thee--and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein... (Qur’an, 42:13)

As a result, by establishing a common ground between people, Islam opens the doors to peace and peacemaking among people of all walks of life (Qutb, 1977, p. 18).

War as the Exception

Various encyclopedias and dictionaries define war as an armed conflict between states or nations, but war includes much more than armed conflict, and often it does not even have to be armed conflict: it can simply be a war of words, ideas and competition.

Today, however, as Brend Orend (2005) notes:

War is a brutal and ugly enterprise. Yet it remains central to human history and social change. These two facts together might seem paradoxical and inexplicable, or they might reveal deeply disturbing facets of the human character (notably, a drive for dominance over others). What is certainly true, in any event, is that war and its threat continue to be forces in our lives.

According to the teaching of Islam, peace is the rule while war is the exception.

As Malik (2008) writes, “Peace is the preamble to the principle of harmony in the

universe, the laws of life and the origin of man, while war is the result of violations of harmony such as injustice, despotism and corruption.” Islam in this case strives to eliminate all reasons that commonly incite war and abolish “all wars for unjust gain and oppression” (p. 21). Having said this, a community, not a person, in accordance with Shariah has to have a strong reason to argue for war because war is not to be considered an enterprise but a serious matter that should be avoided by any means. This is an issue that will be discussed later on.

Islam, like many other religions, “neither supports nor requires illegitimate violence” and war, and the Qur’an simply does not condone or advocate any kind of violence (Esposito, 2002, p. 119). However, as Esposito points out “Islam does permit, indeed at times requires, Muslims to defend themselves and their families, religion, and community from aggression” as Surah 2, verse 190 indicates, but even this does not mean that such a command is a license for violent aggression and killing (p. 119).

The Qur’anic term used “most frequently to indicate war ... is ‘fighting,’ although the Arabic [word] *harb*, ‘war,’ is also found.” However, the term itself, according to Margaret Pettygrove (2007):

introduces ambiguity as to whether or not ‘fight’ means the use of violence. The linguistic ambiguity of the term ‘fight’ further emphasizes the potential for political and contextual interpretation of the Qur’anic position on the morality of war. Not only will each society unconsciously interpret ‘fighting’ in a slightly different way, but the term is flexible enough to allow a certain amount of intentional interpretation to fit the needs of a given situation. Words are always defined in a cultural context, and their meaning can change relatively easily. Reading the Qur’an through a contemporary lens can lead to a reading of the word ‘fight’ according to contemporary notions of war. (p. 7)

At any rate, as can be seen above, language evolves, and what may mean one thing today might come to mean quite another thing centuries from now depending on the context and the interpretation of a word. Qur'anic and hadith language, like any other ancient texts, are not immune to this ambiguity, but this is a point that is often ignored by Islamophobes when trying to make a case of their own in order to attack the beliefs of Muslims (Pettygrove, 2007, pp. 6-8).

Like any scripture, says Esposito, "Islamic sacred texts must be read within the social and political context in which they were revealed" (2002, p. 119). It is not surprising therefore that scriptures like the Qur'an, the Old and the New Testament, to name a few, speak of fighting and war. The world in which these early communities emerged was a rough one. As far as the first Muslim community is concerned, the Arabian society in which they were born was very war-like, and people were ready to fight for the slightest "deviation" to the tribal norms. Additionally, we have to keep in mind that Arabia itself was surrounded by the two warring superpowers of the time, the Byzantines and the Persians, and as a result, fighting was the only way to survive in such conditions (Esposito, 2002, pp. 119).

Modern pacifists and anti-war movements, however, often reject any justification for any kind of fighting and war. They, frequently assert the immorality of war under all conditions, rejecting categorically the notion of a 'just war.' However, judgments about the moral status of war within the framework of Islamic law begin with the assumption that the use of force is allowable if necessitated by a given situation. (Pettygrove, 2007, p. 3)

Regarding this "given situation," some writers, as Abu-Nimer (2000) mentions, have

made the argument that Islam is a war-driven religion, that violence “is an integral part of Islamic religion and tradition,” and that pacifism or nonviolence are foreign concepts to Islam (p. 221). Additionally, many of these writers have been “obsessed” with the principle of *jihad*, trying to make the case that this concept is what Muslims employ to settle their internal and external differences (p. 221).

The Question of Jihad

The term *jihad*, which for many has become synonymous with “holy war,” is often wrongfully regarded as fighting, violence and terrorism. On this note, an important fact to point out is that the term “holy war” itself does not even exist in the Qur’an or hadith collections.⁵⁸ In traditional Muslim literature, however, the term *jihad* refers to spiritual warfare, meaning a struggle within (Johnson & Kelsay, 1990). But nowadays that is certainly not the way it is defined by many, Muslim and non-Muslim. Amir Ali (2011) explains the term, saying:

In the linguistic sense, the Arabic word “jihad” means struggling or striving and applies to any effort exerted by anyone. In this sense, a student struggles and strives to get an education and pass course work; an employee strives to fulfill his/her job and maintain good relations with his/her employer; a politician strives to maintain or increase his popularity with his constituents and so on.

Very often, unfortunately, the term is translated as “holy war” even by some Muslim scholars due to external influences. Others, with regards to war and *jihad* studies, have attempted to make the case that Islam in a unique way tries to find “justification of

⁵⁸ According to Amir Ali (2011), “If we translate the words ‘holy war’ back into Arabic, we find ‘harbun muqaddasatu,’ or for ‘the holy war,’ ‘al-harbu al-muqaddasatu’ which is not found in the early sources of Islam.”

war and violence as the primary means of settlement of conflicts” turning the concept of *jihad* into an automatic justification of war (Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 221). Amir Ali (2011), however, writes that the term *jihad* is not exclusive to Muslims because everyone strives for something in order to achieve a goal. On this note, Ali lists several different aspects of *jihad* that are found in the Qur’an and hadith: 1) Recognizing the Creator and loving Him the most: this can be a struggle for those who might have a hard time putting Allah over their loved one, their wealth and ambitions. 2) Staying steadfastly on the straight path: this is a challenge for those who are persecuted or pressured by others, even their families, to leave Islam. In such cases in which a Muslim is oppressed, he/she is advised to migrate to a more peaceful and tolerant place, as did Prophet Muhammad during the *hijrah*, his migration from Makkah to Madinah.

On this point, troubled by the present-day distortions of the term *jihad*, Tariq Ramadan (2001) questions:

How is it ...that one of the most fundamental notions of Islam has itself come to express the most somber traits? How can a concept, which is loaded with the most intense spirituality, become the most negative symbol of religious expression? The reading of events of recent history certainly has its share of the blame, but the distortion goes far back to the advanced date of the Middle Ages. The understanding of certain Islamic notions was from very early on confined to an exercise of pure comparison. There were crusades and there were also Muslim expansions; there were holy crusades and, thus, there were also “holy wars”, and the famous *jihad*. (p. 59)

Ramadan states that Muslims “must go back to the source of this notion and try to better understand its spiritual and dynamic scope,” and that is because *jihad* is “the most fulfilled expression of a faith which seeks to express balance and harmony” (p. 60). With

regards to conflict, however, especially inward conflict, Ramadan says that it is properly human; therefore humans struggle daily against these inward negative forces that try to manifest themselves in ways that might not be constructive, and as a result this inward effort is the most appropriate translation of the word *jihad* (2001, p. 61). Here Ramadan adds that this is not about reducing “jihad to a personal dimension...but rather returning to its immediate reality. Jihad is to man’s humanity what instinct is to an animal’s behaviour” (p. 61). Nasr elaborates on such an idea when he says:

it is necessary to remember that Islam bases itself upon the idea of establishing equilibrium within the being of man as well as in the human society where he functions and fulfills the goals of his earthly life. This equilibrium, which is the terrestrial reflection of Divine Justice and the necessary condition for peace in the human domain, is the basis upon which the soul takes its flight toward that peace. (as qtd. in Chittick, 2007, p. 43)

As to how a westerner can relate to the term *jihad*, Nasr (2002) makes the excellent point that the term used to mean:

any effort considered worthy, much like “crusade” in its general sense in English and not in particular reference to the religious wars carried out by Western Christianity against both Muslims and Jews in Palestine in the Middle Ages. In the same way that in English one says that such and such organization is carrying out a crusade to eradicate poverty or disease, in Islamic languages one can say that this or that group or government agency is carrying out a jihad to, let us say, build houses for the poor. (p. 257)

Essentially, the term is so flexible that one can use it for any practical purpose, not just in particular reference to war or conflict, even though such a term, just like the term crusade has been used in the West because of the medieval Crusades, has been used by some

Muslims to call their battles *jihad* (p. 257).

Additionally, according to Gulen (2000), there are two aspects of *jihad*: the greater jihad, which is fighting to overcome internal desires and evil inclinations, and the lesser jihad, which is encouraging others to achieve the same objectives (p. 198). Such objectives can be educating one's family, contributing to society, improving the health system, eradicating poverty, and going as far as fighting to defend one's family, property, and country, all done in order to please God, not people. From this it can be seen that people can easily take advantage of the flexibility of the term to justify war and bloodshed, which has become the case in the last two decades with many radical groups (Gulen, 2000, pp. 198-199).

As for the present-day view of the concept of *jihad* as a "holy war" it has its roots in Afghanistan with the Soviet occupation era. According to Mirbagheri (2012),

It was there and then when American policy makers tried to combat the Soviet invasion by fanning the flames of Muslim zealots and offering three billion dollars in aid. The issue of jihad in Islam had long been forgotten until it was given a new lease of life in Afghanistan. (p. 22)

According to an article in *The Economist*, "the notion of jihad, or holy war, had almost ceased to exist in the Muslim world after the tenth century until it was revived, with American encouragement, to fire a pan-Islamic movement after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979" (as qtd. in Mirbagheri 2012, 24). Though this is a topic beyond the scope of this thesis, what is important to mention here, is that the term *jihad*, most often referred to as "holy war," can and does pertain as much to non-violent and peaceful

“exertion,” as it pertains to the concept of self-defense, as it is seen in the Qur’an and the hadith (Pettygrove, 2007, p. 7). The question of non-violence in Islam, however, will be addressed later under the Discussion session.

Chapter 7:

Ethics of War and Peace

Without a doubt, the ethics of peace and war is one of the central ethical issues in international relations today, and a challenge to every human being for that matter (Dower, 2009, p. 2). To understand this concept I have found it necessary to look outside of the acceptable conventions of ethics in order to give the reader a more universal picture of this complex phenomenon. For this matter of the ethics of war and peace, the following section is in somewhat of two parts: the first part deals with the commonly known Western code of ethics, and the second part introduces the virtually unknown Islamic ethics.

The question of ethics is also a question of challenge to every human being, with regards to defining it and most importantly applying it and that is because of the nature of ethics. To understand the ethics of peace and war, one first needs to understand the ambiguous nature of ethics itself. Many people, for example, “tend to equate ethics with their feelings. But being ethical is clearly not a matter of following one’s feelings. A person following his or her feelings may recoil from doing what is right” (Andre & Velasquez, 1987). Others tend to confuse ethics with morals, and the distinction here is, as defined by Siddiqui (1997), a moral is something that is “commonly felt and done,” as opposed to ethics which is something “appropriate and rational” (p. 423). In other words,

moral is what feels to be right or wrong, and ethics is what is deemed acceptable through rational thought.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *ethic* or *ethics* is the “discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation,” it is a “set of moral principles: a theory or system of moral values” (2012). Here, one analytical reaction often is “good and bad according to whose standards?” This is a question that is not raised often enough in academia, especially in the West where Western values and its code of ethics is forced on other people who may not share the same values, as is the case today with some U.S. policies in the Middle East, for instance. As the research of Pitta, Fung and Isberg (1999) shows, what is ethical in one culture may not be the case in other cultures.

Additionally, many associate ethics with religion. Even though most world religions put a great emphasis on ethics, ethics itself cannot be confined to religion and its adherents alone. On this note, Andre and Velasquez (1987) wrote, “ethics applies as much to the behavior of the atheist as to that of the saint. [However,] Religion can set high ethical standards and can provide intense motivations for ethical behavior.”

Moreover, being ethical is not the same as following the law, contrary to the belief of some. Laws often incorporate ethical standards but can also deviate from what is ethical. For example, the laws of the United States until very late in history, until 1865, ruled in favor of the practice of slavery even though to the standards of many that was and is an unethical act. Along the same line, being ethical is also not the same as following society’s norms even if most of the society follows them and believes a certain behavior to be ethically acceptable. Nazi Germany is a good example of this, where

almost the entire society became ethically and morally corrupt by blindly following “the norm” (Andre & Velasquez, 1987).

According to an article published at Santa Clara University, Western ethics is rightly referred to as:

[W]ell based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics...refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud [among other things]. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well founded reasons. (Andre & Velasquez, 1987)

The authors of the aforementioned article go on to say that ethics in actuality refers to the study and the development of one’s ethical standards of life. Therefore, it is necessary to “continuously examine one’s standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded,” as is the effort of “striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based” (Andre & Velasquez, 1987). In other words, ethics is not a static concept but one that is continuously developing depending on the time and place where its code is applied.

A Glimpse at the Western Perspective on the Ethics of War and Peace

Although the question of ethics of war and peace is an intricate one, there have been attempts by various writers throughout the ages to explain this topic, the oldest writer we know of being Aristotle. Military ethics, for example, is intended to guide members of different armed groups to act according to the specific requirements of

combat. As part of military ethics, Just War Theory is often seen as the general rule in modern warfare; however, individual countries have their own specific ways of upholding the principals of this theory. On this note, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, although there are various traditions of thought concerning this topic, there are three traditions that dominate the ethics of war and peace today: Realism, Pacifism, and Just War Theory (JWT). Even though these three, known as “the big three,” are more or less all Western traditions, there are radical differences between them (Orend, 2000).

