Islam – The Global Perspective
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Circle of Peace

Summary

Muslims will unanimously proclaim that Islam is a universal religion because the Qur’an asserts itself to be a message for the worlds; it proclaims Prophet Muhammad as the bearer of glad tidings and messenger for all mankind. Verifying the authenticity of earlier revealed scriptures and all prophets, the Qur’an refers to itself as the perfect Book and Islam as the perfect religion. Islam claims to be a living faith and considers revelation and communion with God to be a continual process. It asserts that the avenues of spiritual bliss experienced by prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the Prophet of Islam, are still open and beckoning to those desirous of close communion with God.

However, there is a major gap in perception and reality. The judgment about Islam, based on Muslims’ behavior in their native or adopted societies, is contrary to the above Qur’anic assertions. Herein lays the dilemma that this paper will address. It will explore if Islam can indeed justify its claim to be the universal religion. If so, then what has enabled Muslims groups to radicalize in the name of Islam and become the disruptive force in the world?

This paper will argue that radicalism, destruction, militancy, and such disruptive behavior of Muslims is caused because of political interpretations and narratives that have been interjected into the religion by regional reform movements. Moreover, due to the absence of economic advancement, lack of basic necessities like education, healthcare, clean water, justice and societal peace, the population in Muslim majority countries feel dejected and victimized by the former Western colonizers.

1 Qur’an Ch 81, v 28: “It is nothing but a Reminder unto all the worlds,”
2 Peace be upon him – a customary salutation used with all prophets.
3 Qur’an Ch 34, v 29: “And We have not sent thee but as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner, for all mankind, but most men know not.”
4 Qur’an Ch 7, v 159: “Say, ‘O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no God but He. He gives life, and He causes death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet, the Immaculate one, who believes in Allah and His words; and follow him that you may be rightly guided.’”
5 Ch 2, v 286 “All (of us) believe in Allah, and His angels, and in His Books, and in His messengers saying, “we make no distinction between any of his Messengers”.
6 Ch 2, v 3: This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous,
7 Ch 5, v 4: “...This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.”
The myths that Islam is a complete political system and people living under Islamic governments led near ideal lives, has been fed to the Muslims for about a century. They accept the politicized clergy’s call to return to the fundamentals of the faith and thus yearn to live a utopian life under the Islamic form of government. Consequently, most Muslims also support the clergy’s call for the creation of the Islamic State ruled under sharia law.

This paper will highlight the internal confusion amongst Muslims, as quantified by the Pew Survey Results of 2013, and urge them to seek modern education, separate religion from politics, transform their societies towards industrialization, and understand human rights in the broadest sense. Moreover, while Muslims will be urged to revert to the Qur’an for guidance they will be cautioned to critically review the several interpretations and explanations of the scripture to understand their faith. Some of the explanations are either politically motivated or limited by the scholar’s knowledge; such misrepresentations are the major source of misunderstandings and confusion about Islam. Most people will be astonished to find congruency between the Qur’anic teachings and the standards of the modern world.

Introduction

Muslims are not a monolithic community; they represent a very diverse group with varied cultural, ethnic, tribal, linguistic and even spiritual backgrounds. Muslims hold several perspectives on all issues, including basic issues of faith and these perspectives are not always in agreement. While the Shia Sunni split emerged shortly after the Prophet’s death, during the time of Caliph Ali, its reason was not doctrinal; it was based primarily on the selection of the leader after the Prophet’s death. With time, the split grew wider and some doctrinal differences crept in. Today, Muslims are divided in several dozen groups (sects).

The differences among Muslim groups progressed at a relatively slow pace until the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the termination of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924. Although the defeat and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and subsequent colonization of the Mughal Empire was brought upon by their failure to keep abreast of the transition towards industrial revolution in Europe, the Muslim narrative has always blamed it on a Western (Christian) conspiracy to defeat Islam; Crusades have frequently been used as an example to highlight Christian enmity and their desire to eliminate Muslims. Later with the formation of the State of Israel, all Muslim setbacks have been blamed on Judeo-Christian conspiracies. In the case of Pakistan, any setbacks are also ascribed to a Hindu conspiracy. These are merely excuses to deflect responsibility.

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8 [http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society.aspx](http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society.aspx)
The doctrinal differences among Muslims can be exemplified by the failure of several leading scholars to define a Muslim in 1953.⁹ In fact, virtually all Muslim sects have declared other sects as non-Muslims.¹⁰

The first section of this paper will describe the religion of Islam and highlight the universality of its teachings. The second section will discuss the major politicization of the religion through regional reformation movements, the geopolitical and demographic effects, and the internal confusion among Muslims in understanding their faith. The second section will also highlight how the politicization of the faith is not only contrary to its teachings and spirit but why the political interpretation will fail to achieve its objectives of establishing an Islamic State and global dominance.

**Part 1 – The Religion of Islam**

Islam is the youngest of the Semitic faiths and its teachings are defined in the scripture – the Qur’an – which is its primary source. The word Islam means peace or submission to God’s will and the practitioner of Islam is known as a Muslim. Essential Islamic practices are the five pillars¹¹ and the six articles of faith.¹² Muslims have two primary religious obligations – one towards the Creator and the other towards the creation.

The five pillars represent the obligations towards the Creator and serve as a training tool for living up to one’s commitment through: (1) affirmation, (2) leading a disciplined and hygienic life with humility and seeking God’s forgiveness through obligatory prayers, (3) demonstrating commitment and loyalty by even foregoing permitted food through fasting, (4) sharing wealth with the needy through charity and (5) demonstrating equality of humankind and coming together as equals through the pilgrimage. Some examples of the training tools that enable Muslims to fulfill their obligations towards the creation – their fellow human beings and all other creation – including the environment are: helping humanity, protecting the weak and needy, exhibiting humility and moderation, safeguarding basic rights for humans and animals, protecting the environment, etc. Seeking knowledge is another essential obligation towards creation because it helps enables the person to better understand the cause and effect relationship.

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⁹ Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted Under Punjab ACT II of 1954 to Enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953, p 214-218
¹⁰ Ibid, p 219-220
¹¹ Affirmation (kali’ma), five obligatory daily prayers (namaz), fasting during Ramadan (roza), charity on wealth (zakat) and pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).
¹² Belief in one God, all angels, all prophets, all revealed scriptures of which five are mentioned in Qur’an, predestination and life after death.
Establishing peace, equality and justice, along with human rights, racial and gender equality, basic freedoms of faith and interfaith harmony and the abolition of slavery are essential Islamic teachings. Islamic prohibitions are rebellion, violence, coercion, intoxication, hoarding, corruption, discrimination, priesthood, celibacy, etc.

Islam is not a ritualistic religion; the objective of Islamic practice is the gradual transformation of the individual from the basic instinctive stage to the moral stage and then to the spiritual stage. Islam assigns minimum behavioral traits of absolute justice for the lowest (instinctive) stage and progressively higher traits of benevolence and overwhelming benevolence for the successive stages of human development (Figure 1).

Prophet Muhammad's life provides an example of following the Qur'anic teachings. Generally known as sunna (practices) and hadith (exhortations), this database was collected about two centuries after his death. Several scholars devised methodologies to collect and compile examples from the Prophet's life but had to rely on peoples' memory for the details. Given the enormity and complexities involved, some erroneous events found their way into the collection. This data was then verified through extensive tests, cross referenced and categorized into three major groupings. The most authentic traditions were those that had been reported to be widespread during the Prophet's time and had continued to be transmitted without interruptions; very few traditions fall in this category. The ones that were widespread but the chain of transmission was broken between being observed and reported or where the event was not widely reported during the Prophet’s time but was transmitted through few sources were considered weaker. Overall, the sunna and hadith represent the secondary source of Islamic teachings. The rule of thumb is that any tradition, contrary to Qur’anic teachings, must be rejected.

