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War and Peace in Islam

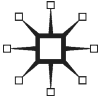
A Critique of Islamic/ist Political Discourses

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In the Name of the Author of Peace

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Any mistakes, factual or otherwise, and any erroneous conclusions or interpretations in this work are mine alone.

Preface

The late twentieth century witnessed a rise in violent political behaviour by actors operating in the name of Islam. At times this violence pervaded intra-Islamic milieus and involved potent Islamic states. However, the most ostentatious advent of what can be referred to as Islamist fundamentalism occurred in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001. Coming in the aftermath of an Islamic anti-American revolution in Iran in 1979 and an acute hostage crisis in that country the next year, and followed by a series of bombings against Western targets, including the ones in Madrid and London, and other similar events after 11 September, the Western world has found itself in need of a better and deeper understanding of Islam.

In particular the concept of *jihad* has appeared instrumental to utilise, guide and understand the primary factors responsible for extremist behaviour among young radical Muslims. Yet despite an increasing volume of literature much has remained unsaid on the significance and the true meanings of this precept in Islamic teachings. This work is an attempt to outline some of the most fundamental questions relating to the subject of peace and conflict in Islam vis-à-vis the West and examine them in the light of current international developments and with an International Relations (IR) perspective. This will be attempted in the context of Gnosticism in Islam and critical theory in the West.

Conventional systemic paradigms in International Relations, it will be argued, have consistently overlooked the role and the significance of the individual. Gnosticism in Islam, however, promotes the inner development of each person as a prerequisite to external action towards change.

This work will borrow, apart from the Quran and the *hadith*, from the works of leading experts on Islam and critical theory in IR. In conclusion an attempt will be made to bring main points together in an assessment of the arguments made on *jihad*, relating them to the general perspective of war and peace in Islam vis-à-vis the West. It is very much that premise that may lie at the root of current debates in what may be referred to as the Renaissance of the Islamic world.