The Big Three

Essentially, the core proposition of JWT is that sometimes states and/or nations can claim moral justifications for using armed force against another state or another group of people (See Appendix I). According to those who hold on to these values, war sometimes is morally right, and when that is the case it is appropriate to use violence. According to this logic, the participation of the Allies in WWII, for example, was a definitive example of states participating in a just and good war, as it is often referred to by the “victors” of that war as “the moral war.” Traditional Western scholars, however, have divided the theory into three meaningful parts: “1) *jus ad bellum*, which concerns the justice of resorting to war in the first place; 2) *jus in bello*, which concerns the justice of conduct within war, after it has begun; and 3) *jus post bellum*, which concerns the justice of peace agreements and the termination phase of war” (Orend, 2000).

On the other hand, Realism, deeply rooted in Darwinism, expresses a “profound skepticism about the application of moral concepts, such as justice, to the key problems

of foreign policy.” According to realists, power and national security motivate states during wartime to compete for dominance, victory and destruction of the rival state or states, and therefore moral appeals are strictly wishful thinking and they should not get in the way. They claim that in a world of competition, where only the strong and the fittest are meant to survive, talk of moral warfare is nonsense because ethics has nothing to do with “the rough-and-tumble world of global politics,” and a country should tend to its own interests and not to moral ideals. In the words of Brent Orend (2000):

Morality is a luxury states can’t afford, for they inhabit a violent international arena, and they’ve got to be able to get in that game and win, if they are to serve and protect their citizens in an effective way over time. Morality is simply not on the radar screen for states, given their defensive function and the brutal environment in which they subsist.

Unlike as is the case with Just War theorists and realists, for pacifists moral concepts “can indeed be applied fruitfully to international affairs” (Orend, 2000). According to pacifists, it makes no sense “to ask whether a war is just” and they argue that war should not be undertaken at all. Where JWT “is *sometimes* permissive with regard to war, Pacifism is *always* prohibitive” (Orend, 2000). For pacifists, war is always wrong no matter what and there is always a better resolution than fighting. According to Gettings (2012), however, Pacifism “may be regarded as a sort of ‘practical pacifism’ which opposes war not so much out of morality as on the grounds that it is too destructive ever to be justified rationally” (p. 4). The common critique against Pacifism is that it fails to use any kind of force to prevent further acts of violence, such as war and genocide.

Ethics in Islam

Before exploring the question of ethics, it should be noted that, as far as Islam is concerned, the concept of morality should be understood first, morality meaning as an unchanging code of conduct revealed by God in His books given to humanity through His Prophets, who actually taught and lived that message.⁵⁹ One such prophet, as a point in case, was Muhammad, called in the Qur'an as the one sent to perfect human morals. Islam, for Muslims being a comprehensive way of life, has a striking moral system in "that it not only defines morality, but also guides the human race in how to achieve it, at both an individual as well as a collective level" (WhyIslam, 2011).

In the teachings of Islam, continuous awareness of God and all of His promises to humanity enables people to "be moral in conduct and sincere in intention" at all times, whether one is dealing with family, making a transaction at the market place or dealing with the enemy on the battlefield (WhyIslam, 2011). In fact the Qur'an says:

Say: the things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to Allah, for which He hath given no authority; and saying things about Allah of which ye have no knowledge. (Qur'an 7:33)

Additionally, as recorded in a hadith, the Prophet said:

My Sustainer has given me nine commands: to remain conscious of God, whether in private or in public; to speak justly, whether angry or pleased; to show

⁵⁹ According to WhyIslam (2012) editors, "The word 'morality' comes from the Latin word *moralitas* meaning 'manner, character, and proper behavior.' Morality generally refers to a code of conduct, that an individual, group or society hold as authoritative, in distinguishing right from wrong. Such an ideal code of conduct is often espoused in preference to other alternatives."

moderation both when poor and when rich, to reunite friendship with those who have broken off with me; to give to him who refuses me; that my silence should be occupied with thought; that my looking should be an admonition; and that I should command what is right. (WhyIslam, 2011)

It is this prophetic morality that Muslims regard as overriding any other forms of morality, and it is that moral form that Muslims are advised to adopt in their lives.⁶⁰ As outlined by Musharraf Hussain (2009), “Morality is concerned with promoting peace and harmony between people and avoiding harm to others.” Therefore, “[w]ithout [Divine] guidance and moral teachings [from examples like Prophet Muhammad], people will not change. They will be caught up in the mesh of their selfish desires, and become self-centered,” the results of which are greed, violence, conflict and war (p. 2).

Reflecting on the work of al-Ghazali, a late ninth-century Muslim theologian, Hussain (2009) writes that, “Neither human reason nor nature can provide in themselves foundations for morality,” and adds that, “Human selfishness cannot be the basis of morality since humanity is blinded by self-interest and desire.” In order to get out of that cycle of selfishness, “[h]umanity must seek to become selfless.” According to Hussain, this is where religion comes in “since it acknowledges the source of grace and power outside of humanity that can provide solid foundation for morality.” Religion, he says, provides that basis by guaranteeing Divine reward in this world and the Hereafter (pp. 10-11). It is the philosophers, says Hussain, religious or otherwise, who study morality as well, and this study is called ethics.

As far as this study is concerned, in an article Ataullah Siddiqui (1997) points out

⁶⁰ Imam al-Ghazali defined morality as “a firmly established condition of the heart, from which acts proceed easily without any need for thinking” (Hussain, p. 1).

that unfortunately there is no such separate discipline as “Islamic ethics” today. This is not to say that there are no ethics in Islam, but unlike in some other religious traditions, a distinctive discipline that deals with Islamic ethics is non-existent. However, he adds that “[a] huge amount of material on ethics is scattered throughout the pages of *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis), *Kalam* (scholastic theology) and *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) as well as in the work of *Sufis* (mystics).” But nowadays “[t]here is a growing realisation that Muslims should give due attention to this subject so that it can be studied as a discipline” (p. 423).

It is known that philosophical ethics draws its resources of this discipline from human reason and human experiences. Religious traditions, on the other hand, for the most part draw their ethics from revelation and divine guidance, as is the case with Islam. In any situation, both of these distinctive paths are faced with the same questions of ethics and morality: what is good and what is bad; what values should be pursued and “how should society go about making ethical decisions posed by new challenges” (modern warfare being one of them (Siddiqui 1997, p. 423).

Ethics of War and Peace Based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah

Muslims worldwide agree that the foundation of Islamic ethics is the Qur’an and Sunnah, as well as the interpretations of scholars made to meet the needs of Muslims whatever time and place in which they may be. But there is also a great deal of ethics that comes from local customs from different parts of the Muslim world. However, according to Ernest (2003), the “foundation for ethical obligation in the Qur’an is traced to the covenant established between God and humanity at the beginning of Creation” when God told humanity the right and wrong (as explained in Islamic theology), and whoever followed that path accepted the covenant, and whoever did not rebelled against God.

“This primordial scene becomes the charter for ethics, as an acknowledgement of the divine authority, and for spirituality, a testimony to the intimate relationship between God and humanity” (pp. 110-111). Such acknowledgement of divine authority is also the case as far as war and peace are concerned in the Muslim tradition.

In Islam, the question of ethics is intertwined with the concept of the Divine, and that means that being God-conscious means being ethical. In fact, the driving force in ensuring and applying ethics is based on the Qur’anic notion that every human being is called by their Creator to “command good and forbid evil” in every aspect of life (Qur’an, 3:104; 3:120). According to the teachings of Islam, the primary duty of human beings is to submit to the will of God, obey Him, be just and serve other human beings, because human beings are referred to in the Qur’an as the care-takers or vicegerents of God on earth. Therefore, it is the moral duty of every human being, to be an ethical person when dealing with other people, and this being a divine command, it has to be taken very seriously. In so doing, those who accept this covenant are bound to live an ethical life; whether they do so or not is a different question altogether. In the words of ‘Abd al ‘Ati (2008), a Muslim has to guard his external and internal

behavior and his manifest deeds, his words and his thoughts, his feelings and intentions...his role is to champion what is right and fight what is wrong, seek what is true and abandon what is false, cherish what is beautiful and wholesome and avoid what is indecent. Truth and virtue are his goals... In his view, arrogance and vanity, harshness and indifference, are distasteful, offensive, and displeasing to God. (p.41)

What is generally characterized as Islamic ethics involves four core aspects

according to the Qur'an and hadith: *Iman*, *Islam*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*. To start with, *Iman* refers to the idea of belief, or faith in God, and one who does not profess this belief in the Divine and its laws is neither at peace with him/herself nor with society because belief itself is an act of the heart. Therefore, if there is no peace of the heart, there cannot be true internal or external peace for that person. Secondly, *Islam* means “to be at peace” or “to be safe” and one who accepts Islam means he/she surrenders oneself to God. In other words, only by surrendering the self to the Creator of peace can one be at peace. As a result the “inner conviction of *Iman* and the practice of Islam are intertwined in that faith and righteous conduct go hand in hand” (Siddiqui 1997, pp. 423-425).

As for *Taqwa*, it means being God-conscious, and it also refers to “preserving” or “protecting” oneself from possible danger. As Siddiqui (1997) says, the Qur'an uses this concept to “encourage human beings to be vigilant against moral peril” and avoid things which are prohibited in Islam, one of them being taking a human life. This avoidance of course means preservation of peace and its manifestation by the person who has *Taqwa*. The concept of *Ihsan*, however, is the pinnacle of Islamic ethics. It means something “proper” or “fitting” and its essence is love of God. “An act performed with a sense of duty is one thing, the same act performed with a sense of love is another. *Ihsan* represents the latter, serving as the inspiration for Muslim piety” (Siddiqui 1997, pp. 423-425). In other words, when a deed is done for the love and the sake of God alone, such an act embodies the highest level of morals and ethics. For instance, when God commands Muslims to stay away from harmful behavior, and the person does it because such a command is coming from the Divine, he/she does it not out of personal interest but only out of love and for the sake of God.

Looking at the Qur'an and the Sunnah, one cannot help but notice countless references to ethics and morals. In fact, Prophet Muhammad, when teaching Islam said, "I have been sent to perfect the best of morals" and ethics, for that matter. As for the Qur'an, it is not an exaggeration to say that it is a book of morals and ethics because one of its names is *Furkan*, meaning the criterion that distinguishes right from wrong. Therefore, anything that contradicts the Qur'an and the Sunnah is not from Islam.

As far as right and wrong in the Qur'an are concerned, as a means of advising Muslims, a verse states, "the believing men and the believing women...are guardians of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger; (as for) these, Allah will show mercy to them; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise" (Quran, 9:71). In another injunction the Qur'an advises Muslims to "keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage" (31: 17). Another verse of this kind serves as a reminder to people to hold on to the ethics set by God saying, "Whoever joins himself (to another) in a good cause shall have a share of it, and whoever joins himself (to another) in an evil cause shall have the responsibility of it, and Allah controls all things" (4:89). The next verse, however, tells that not everyone will follow these instructions but those who do follow them are to be the successful ones in this life and the hereafter: "And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful" (3:104).

Islamic Ethics of War and Peace and the Big Three

As stated earlier, the question of ethics is also a question of challenge to every human being; this question becomes even more challenging when it comes to war and

peace. Nigel Dower (2009) points out that the ethical challenges of war that confront us now in the modern world may often seem recent but in fact “they arise out of a tradition of thinking about the ethics of war that goes back for many centuries” and such a tradition has been called Just War Theory. This theory, as mentioned earlier, “[p]rovides a sophisticated account of the circumstances in which it is morally right to go to war,” and also outlines behavior that is considered moral or immoral during war, for example, a soldier “may not directly attack non-combatants” (p. 2).

Before extrapolating on the Just War Theory, however, first we need to look into the other two traditions and how they relate/are compatible or incompatible with Islam. Realism, from whatever angle one looks at it, is unacceptable in Islam. That is because it simply ignores the most fundamental rules of war, which involve the protection of innocent lives. First and foremost, in Islam such a state of disregard for human life has been strictly forbidden since the time of Prophet Muhammad. In fact Muslims since the beginning of Islam have been deeply preoccupied during times of conflict with issues like treatment of foreign diplomats, prisoners of war, and refugees; proper conduct on the battle field; protection of civilians, including women, children and elders; and the prohibition of poisonous weapons and property destruction in enemy territories (Weeramantry, 1997, p. 136).

Secondly, in addition to the points made earlier with regards to Realism, Muslims do not believe that states should go to war for the reason of conquering and dominating other states for their own interests. And thirdly, when Realism calls for the destruction of the other, the losers of the war in this case, Islam forbids this destruction: it in fact teaches people to deal with the enemy nobly even on the battle field. Although Islam is

against war, if there is war ahead, the enemy has to be pushed back as much as possible but not completely annihilated just because the victors have the power to do so (Al-Qahtani, 2007, pp. 74-84). Regarding these sensitive issues, a tradition regarding Abu Bakr⁶¹ sums up this point clearly when he addressed the Muslim armies under his command:

Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone. (BBC, 2009)

In one instance during a war, the Prophet saw the corpse of a woman lying on the ground and said, “‘She was not fighting. How then she came to be killed?’ Thus non-combatants are guaranteed security of life even if their state is at war with an Islamic state” (ICNA, 2011). Furthermore, according to Maududi (1976), the Prophet gave the Muslims specific instructions on how to treat combatants. He forbade torture, the attack of wounded enemy soldiers, the slaying of prisoners of war, the mutilation of the bodies of the enemy, and destruction in the enemy's country. The Prophet also advised Muslims on the sanctity of the property of the enemy, saying that Muslims have been:

prohibited from taking anything from the general public of a conquered country without paying for it. If in a war the Muslim army occupies an area of the enemy country, and is encamped there, it does not have the right to use the things belonging to the people without their consent. If they need anything, they should purchase it from the local population or should obtain permission from the owners. (Maududi, 1976, p. 24)

⁶¹ The first successor of Prophet Muhammad.

As opposed to this Islamic view, for the realists morality does not matter because, as they believe, there is no relation between morality and warfare. The Muslim response here, of course, is that morality matters and that even during wartime, if war is unavoidable, morals should not be put aside.⁶² As Maryann Love (2002) pointed out, when discussing ethics in the modern world, the ends do not justify the means, adding that such a mentality is wrong because morality matters even when fighting enemies (p. 9). Islam teaches just that: the ends do not justify the means in any way, and the means have to be appropriate in order to expect any kind of acceptable results.