Several illustrious examples of the Prophet's compassion, concern for humanity, establishing peace and justice, and human rights are reported in these traditions. Four of these historical facts, are summarized below:

1. **The Constitution of Medina** is a shining example of the Prophet’s desire for establishing peace. After being forced to relocate from Mecca (his birthplace) because of persecution due to his beliefs, he accepted the invitation from the tribes of Medina where he developed a tripartite agreement (sa’hi’fa) with the various warring factions living in Medina. (This is generally referred to as an example of an Islamic state but the facts are misrepresented, as will be shown later.)

Commonly known as the Constitution of Medina this agreement was based on an inclusive conception of the rule of law, with two basic principles: the safeguarding of individual rights by impartial judicial authority, and the principle of equality before the
The terms of the agreement recognized the diverse ethnic, religious and secular affiliations of the signatories – Jews, Muslims, Medina natives, Meccan immigrants, the Arab belonging to the Aws and Khazraj clans, and did not demand conversion to Islam. The community created by the sa’hi’fa became known as the ummah, a term describing the totality of individuals living in Medina who were bound to one another by the sa’hi’fa. As a rudimentary basis of civil law, the primary purpose of this tripartite agreement was the resolution of conflicts without violence. Accordingly, blood feuds were abolished, and all rights were given equally to Medina’s citizens, regardless of religion, ethnicity or social position.

2. **The Peace Treaty at Hudaibiya** is another brilliant example of tolerance, peacemaking and faith in God. In this instance, the prophet accepted seemingly unfavorable terms to make peace with the Meccans, even going against his companions’ advice to the contrary. When he and his unarmed companions, dressed as pilgrims for the annual Hajj reached the borders of Mecca, the Meccans disallowed permission to proceed forward and perform Hajj. They demanded that the Prophet and his companions return to Medina, without performing the pilgrimage, and return next year when permission will be granted. The other condition was that if any Meccan sought refuge in Medina, that person should be returned while if anyone from Medina sought refuge in Mecca, that person will not be returned. Accepting these seemingly unfair conditions, the Prophet advised his companions to perform the traditional sacrifice at that place. When he affixed his seal to the agreement, the Meccans objected because the seal identified him as God’s prophet – a position which the Meccans did not recognize. He willingly struck off that part and signed his name without the title.

3. **The Fall of Mecca** is another admirable example of the Prophet’s respect for human life, honoring the treaties and desire for peace. After a Muslim ally was killed by a Meccan ally, the victim’s family demanded justice. The Prophet offered three options to the Meccans: (1) dissolve their alliance with the culprit, (2) compensate the victim, or (3) dissolve their peace treaty with the Muslims. The Meccans opted for the latter and the Prophet marched on to Mecca announcing general amnesty to its inhabitants and non-combatants. Not one single person was killed in combat despite the fact that the Meccans had long persecuted the Muslims and forced them to migrate to Medina.

4. **The Farewell Sermon** is the magnificent example of upholding universal human rights. Declaring all human beings as equal, he reminded them to safeguard the honor, life and property of other human beings and reiterated that husbands and wives have reciprocal rights over each other and are partners.
Prophet Muhammad defined a Muslim as the person whose word and deed do not harm others.\textsuperscript{13} Prophet Muhammad’s last sermon, which came to be known as his \textit{Farewell Pilgrimage}, is an eternal charter of peace for humanity.

\textbf{The Universality of Islamic Teachings}

The prerequisites for a universal religion should be authenticity, inclusivity, adaptability, longevity, non-competitive nature, etc. Applying this test to the Qur’an demonstrates that its message is addressed to all humans; the Qur’an presents a concept of the universe by proclaiming God to be the sustainer of the worlds and Lord of mankind. Addressing mankind, the Qur’an acknowledges all earlier divine scriptures and all prophets. Not only does the Qur’an proclaim to be universal in character, it also claims to be a complete and eternal religion.\textsuperscript{14} It goes further and offers a guarantee for perpetual preservation in its original form\textsuperscript{15} and claims to have no inconsistencies. Interestingly, the Qur’an is a verbal revelation – revealed in short sections over a 23-year period – which was memorized by the Prophet’s companions. Thus memorization has been the primary mode and its preservation and transmission. The revelations were also transcribed and verified against the memorized records which were later compiled into one volume. Thousands of people have committed the entire Qur’an to memory and many continue to do so today. Moreover, the Qur’anic claim of preservation is also supported by reliable corroborative evidence.\textsuperscript{16, 17}

The Qur’an does not claim monopoly over truth and/or salvation. It categorically declares that God has delivered His teachings to nurture the spiritual and religious needs of all people through several messengers.\textsuperscript{18} Addressing Prophet Muhammad, the Qur’an asserts that his role is that of a messenger, like the previous ones,\textsuperscript{19} adding that God has not disclosed all

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Bukhari-Kitabul Iman
\item \textsuperscript{14} Qur’an Ch 5, v 4: “I have this day perfected your faith for you in every way and, having completed My bounty upon you, have chosen for you Islam as religion.”
\item \textsuperscript{15} Qur’an Ch 15, v 10: “We have sent down this Book and verily We shall safeguard it.”
\item \textsuperscript{16} Sir William Muir, Life of Muhammad, p xxviii “We may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse is the genuine and unaltered composition of Muhammad himself.”
\item \textsuperscript{17} Noldeke, Enc Britanica 9\textsuperscript{th} Edition under the word Quran. “Slight clerical errors there may have been but the Qur’an of Uthman contains none but genuine elements though some times in very strange order. The efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Qur’an have failed.”
\item \textsuperscript{18} Qur’an Ch 16, v 37: “We did raise among every people a Messenger [with the teaching] ‘Worship Allah and shun the evil one.’
\item \textsuperscript{19} Qur’an Ch 35, v 24-25: “Thou art but a Warner. Verily, We have sent thee with the truth, as bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner; and there is no people, to whom a Warner has not been sent”.
\end{itemize}
earlier prophets to him.\textsuperscript{20} The Qur’an further adds that all prophets have the same Divine authority and discrimination among prophets is forbidden. Prophet Muhammad reportedly admonished his followers to not declare him superior over other prophets.\textsuperscript{21, 22} The Qur’an similarly assures people of other religions that they should not fear reprisals if they follow their religious teachings honestly, serve humanity, and become good human beings.\textsuperscript{23, 24, 25}

The referenced Qur’anic teachings are great tools for promoting peace, justice, and equality on the one hand and shun negative actions that might lead to inequity and disruption, on the other. The following principles are presented as illustrative examples to exhibit its universality:

1. The Qur’an only enunciates fundamental principles and refrains from stipulating such detail as would need to vary to cope with changing times and situations.
2. Fully mindful of human’s intellectual, social and political evolution, Qur’anic teachings cater for all possible situations acknowledging that: (a) continuous changes and development occur among nations and (b) the reality that not all people are at par in their state of development at any given point in time.
3. Qur’anic teachings conform to human nature and fulfill all human needs. No change in its teachings is necessary, unless there is a fundamental change in human nature.

Thus the Qur’an provides the necessary tools for uniting humanity because of its inclusivity, authenticating previous religions, granting equality to all humans irrespective of color, race, economic or social position, and geographic denomination.