As for Pacifism, as Brown (2006) has shown it is not foreign or incompatible with Islam, one reason being that Islamic ethics of war and peace initially began of a pacifist nature. That is because the early Muslims, although oppressed by their enemies in Makkah, were completely forbidden to fight for the first 13 years of Islam. It was in Madinah when the Qur'anic verse was revealed which gave the Muslims permission to fight in self-defense only (22: 39-40). However, even after this divine command was given to them, Muslims were always reminded that war was the last resort and that they should always choose peace over war. In this regard, Islam closely relates to the theory of Pacifism. However, it is permissible to fight according to the teachings of Islam in cases when corruption, oppression, violence and killing prevails in a society, *if* every other means have been tested and have failed. This is because if the vicious cycle of oppression and killing is continuous then the victims will be annihilated, therefore it becomes the moral duty of those who have the means to stand against injustice and oppression to do so

⁶² The position of Thomas Friedman that America has to fight terrorists as if there were no rules is simply against the Islamic principles of war.

even if it means through fighting (ICNA, 2012). It is in this regard that Islam differs from the theory of Pacifism.

Just War Theory (JWT) and the Islamic Perspective

Unlike Realism, JWT has a lot more in common with the Islamic tradition, but there are also notable distinctions between the two and the following are some examples. As far as *Jus ad bellum* is concerned, in which a just cause needs to be found in order to go to war, sometimes nations take the opportunity of such a broad definition of “just” in the theory and easily find reasons aligned with their own interests to go to war against another state. In Islam, such an act is prohibited, because a state must not go to war to exercise its military might and power in a country with the excuse of defending and liberating an oppressed people, as was the case with the U.S. invasion of Iraq (ICNA, 2012). As for comparative justice that concerns *Jus ad bellum*, Khalid Baig (2001) writes that “Justice does require retribution and Islam does call for, ‘an eye for an eye.’ But it does not mean an innocent eye for an innocent eye; it means the eye of the perpetrator for the eye of the victim,” again, only if the victim does not forgive the oppressor. As for the right intention of JWT, it is a command in Islam that with everything that is done or is to be done, the person completing the actions has to have the right intention. Therefore, if the intention of the intervening council is to stop the suffering of a people, that should be the focus of the campaign throughout that mission (ICNA, 2012).

Regarding *Jus in bello*, many of the points in both traditions, JWT and the Islamic perspective, are very similar. In Islam, however, the principle of distinction should be made and civilians are not to be harmed in any way; if the military of another state is the target, it should be the only target for violence in order to limit excessive destruction.

Additionally, it is wrongful to torture or mistreat any prisoners of war, and also the military is not to use evil means to achieve its goals like rape, the use of weapons that cannot be controlled (destroying more than the intended target), and so on, as was the case in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among other places (Orend 2000).⁶³

As far as the Islamic perspective on just war is concerned, Margaret Pettygrove (2007) points out that Muslim scholars:

[t]hrough exegesis of the Qur'an, in conjunction with the *hadith* and Sunnah... have sought to establish the development of Islamic just war theories as a reaction to community practice. Islamic interpretations of the moral status of war were historically, as they are currently, dependent on perceptions of the activities of early Islamic society. (p. 5)

In other words, these war theories were heavily influenced by the societies and the cultures of the early Muslims, and as a result they changed through time depending on the time and place. Interestingly enough, these just war theories concerning Islam have often been associated with the concept of *jihad*, which as was mentioned earlier is a term greatly misunderstood in the West and often abused by Muslims themselves, when in actuality war is the last thing that *jihad* is concerned with (ICNA, 2012).

⁶³ See *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* by Khadduri.

Part 3

Methodology, Discussion and Results

Chapter 8:

Methodology

Purpose of this study

I chose to conduct qualitative research for this study in order to gain a deeper understanding of what the religion of Islam has to offer to the field of Conflict Resolution based on the review of the early sources of Islam, and the interpretations of scholars of the faith sticking closely to the early period of Islam, mainly the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs of Islam.

Methodology Overview

Based on the work of Creswell (2003) called *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, “qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. This means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data” (p. 182), and this is what I have attempted to do while working on this thesis. As it can be noted in this work, I have gathered data from two main sources; the first being from the existing literature, including the scriptures of Islam, regarding Conflict Resolution which entails the examination and the analysis of the early teachings of Islam on dealing with conflict. And secondly, data was gathered from the participants of this thesis (Imams and religious scholars of Islam) interviewed through a basic questionnaire of ten questions on the subject matter (see *Data Collection Instrument*), which entails their opinions and interpretations on what scriptures of Islam have to teach about Conflict Resolution.

Keeping this in mind, I am aware that my personal experiences with the religion

of Islam impact my biases with regards to this study; however, throughout this research I have tried to do this work with honesty and an open mind. Additionally, in order to keep myself in check, I have had this thesis reviewed by professionals in the field of Islam, some of whom are not Muslim.

This thesis utilizes a mixed methods approach, therefore alongside my qualitative approach which, as noted, is my understanding and interpretation of the literature review and the opinions of the imams and scholars of Islam, the quantitative method is minimally used to analyze the profile information gathered from the subjects by using standard questionnaires and also to analyze the life history information of the subjects collected through written notes and e-mail exchanges (see Appendix K attached)

Setting and Participants

As stated earlier, my research is qualitative, based on sampling that I have conducted throughout the United States. Additionally, utilizing textual analysis was the best method for obtaining, evaluating and reporting the gathered data both from the literature review and the participants. My research strategy of inquiry was based on going over the scriptures of Islam, conducting interviews and drawing conclusions from the literature relevant to the problems presented in this study. To be fair, the participants of this research did most of the interpretation of the events covered in this work. Most of the participants in my study were contacted via e-mail but also I met some in person and explained the objectives and the procedures of this research.

Research Participants

The research participants are scholars, imams and other Muslim clergy that research and lecture on such issues as conflict resolution, mediation, and peacemaking

with regards to Islam. The participants were chosen on the basis of their knowledge, expertise and practical work in Islamic conflict resolution methods and other related fields.

Purpose of Research

The primary purpose of this research is to unearth the tradition of conflict resolution that comes out of the religion of Islam, which is unknown to many Muslims. In this study, I examine the existing literature and carry out a qualitative exploration in order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of the Qur'an, *hadith*⁶⁴ and other documents as they relate to the field of Conflict Resolution. Furthermore, this thesis examines the role and the contributions of Islam in the field of Conflict Resolution. In the process, to further explore the concept of Conflict Resolution in Islam, interpretations of Muslim scholars and imams will also be included in this document review.

Research questions

My research questions are inspired by the many challenges that Muslims face throughout the world and especially in the West with regards to their religion as it is associated with conflict and terrorism today. Therefore, I wanted to find out what Islam has to teach about these present-day challenges, what it has to contribute to the field of Conflict Resolution, and how that contribution, if any, has been applied in the past as examples that could also be used today. Some questions addressed in this research are as follows: How might this knowledge be valuable to Muslims (and non-Muslims to some extent) today in these times of great turmoil involving the Muslim world after September 11? Where do the primary sources of Islam, the Quran and the *hadith*, stand as far as

⁶⁴ Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

peace and conflict are concerned? What does Islam have to say about war and peace, the ethics of war and peace? And other relevant questions.

Hypothesis of this study

Based on the literature review, and on my post-September 11 experiences in the United States, having witnessed the discrimination of many Muslim communities in this country, I have seen a great need to introduce something new to the literature of Peace, War and Conflict Studies regarding Islam's take on these studies. Noting that such a field of study is not prevalent in Muslim literature and is missing completely in Western literature, my initial conclusion was that this research would be beneficial to both of these "camps" of knowledge. Although based on my exchanges with Muslim scholars around the world, I knew the field of Conflict Resolution was and is present in Islamic thought, as supported by Abu-Nimer (2000), so I wanted to find out for myself what the Qur'an and the hadith said about it, and how this knowledge was used by the Prophet and the early Muslims to resolve conflict. Therefore, my hypothesis is that the scriptures of Islam and its teachings, through the interpretations of the scholars (including the participants of this research), have a great wealth of knowledge to offer to the field of Conflict Resolution.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is of two parts and consists of 10 questions. The first part is intended to collect basic demographic data about the subjects and their experience in the field of conflict resolution with regards to Islam, and the second part includes questions like what Islam teaches about conflict resolution, war, peace, and so on (see Questionnaire in Appendix H). All of the questions are open-ended in order to make the

job of the subjects easier and leave room for their interpretations on the subject. The questionnaire was emailed to Imams in the United States and abroad (Europe and Middle East), and the subjects had two months to respond.

Research design validity

The validity of this research attempts to examine the sources of Islam, taking into account the interpretations of Muslim scholars, in order to formulate a better understanding of the religion's contribution to the field of Conflict Resolution. This research is designed to utilize a case study strategy of inquiry. As Creswell (2003) points out, "interpretation in qualitative research can take many forms, be adapted from different types of designs, and be flexible to convey personal, research-based and action meanings" (p. 195), and this is what I will attempt to do throughout this work. While designing my research, I tried to shape it in a way that my findings will raise new questions that have not been raised before, and I have done this by cross-referencing my findings with the writings of other researchers in the field of Conflict Resolution, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Additionally, while thinking of the design, it only seemed logical to utilize case study methods in order to try to make sense of the data collected through my questionnaire.

Data collection instrument

The data collection instrument consists of 10 open-ended questions (See Appendix H). I came up with these specific questions for the simple reason that not many of the writers in the field of Conflict Resolution had previously asked questions like these during their research. Permission to utilize these questions was granted by PSU's Human Subjects Research Review Committee (HSRRC) before starting my research.

Data analysis and interpretation

According to Creswell (2003), analyzing data is a step by step process and has several components to be kept in mind. He adds that this process of “data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data” (p. 190). Additionally, he points out, “Researchers need to tailor the data analysis beyond the more generic approaches to specific types of qualitative research strategies” (Creswell, 1998, 190). With this in mind, I began looking for patterns that might show up while researching the topics addressed in my thesis, and in the answers of the subjects. As far as the subjects are concerned, to my surprise, most of them quoted from the Qur’an, yet their answers slightly differed which indicates that the differences of scriptural interpretation are unavoidable, as I had indicated in my literature review earlier.⁶⁵ Additionally, after having gathered the information from the subjects through the questionnaire, I attempted to code my data with the goal of finding and building common patterns and themes that will prove useful with regards to my overall theory of Conflict Resolution in Islam.

Limitations

Considering the lack of literature and the unavailability of Muslim practitioners in this field, I encountered various limitations. First of all, most of the Muslim sources relating to Conflict Resolution are written in Arabic, and therefore my inability to read Arabic limited my research ability. As a result, I had to depend on translations of the classical works and the interpretations of scholars who are also scarce, especially those who are knowledgeable about this field. Above anything else, though, I will note that time constraints were the greatest limitation knowing that such research needed a much

⁶⁵ See Margaret Pettygrove (2007).

deeper understanding of the problem. On the positive side, however, the advantages for my chosen topic outweighed the limitations I faced. Some of those advantages are my ability to connect with scholars of Islam; easy access to resources in English from a variety of libraries, and of course the opportunity to have been able to work on such a topic like this one.

Chapter 9:

Discussion

The Heart of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam

The tradition of conflict resolution, contrary to modern belief, is not foreign to Islam. In fact, as pointed out in my literature review, it goes back to the time of Prophet Muhammad, and even before as God was preparing him for the mission of his prophethood. Today, however, those conflict resolution skills introduced by the Muslim tradition are rarely mentioned in modern academia. As Abu-Nimer (2000) points out, Muslim practitioners in the field of peace-building and conflict resolution have carried various CR methods to Muslim communities showing that Islam has a lot to offer to this field, but their progress “has been hampered by a well-publicized Western assumption that Islamic religion and culture contradict the principles of peace-building, conflict resolution, nonviolence, and even democracy” (p. 217). This thesis endeavored to counter those assumptions and bring up some of those conflict resolution methods used by Muslim practitioners, showing that Islam does not contradict concepts like conflict resolution or nonviolence but actually builds on them.

Conflict Resolution Methods in Islam

According to a lecture given by Imam Toure (2012), Conflict Resolution in the Qur'an is referred to by the word *islah*. The definition of *islah* is to mend, to restore something that is broken, to make something right, to make peace, to set something in order. As Mohamed Sadek (2009) points out, the term:

appears several times in the Qur'an and which conveys the idea of improving, purifying, reconciling, repairing and reforming... The notion of *islah* implies bringing the object (whether a heart, an intelligence or a society) back to its original state, when the said object was considered to be pure and good: it is indeed a matter of improving, [or] curing, ...through reform.

Present in the Qur'an is also the opposite of *islah*, which is *fasaad*, and it is defined as disorder, something corrupted and imbalanced. Regarding *fasaad*, the Qur'an says, "Hence, do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered. And call unto Him [God] with fear and longing: verily, God's grace is ever near unto the doers of good!" (7:56).⁶⁶ Here Imam Toure adds that "Allah created the world in balance and in a perfect order, a moral balance, and a just balance." On this note, a surah of the Qur'an indicates that the world Allah created for people is in a state of perfect order and balance, and advises humanity not to disrupt that order (55:7-9). From these verses it can be noted that, according to the Qur'an, there is a balance in the universe and anyone's negative actions disrupt that balance, as do conflicts among people, and that is why there is the concept of *islah* to try to restore that balance.

According to Toure (2012), in the Islamic worldview there are five principles in understanding the essence of conflict:

⁶⁶ As translated by Imam Mamadou Toure.

1. *Conflict is an integral part of human life*

As the previously cited sources indicate, conflict is an integral part of our lives, and it should be treated as such. According to Imam Toure,

There are certain things that are certain to take place. Death is certain. Today you are ill, tomorrow you feel better. Today you are rich, tomorrow you are poor. Today there is conflict, tomorrow there is not. No matter who you are, this is true. This will always be true. From the time of Adam and Hawa [Eve] this was true. This is what drove Adam and Hawa out of their place [Paradise]. (2012)

On this note, the Qur'an reminds that Satan caused Adam and Eve "to stumble therein, and thus brought about the loss of their erstwhile state. And so We⁶⁷ said: 'Down with you, [and be henceforth] enemies unto one another; and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!'" (2:36). After the exile of Adam and Eve to our world, the imam says that with Adam's children [Cain and Abel] there was conflict, referring to the first murder on earth initiated by Cain. Regarding this murder the Qur'an says, "then his [Cain's] evil soul... incited him to kill his brother [Abel] and he killed his brother and then he joined the losers" (5:30). This is very important to recognize here, says Toure (2012), because it shows that the desire to initiate conflict comes from inside, the *nafs* (the soul), and it becomes crucial that the person trains his or her *nafs* when it comes to handling conflict.⁶⁸

2. *Conflict is a divine means of testing and growing the human being*

On this note the Qur'an says, "and some of you, we have made them a source of

⁶⁷ Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion, but some misunderstandings have arisen because the Qur'an often uses the form "We" to refer to God. This is a feature of literary style in Arabic that a person may refer to himself by the pronoun *nahnu* (we) for respect or glorification." In English, this is known as "The Royal We." Therefore, in "such cases, only one person is speaking but the plural is used for respect" (Ibrahim, 2013).

⁶⁸ For a more detailed account on Islam's view on the soul, the *nafs*, see chapter 5 of this thesis.

trial and a source of conflict for one another” (25:20). And, according to the Imam Toure (2012), Allah says that when the conflict comes, Allah asks for *sabr*⁶⁹ from people, and He is constantly watching how people behave in times of trial and tribulations. Therefore, it should always be remembered that God uses this conflict as a means of testing people. It becomes obvious here that when one realizes that conflict is a test from his/her Creator, then he or she will do the best to handle the situation with care by taking the right steps to resolving the conflict in order to please God

3. Conflict is a divine means of rewards in the Afterlife for the human being

According to Imam Toure (2012), there is a reward for the person who handles a conflict in a reasonable and acceptable manner, as is recommended in the teachings of Islam:

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.u.s)⁷⁰ in [the hadith books of] Bukhari and Muslim was reported to have said, “If you give up an argument, when you are wrong Allah will build you a palace in paradise. If you are in an argument and you are right and you give up on the argument Allah will build you a palace on the highest of places in paradise.” (2012)⁷¹

4. Truth is the central component of conflict resolution in Islam

Regarding the role of truth in conflict resolution, the Imam quotes the Qur’an where it says, “We give them [people] mercy from us and we give them a tongue of truth that is honorable” (19:50). According to the imam, conflict cannot be resolved within the Islamic model without the truth being known. “This is how Conflict Resolution in Islam

⁶⁹ *Sabr*, meaning patience.

⁷⁰ Stands for *Salla Allahu alayhi wa salaam*, meaning “peace be upon him,” referring to Prophet Muhammad as a sign of respect.

⁷¹ Hadith as quoted by Imam Toure (2012).

differs from other conflict resolution methods. Other methods will seek to resolve the conflict even if it means withholding or ignoring the truth of what happened.” There is only one thing that can mend the conflict, says the imam, “and that is saying the truth” (Toure, 2012).

5. Peacemaking between conflicting parties is a sacred act

According to the imam, peacemaking between the conflicting parties is a sacred act and duty in Islam, and it has to be taken very seriously. As the Qur’an says, “be conscience of Allah and make peace...” (8:1). The act of resolving conflict, he says, is one of the three things that people are allowed to talk about in secret and there is reward in it (Toure, 2013).⁷²

The Salaam Method

One practical Muslim method to resolving conflict, according to Imam Toure (2012) is the Salaam Method (salaam meaning peace). This method mainly concerns recognizing, understanding, facing, analyzing and handling the conflict in the best manner possible, as advised by the Qur’an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

When speaking of this method, it is important to point out that in the Muslim tradition, there is no room for speculations and suspicion, because as the Qur’an says, it is a sin to show suspicion on any matter (49:12). Therefore, it is vital to recognize, research, and state the conflict clearly: “don’t just go by what you have heard, or rumors,” says Imam Toure (2012). Additionally, agreeing that the conflict exists is vital for the process

⁷² The other acts during which talking in secret are allowed are when giving *sadaqah* (charity), and helping or visiting someone.

of conflict resolution to begin and move forward. Also, says the imam, it is important to “shift the focus on the action not the person. On all labels of different people in the Quran it is always about their conduct not the person because there is always a chance for them to change” (Toure, 2012).

Other important aspects of the Salam Method that the imam mentions are listening and learning. People have to listen in order to respond or wait for their turn to speak. “This step requires genuine listening and learning each viewpoint” (Toure, 2012). He also discusses advising one another with truth, as an important tip for conflict resolution, “you cannot resolve a conflict without “the mutual advising of truth,” as Surah al-Asr asks to counsel each other in the mutual advising of truth before talking about having patience” (103:3). Another tip mentioned by the imam is to minimize the areas of disagreement that lead to aggression and or withdrawal; he suggests that the right thing to do is to emphasize the points that all can agree upon (Toure, 2012).

The 6 basic steps to conflict resolution in Islam

According to Imam Toure (2012), there are six steps to the process of conflict resolution in Islam, and they are as follows:

- a) Face the situation courageously: Don’t pretend the conflict will go away.
- b) Hear both parties *together*: this might mean listening to one side then the other another day.
- c) Respect each party’s rights: even the person who is wrong still has rights.
- d) Be sensitive to people’s honor: don’t compromise the truth, [and] use good manners.
- e) State the truth *uncompromisingly*: say what is wrong and what is right, even if someone does not like to hear it.
- f) Mend the damaged relationship, if possible; as the Qur’an says ‘If Allah didn’t use some people to check other people’s conduct and check other people’s behavior there would be much *fasaad* on earth’ (2:251). [And it is important to

keep in mind that] Sometimes it is possible to mend the relationship and sometimes it is not. Each party needs to make an effort to mend that relationship. It is not just about whether or not the mediator does the right thing. (Toure, 2012)

Other important points gathered regarding conflict resolution that everyone should think of are:

- a) When we are wrong, we have to admit that we are wrong; there is nothing shameful about admitting the wrong.
- b) Have patience and show respect for the others; we do not have the right to insult someone else in the process.
- c) We have to show kindness and compassion for other side, as the Prophet said, ‘If you want kindness from Allah, then show kindness to people.’
- d) If we show mercy then Allah will show us mercy. The idea is to have the person stop doing the wrong they are doing and not to humiliate them. Additionally, we have to remember that we ourselves have done much wrong to others as well.
- e) If wrong has been done to you, you can get your revenge but it is better to forgive the one who has wronged you. As Aisha, the wife of the Prophet has said “There was never an instance where the Prophet took revenge for something that was done to him.”
- f) If we have tried to resolve a conflict and the process is not moving forward, check-in later with the parties because time does heal, and distance can help.
- g) Have a Conflict Resolution committee in your community, “and it is much better to have a group, a *shurah*, to do this than just one person. With one person it is much easier to point fingers at one person.”
- h) Always keep in mind that man is weak and as long as man will be on earth there will be conflict. The priority though, is first the truth and then forgiveness. (Toure, 2012)

On Conflict and Conflict Resolution

As addressed by Imam Toure (2012), conflict is an integral part of human life, and it should be treated as such. When asked what Islam had to say regarding the roots of conflict and conflict resolution, one of the participants, participant A, said:

The Qur’an emphasizes that humans are created by the Almighty God yet they do differ in their view and ideas and interests, in order to bring them together.

Almighty God has sent His Holy revelation to help people resolve their disputes and conflict through dialogue. Allah says: ‘And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing (Qur’an, 11:118).’

According to the participant, as indicated in the Qur’an, God has left room for people to differ in their views, which according to Imam Toure, is a blessing in itself, because by differing among themselves people find ways to grow as intellectual human beings. The same participant adds that the Qur’an also prescribes the path to the solution of these differences among human beings, quoting,

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (Qur’an, 4:59)

Adding that,

the Almighty God advises Muslims that in case of dispute or conflict they should be fair and polite [in the treatment of the others]: The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend. (Qur’an, 41:34).

Another participant, C, answers the same question explaining that

In Islam, the Qur’an and Sunnah address conflict and conflict resolution on numerous occasions. An important thing to note is that Muslims cannot participate in conflict unless it is for the purpose of self-defense or self-preservation. As described in verses 22:39-40 [of the Qur’an], the permission to

engage in conflict is given to those people who are currently at the receiving end of the fighting and, in effect, are being wronged. The purpose is to preserve justice and prevent oppression from becoming widespread. Even at this point, it is better to resist and reconcile by other means, if there is an opportunity for that.

With regards to conflict and fighting, however, the above quoted participant said that

fighting against oppression is not exclusive to Islam. In fact, the Torah also allows for equal retaliation by those who have endured an injustice from another. The terms of this kind of fighting as explained in verses 2:190-195 of the Qur'an requires that the retaliation must be equal and fair and fighting must stop as soon as the oppressors stop the fighting and pursue peace. Similarly, this approach to conflict is also manifested in verses 4:89-90 of the Qur'an. However, like the Gospels, the Qur'an encourages forgiveness and patience, instead of taking revenge, to be a more superior and rewarding response (Qur'an, 5:45, 42:43).

Forgiveness as a Means of Resolving Conflict

As exemplified earlier, according to the teachings of Islam forgiveness is superior to fighting or revenge. When asked what Islam had to say about forgiveness with regards to conflict resolution, participant B said, "Several Qur'anic verses encourage forgiveness, and often the question is posed: 'Forgive, don't you want God to forgive you?'" In other words, knowing that God loves forgiveness, forgiving another person's faults may be a means of God forgiving our faults in this life. This is very encouraging for a Muslim knowing that through forgiving another, God can forgive them.

On the same question, participant D said that "Prophet Muhammad exemplified choosing forgiveness and patience over revenge throughout his life. One example occurred in his experience with the people of Ta'if."⁷³

⁷³ Ta'if is a town in the Makkan province of Saudi Arabia.

As this example was mentioned earlier, even though the Prophet was made to suffer the hands of the inhabitants of Makkah, he refused to take his revenge when he had the opportunity to do so. Here participant D adds:

Despite having received so much pain and injustice from them, the Prophet declined in an act of forgiveness in the hope that one day there would be some from the future generations of the Ta'if people who would be Muslims. Instead, he made supplication to seek the pleasure of Allah.

Islam on War and the Ethics of It

It is unfortunate that Islam has been “much maligned today as the religion of war” (Engineer, 2011, p. 47). However, as discussed previously, the last thing that the teachings of Islam condone is war. Nevertheless, to be fair to history, there are wars that have been fought in the name of Islam, just like many other wars in the name of other religions, but most of these wars were and are fought for political power between rulers fighting for political supremacy (Engineer, 2011, p. 49). As far as the Muslims are concerned, many of their rulers have used concepts like *jihad* to fight their wars when in actuality, as Engineer (2011), a scholar of Islam and an Indian reformist-writer and activist, notes, those were political moves by rulers who used religion to rally people behind them in order to achieve their goals.

On a different note, regarding what is in the Qur'an, Engineer says that “war is sanctioned only in exceptional circumstances and peace is the norm. He adds that “permission for war in the Qur'an is given reluctantly under extreme conditions of persecution and oppression,” but even then Muslims are advised to “bear adverse conditions with patience and endurance” (Engineer, 2011, p. 49). In addition to this,

another scholar of Islam named Saiyidain points out there are circumstances in which Islam contemplates the possibility of fighting and war, as in the case of averting a worse disaster “like the denial of freedom to human conscience, but the essential thing in life is peace. It is toward the achievement of peace that all human efforts must be sincerely diverted” (as qtd in Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 228).

On the same note, when asked about what Islam had to say about war and the ethics of it, a female participant, participant C, of my research responded that:

[In] Islamic history during Prophet Muhammad (SAW)’s life, peace was the norm and war was the exception. This should be an indication of how war should be used as a last resort for defense to fight oppression or injustice according to Islamic principles/Sunnah. The verse 2:216 in the Qur’an states, “Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.” This lends support to the concept that war and fighting in general are actually unnatural for humans and should be considered exceptions to the “normal” or “natural” state of peace according to Islam.

As far as the ethics of war are concerned, she added:

In terms of ethics during warfare, it was narrated by Ibn ‘Umar⁷⁴ that upon the finding of a killed woman in a battle, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prohibited the killing of women and children in war (Sahih Muslim).⁷⁵ Additionally, verse 5:32 states: ‘Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land-it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one-it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, (even) after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.’ The value and sanctity of innocent human lives are emphasized here.

⁷⁴ Ibn ‘Umar was a companion of the Prophet.

⁷⁵ Sahih Muslim is a collection of hadith.

A just society teaches good moral and ethical conduct to the point when it is even concerned with the treatment of the enemy, something that is often ignored in many societies and philosophies, as was seen from the example of the Realists regarding the ethics of war. On this note, participant D said:

Islam encourages fair treatment of the enemy. Verse 5:8 [of the Qur'an] reads, 'O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah for Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.' Prisoners of war [for example] are shown kindness in a variety of ways. Verses 76:5-9 state, 'Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup (of wine) whose mixture is of Kafur, a spring of which the (righteous) servants of Allah will drink...They (are those who) fulfill (their) vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread. And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, (Saying), 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.' Giving prisoners food was a new charitable practice incorporated by Muslims in a time when it was customary for captives to be forced to work for their food or get it by other private ways. Also, in reference to the enemy, Anas b. Malik reported that Prophet Muhammad said, 'Show leniency; do not be hard; give solace and do not create aversion (towards religion) (Sahih Muslim)'.

According to the participant, the kind treatment of the enemy is not only encouraged, it is also rewarded by God, as stated several places in the Qur'an. As participant A notes, "The Qur'an reminds Muslims that life of human being is very precious and should be treated very carefully, saying: 'whosoever killed a person - unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land - it shall be as if he killed all mankind; and whoso gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind (5:33).' On the same note, the Prophet advised his followers to abide by these rules in case of war conflict: "Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman." To add, participant A

says, “Do not kill the monks in monasteries” or “Do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship.”

The Question of Nonviolence in Islam

Is there such a thing as nonviolence in Islam? This is a very common question-statement among the people I have spoken with regarding this section of my thesis. Many others think that such a question is very obvious and needs no explanation because evidence for it is all around us. What is unfortunate, however, is that current conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere are used to paint the past of Islam and make a case that Islam has no relation with nonviolence, but in actuality this is not the case. Examples throughout Islamic history and tradition contradict such assumptions (Abu-Nimer, 2001, p. 227).