\textsuperscript{20} Qur’an Ch 40, v 79: “We indeed sent Messengers before thee; of them are some whom We mentioned to thee, and of them are some We have not mentioned to thee”.
\textsuperscript{21} Al-Bidaya wan Nihaya Libni Kathir, vol.1 p.171: “Do not declare me to be superior over Jonah (Yunus), son of Mattah”.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. vol.1 p.237, (see also Bukhari): Do not declare my superiority over Moses.
\textsuperscript{23} Qur’an Ch 5, v 70: Surely, those who have believed [in Muhammad] and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians – whoso believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds, [on them shall come] no fear nor shall they grieve”.
\textsuperscript{24} Qur’an Ch 22, v 68: “For every people We have appointed ways of worship which they observe; so let them not dispute with thee in the matter [of the Islamic way of worship]; and call thou the people of thy Lord, for surely thou art on the right guidance”.
\textsuperscript{25} Qur’an Ch 3, v 114-6: “They are not all alike. Among the people of the Book are those who [are very pious and God fearing],and who stand by [their covenant]; they recite the Word of Allah in the hours of night and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin good and forbid evil, and hasten to vie with one another in good works. They are among the righteous. Whatever good they do, they shall not be denied its due reward, and Allah well knows those who guard against evil”.

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Topics of Current Interest

The topics of current interest are briefly explained in this section to highlight their significance as Qur’anic teachings in this section, and in the later section, differentiate them from their political interpretations. While important, these topics neither constitute the five pillars nor the articles of faith. The political interpretation of these topics is not only destructive but is also contrary to Qur’anic teachings; this will be discussed in second part.

1. Islamic Form of Government

Determining the form of government supported by Islam is the one major question haunting the world today. True to its universal nature, Islam does not specify any form of government. Rather, Islam enunciates the principle of governance in a specific manner; it imposes the condition that, no matter what the form, the responsibilities of a government should always be discharged justly and fairly, with sympathy and upholding basic human rights.26

2. Islamic Concept of Justice

The Islamic concept of justice is another matter of grave concern in the world and needs particular emphasis. A few important examples of Islamic principles of justice are:

1. And when you judge between people, do so fairly and justly. [Qur’an Ch 4, v 59].
2. Be strict in observing justice, and be witness for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against your parents or kindred. [Qur’an Ch 4, v 136].
3. And let not a people’s enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. [Qur’an Ch 5, v 9].
4. And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but do not transgress. Allah loves not the transgressors. [Qur’an Ch 2, v 91].
5. And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it. [Qur’an Ch 8, v 62].
6. Remember that the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and thereby brings about a reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, Allah loves not wrongdoers. [Qur’an Ch 42, v 41]

The real objective of justice in Islam is to reform the culprit and to that end, forgiveness is preferred. If not, then punishment is held to be necessary, but not exceeding the degree to which one is wronged. This also safeguards the victim’s interest.

26 Qur’an Ch 4, v 59: “Verily, Allah commands you to give over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice.”
3. *Shar’ia*

A set of personal rules prescribed for the individual’s behavior, morality, manners, worship, character and specific rules of faith practice, is mentioned in the Qur’an. Additionally, Prophet Muhammad’s practices and exhortations provide practical examples for leading life in conformance to the Qur’anic rules which are akin to the Ten Commandments. This constitutes personal *shar’ia* and is very different from the legislative *shar’ia* which the radicals support; that will be discussed later.

4. Apostasy and Blasphemy

The Qur’an grants absolute freedom of speech and expression.\(^27\) The assertion of *no compulsion in religion* clearly allows the freedom to change ones religion (apostasy). This freedom also applies to speech (blasphemy). The Qur’an does condemn blasphemy on moral and ethical grounds but prescribes no physical punishment. While prescribing temporary disassociation from the blasphemers\(^28\) for registering a peaceful protest, the Qur’an prohibits Muslims from retaliating and blaspheming other faiths.\(^29\)

5. Human Rights

The Qur’anic teachings and the Holy Prophet’s momentous farewell address has already been mentioned. These are fully congruent with the United Nations Human Rights Declaration (UN-HDR) adopted in 1948.\(^30\) The book *Islam and Human Rights* cross references each article of the UN-HDR to the Qur’an and the Prophet’s actions and exhortations. Safeguarding Human Rights is fulfilling Muslims’ obligation towards God’s creation and can thus qualify to attain the standard for being the *best people raised for the good of mankind*.\(^31\)

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**Part 2 – The Political Interpretation of Islam**

**Historical Background**

The system of governance established by Prophet Muhammad, first in Medina and later in Mecca, was based on Qur’anic principles of equality, peace and justice. This efficient system of

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\(^{27}\) Qur’an Ch 2, v 257: “There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong”  
\(^{28}\) Qur’an Ch 4, v 141: “He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will assemble the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell, all together”  
\(^{29}\) Qur’an Ch 6, v 109: “Revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus unto every people have We caused their doing seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return; and He will inform them what they used to do.”  
\(^{31}\) Qur’an Ch 3, v 111: “You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah....”
governance enabled the Muslims to rapidly expand their empire, in spite of the issues of leader (caliph), after the Prophet’s death. Within a thirty-year period (632-661), the caliphate had transitioned from a process of election (or selection) to dynastic. Despite these issues, the expansion of the empire continued and the Caliphate lasted for almost 1300 years, ending with the termination of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924. It transitioned through several dynasties, upheavals, became politicized and later, became symbolic. It, however, served as the focal point of Muslim unity.

Scholars and merchants were encouraged to travel, bringing goods and knowledge into the Caliphate. These were developed further and supplied to less advanced regions, such as Western Europe. In 751, paper-making from China made its way to the West through the Muslims. Trade also introduced Islam to the Africans.

The Islamic Golden Age began in the middle of the 8th century, during the ascension of the Abbasid Caliphate and the transfer of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad. The Abbasids were influenced by the Qur’anic injunctions and hadith such as the ink of a scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr stressing the value of knowledge. During this period the Muslim world became an intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine and education as the Abbasids championed the cause of knowledge and established the House of Wisdom in Baghdad; Muslim and non-Muslim scholars sought to translate and gather the world’s knowledge into Arabic. Many classic works of antiquity that would otherwise have been lost were translated into Arabic and Persian and later, in turn, translated into Turkish, Hebrew and Latin. During this period the Muslim world was a cauldron of cultures which collected, synthesized and significantly advanced the knowledge gained from the ancient Roman, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, North African, Greek and Byzantine civilizations.32

Even after the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, Islam would remain as one of the leading institutions as four important empires in the region – Safavid, Seljuk, Ottoman and Mughal Empires – were all Islamic Empires. During the period of Muslim dominance, the global economy was agrarian and thus all standards of administration and governance were based on agrarian norms.

By comparison, Christianity became the official religion of Rome towards the end of the 4th century after the Roman Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity. Christianity thus became the dominant faith and Church Fathers enjoyed greater prestige and control. They condemned the diverse religions practiced throughout the Empire as pagan and instituted doctrines that restricted alternate thinking.

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The rise of Islam roughly coincided with the period when the Roman Empire was in decline and the Roman territories in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe were being lost to the advancing Muslim armies. The decisive Muslim victory over the Byzantine army in 1071 prompted Pope Urban II to call for Crusade against the Muslims with the stated goal of restoring Christian access to the holy places in and near Jerusalem. The Crusades were a series of wars in Asia Minor and the Levant between 1095 and 1291, in which Western European nations used religious propaganda against Muslims as justification for war. Several internal factors within the Roman Catholic Church weakened its authority and, in the 16th century, some believers rejected what they perceived were false doctrines. This reformation within the Church led to the Renaissance Movement which brought about the industrial revolution in Europe.

European ascendancy after the industrial revolution also overlapped with the decline of the Muslims’ power. Muslims had become complacent. They had failed to appreciate the major transformation underway in Europe and made no attempts to change their agrarian economy. The Europeans sought sources of raw materials and markets for their industrial production around the world and, realizing the weakness of the Muslim governments, colonized their lands. The Ottoman Empire was defeated and broken down into almost three dozen nation states.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the termination of the Ottoman Caliphate, and the colonization of Muslim lands has been a major turning point in the Muslim psyche. The political wars between the Christians and the Muslims that began in the 7th century till the colonization of Muslim lands in the 20th century have created grave mistrust and suspicions between the Christian West and the Muslim East. As the defeated party, the Muslim leadership was discredited and the politicized clergy filled that leadership void. This brief historical background, while not a justification, will help one understand the current trend towards radicalism that exists among Muslims.

**Origins of Radicalism Among Muslims**

Geopolitical factors have played, and continue to play, an important role in the radicalization of Muslims. Exploitation of religious doctrines among Muslims started soon after the Prophet’s death, in the 7th century after Ali became the fourth caliph. His supporters turned against him when he agreed to accept the arbitrated settlement with his rival, Muawiya. Ali’s supporters, who abandoned him, became to be known as Kharijites (those who leave). Believing that Ali and his faithful followers had lost the true path, the Kharijites declared them apostates and then launched jihad against them. Their self-righteousness prompted them to engage in assassinations, including that of Caliph Ali in 661 CE. The Kharijites took the Qur’anic assertion *to command the good and forbid the evil* in a very literal manner, and contrary to the Qur’anic
assertions, believed that the affirmation of faith (*kalima*) alone was not enough to qualify as a Muslim. That had to be accompanied by righteousness and good works which they themselves judged. Anyone who violated religious rules was guilty of apostasy and liable to be killed. Fortunately, this radical ideology of justifying murder did not gain traction at that time.

The second pronouncement of apostasy was made by Ibn-e-Taymiyya (1263 – 1328) when the Mongols invaded Baghdad. Taymiyya made this pronouncement when he was forced to move to a safer place. Fortunately, his pronouncements also did not gain traction at that time. Taymiyya belonged to the Hanbali School of Islamic jurisprudence whose founder Ahmad ibn Hanbal personified the views of the early orthodox scholars. The Hanbali School strives to bring people back to the *true* interpretation of Islam.

A brief comment about the *Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence* will be helpful in understanding the reason for their creation and existence. Five such schools are accepted by Muslims; these were founded and patronized under the Abbasid Caliphate starting in the 9th century. The Ja’fri (Shi’a) school was founded by Iman Ja’far ibn-Muhammad al-Sidiq (702 – 765 CE) who is considered the sixth of the twelve designated imans in Shi’a Islam. The Hanafi School was founded by Iman al-Nu’man ibn Thabit, commonly known as Abu Hanifa (699 – 767 CE). The Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid patronized the Hanafi School. The Maliki School was founded by Imam Malik ibn Anas al-Asbah, commonly known as Imam Malik (711 – 795 CE). On account of his differences with Imam Abu Hanifa who was the leader of the school of opinion, Imam Malik became the leader of the school of tradition. The Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur patronized Imam Malik. The third school, the Shafi’i school was founded by Imam Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi’i (767 – 813 CE) and emerged in Egypt. The fourth school, the Hanbali School was founded by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780 – 855 CE). This school gained traction in the region that is now part of Saudi Arabia. It spread in the region through the teachings of ibn Taymiyyah (1263 – 1328 CE) and then through Abd al Wahab, the founder of the Wahabbi sect. While this diversity in thought broadened the Muslim outlook during the early stages when multiplicity of opinions was tolerated when legislative sharia was being developed, it became rigid when the freedom of expression and thought was curtailed by the Caliphate. This trend of state patronizing has occurred in almost every religion of which the formation of the Anglican Church in 1534 CE is a good example.

The advent of the industrial revolution accelerated the movements for religious renewal. The colonizers wanted to impose their faith in the newly conquered Muslim lands. The Muslims on the other hand believed that the Caliphate, which served as a focal point of Muslim unity and identity, should be restored. Terming the Muslims’ loss as divine punishment, the Muslim clergy urged people to revert to the *original* practices of Islam. This provided opportunities for
various leaders to exploit Islam for personal and political gains and set the stage for the latest wave of radicalism within Muslims which this is still continuing.

The Saudi-Wahhabi nexus began in 1744 when Muhammad ibn Saud (Al Saud) and Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab (Wahab) (1703 –1792) took an oath to establish a state run according to Islamic principles. Wahhab – inspired by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Taymiyyah – had started a reform movement within Sunni Muslims to bring them back to the teachings of Qur’an and hadith. Wahhab shunned any practices not supported by established rituals or defined in religious texts, for example the Shia Muslims’ practice of venerating the shrines of Imams. These regional practices were influenced by local culture and had become part of the faith in some regions.

Al Saud had become a conventional tribal leader whose rule was based on longstanding but vaguely defined authority. Wahhab offered Al Saud a clearly defined religious mission on which to base his political authority. After Al Saud death in 1765, his son continued the Wahhabi advance and led the Wahhabi army to attack Karbala – the Shia shrine in eastern Iraq in 1802. The next year, they seized control of Sunni towns in what is now part of Saudi Arabia, destroying monuments and grave markers of Muslim saints where people offered supplicatory rituals. The Wahhabis considered them as acts of polytheism. This politico-religious alliance between the Wahhabbi and Saudis continues till today.

During this turmoil, a reform movement started in Egypt at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Led by an educationalist, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), a political activist, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897; who was also the emissary of the Ottoman Caliphate sent to India), and Rashid Rida (1865-1935) a reformer and a disciple of Abduh, this movement is known as Salafism. Rida’s ideas strongly influenced later reformers in developing a political philosophy of Islamic State. The Salafis sought gradual social reform as a part of proselytizing, particularly through education. In the Salafist view, any deviation from the Prophet’s core religious principles represented contamination of the faith.

The integration of Salafism and Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia is worth mentioning. The broad distinction between two movements is that while Wahhabis reject modern influences, Salafis seek to reconcile Islam with modernism. The similarity between these groups is that they both want to revert to the pristine teachings of Islam – as practiced during the Prophet’s time.

By the early 20th century, the weakened Ottoman Empire retained only nominal control over the Arabian Peninsula; they used tribal rulers, including Abdal Aziz Al Saud (Al Saud) to control their territories. Britain and France engineered a pan-Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire.
in 1916.\textsuperscript{33} Although Al Saud did not participate in this revolt due to political differences with other Arab leaders, the revolt resulted in the Ottomans' defeat in 1918.\textsuperscript{34} The British then supported Al Saud to create an independent country. Al Saud had allied with the Wahhabist-Bedouin tribal army known as \textit{ikhwan}.\textsuperscript{35, 36} The United Kingdom recognized Al Saud's independence in 1927 through the treaty of Jeddah\textsuperscript{37} but the \textit{ikhwan} wanted to continue the expansion into the British protectorates of Transjordan, Iraq and Kuwait. Abdul-Aziz, however, refused to accept \textit{ikhwan}'s decision and they revolted against him. The British defeated the \textit{ikhwan} in the Battle of Sabilla in 1930, and the \textit{ikhwan} leadership was massacred.\textsuperscript{38} (\textit{ikhwan} is similar to al-Qaida and Taliban – getting out of control and challenging their patrons in Pakistan.)