Since September 11, and even before it to a great extent, Islam has constantly been portrayed as a religion of violence and Prophet Muhammad as a warlord. However, what one never hears is that Prophet Muhammad at least for the 13 years of his prophethood, both in Makkah and Madinah, during persecution and starvation, never lifted his hand against his oppressors, and that was because he never received permission from God to aggress or take revenge against his enemies, even though to a great extent he had the means to fight back. And it was only 13 years later, after he and the Muslim community were persecuted and many of them killed by his enemies, that he received a verse of the Qur'an that gave him and the Muslims permission to fight, though in self-defense only (Qur'an, 22:39).

However, before we go deeper into the concept of non-violence in Islam, what the Qur'an has to say about it and how the Prophet practiced it, I believe it is important for us

do define the concept of nonviolence itself because many have greatly misunderstood it, or have closely associated it with the absence of violence.

Engineer (2011) defines non-violence as follows:

Non-violence is not merely an act of non-aggression. A meek person lacking courage can also apparently be non-aggressive but this meekness or lack of courage become a store of aggression within him...and strikes in devious ways including conspiracies, and mortal blows. Thus, absence of violence cannot be treated as non-violence. (p. 4)

In addition to this, one who has absolutely no means of rebelling against the status quo and is left with no choice but to submit to the oppression of authority cannot be called a non-violent activist, instead he or she should be considered as someone who has or had no options but to remain silent. Engineer (2011) further notes:

Non-violence is based on [the] deeper inner conviction of a person even if he cannot control all forces operating around him. We must remember that a non-violent person without such deeper conviction cannot be truly a non-violent person...A person without such deeper conviction may not. (p. 4)

When asked about Islam's take on nonviolence, participants C said that non-violence "has played a huge role in Islamic history and is an integral part of the Islamic tradition," adding:

During his lifetime, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was subjected to cruel and abusive treatment and at times was even a target for assassination for the message of Islam he was bringing to the people. He faced these difficulties with nonviolent tactics. It was revealed to him in verse 50:39 of the Qur'an, 'So be patient, (O

Muhammad), over what they say and exalt (Allah) with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting.’

This is also supported by Wahiduddin Khan, a scholars of Islam who wrote:

Of the 23-year period of prophethood, the initial 13 years were spent by the Prophet in Mecca. The Prophet fully adopted the way of pacifism or nonviolence during this time. There were many such issues in Mecca at the time which could have been the subject of clash and confrontation. But, by avoiding all such issues, the Prophet of Islam strictly limited his sphere to peaceful propagation of the word of God. (as qtd in Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 230)

Participant A added that “Islam advises its followers to resolve their issues only through means of nonviolence.” This coincides with what some Muslim scholars have said regarding violence, specifically, “The historical period has changed and therefore, the use of violence as a means to resolve differences... is no longer religiously permissible (as qtd in Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 229). Participant B added that, “Qur’anic text encourages peaceful interaction. Qur’anic verses specifically instruct individuals to prevent harm, as well as to repel harm with the kindness as such that this kindness could pave the way to reconciliation between the two disputing parties.”

All for the Sake of Peace

According to Abu-Nimer (2000),

Peace in Islam is a state of physical, mental, spiritual and social harmony. Living at peace with God through submission, and living at peace with fellow beings by avoiding mischief on earth, is real Islam. Islam is a religion that preaches and obligates its believers to seek peace in all life's domains. The ultimate purpose of one's existence is to live in a peaceful as well as a just social reality. (p. 243)

In the Qur'an, as indicated earlier, there are repeated references to the concept of peace. "Significantly the Qur'an calls upon Muslims, 'O you who believe, enter into complete peace and follow not the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy' (2:208)." writes Engineer (2008). According to him, "Entering into complete peace here means entering into peace whole-heartedly. It would also imply surrendering to Allah whole-heartedly." Therefore, "Acceptance of violence as the other part of the verse says is like following in the footsteps of devil. Violence is devil and devil is violence" says Engineer, adding:

In the verse 2:131 Allah says submit and reply is given I submit myself to my Rabb⁷⁶ of the worlds... Thus submitting to Allah, or accepting His authority means dedicating oneself to the cause of peace so that this universe reaches perfection. Perfection is possible only if there is peace, not otherwise. In fact violence destroys all the achievements of culture and civilisation. Since Allah is Rabb i.e. the Sustainer and Perfecter, he ordains peace and those who surrender to His Will have to work for peace so that perfection could be reached. (Engineer, 2008)

Regarding the concept of peace, in one instance Engineer writes, "Islam is a deep spiritual experience" for millions of Muslims around the world. Muslims pray, fast, perform the pilgrimage to Makkah, and all other spiritual practices in order to achieve peace and feel satisfied within. They work and pray for justice and peace and have "nothing to do with politics, violence or use of Islam for one's interests. It is these Muslims who seek deep spiritual fulfillment who matter and not the few who use or

⁷⁶ "Rabb in Arabic means one who is sustainer or one who takes us step by step from one stage of perfection to another stage of perfection" (Engineer, 2008).

misuse it for political purposes.” He adds, “For millions of Muslims Islam, like any other religion, is a great source of inner peace” and that is because as far as Islam is concerned to them, justice and peace are “integral parts of its teachings” (Engineer, 2008).

On the same note, participant C added:

Practicing Islam is a path to peace as understood from the Qur’anic verse 5:16 which states, ‘By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.’ Paradise has also been named as “The Home of Peace” in verse 6:127 of the Qur’an.

In effect, as noted by Engineer, “Islam teaches Muslims that they should always be striving for peace,” and adds that there is much support for peacemaking as well, like the Qur’anic verse 8:61 which states:

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it (also) and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. Whenever a dispute occurs, it is encouraged to attempt reconciliation first and upon many times in the Qur’an this is better than taking violent means. (Qur’anic verses 49:9, 4:128)

As indicated by some of the participants, these Qur’anic advices are embodied by the Prophet himself. In fact, there are many examples of conflict resolution and peacemaking conducted by the Prophet. According to one Hadith narrated by Sahl bin Sad⁷⁷, “Once the people of Quba⁷⁸ fought with each other till they threw stones on each other. When Allah’s Apostle was informed about it, he said, ‘Let us go to bring about

⁷⁷ One of the companions of the Prophet.

⁷⁸ Town in the outlying environs of Madinah in Saudi Arabia, which is home to the oldest mosque in the world.

reconciliation between them” (Sahih Bukhari). Another hadith narrated by Al-Bara bin ‘Azib says, “When Allah’s Apostle concluded a peace treaty with the people of Hudaibiya, Ali bin Abu Talib wrote the document and he mentioned in it, ‘Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle.’ The pagans said, ‘Don’t write: “Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle,” for if you were an apostle we would not fight with you.’ Allah’s Apostle asked Ali to rub it out, but Ali said, ‘I will not be the person to rub it out.’ Allah’s Apostle rubbed it out and made peace with them on the condition that the Prophet and his companions would enter Mecca and stay there for three days, and that they would enter with their weapons in cases” (Sahih Bukhari). This shows how patient and compromising the Prophet was for the purpose of choosing a peaceful route, and that is because in Islam, as Abu-Nimer points out, “Peace is viewed as an outcome and goal of life to be achieved only after the full submission to the will of God. Thus, peace has an internal, personal as well as social application, and God is the source and sustainer of such peace.” Therefore, according to Abu-Nimer, “the best way to insure peace is by total submission to God's will and to Islam” adding:

Shunning violence and aggression in all its forms has been another primary focus of Islamic values and tradition. Many Qur'anic verses stress this principle, among them: ‘Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God extinguishes it. They strive to create disorder on earth and God loves not those who create disorder’ (5:64). Tolerance, kindness to other people, and dealing with all people in such a manner with no exception is also emphasized in these verses: ‘God commands you to treat (everyone) justly, generously and with kindness’ (16:90). ‘Repel evil (not with evil) with that which is best: We are well-acquainted with the things they say.’ (23:96) Thus when evil is done to you it is better not to reply with evil, ‘but to do what best repels the evil. Two evils do not make a good.’ (Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 224)

And this has always been the stand of Islam on violence and aggression, like the saying that one cannot put out fire with fire.

Study Findings and Limitations

First of all, this study, through research and questionnaires, validated the original hypothesis that Islam has a great wealth of knowledge to offer to the field of Conflict Resolution. Secondly, it shows that both Muslims and non-Muslims can use the resources that Islam has to offer with regards to Conflict Resolution. However, during my research and discussions with the scholars and leaders of Islam, I have learned that such knowledge with regard to Conflict Resolution is missing in the Western academia and there is a great need for it to become more available in the West.

My research interviews (through the use of questionnaires) involve the interpretations and opinions of Muslim scholars representing a wide range of backgrounds with regards to gender, country of origin (including the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe), educational background on Islam, gender, and so on, with the objective of obtaining diversity for this study. My questionnaire was designed to gain a broader meaning of understanding by presenting open ended questions to the participants.

The results of my research suggest that, as Abu-Nimer noted earlier, there is an awakening among the Muslim scholars to further develop and widely introduce the conflict resolution skills that are found in the Islamic tradition. This was very obviously based on the specific answers they gave, demonstrating that such knowledge is important to them and that they have actually studied it.

This study was limited due to time constraints involving responses from Muslim scholars and leaders who were extremely busy during the times I contacted them by

phone and e-mail. When I began my research, my initial hope was to receive over 20 questionnaires, since I sent out a total of 23, but later this proved unattainable for various reasons. This seemed primarily due to time constraints and the busy schedules of the people I contacted to participate in this research, since most of them are renowned scholars of Islam who frequently travel around the Muslim world. However, I did get responses from seven participants, and only four of them completed the questionnaire fully.

One other limitation to this study is that I am not a speaker of Arabic, and considering that most of the sources on the topic are in Arabic, including the Qur'an and the Hadith, this made it hard for me to interpret the data in a meaningful way. However, the participants that responded to my questionnaires are all fluent in Arabic, so their interpretations added a level of expertise regarding the text that I could not bring to this study.

My overall goal while conducting this research was to remain objective and avoid bias as much as possible. Every effort was made to engage with and view my participants from a theoretical point of view, although I acknowledge that my own background as a Muslim might have influenced the answers of the participants, and might have shaped the interpretation of the collected data. However, this is something hard to avoid, as Creswell (2003) indicates:

Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they “position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The researcher’s intent, then, is to make sense of (or interpret) the meaning others have about the world (pp. 8-9).

Conclusion

Given the distressing social challenges facing Muslim communities around the world today, this research deems it of critical importance the need to establish a framework for conflict resolution in Islam based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. This framework, if put into practice, could serve both Muslims and non-Muslims working with Muslim communities and beyond. Although such efforts do exist in the Muslim world, as this research has found, they are rarely recognized or brought up in Western academia. Moreover, as Abu-Nimer (2000) points out, "many Muslims themselves lack a comprehensive Islamic knowledge and hermeneutics relevant to the field of Conflict Resolution," and especially regarding:

nonviolent conflict transformations through its peaceful teachings. Most extant academic research and writing on Islam and conflict, not only by Orientalists, but even by Muslims scholars is aimed at the study and interpretation of war, violence, power, political systems or legal arrangements. (Abu-Nimer, 2000, p. 220)

Abu-Nimer adds that approaching "Islamic tradition and religion from these perspectives only perpetuates negative images and perceptions, particularly by Westerners," and as my research indicates, this very often has been the case.

In summary, the fundamental research hypothesis for this study is that Islam has an abundant wealth of resources to offer to the field of Conflict Resolution, as was demonstrated throughout this thesis using verses from the Qur'an, the Hadith of the Prophet and the interpretations of the scholars. The problem, however, is that both Muslims and non-Muslims lack access to those resources. It is also important to point out

that among the existing overarching challenges are, according to my hypothesis, the negative stereotyping of Islam in the Western media, Islamophobia, and the lack of written literature on the subject of Conflict Resolution in Islam, especially in languages other than Arabic.

Additionally, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- Where do the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the hadith, stand as far as peace and conflict are concerned?
- How might this knowledge be valuable to Muslims today in these times of great turmoil involving the Muslim world after September 11?

My analysis concludes that, in correlation with my hypothesis, the primary sources of Islam are very clear when it comes to Islam's stand on peace, war and conflict. As the name *Islam* itself denotes, the religion of Islam is much more concerned with the establishment of peace than it is with conflict or war. In fact, the five pillars of Islam indicate just that. The declaration of faith, prayer, obligatory charity, fasting and pilgrimage are all centered on the individual's relationship with the Creator, which in return, if these pillars are practiced sincerely, are meant to serve as a way of achieving peace, the first step being the achievement of inner peace.

Regarding the second question, I have come to the conclusion that this Islamic knowledge concerning Conflict Resolution is vital for Muslims around the world, especially after September 11. First of all, by introducing this knowledge to Western academia and sharing what Islam has to offer to this field could contribute to the debunking of some of the myths regarding Islam and its role in human civilization. It

could dispel some of the stereotypes about Muslims and their religion, but most importantly it will contribute to Muslim communities in their efforts to resolve their internal and/or external conflicts in a peaceful manner, whether they live in the East or in the West.

With regards to the misunderstandings of Islam in many parts of the West, and the evident lack of respect for the other as a result of those misunderstandings and proper education about Islam in the West and the West in the Muslim world and beyond, I will conclude with the words of Karen Armstrong (2006) who said:

If we are to avoid a catastrophe, the Muslim and the Western worlds must learn not merely to tolerate but to appreciate one another. A good place to start is with the figure of Muhammad: a complex man, who resists facile, ideologically driven categorization, who sometimes did things that were difficult or impossible for us to accept, but who had profound genius and founded a religion and cultural tradition that was not based on the sword but whose name – “Islam” – signified peace and reconciliation. (p. 202)

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research regarding this topic should look into specific examples of conflict within Muslim communities (conflict between other Muslims or non-Muslims) in various regions around the world, and see how such conflicts have been or are being handled currently. By doing so, one should be able to find out how the Islamic method of the process of conflict resolution is being applied and what has and has not worked in efforts to resolve these conflicts.