The fallout from the termination of the Ottoman Empire and Caliphate was felt strongly in Egypt where Hassan al-Banna founded a pan-Islamic, political and social reform movement – the Muslim Brotherhood – in 1928. Al-Banna claimed that contemporary Islam had lost its social dominance, because most Muslims had been corrupted by Western influences. Al-Banna advocated for the recreation of the Islamic State, the restoration of the Caliphate, and the implementation of \textit{shar'a law}. Al-Banna became the champion for protecting Egyptian workers and founded hospitals, pharmacies, schools, etc. He held highly conservative views on issues such as women's rights, but supported justice towards women.\textsuperscript{39}

Muslim Brotherhood developed the Salafi political philosophy of \textit{Islamic State} into a political objective and believed that their political ideology embedded in Islam would effectively negate western secularism which they abhorred. The Muslim Brotherhood-Salafi ideology found a home in Saudi Arabia during the 1950-60 when Egypt’s Soviet-backed pan Arab movement

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\textsuperscript{33} Murphy, David The Arab Revolt 1916-1918, London: Osprey, 2008 page 18  
\textsuperscript{34} David Murphy, The Arab Revolt 1916-18: Lawrence Sets Arabia Ablaze, Osprey Publishing, 2008  
\textsuperscript{35} King Abdul Aziz Information Resource retrieved 19 January 2011  
\textsuperscript{36} ‘Arabian Sands’ by Wilfred Thesiger, 1991  
\textsuperscript{38} ‘Arabian Sands’ by Wilfred Thesiger, 1991  
\textsuperscript{39} In his tract, “Toward the Light” in Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna, trans. by Charles Wendell (Berkeley, 1978), ISBN 0-520-09584-7 pp. 126f., Al-Banna writes: “Following are the principal goals of reform grounded on the spirit of genuine Islam ... Treatment of the problem of women in a way which combines the progressive and the protective, in accordance with Islamic teaching, so that this problem – one of the most important social problems – will not be abandoned to the biased pens and deviant notions of those who err in the directions of deficiency and excess ... a campaign against ostentation in dress and loose behaviour; the instruction of women in what is proper, with particular strictness as regards female instructors, pupils, physicians, and students, and all those in similar categories ... a review of the curricula offered to girls and the necessity of making them distinct from the boys' curricula in many stages of education ... segregation of male and female students; private meetings between men and women, unless within the permitted degrees of relationship, to be counted as a crime for which both will be censured ... the encouragement of marriage and procreation, by all possible means; promulgation of legislation to protect and give moral support to the family, and to solve the problems of marriage ... the closure of morally undesirable ballrooms and dance-halls, and the prohibition of dancing and other such pastimes ....”
\end{flushright}
came in conflict with the Salafis’ pan-Islamic movement. In addition to effectively countering Egypt’s plan, the Saudis embraced the Salafis to boost their own pan-Islamic program which gave them a leadership position in the Muslim world. It also provided the much needed trained specialists like educators, engineers, doctors, bureaucrats, etc., for meeting the Kingdom’s growing needs for building the oil infrastructure for which the Muslim Brotherhood was a great source and their members were anxious to leave Egypt.

Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood ideologues jointly fought and defeated Egypt’s Soviet-backed pan-Arab ideology before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which was perhaps the most visible battleground between these groups. This long association and common objective between the Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood movements brought about a synthesis of thought between the two groups. The Muslim Brotherhood ideology retained its basic character during this time, but Salafism, which had been largely devoid of political philosophy, became heavily influenced by the ideas of prominent figures like Sayyid Qutb, thereby diluting the Salafist support network in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps the most notable example of this dynamic was the relationship between Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian religious scholar affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the leader of the Arab fighters in 1980s Afghanistan. Through Azzam’s mentoring, bin Laden’s Salafist ideas underwent a radical transformation. It was not until Ayman al-Zawahiri began mentoring bin Laden in the early 1990s that bin Laden began to embrace jihad against Soviets. Salafis are considered the most radical group within Islam and Germany has banned some Salafi groups.41

In November 1948, following several bombings and assassination attempts, the Egyptian government banned the Brotherhood.42 In succeeding months Egypt's prime minister was assassinated by a Brotherhood member, and following that Al-Banna himself was assassinated in what is thought to be a cycle of retaliation. In 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood was accused of destroying some 750 buildings in downtown Cairo — mainly night clubs, theatres, hotels, and restaurants frequented by British and other foreigners.43 Muslim Brotherhood thus justified assassinations, destruction of property, and violence as jihad, and redefined this noble Islamic concept.

Sayyid Qut’b (1906 – 1966), was a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood who took charge after Al-Banna. He was convicted of plotting the assassination of Egyptian president

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40 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/20/opinion/dont-fear-all-islamists-fear-salafis.html?_r=0
41 http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/14/world/europe/germany-arrests-4-and-bans-groups-linked-to-salafism.html?_r=0
43 The Rebellion Within, An Al Qaeda mastermind questions terrorism. by Lawrence Wright. New Yorker 2 June 2008
Gamal Abdel Nasser and executed in 1966. Qut’s best known for his work on what he believed to be the social and political role of Islam. That formed the basis of his books Social Justice and Milestones; his 30-volume commentary on the Qur’an is titled In the shade of the Qur’an. Qut’s is known for his intense disapproval of the society and culture in the United States and Europe; he felt that these societies were obsessed with materialism, violence, and sexual pleasures.\(^4^4\) He formed his opinion during his two years in the US (1948-1950) and visiting Europe on his return to Egypt. By the mid-1940s, many of his writings were officially included in the curricula of schools, colleges and universities in the Muslim world.\(^4^5\) They were also included in Muslim educational institutions in Europe and the US.

Similar reformation movements began in India when it was under British colonization. The Deobandi movement in Sunni Islam is a revivalist movement under the Hanafi interpretation. Inspired by the works of a Muslim scholar, Shah Wali’ullah (1703–1762), the foundation of their mosque and seminary was laid in 1866 in the town of Deoband from where it acquired its name. This center, known as Darul Uloom Deoband, became very popular and began to be considered as the second most important center of Islamic teachings and research, after Egypt’s Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Promoting a very conservative code, this movement also argued that Islamic societies have deviated from the original teachings of the Prophet and have fallen behind the West because they have been seduced by the amoral and material values of Westernization. They practically prohibited befriending non-Muslims to enable Muslims to focus on their faith.

Another reformation movement – Barelvi – started in the Indian town of Bareilly. Its founder Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) defended the traditional practice of Islam as understood and practiced in India. They permit relatively more freedoms in their interpretation of the faith – allowing friendship with people of the book (Jewish and Christians) and support the sufi tradition. Naturally, the Deobandis became their rivals and accused them of siding with the British and declared them non-Muslims or apostates.

Interestingly, the stated objective of the above (and subsequent) reform movements was to bring the Muslims back to the pristine Islamic teachings. Sadly, none of these groups could identify the required reforms and how to accomplish that objective. Instead, they focused on external symbolism and only encouraged religiosity and further subdivisions – a destructive trend that is still continuing. The type of reform required is essentially a reevaluation of the Qur’anic translations and commentaries which are contributing to the confusion as highlighted

\(^4^5\) The Political Thoughts of Sayyed Qutb, Ch. 3, p. 56
by the Pew Survey results, some of which are shown in Figures 4-8. Muslims are unclear about the source of legislative shar’ia (Figure 5), if it has multiple interpretations (Figure 6), or about its applicability to all citizens (Figure 7). Muslim scholars should come together to review, update, and reconcile existing translations and commentaries to address issues of the contemporary era.

For illustration, take the example of the legislative shar’ia mandated punishment of theft which, according to a Qur’anic verse, is amputation of the hand as the extreme punishment. An overwhelming majority of Muslims who support shar’ia Law also favor amputation of hands for robbery (Figure 8). Various interpretations of where the hand should be severed, the value of theft, along with the state’s responsibility for ensuring basic necessities, social conditions, etc., are reported in various interpretations (Appendix 1). Most of the existing explanations assume that the thief’s hand became the tool in stealing a physical entity. In today’s industrial economy, large scale financial theft occurs by electronic manipulation using the mind. Recent examples are scandals at Lehman Brothers, Enron, Bernie Madoff, and the 2012 manipulation of LIBOR which underpins approximately $350 trillion in derivative trades in the US and is controlled by the British Bankers’ Association. Cutting the hands of these criminals will not prevent their ability to commit the crime. If the Qur’anic prescription has to be correct, then the meaning of the referenced verse will have to be revised to that of Lane’s interpretation i.e., deprive them of the power to commit theft or employ any practical means calculated to restrain them from committing theft, rather than physical amputation of the limb will be the appropriate interpretation.

A campaign in defense of the Ottoman Caliph (Khilafat movement) was launched in India in 1912 after an emissary from the Ottoman Caliph sought help from Indian Muslims to pressurize the British to retain the institution of Caliphat. Mahatma Gandhi’s supported the Khilafat movement with the hope to keep India united. The Muslims later joined hands with Gandhi’s noncooperation movement for Indian independence, promising nonviolence in return for his support. The Khilafat movement fizzled out after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the caliphate in 1924.

The turmoil of the period leading up to and subsequent to WW-II saw the establishment of several nation states from what were part of the former Ottoman Empire and the partition of India to form Pakistan in 1947. Although the Deobandis and Barevis opposed the partition of India, they changed their views after the creation of Pakistan. They established their presence in the new country and demanded that Pakistan was the Islamic State that had been visualized after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Caliphate. They thus derailed the process of drafting

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Pakistan’s first constitution in 1948 claiming that sovereignty can only belong to God and the head of state (president or prime minister) could not be a sovereign. That dilemma was resolved through a compromise by the then prime minister through the Objectives Resolution which asserted that all laws framed in Pakistan must be in accordance with Islam and shar’ia.

As already indicated, the definition of a Muslim has been the bone of contention among Muslims scholars in Pakistan. Without agreement on that fundamental definition, how can the laws be determined as Islamic? This has severely hampered the parliament’s authority to legislate because any group can challenge the legislation as un-Islamic, given the multiple interpretations by various sects. Emboldened by their initial victory, the politicized clergy used their convoluted interpretation of apostasy and, demanding the dismissal of the Foreign Minister and the declaration of his sect (Ahmadi Muslims) as non-Muslim, started religious riots in parts of Pakistan. After significant loss of life and property, the army had to be called to restore law and order after the imposition of martial law in parts of the country. A high powered and independent judicial commission was established to identify the causes of this unrest and assign responsibility. Commonly known as the Munir Commission, its report presents an excellent and detailed analysis, provides insight into the regression of Muslim psyche, and prescribes the necessary action for Muslim to improve their lot.

For brevity, the Munir Commission established the politicized clergy’s key demands as follows:

1. Dismissal of Pakistan’s Foreign Minister and the declaration of his sect (Ahmadi) as non-Muslims and apostates.
2. Declaring Pakistan to be an Islamic State and [legislative] shar’ia to be the law of the land.
3. Blasphemy and apostasy be made capital crimes.
4. Minorities in Pakistan (and by extension, the Islamic state) to have diminished rights.
5. The loyalty of Muslims belongs to the Islamic state and not the nation state.
6. Muslims cannot be faithful citizens of non-Muslim governments.
7. Pakistan should not enter into international agreements or honor international treaties because they may be repugnant to Islam.

The commission made the following damning observations about the cause of unrest and the politicized clergy’s goals:

“If there is one thing which has been conclusively demonstrated in this inquiry, it is that provided you can persuade the masses to believe that something they are asked to do is

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47 Report of The Court of Inquiry Constituted under Punjab ACT II OF 1954 to enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953
48 Ibid, p 232
religiously right or enjoined by religion, you can set them to any course of action, regardless of all considerations of discipline, loyalty, decency, morality or civic sense. .... The phantom of an Islamic State has haunted the Musalman [Muslim] throughout the ages and is a result of the memory of the glorious past when Islam rising like a storm from the least expected quarter of the world—wilds of Arabia—instantly enveloped the world, pulling down from their high pedestal gods who had ruled over man since the creation, uprooting centuries old institutions and superstitions and supplanting all civilisations that had been built on an enslaved humanity..... It is this brilliant achievement of the Arabian nomads, the like of which the world had never seen before, that makes the Musalman [Muslim] of today live in the past and yearn for the return of the glory that was Islam. He finds himself standing on the crossroads, wrapped in the mantle of the past and with the dead weight of centuries on his back, frustrated and bewildered and hesitant to turn one corner or the other. The freshness and the simplicity of the faith, which gave determination to his mind and spring to his muscle, is now denied to him. ...He has neither the means nor the ability to conquer and there are no countries to conquer. Little does he understand that the forces, which are pitted against him, are entirely different from those against which early Islam, had to fight, and that on the clues given by his own ancestors, human mind has achieved results which he cannot understand. He therefore finds himself in a state of helplessness, waiting for some one to come and help him out of this morass of uncertainty and confusion. And he will go on waiting like this without anything happening. Nothing but a bold re-orientation of Islam to separate the vital from the lifeless can preserve it as a World Idea and convert the Musalman [Muslim] into a citizen of the present and the future world from the archaic in congruity that he is today.

It is this lack of bold and clear thinking, the inability to understand and take decisions which has brought about in Pakistan a confusion which will persist and repeatedly create situations of the kind we have been inquiring into until our leaders have a clear conception of the goal and of the means to reach it. It requires no imagination to realise that irreconcilables remain irreconcilable even if you believe or wish to the contrary. Opposing principles, if left to themselves, can only produce confusion and disorder, and the application of a neutralising agency to them can only produce a dead result. Unless, in case of conflict between two ideologies, our leaders have the desire and the ability to elect, uncertainty must continue.”

Despite this prophetic warning of dire consequences, the Muslim world and Pakistan have continued to exploit religion for political gains. Ayatollah Khomeini had delivered a series of lectures on the Islamic form of government in 1970 which were later published in several
languages. That prompted Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other Muslim countries to organize an Islamic Summit in Lahore in February 1974 to discuss pan-Islamic programs. The plan for the *Islamic nuclear bomb*, to be funded by petrodollars and developed in Pakistan, started after this meeting.