I strongly encourage that this future work take into account both gender groups as conflict resolvers and as conflicting parties in order to determine whether one gender

group exceeds the other at handling conflict more constructively, or if there is no difference. If there is a difference, then such research would help promote the growth of that particular group as conflict resolvers.

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Appendix A

Research Questionnaire

Conflict Resolution in Islam

Principal researcher: Flamur Vehapi

Conflict Resolution Graduate Program

Portland State University,

Portland Oregon – U.S.A. (503) 725-4288 / U.S. 1-877-480-4400.

E-mail: fvehapi@hotmail.com

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University; Vehapi is a graduate student with the Conflict Resolution Department.

Note: Please feel free to print or write your answers directly in this document. Also, feel free to skip any question you may not feel comfortable answering.

Sex: M / F (please circle or underline one)

Your current location (e.g. Portland, OR, USA)_____

1. What is your current position, as far as your involvement in the Muslim community is concerned? (e.g. Imam of the local mosque)

2. What is your educational background in Islam? (e.g. B.A. in Islamic Law and Theology)

3. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (always taking into account your interpretation of them), what does Islam have to say about conflict, as far as its roots are concerned, *and* conflict resolution?⁷⁹

⁷⁹ For this and other answers, please try to provide evidence from the sources of Islam, if possible, considering that this research is mostly a document review (of the Qu'ran, hadith and other important documents of Islam).

4. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about anger as far as conflict is concerned?

5. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about war and the ethics of it?

6. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about violence and/or non-violence?

7. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, how does jihad relate to war and peace?

8. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about peace and peacemaking?

9. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about nationalism?

10. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about tolerance and or forgiveness (in times of war and/or peace)?

Any comments or suggestions are welcome.

Thank you,
Flamur Vehapi

Appendix B

HSRRC Application Proposal

Conflict Resolution in Islam

Principal researcher: Flamur Vehapi

Conflict Resolution Graduate Program

Portland State University,

Portland Oregon – U.S.A. (503) 725-4288 / U.S. 1-877-480-4400.

E-mail: fvehapi@hotmail.com

II. Project Title & Prospectus

Conflict Resolution in Islam:

Document Review of the Early Sources

Research question:

What does Islam have to contribute to the field of Conflict Resolution, and how that contribution, if any, has been applied in the past that could also be used today.

Purpose and Problem Statement:

The primary purpose of this study is to unearth the tradition of conflict resolution that comes out of the religion of Islam, which is unknown even to many Muslims. In this study, I examine the existing literature and carry out a qualitative exploration in order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of the Qur'an, *hadith*⁸⁰ and other documents as they relate to the field of Conflict Resolution. Furthermore, this thesis examines the role and the contributions of Islam in the field of Conflict Resolution. In the process, to further explore the concept of Conflict Resolution in Islam, interpretations of Muslim scholars and imams will also be included in this document review. Some questions addressed in this research are how might this knowledge be valuable to Muslims today in these times of great turmoil involving the Muslim world after September 11? Where do the primary sources of Islam, the Quran and the hadith, stand as far as peace and conflict are concerned?

Research Participants

The research participants will be scholars, imams and other Muslim clergy that research and lecture on such issues as conflict resolution, mediation, and peacemaking. The participants are chosen on the basis of their knowledge, expertise and practical work in Islamic conflict resolution methods, and the related fields.

Methodology

Although most of the chapters of this thesis will be based on literature review in order to present another view of CR, that of Islam, this study will employ quantitative

⁸⁰ Sayings of Prophert Muhammad.

and qualitative research methods. The quantitative method will be used to analyze the profile information gathered from the subjects by using standard questionnaires. The qualitative method will be used to analyze the life history information of the subjects collected through written notes, in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and observational field notes.

III. Exemption Claim for Waiver of Review

Expedited review is requested.

IV. Subject Recruitment

All subjects will be 18 years and older; no child will participate in this study. Their ethnic background is irrelevant to this research project, as a result no one is excluded from participating in this research as long as they are scholars of Islam or imams/leaders in their community. In other words, anyone with any ethnic background has the equal probability of being selected for this research project. Additionally, both Muslim men and women will have equal probabilities of being selected for participation in this research, as long as they are scholars of Islam or leaders in their community. The subjects will be given written consent forms as well as verbal information in English. This study will use no subjects who are currently institutionalized in prisons, mental health facilities, etc. All participants in this study will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an explanation. Research participants will also be told they can skip any question they do not want to answer while responding to the survey or interview questions (see attached Consent Form)

V. Informed Consent

Consent will be obtained by the Principal Researcher (Flamur Vehapi), a preapproved consent form will be dispersed to each participant prior to conducting my interview. My research interview and participation with my questionnaire will be strictly on a voluntary basis. The interviewees will be presented with my consent form (see appendices), before any information is asked of them, they will be asked to read over and sign the consent form that can be found in the Appendices of this application. Consent and approval will be obtained before research participants have their answers and related comments recorded by the Principle Researcher. Interviews will be one on one, conducted in a safe and comfortable environment.

VI. First-Person Scenario

The researcher, Flamur Vehapi, contacted me via email asking if I would be willing to participate in his research and I agreed to participate. Once I agreed, we scheduled an appointment to meet and it was then when the researcher gave me an outline of his thesis project. After that the researcher went over the informed consent and he told me that I could withdraw from the research at any time. Later, the researcher asked me about my involvement in the community and gave me a questionnaire to fill out either there in person or mail it back to him within a month time period.

VII. Potential Risks and Safeguards

No personal information will be taken from the participants, nor will I insist that they answer any of the questions if they are not willing to do so. However, if the subjects have concerns or problems about participating in this study, complaints against me or about their rights as research subjects, they will have the address, phone number and email address of my faculty supervisor and the office of the HSRRC board (see consent form)

As an investigator, it is my responsibility to make sure that no complaints are made against me or the co-principal investigator (Dr. Harry Anastasiou). However, if there are complaints, I will evaluate my actions, consult with my faculty supervisor, and make the necessary adjustments. In the case of any subjects becoming distraught or upset during the interview, I have compiled a list of community service centers available in the area of the study that can provide care for and ensure the safety and welfare of all subjects participating in the research. Additionally, participants will be given the safeguard of absolute confidentiality. The confidentiality details are included in detail in Section VIII. Additionally, the transport of all data will be secured, consequently, for true safeguarding purposes, all original data and the data file drive being used to store this information will be kept in a secure place.

VIII. Potential Benefits

There are various benefits that will come from this research. One of those benefits is that a new field of study and a new way of approaching conflict and conflict resolution that will become available. My research goal is to promote a greater understanding of Islam, and its contributions to society, Muslim and Non-Muslim. My research goal is to promote a greater understanding of Islam and what it has to offer to the field of conflict resolution.

IX. Confidentiality, Records & Distribution

All participants will be provided confidentiality regarding their contributions to the research, their identities will remain confidential. Their names will be replaced with a number, I will have a numbering system that will be associated with each participant, this documentation will be in my possession and properly safeguarded for the duration of my research, and for the period thereafter. As a result, all the information and data obtained from this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. This study incorporates several procedures, as stated above, to protect the privacy of the participants. The responses will be held confidential and no effort will be made to link individuals with their responses. No record of involvement by the subjects who participate in this study will be indicated or made available by name, identification or any other means.

X. Appendices

All instruments mentioned above will be included in the application.

XI. Community Resources

Bilal Masjid

4115 SW 160th Ave Beaverton, OR 97007 Telephone (503) 591-7233

Masjid AsSabr

Islamic Center of Portland, Oregon, USA info@assaber.com

Masjid Al-Tawheed

730 North Main Street, Phoenix, OR 97535 (541) 646 8233

Appendix C

Consent Form

Conflict Resolution in Islam

Principal researcher: Flamur Vehapi

Conflict Resolution Graduate Program

Portland State University,

Portland Oregon – U.S.A. (503) 725-4288 / U.S. 1-877-480-4400.

E-mail: fvehapi@hotmail.com

Thesis title: Conflict Resolution in Islam

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University, Conflict Resolution Department. The researcher hopes to unearth the tradition of conflict resolution that comes out of the religion of Islam, which is unknown even to many Muslims. In this study, the existing literature will be examined in order to formulate a better understanding of the dynamics of the Qur'an, hadith and other documents as they relate to the field of Conflict Resolution. Furthermore, this thesis examines the role and the contributions of Islam in the field of Conflict Resolution.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to talk to Flamur face-to-face in a one-on-one setting for about thirty minutes, and answer a set of 10 questions listed below. While participating in this study, it is possible to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an explanation. You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but the study may help to increase knowledge which may help others in the future.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. This information will be kept confidential by Flamur Vehapi

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and it will not affect your relationship with Flamur Vehapi, his friends or your community. You may withdraw from this study at any time without affecting your connection with aforementioned individuals. You can also skip any question that you do not want to answer while responding to the survey questions.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, Market Center Building, 1600 SW 4th Avenue, Portland State University, Portland Oregon – U.S.A. (503) 725-4288 / U.S. 1-877-480-4400.

Please read careful the following section:

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences Potential risk will be minimized by making the environment as comfortable as possible for the subjects; and if further support is needed, the community resources will be contacted for assistance (see section XI of this application).

My participation is strictly voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the study at any moment or refuse to participate without any penalty. Although it would be preferable that I answer all of the questions, if I am uncomfortable with any particular question, I may skip or refuse to answer. I have also received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I, in turn, assure the researcher that I will treat in the same confidential way all the information he will share during my meeting meetings.

Please note that material gathered during this research will be treated as confidential and securely stored. Please answer each statement concerning the collection and use of the research data.

I have read and understood the information sheet.	Yes	No
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	Yes	No
I have had my questions, if any, answered satisfactorily.	Yes	No
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an explanation.	Yes	No
I agree to the interview being recorded and to its contents being used for research purposes.	Yes	No
I agree to be unidentified in this interview and in any subsequent publications or use. Where used my name must be removed and my comments made anonymous.	Yes	No

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

Signature

Date

Name (printed) _____

Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions: fvehapi@hotmail.com

Appendix D

Selected Qur'anic verses: ⁸¹

Surah (Chapter) 1, Verese 1-7:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful.
Owner of the Day of Judgment,
Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
Show us the straight path,
The path of those whom Thou hast favoured. Not (the path) of those
who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

Surah 2, Verse 255:

Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal.
Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him.
Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth.
Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave?
He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them,
while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will.
His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving
them.
He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.

Surah 8, Verses 61-62:

And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah.
Lo! He, is the Hearer, the Knower.
And if they would deceive thee, then lo! Allah is Sufficient for thee.
He it is Who supporteth thee with His help and with the believers.

Surah 29, Verse 46:

And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better,
save with such of them as do wrong; and say:
We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you;
our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender.

⁸¹ Excerpts from the *Meanings of the Glorious Quran*, Trans. by M. Pikhall.

Surah 59, Verse 23:

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God,
the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace,
the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic,
the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified be Allah
from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him).

Surah 112:

Say: He is Allah, the One!
Allah, the eternally Besought of all!
He begetteth not nor was begotten.
And there is none comparable unto Him.

Appendix E

*Selected Hadith*⁸²

Whosoever plans a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.

Every religion has a special character; and the characteristic of Islam is modesty.

Do you love God? Love your fellow being first.

No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother what he desires for himself.

God will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to people.

The servants of God are those who walk the earth in humility.

Kindness is a mark of faith; those without kindness are also without faith.

Have compassion on those who live on earth and He Who is in the Heaven will have compassion on you.

The most excellent jihad is the conquest of one's ego.

Be not angry.

A strong person is not he who throws his adversaries to the ground. A strong person is the one who contains himself when angry.⁸³

Strive always to excel in virtue and truth.

Say what is true, although it may be bitter and displeasing to people.

Doing justice is charity; and assisting a man upon his beast and lifting his baggage is charity, and pure, comforting words are charity ... and removing that which is an inconvenience to wayfarer ... is a charity.

Indeed, an ignorant man who is generous is dearer to God than a worshipper who is miserly.

Feed the hungry and visit the sick, free the captive if he is unjustly confined, and assist the oppressed.

⁸² Excerpts from *What do Muslims Believe?* by Z. Sardar, pp. 119-122., and other sources of hadith.

⁸³ From <http://mpf21.wordpress.com/islamic-nonviolence/the-prophet-of-peace-fundamental-hadith-for-peacebuilders/>

It is better for a leader to make a mistake in forgiving than to make a mistake in punishing.

Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.

An hour's contemplation is better than a year's worship.

He who knows himself knows God.

The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr.

Appendix F

*The Constitution of Madinah (The Madinah Charter)*⁸⁴

In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

(1) This is a document from Muhammad the prophet (governing the relations) between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them.

(2) They are one community (umma) to the exclusion of all men.

(3) The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.

(4-8) The B. ‘Auf according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit they paid in heathenism; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers. The B. Sa’ida, the B. ‘l-Harith, and the B. Jusham, and the B. al-Najjar likewise.

(9-11) The B. ‘Amr b. ‘Auf, the B. al-Nabit and the B. al-‘Aus likewise.

(12)(a) Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or bloodwit in kindness.

(12)(b) A believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Muslim against him.

(13) The God-fearing believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice, or sin or animosity, or corruption between believers; the hand of every man shall be against him even if he be a son of one of them.

(14) A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he aid an unbeliever against a believer.

(15) God’s protection is one, the least of them may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders.

(16) To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided.

(17) The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of God. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.

(18) In every foray a rider must take another behind him.

(19) The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God.

(20)(a) The God-fearing believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance.

(20)(b) No polytheist shall take the property of person of Quraysh under his protection nor shall he intervene against a believer.

(21) Whoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

(22) It shall not be lawful to a believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in God and the last day to help an evil-doer or to shelter him. The curse of God

⁸⁴ This text is taken from A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (a Translation of Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1955; pp. 231-233. Numbering added. As quoted in http://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/con_medinah.htm

and His anger on the day of resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be received from him.

(23) Whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad.

(24) The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.

(25) The Jews of the B. 'Auf are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families.

(26-35) The same applies to the Jews of the B. al-Najjar, B. al-Harith, B. Sai ida, B. Jusham, B. al-Aus, B. Tha'laba, and the Jafna, a clan of the Tha'laba and the B. al-Shutayba. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The freedmen of Tha'laba are as themselves. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.

(36) None of them shall go out to war save the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his household, unless it be one who has wronged him, for God will accept that.

(37) The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped.

(38) The Jews must pay with the believers so long as war lasts.

(39) Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document.

(40) A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime.

(41) A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family.

(42) If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the apostle of God. God accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document.

(43) Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection.

(44) The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib.

(45)(a) If they are called to make peace and maintain it they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Muslims it must be carried out except in the case of a holy war.

(45)(b) Every one shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs.

(46) The Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in purely loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. He who acquires ought acquires it for himself. God approves of this document.

(47) This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city is safe unless he has been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-fearing man and Muhammad is the apostle of God.

Appendix G

*The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah*⁸⁵

1. Make things easy and do not make them hard, and cheer people up and do not rebuff them.
2. The Muslims shall return this time and come back next year, but they shall not stay in Makkah for more than three days.
3. They shall not come back armed but can bring with them swords only sheathed in scabbards and these shall be kept in bags.
4. War activities shall be suspended for ten years, during which both parties will live in full security and neither will raise sword against the other.
5. If anyone from Quraish goes over to Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) without his guardian's permission, he should be sent back to Quraish, but should any of Muhammad's followers return to Quraish, he shall not be sent back.
6. Whosoever wishes to join Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace), or enter into treaty with him, should have the liberty to do so; and likewise whosoever wishes to join Quraish, or enter into treaty with them, should be allowed to do so (as qtd in Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002, pp. 403-404)

⁸⁵ See The Sealed Nectar, pp. 398-410.

Appendix H

*The agreement of Umar with the people of the surrendered Jerusalem in 638 C.E.*⁸⁶

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety [*aman*] which the servant of God Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has given to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves, for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and the healthy of the city and for all rituals which belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their crosses, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted... Those of the people of Jerusalem who want to leave with the Byzantines, take their property and abandon their churches and crosses will be safe until [they] reach their place of refuge...and those who wish may return to their families...If they pay their taxes according to their obligations, then the conditions laid out in this letter are under the covenant of God, are the responsibility of His Prophet, of the caliphs and of the faithful.

⁸⁶ Excerpt from *The Great Arab Conquests* by H. Kennedy, pp. 91-92.

Appendix I

*Just War Theory Requirements*⁸⁷

- The war is used as the last resort after all other peaceful alternatives have been convincingly exhausted.
- The war must be waged by a legitimate authority (this usually means the state).
- The war must be in response to a wrong committed, for example, aggression and it is carried out only to redress the injury with the right intention throughout.
- There must be a reasonable chance of success for the war to start.
- Peace, as the ultimate objective of the war, must be superior to the peace that prevailed before the war.
- There must be proportionality in the conduct of war. All unnecessary deaths, injuries and suffering, outside the remit of the objective of war must be avoided.
- The War should discriminate combatants and non-combatants, particularly civilians.

⁸⁷ Excerpt from *War and Peace in Islam* by Mirbagheri, p. 129.

Appendix J

In the Footsteps of the Prophet

After Jerusalem had surrendered in 638 C.E., Umar had personally travelled there from Madinah (approximately 800 miles/1280 km) to receive the keys of the surrendered city from Patriarch Sophronius, who would not give the keys to anyone else but the ruler of the Muslims. Once the city was taken, no blood was spilled, nor were any Christian or Jewish holy sites damaged. Furthermore, as the patriarch guided Umar to the city's holy sites, he also took Umar to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Realizing that Umar's time for prayer had come, the patriarch offered him to pray in the church, but Umar refused, fearing that later Muslims might use that as an excuse and try to convert the church into a mosque; instead he prayed in the street (Kennedy, 2007, pp. 92-93). In addition, the agreement that Umar made with the Christian leaders who surrendered Jerusalem is a fascinating account in itself where he not only left them mind their own business, he also give them the right of protection under the Islamic rule (see Appendix).

Another highly respected caliph is Umar bin Abd al-Aziz (r. 717 – 720 C.E.). This just ruler is known for his equal treatment and justice towards his people, Muslim and non-Muslim. As Haye (1950) notes, Umar bin Abd al-Aziz made sure that his governors made it “their sacred duty to see that no church or, synagogue or fire-temple was ever desecrated in any way by anybody” (p. 41). And as far as some of the proceeding caliphs are concerned, many of them were mostly concerned with internal strives in their empire, however there were others like Harun al-Rasheed (r. 786 – 809 C.E.) or al-Mamun (r. 813 - 833 C.E.) of the Abbasid Empire who mostly concerned themselves with the advancement of knowledge and scientific developments where Muslims, Christians and Jews flourished in “the empire and enjoyed unprecedented peace” (Armstrong, 2000, pp. 54-56).

When moving forward in history, it is hard to miss the great figure and the excellent example of Salah ad-Din Ayubi (r. 1174 – 1193). He is now known as Salahudin (or *Saladin* in the Western world), who fought and gave an end to the Medieval Crusades. After capturing almost every Crusader city in the Middle East, Salahudin laid siege to Jerusalem and captured it in 1187. Knowing that the Christian Crusaders, less than a century earlier, had massacred every living person within the walls of the city, now when the city had surrendered to Salahudin, and when he had the power to do the same to the Christians, to everyone's surprise, Salahudin let every Christian walk freely out of the city (Armstrong, 1996, p. 274).⁸⁸ Here, Salahudin, of course, followed his spiritual example, and did what he, the Prophet, had done with the people of Makkah centuries earlier.

Another interesting example that has been reported down to us from both sides, Muslim and Christian sources, is the time when King Richard fell ill while in charge of the Crusades. Having heard of this, even during a time of war with the Christians,

⁸⁸ Describing what had taken place when the Crusaders had taken Jerusalem in 1099, Raymond of Aguiles, an eye-witness wrote, “If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple of the Porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins” (Armstrong, 1996, p. 274).

Salahudin arranged for his personal physician to visit the Christian king and treat him with the best possible treatment available at the time; a treatment that the Christian Europe did not know much about at the time.⁸⁹ As a result, Salahudin's kindness and noble attitude, won him respect not only by Muslims but also by many Western writers (as-Sibaa'ie, 2005, p. 156). On this note, René Grousset (1970), for example, wrote, "It is equally true that his [Salahudin's] generosity, his piety, devoid of fanaticism, that flower of liberality and courtesy which had been the model of our old chroniclers, won him no less popularity in Frankish Syria than in the lands of Islam."⁹⁰

On this note Haye (1950), adds that Salahudin allowed anyone to live in his dominion, and treated "Muslims, Christians and Jews alike with equal fairness" (p. 65). This was Salahudin, the Kurdish Sultan of Egypt and Syria, whose example continues to inspire people in the Muslim world and beyond, to this day. However, a couple centuries later, another powerful figure was to follow the same path, that of Salahudin, laid out for both of them by the Prophet himself; this was the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih, known in the West as Mehmet the Conqueror.

Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih (r. 1444 – 1481), a devout Muslim, was only 21 when he conquered Constantinople in 1453. Unlike what the Crusaders had done to Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, it is written that after the conquest, the young sultan entered the Aya Sofia church, where many people had fled for their safety, and reassured everyone that they were all free and protected by the men of the sultan. The sultan not only asked everyone to return peacefully to their homes, he also made sure that they were free to have their priests, observe their own laws, and practice their religion in his new city, now called Istanbul (as-Sibaa'ie, 2005, pp. 156-7).

History clearly indicates that most of the Ottoman sultans are well known for their tolerance towards their subjects of any religion. It was actually during the Inquisitions that most of the Muslims, Jews and people of other faiths that were persecuted and exiled by the church, were willingly absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. In addition, while the Christians of Europe were suffering because of the harshness of their rulers, the Ottomans had fairly good relations with the neighboring countries like Greece, Bulgaria, the Albanian lands, and so on (the later accepted Islam peacefully by thousands because of this Ottoman tolerance and justice) (as-Sibaa'ie, 2005, p. 157).

In one case, describing the atrocities that were taking place in Europe between the Polish Catholics and the Orthodox, the Patriarch of Antioch, Macarius, wrote, "...May God cause the Turkish state to abide forever, for they take the *jizyah* (tribute) that they have imposed but they have nothing to do with other religions, and they do not care whether their subjects are Christian or Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans..." (as-Sibaa'ie, 2005, p. 158).

⁸⁹ This is because by this time Islamic sciences had achieved their greatest potential in medicine and other related fields (See *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, 2007).

⁹⁰ See 'The Byzantines and Saladin, 1185-1192,' on *Speculum* by Charles Brand, 1962.

Appendix K

Supplemental Files: Participant Responses

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT A

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University; Vehapi is a graduate student with the Conflict Resolution Department.

Note: Please feel free to print or write your answers directly in this document. Also, feel free to skip any question you may not feel comfortable answering.

Sex: **M** (please circle or underline one)

Your current location (e.g. Portland, OR, USA)_____

1. What is your current position, as far as your involvement in the Muslim community is concerned? (e.g. Imam of the local mosque)
Imam _____
2. What is your educational background in Islam? (e.g. B.A. in Islamic Law and Theology)

3. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (always taking into account your interpretation of them), what does Islam have to say about conflict, as far as its roots are concerned, *and* conflict resolution?⁹¹

Qur'an emphasizes that humans are created by Almighty God yet they do differ in their view and ideas and interests, in order to bring them together Almighty God has sent His Holy revelation to help people resolve their disputes and conflict through dialogue. Allah says: "And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing, Chapter Hud, verse (118)

Qur'an prescribes the path to the solution:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (59) Surah An-Nisa

⁹¹ For this and other answers, please try to provide evidence from the sources of Islam, if possible, considering that this research is mostly a document review (of the Qu'ran, hadith and other important documents of Islam).

Almighty God advises Muslims that in case of dispute or conflict they should be fair and polite:

The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend. (34) Surah Fussilat

4. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about anger as far as conflict is concerned?

Qur'an teaches believers to repel the evil with that which is better: "Repel evil with that which is better. We are best aware of that which they allege. (96) Al-Mu'minun, but in case of fight- war-, Islam encourages its followers to peaceful and avoid the fight and resolve conflicts through peaceful means, but also teaches Muslims that in time of attack they should fight back likewise Christianity and Judaism. Almighty God says: Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors. (2:190)

5. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about war and the ethics of it? *Qur'an reminds Muslims that life of human being is very precious and should be treated very carefully: " whosoever killed a person - unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land - it shall be as if he killed all mankind; and whoso gave life to one , it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind. " (Ch.5: V.33)*

Prophet Muhammed a.s. was advising his followers to abide by these rules in case of war conflict : "Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman". "Do not kill the monks in monasteries" or "Do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship."

War ethics in Islam are summarized by first Caliph Abu Bakr r.a. when he was addressing his army: O people! I charge you with ten rules; learn them well!

Stop, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

6. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about violence and/or non-violence?

Islam advises its followers to resolve their issues only through means of non-violence. Verses above they can be used to understand Islamic instructions during the violence or non violence. Prophet Muhammed a.s. was encouraging his followers " do not get angry and for that they will have the paradise"

7. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, how does jihad relate to war and peace?

Jihad is often misunderstood by non- Muslims and even most of Muslims. Jihad is an effort to do what is right and beneficial for mankind. Word Jihad does not mean war of holy war, the appropriate word for war in Qur'an is mentioned QITAL- fight or war. Read this verse and you will find the word QITAL= fight or war: "How should ye not fight for the cause of Allah and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord!

Bring us forth from out this town of which the people are oppressors! Oh, give us from thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender! (75) Surah An-Nisa

8. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about peace and peacemaking?

Qur'an commands Muslims to pursue peace and not initiate the fight: "and if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Lo! He, is the Hearer, the Knower. (61) Surah Al-Anfal

9. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about nationalism?
Almighty God says that all human being are created from single male and female and no race or color is privileged nor favored except those they are more beneficial for humans and pious: " O mankind! Lo! We have created you from male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware. (13) Al- Hujurat

10. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about tolerance and or forgiveness (in times of war and/or peace)?

Qur'an commands Muslims to pursue peace and not initiate the fight: "and if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Lo! He, is the Hearer, the Knower. (61) Surah Al-Anfal

Almighty God says that various races and nations and languages are signs of Allah and richness in His creations: And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge. (22) Al- Rum, so fanaticism and nationalism does not have base in Holy Qur'an. All races are treated equally in Islamic perspective.

Any comments or suggestions are welcome.

Thank you,
Flamur Vehapi

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT B

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University; Vehapi is a graduate student with the Conflict Resolution Department.

Note: Please feel free to print or write your answers directly in this document. Also, feel free to skip any question you may not feel comfortable answering.

Sex: **M** / F (please circle or underline one)

Your current location (e.g. Portland, OR, USA) _____

1. What is your current position, as far as your involvement in the Muslim community is concerned? (e.g. Imam of the local mosque)

2. What is your educational background in Islam? (e.g. B.A. in Islamic Law and Theology) Islamic teaching : (Quran recitation)

3. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (always taking into account your interpretation of them), what does Islam have to say about conflict, as far as its roots are concerned, *and* conflict resolution?⁹²

_Avoid conflict, work for mutual understanding and breach the gaps. Prophetic tradition narrated by Imam Al nawawi in his 40 Hadith collection: To reconcile between two individual is a charity.

4. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about anger as far as conflict is concerned?

_According the the prophetic tradition in the authenticated hadith: A man came to seek

⁹² For this and other answers, please try to provide evidence from the sources of Islam, if possible, considering that this research is mostly a document review (of the Qu'ran, hadith and other important documents of Islam).

advice from the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) advice was "Do not get angry" the advise was repeated 3 times after the man repeated his request. The scholars interpret that specific sentence "Do not get angry" as do not act while angry. As it is difficult for someone to prevent himself from getting angry, it is possible to be angry but not take any action until one cools down. In other words, restrain yourself and have self control when a person gets angry.

5. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about war and the ethics of it?