In August 1974, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto accepted the politicized clergy’s demands that had led to the 1953 riots and, through the Second Constitutional Amendment, declared Ahmadi Muslims as non-Muslims. Prior to this governmental intervention, virtually every Muslim sect had issued *fatwas* against their competition declaring them non-Muslim. Governmental intervention in this matter was a significant step towards becoming a party to the politicization of Islam as evident from the acceleration in the mushrooming of *madrassas* in Pakistan. Historically, *madrassa* in the Islamic world, was a place of learning (school) when no formal organized educational system existed. Today, the connotation of a *madrassa* has been reduced to a place for brainwashing young Muslims for *jihad* and *shar’ia*. While not entirely true, this connotation is not far from reality. Competing politicized Muslim groups have established *madrassas*, with questionable funding sources including petrodollars, to provide trained manpower for promoting their views and monopolizing Islam. The USA’s support for the *jihad* in Afghanistan, after the Soviet invasion, not only accelerated but justified, trained, and funded this monstrous ideology of violence under the guise of *jihad*. The Soviet Union’s defeat and its subsequent disintegration further emboldened the radicals. Their confidence has now been further bolstered by the impending US departure from Afghanistan in 2014.

After his coup d’état and arresting Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Gen Zia-ul-Haq passed a series of ordinances to Islamize Pakistan. These included capital punishment for blasphemy and apostasy, requirement for a woman to produce four male witnesses to prove rape, failing which she is guilty of adultery, and also criminalized the practice of Islam by Ahmadi Muslims. All of these laws are still on the books and have been ratified by the parliament. The Pakistan Supreme court rejected the Ahmadi Muslim’s appeal citing Company and Trademark Law for the state’s ownership of Islam! The consequences of these *Islamization* policies are obvious to everyone. These legislations are contrary to the Qur’an and the destructive effects of blasphemy and apostasy legislation is evident to everyone. The Salman Rushdie affair, the cartoon controversy, persecuting minorities under allegations of blasphemy and apostasy, for

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49 [http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/2amendment.html](http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/2amendment.html)
50 Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted Under Punjab ACT II of 1954 to Enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953, p 219-20
52 Ahmed Rashid “Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia” 2009
54 Enforced Apostasy: Zaheeruddin v. State And the Official Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan, Law & Inequality; Vol XIV, Dec 1995, No. 1, p 277
grabbing their property or settling personal issues, are some of the painful reminders of the implementation of these misrepresented ideologies.

Unrestrained funding and support from Pakistan, the US, and the Middle Eastern countries have resulted in the formation of several armed militant groups to safeguard the interest of their parent organization. This trend of radicalism has only mushroomed as is evident from the on-going wars in Afghanistan, various African countries and the spate of terrorist attacks around the world since the Twin Tower attacks in 2001 where these radicals are facing up to well trained and highly disciplined armies. Brazen terrorist attacks on military installations in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Indian parliament and Mumbai shows the capability, resources and motivation of these terrorist organizations. Their influence can be further gauged by their increasing assertiveness in Afghanistan, influencing the election 2013 campaign in Pakistan, killing moderates who question the validity of the discriminatory Islamic laws, like the Blasphemy Law or the Hadood Laws in Pakistan.

The overall effect of the politicization of Islam has been total intellectual confusion in the Muslim world, which interestingly is made up of underdeveloped countries (Figure 2). None of the 56 members of OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) is a proper functioning democracy and virtually each country is rife with poor governance, corruption, lack of justice, absence of peace, and equality before the law. Even in the wealthy petro-economies of the Middle East, non-citizens and the disenfranchised lead dismal lives which are not obvious to the casual visitor. Human rights record in the entire Muslim world is miserable to say the least and the OIC has formally rejected the UN Declaration of Human Rights adopted unanimously in 1948. Terming this excellent document as un-Islamic, the OIC, led by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, has adopted an Islamic version which revolves around shar’ia law.

The unintended consequence of the Islamization policies in the Muslim world has resulted in their isolation and the sense of victimization among Muslims. Their view of the world is rather convoluted, blaming their shortcomings on non-Muslim conspiracies, and creating deeper rifts within the Muslim communities due to sectarianism and rejecting the alternate view as heresy. As the gap between the developed- and the Muslim-world grows, the Muslim’s disillusionment and frustration has increased. Added to this is the current geopolitical situation, the demographics of Muslim countries which have a large population bulge of young (15-30 year old) people with extremely poor education, high unemployment, absence of basic facilities like clean water, healthcare and justice. While widespread corruption, absence of justice and peace in their societies exasperates the feeling of vulnerability, the radicals’ clarion call to serve the

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56 Shari’a laws enacted in Pakistan by Gen Zia ul Haq in 1979 for enforcing punishments for extramarital sex

religion, establish the mythical Islamic State, win redemption in this world and the hereafter, is hard to resist.

The mythical Islamic State ruled under legislative sahria Law is prescribed by the politicized clergy as the solution to all problems. Radical Muslim leadership is also demanding the implementation of shar’ia in non-Muslim democracies in the US and Europe; these unfair demands are causing severe backlash and secular groups have sought injunctions against the implementation of shar’ia in many states in the US. Shar’ia courts in Canada for resolving personal and family issues have also been abolished.

Understanding legislative shar’ia is critical for highlighting the issues and for clearing the confusion that exists in the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Legislative shar’ia was developed by the Abbasid caliphate as a Qur’an compliant system of legislation in the 8th century. As explained in Figure 3, this three tier process included Qur’an as the primary source; sunna and hadith as secondary sources because they were collected about two centuries after the Prophet’s death and are subordinate to the Qur’an; and precedence, analogy, and consensus are derived sources because they are based on the opinion of scholars and jurists. Multiple interpretations were allowed for the derived sources based on the various Schools of Jurisprudence already described, and were required to be continually updated based on the local cultural and social norms and the changing environment. This process was terminated in the 10th century. Interestingly, legislative shar’ia was developed when the global economic base was agrarian.

In today’s industrial world, the agrarian-era developed legislation is simply inapplicable. The Abbasid Caliphate was a vast empire; political challenges created by the far flung nature of the empire, and the limited communication across it, made administration difficult. They thus appointed governors or administrators who operated mostly independently of central authority. Social so while the Caliphate framed legislation (shar’ia), implementation was done by independent political entities. This provided for an inbuilt separation of religion and politics. In today’s industrial world, constitution-based, democratic systems of governance are based on the same principles as legislative shar’ia and offer better systems. A recent set of documentaries highlight the inherent contradictions in the legislative shar’ia that the radicalized Muslim groups want implemented.

These matters only create confusion in the Muslims’ mind. The failure of the much anticipated Arab revolution is a case in point. This confusion has also been confirmed by the Pew survey results of April 2013. An overwhelming population in the Muslim world wants the

implementation of shar’ia (Figure 4), without fully understanding what it stands for and which school of jurisprudence should be followed for developing a uniform law acceptable to all Muslim sects. The competing opinions and judgments of various schools of jurisprudence are highlighted in the video clips in reference 59 and explain the inherent complications in implementing legislative shar’ia as law. A majority of Muslims feel that legislative shar’ia is the word of God and thus is immutable (Figure 5); that it can have only one interpretation (Figure 6) and a majority wants it to be applied to Muslims only (Figure 7), thus creating two parallel systems of governance in the country. This comprehensive survey results show that the majority’s perceptions about legislative shar’ia are wrong and they confuse the personal shar’ia contained in the Qur’an with the legislative shar’ia that the radical groups demand.