The prophetic tradition has several rules of conduct during war. Instructions encompass kind treatment of prisoners of war, tending to the wounded, prevention of harm to non combatants, not harming plants, animals, as well as safeguarding of the sources of water and protecting environment and providing safe passage to messengers

6. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about violence and/or non-violence?

_Quranic text encourage peaceful interaction, Quranic verses specifically instruct individuals to prevent harm, as well as to repel harm with the kindness as such that this kindness could pave the way to reconciliation between the two disputing parties.

7. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, how does jihad relate to war and peace?

Jihad in Islam is a way to right a wrong, and to insure the community is can gather the strength to defend itself in times of dangers. The quranic versus encourages peace making in case of enemy seeking peaceful resolution.

8. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about peace and peacemaking?

Quranic verses instruct to reach peaceful resolution to our conflict.

9. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about nationalism?

The prophet (Peace and blessing be upon him) encourages in the prophetic tradition kindness to neighbors (regardless to religious affiliation) and extends the definition of neighbor to 7 neighbors on all 4 direction of the house. The understanding is that this extends to village, city and country. Further, Islam requires individuals to insure the following are protected: Religion, Reasoning, Progeny& Family, Wealth, Honor & Reputation,

10. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about tolerance and or forgiveness (in times of war and/or peace)?

Several Islamic versus encourages forgiveness, it poses the question: "Forgive, don't you want God to forgive you?"

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT C

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University; Vehapi is a graduate student with the Conflict Resolution Department.

Note: Please feel free to print or write your answers directly in this document. Also, feel free to skip any question you may not feel comfortable answering.

Sex: **M** / **F** (please circle or underline one)

Your current location (e.g. Portland, OR, USA)_____

1. What is your current position, as far as your involvement in the Muslim community is concerned? (e.g. Imam of the local mosque)____Instructor_____ -
2. What is your educational background in Islam? (e.g. B.A. in Islamic Law and Theology)

3. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (always taking into account your interpretation of them), what does Islam have to say about conflict, as far as its roots are concerned, *and* conflict resolution?⁹³

In Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah address conflict and conflict resolution on numerous occasions. An important thing to note is that Muslims cannot participate in conflict unless it is for the purpose of self-defense or self-preservation. As described in verses 22:39-40, the permission to engage in conflict is given to those people who are currently at the receiving end of the fighting and, in effect, are being wronged. The purpose is to preserve justice and prevent oppression from becoming widespread. Even at this point, it is better to resist and reconcile by other means if there is opportunity for that.

⁹³ For this and other answers, please try to provide evidence from the sources of Islam, if possible, considering that this research is mostly a document review (of the Qu'ran, hadith and other important documents of Islam).

This concept of fighting against oppression is not exclusive to Islam. In fact, the Torah also allows for equal retaliation by those who have endured an injustice from another. The terms of this kind of fighting as explained in verses 2:190-195 of the Qur'an require that the retaliation must be equal and fair and fighting must stop as soon as the oppressors stop the fighting and pursue peace. Similarly, this approach to conflict is also manifested in verses 4:89-90 in the Qur'an. However, like the Gospels, the Qur'an encourages forgiveness and patience instead of taking revenge to be a more superior and rewarding response (5:45, 42:43).

4. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about anger as far as conflict is concerned?

In regards to dealing with anger in terms of conflict, the virtue of patience is encouraged in Islam. Disapproving of and working against wrongdoing is necessary to promote peace and justice. However, dealing with an issue can only be done effectively when remaining calm. Verse 8:46 reads, "And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and (thus) lose courage and (then) your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient." In effect, becoming so passionately angry is destructive in that it leads to a loss of objectiveness and does not result in productive means to resolve the problem. Alternatively, approaching problems with a clear head can result in long-term solutions because both parties will be more willing to compromise and part amicably. Verse 42:37 also sheds a positive light on forgiving when angry.

Verses 41:34-35 address the benefit of patience in dealing with an enemy. One translation reads, "A good action and a bad action are not the same. Requite the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will become like a bosom friend. None will attain this attribute save those who are truly steadfast. None will attain it save those who have great good fortune." Revenge can only deliver a lower form of satisfaction for the wronged party, but forgiving and showing patience can lead to good faith and a strong bond, resulting in many more and long-lasting blessings and happiness for both sides.

Also according to Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "No one can be given a better and more abundant gift than patience" (Bukhari and Muslim). This gives us more insight into the blessings of choosing patience over anger or despair.

5. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about war and the ethics of it?

My comments and supporting sources for #3 would also apply to this question.

I would add that in Islamic history during Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s life, peace was the norm and war was the exception. This should be an indication of how war should be used as a last resort for defense to fight oppression or injustice according to Islamic principles/Sunnah. The verse 2:216 in the Qur'an states, "Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not." This lends support to the concept that war and fighting in general are actually unnatural for humans and should be considered exceptions to the "normal" or "natural" state of peace according to Islam.

In terms of ethics during warfare, it was narrated by Ibn 'Umar that upon the finding of a killed woman in a battle, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prohibited the killing of women and children in

war (Sahih Muslim). Additionally, verse 5:32 states: “Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land- it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one- it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, (even) after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.” The value and sanctity of innocent human lives are emphasized here.

In terms of treaties and promises made between two parties, Muslims are obligated to uphold them with sincerity and high morality. Verse 5:1 reads, “O you who have believed, fulfill (all) contracts...” and verse 16:91 states, “And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, (O believers), and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do.”

6. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about violence and/or non-violence?

Again, please see #3 answer for specific conditions in which violence only for self-defensive and self-preservation purposes is permitted.

Violence as I've mentioned in other parts of this survey is not something that should be desired by Muslims. According to Hadith, as narrated by the authority of Abu Huraira, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Do not desire an encounter with the enemy; but when you encounter them, be firm.” (Sahih Muslim) When fighting becomes necessary for self-defense or preserving religious freedom and other basic human rights and all other means of resolution have been exhausted unsuccessfully, only then does a Muslim resort to conflict, but nowhere in the process should conflict be wanted by the Muslim. Verse 2:205 in the Qur'an reads, “And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption.” The translated word, corruption, in this verse is for the Arabic word, “fasad”. Fasad can be defined as a social disorder within the community including corruption or other crimes and violence against law and order. It is strongly disliked, especially because violence is a destructive means which, as the verse describes, brings about the loss of property and life. Violence breeds feelings of animosity and hatred.

Non-violence, on the other hand, is a positive tool, which can promote beneficial change while increasing feelings of love and satisfaction between the two disputing parties. Nonviolence has played a huge role in Islamic history and is an integral part of the Islamic tradition. During his lifetime, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was subjected to cruel and abusive treatment and at times was even a target for assassination for the message of Islam he was bringing to the people. He faced these difficulties with non-violent tactics. It was revealed to him in verse 50:39 of the Qur'an, “So be patient, (O Muhammad), over what they say and exalt (Allah) with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting”. (Also see answer #4 about verse 41:34-35)

7. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, how does jihad relate to war and peace?

The word jihad is derived from the root word “jahada”, which means to strive or struggle in the path of God (verse 22:78). Jihad can refer to the inner spiritual struggle of a Muslim or an outer physical struggle. The outer struggle is split into two methods of resolving issues: non-violence and violence. As mentioned in #3, the conditions for choosing war are limited and used as a last

resort in an effort to protect oneself and preserve basic rights for themselves and society (Qur'anic verse 2:193). Qur'anic verse 2:251 also sheds light on the purpose of this type of struggle for being a means of fighting corruption and preventing it from spreading. In all other cases, where a non-violent option exists when interacting with others, peaceful means should be chosen (Qur'anic verse 60:8). The struggle/striving in the path of God is a way to achieve peace. As I have mentioned in #8 in more detail, practicing Islam and increasing worship/moral work in seeking pleasure of Allah is an individual struggle for each Muslim which results in peace.

8. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about peace and peacemaking?

The very name of the religion, Islam, means submission or surrender to God. The root of this name is "salam", meaning peace. In verse 59:23, one of Allah's names is revealed to be Al-Salaam (Peace).

Practicing Islam is a path to peace as understood from the Qur'anic verse 5:16 which states, "By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path". Paradise has also been named as "The Home of Peace" in verse 6:127 of the Qur'an. In effect, Islam teaches Muslims that they should always be striving for peace.

There is also much support for peacemaking in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic verse 8:61 states, "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it (also) and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. Whenever a dispute occurs, it is encouraged to attempt reconciliation first and upon many times in the Qur'an this is better than taking violent means (Qur'anic verses 49:9, 4:128).

There are also many examples of peacemaking conducted by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). According to one Hadith narrated by Sahl bin Sad: "Once the people of Quba fought with each other till they threw stones on each other. When Allah's Apostle was informed about it, he said, 'Let us go to bring about a reconciliation between them.'" (Sahih Bukhari) Another hadith narrated by Al-Bara bin 'Azib was: "When Allah's Apostle concluded a peace treaty with the people of Hudaibiya, Ali bin Abu Talib wrote the document and he mentioned in it, 'Muhammad, Allah's Apostle.' The pagans said, 'Don't write: 'Muhammad, Allah's Apostle', for if you were an apostle we would not fight with you.' Allah's apostle asked Ali to rub it out, but Ali said, 'I will not be the person to rub it out.' Allah's Apostle rubbed it out and made peace with them on the condition that the Prophet and his companions would enter Mecca and stay there for three days, and that they would enter with their weapons in cases (Sahih Bukhari). This shows how patient and compromising the Prophet (SAW) was for the purpose of choosing a peaceful route.

Another narration by Abu Huraira relates: "Allah's Apostle said, 'There is Sadaqa to be given for every joint of the human body; and for every day on which the sun rises there is a reward of a Sadaqa (ie: charitable gift) for the one who establishes justice among people.'" "

Peacemaking requires patience, which is a trait of a good Muslim. Qur'anic verse 39:10 reads, "Say, 'O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without

account'."

9. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about nationalism?

In Islam, humankind is viewed to be equal with no differentiation between race, age, nationality, or any other such superficial factor. In fact, diversity is the will and manifestation of God. As verse 49:13 states, "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." This emphasizes that the only status differentiating us that is judged by God is based on the good works and righteousness of a human being's beliefs and conduct.

10. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about tolerance and or forgiveness (in times of war and/or peace)?

Tolerance is heavily promoted in Islamic values. In the Qur'anic verse 29:46 it is stated, "And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims (in submission) to Him.'" Islamic principles encourage positive interfaith dealings between Muslims and people of the Christian and Jewish faith.

Also, showing forgiveness and being merciful are very important for the Muslim. In the Qur'anic verse 15:85 it is revealed, "And We have not created the heavens and earth and that between them except in truth. And indeed, the Hour is coming; so forgive with gracious forgiveness."

The Prophet (SAW) said, "Whoever suffers an injury and forgives (the person responsible), God will raise his status to a higher degree and remove one of his sins." (Al-Tirmidhi). At another time, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy (by Allah)" (Al-Bukhari). Islamic teachings about forgiveness and the benefits of acting merciful towards others only reinforces the idea that Islam is a benevolent religion for not only the individual Muslim or Muslim community, but for the rest of society and world.

Any comments or suggestions are welcome.

Thank you,
Flamur Vehapi

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT D

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Flamur Vehapi from Portland State University; Vehapi is a graduate student with the Conflict Resolution Department.

Note: Please feel free to print or write your answers directly in this document. Also, feel free to skip any question you may not feel comfortable answering.

Sex: **M** / F (please circle or underline one)

Your current location (e.g. Portland, OR, USA) _____

1. What is your current position, as far as your involvement in the Muslim community is concerned? (e.g. Imam of the local mosque)

Imam

2. What is your educational background in Islam? (e.g. B.A. in Islamic Law and Theology) Islamic teaching : MA in Islamic Studies

3. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (always taking into account your interpretation of them), what does Islam have to say about conflict, as far as its roots are concerned, *and* conflict resolution?⁹⁴

Prophet Muhammad exemplified choosing forgiveness and patience over revenge throughout his life. One example occurred in his experience with the people of Ta'if. Ta'if was a town

⁹⁴ For this and other answers, please try to provide evidence from the sources of Islam, if possible, considering that this research is mostly a document review (of the Qu'ran, hadith and other important documents of Islam).

where the Prophet went to preach and invite others to Islam. It was there that he suffered much humiliation and abuse by the people. They had even gotten their children to throw stones at him and he suffered so much that even his feet were clotted to his shoes with blood. Finally, in response to this suffering, Angel Jibreel was sent by Allah to the Prophet to give him the option of destroying the town of Ta'if and its residents by having two mountains fall upon them. Despite having received so much pain and injustice from them, the Prophet declined in an act of forgiveness in the hope that one day there would be some from the future generations of the Ta'if people who would be Muslims. Instead, he made supplication to seek the pleasure of Allah.

4. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about anger as far as conflict is concerned?
5. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about war and the ethics of it?

Islam encourages fair treatment of the enemy. Verse 5:8 reads, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do." Prisoners of war are shown kindness in a variety of ways. Verses 76:5-9 state, "Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup (of wine) whose mixture is of Kafur, A spring of which the (righteous) servants of Allah will drink; they will make it gush forth in force (and abundance). They (are those who) fulfill (their) vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread. And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, (Saying), 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.'" Giving prisoners food was a new charitable practice incorporated by Muslims in a time when it was customary for captives to be forced to work for their food or get it by other private ways. Also, in reference to the enemy, Anas b. Malik reported that Prophet Muhammad said, "Show leniency; do not be hard; give solace and do not create aversion (towards religion)." (Sahih Muslim)

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6. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about violence and/or non-violence?

Islam started as a religion that completely opposed violence, but later adopted a policy of self-defense.

7. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, how does jihad relate to war and peace?

Jihad is seen as a way of struggling to make peace and not to cause war, but today it is viewed as the opposite of what it actually is.

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8. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to teach about peace and peacemaking?

The Prophet said peacemaking is one of the most honorable jobs one can have.

9. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about nationalism?

It is considered a sinful act because it ignores the most fundamental rights of every human being.

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10. Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, what does Islam have to say about tolerance and or forgiveness (in times of war and/or peace)?

Islam is a religion of tolerance and forgiveness, both the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet show this. See Life of Muhammad by Martin Lings.

Any comments or suggestions are welcome.

Thank you,
Flamur Vehapi