Allama Iqbal – the great poet-philosopher of the Muslim world – also recognized that the Muslims’ practice of their faith was inconsistent with the Qur’anic teachings. In addition to his famous poem Shikwa (lament [to God]) and Jawab-e-shikwa ([God’s] response) he delivered a series of lectures to warn Muslims about this disconnect. Urging them to understand and practice the teachings of the Qur’an, he warned them that the explanations of Islam offered by the various schools of jurisprudence were based on wrong assumptions. In one of the lectures titled Knowledge and Religious Experience he said:\footnote{60 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, lecture on “Knowledge and Religious Experience” compiled in “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam”, Pub: Sang-e-Meel, ISBN 969 35 0689 8, p 11-15}

“The main purpose of the Qur’an is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe. ... As we all know, Greek philosophy has been a great cultural force in the history of Islam. Yet the careful study of the Qur’an and the various school of scholastic theology that arose under the inspiration of Greek thought disclose the remarkable fact that while Greek philosophy very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it, on the whole, obscured their vision of the Qur’an. ... How unlike the Qur’an, which regards “hearing” and “sight” as the most valuable Divine gifts and declared them to be accountable to God for their activity in this world. This is what the earlier Muslim students of the Qur’an completely missed under the spell of classical speculation. They read the Qur’an in the light of Greek thought. It took them over 200 years to perceive – though not quite clearly – that the spirit of the Qur’an was essentially anti classical, and the result of this perception was a kind of intellectual revolt, the full significance of which has not been realized even up to the present day. ... During the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from Islam. ... Since the Middle Ages, when the schools of Muslim theology were completed, infinite advance has taken place in the domain of human thought and experience. The extension of man’s power over nature has given him a new faith and a fresh sense of superiority over the forces that constitute his environment. New points of view have been suggested, old problems have been restated in the light of fresh experience, and new problems have arisen. It seems as if the
intellect of man is outgrowing its own most fundamental categories – time, space, and causality. With the advance of scientific thought even our concepts of intelligibility is undergoing a change.”

Concluding Comments

The abyss between the Qur’anic teachings and the political interpretation of Islam are obvious. The political interpretations are contrary to the Qur’anic teachings and are derived from the various schools of jurisprudence that were formed under state patronage two to three centuries after the Prophet’s death. Interestingly, the tripartite blend of Hanbali-Wahabbi-Muslim Brotherhood interpretation has permeated the Muslim world and is the leading justification for violence and destruction. Not to be left behind, competing ideological groups have also adopted similar tactics for turf protection. These groups have not only wreaked havoc with the lives of peaceful citizens around the world, they have done untold damage to the Muslims around the world and sullied the name of Islam. Sadly, any Muslim voices of moderation are silenced through force, and Muslims have been unable to challenge this destructive narrative that has defaced their religion.

The idea of an Islamic state is an illusion. This can be confirmed by the two attempts to unite Arab states. Egypt and Syria came together in 1958 and formed the United Arab Republic (UAR). This political union lasted three years. Similarly, Libya, Egypt and Syria again came together to form the Federation of Arab Republics in 1972; this union was terminated five years later. If a political union of Arab states with common cultural and social background is not sustainable, how can all Muslim countries with vastly distinct cultures and social customs be brought together and form one Islamic State? Political Islam or Islamism is nothing but an ideology to gain absolute power and control over the Muslims. Interestingly, while aspiring for the same objectives, the Islamist groups cannot even unite for its accomplishment.

Muslims must come together to first acknowledge the chasm between the Qur’anic teachings and the practice of politicized Islam. The major source of this confusion is the various translations and interpretations of the Qur’an. Such translations, rather mistranslations, are simplistic explanations; they are unable to address 21st century issues. The confusion and fragmentation among Muslims has empowered radicals to exploit Islam for their criminal activities while peaceful Muslims, as silent spectators, can only find solace in conspiracy theories and remain indifferent which in turn empowers the radical groups. This attitude has already isolated Muslims and relegated them to the category of suspected terrorists around the

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61 *The Illusion of an Islamic State*, Ed. Abdurrahman Wahid, former President of Indonesia, ISBN 978 0 9834629 0 3

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world. Muslims’ inability to act decisively and reverse that trend can have more serious consequences for the future.

Islam indeed has the tools to be the universal religion of reason, compassion, equality, peace and justice. Muslims must realize that Islam is not a political movement and has no political ambitions. Accordingly, Muslims should shun the politicized interpretations and go across the self-imposed intellectual boundaries to explore, understand and practice Islam per the Qur’anic teachings.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1: Illustration of confusion caused by Qur’anic translations – Excerpted from translation by Mirza Tahir Ahmad’s

The punishment prescribed in the Qur’an for robbery is the amputation of hands as an exemplary punishment. This simple translation has created the prevalent view that the Qur’anic punishment for robbery is the amputation of the limb and is reflected in the Pew survey results (Figure 8). The reformist scholars of the past went on to define the value of the theft for which the prescribed punishment would apply. For example, Imam Abu Hanifa (699 – 767 CE), the founder of the Hanifi school of jurisprudence holds that the minimum amount of theft should be ten dirhams while Imam Malik (711 – 795) the founders of Mali’ki School and Imam Shaf’i (767 – 820 CE), the founder of the Shaf’i Schools hold it to be three dirhams. These great Imams or their successors could not even agree on the value of the theft for which a person’s limb could be amputated. Additionally, some scholars would not amputate the limb for stealing fruit from a tree or when the theft was committed in the course of a journey. This disagreement among theologians not only creates the confusion, it also shows that the judge has wide discretion in making the decision.

A detailed and critical analysis of the Qur’anic prescription is required to better understand the prescription for which both the literal and metaphorical meaning of the words used in the Qur’an and the overall Islamic concept of justice (already described in the paper) should be properly understood and considered. For example, according to the Lane Dictionary, the Arabic expression in the Qur’an Qata’a-hu bi’l Hujjati means “he silenced him with argument”. And Yad among other things means “the power and capacity to do a certain thing”. Thus the phrase Qata’a Yada-hu metaphorically means “he deprived him of the power to do the thing or he restrained him from doing it”. In view of this signification of the two words the Arabic expression used in the verse may mean “deprive them of the power to commit theft or employ any practical means calculated to restrain them from committing theft”. This could be accomplished by a jail sentence. Taking the verse literally, the punishment prescribed in the Qur’anic verse is the maximum punishment to be awarded only as deterrent to hardened

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62 http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/?page=245&region=EN&CR=
63 Qur’an Ch 5, v 39: “And as for the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands in retribution of their offence as an exemplary punishment from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.
64 Arab currency
65 Dawud ...
66 The Arabic–English Lexicon is an Arabic-English dictionary compiled by Edward William Lane (died 1876). It was published in eight volumes during the second half of the 19th century. It consists of Arabic words defined and explained in the English language. But Lane does not use his own knowledge of Arabic to give definitions to the words. Instead, the definitions are taken from older Arabic dictionaries, primarily medieval Arabic dictionaries. Lane translates these definitions into English, and he carefully notes which dictionaries are giving which definitions.
criminals. In awarding the punishment the nature and scope of all the attending circumstances are also to be taken into consideration. Moreover, the use of the word al-Sariq which is a noun (instead of the verb Saraqa—he stole) implying the sense of intensiveness signifies a habitual thief or one addicted to theft is worthy of special consideration.
Figure 1: Stages of spiritual and behavioral development

Figure 2: Location of OIC member countries

Figure 3: Hierarchy of legislative shar‘ia development.
Figure 4: An overwhelming majority in the Muslim world supports *shar’ia* law.

Figure 5: Although legislative *shar’ia* was developed by humans, majority of Muslims feel it is the revealed word of God.

Figure 6: Although legislative *shar’ia* can have multiple interpretations, majority of Muslims feel it has a single interpretation.
Figure 7: Confusion about the applicability of *shar’ia* to the population. Majority wants to have a duplicate legislative system for Muslims.

Figure 8: Overwhelming majority of Muslims who support *shar’ia* Law favoring amputation of hands for robbery