

Bernard Lewis on Islam and Violence: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

Bernard Lewis (1916–2018) is deemed an authority in the Western academia on the Muslim world, particularly the Middle East. His work continues to influence the policymakers and the intelligentsia in the West as well as the ruling elites in the Muslim world. The present paper attempts to critically evaluate his views regarding the alleged relationship of Islam and violence. In his various books and articles, Lewis has tried to prove that the Islamic teachings on jihād envisage an all-out war by Muslims against all non-Muslims and that jihād is a tool of Muslim domination over the whole of the world. Moreover, he persistently tries to exonerate the United States of America and its allies of all the wrongs they have committed against Muslims. The work of Lewis provides intellectual basis for the political and economic exploitation of the Muslim world by the Western hegemonic powers.

Keywords

Bernard Lewis, *jihād*, Orientalism, violence, Islamic teachings.

Introduction

Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), like all other Prophets, preached his message in a peaceful manner and always disdained compulsion in matters of faith. To the Western scholars, however, the struggle of the Prophet (peace be on him) to defend the community of his followers against the armed aggression of the opponents seems more like a political movement than a religious phenomenon, although many of these scholars do not deem the life of the Prophet (peace be on him) in Makkah as a deviation from the

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“prophetic tradition.” In other words, to them, he seems a “prophet” in Makkah and a “statesman” in Madīnah.¹ This is, perhaps, because they are unconsciously influenced by the Christian teachings regarding separation of politics and religion. Moreover, many of the Western scholars still seem to be under the influence of the crusades even though more than nine hundred years have passed since Pope Urban II ignited that series of violent aggression against Islam and Muslims.² During the crusades, the Christian invaders not only massacred thousands of Muslims but also Jews and fellow Christians. Is it not an irony, then, that in the works of the Western scholars written after the first crusade the image of the Prophet (peace be on him) was portrayed as a blood-thirsty and revengeful person.³

Similarly, during the Christian *Reconquista*,⁴ thousands of Muslims were massacred in Portugal, Spain, and other parts of Europe, and even more were forcefully converted to Christianity.⁵ Still the Western authors have been accusing the Prophet (peace be on him) of compulsion in matters of religion and they have been consistently propagating that Islam spread through sword!⁶ Even during the colonial era when the European powers were in occupation of Muslim lands and were exploiting their resources, many Orientalists⁷

¹ For instance, see Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953); Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

² In the year 1095 CE, Pope Urban II pronounced a verdict whereby he proclaimed that the Christian knights were under a religious duty to liberate the Holy Land from the infidels, i.e., Muslims. The Christian West responded with religious fervour and zeal. In 1099 CE, the crusaders succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land. In 1148 CE, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193 CE) re-conquered Jerusalem. The next five waves of crusades proved complete failures and by 1291 CE the last fortress of Crusaders fell to the Muslims. For details, see Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History; The Roots of Conflict between Christianity and Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³ For a good analysis of how and why Western scholars choose to study Islam in order to criticise it and how this tradition started after the crusades, see Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Delhi: Arafat Publications, 1934); Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

⁴ The Spanish and Portuguese word “Reconquista” literally means reconquest or recapture and it is used to denote the more than 700 years period during which the Christians eventually succeeded in driving Muslims out of al-Andalus and the Iberian Peninsula. The *Reconquista* completed in 1492 when Muslims were defeated in Granada. For details, see Derek William Lomax, *The Reconquest of Spain* (London: Longman, 1978).

⁵ Ibid. Also see Montgomery Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh: University Press of Edinburgh, 1992).

⁶ A glaring example of this mindset is the statement of Pope Benedict XVI—the “Regensburg Lecture,” September 12, 2006—in which he quoted a Byzantine Emperor of the fourteenth century who accused the Prophet (peace be on him) of having commanded the use of the sword to convert people.

⁷ In fact, as candidly shown by Edward Said, “Orientalism” was an essential part of the larger

criticised the Islamic doctrine of *jihād* and portrayed Islam as the religion of violence.⁸ This trend continues in the contemporary world, more particularly after the 9/11 incidents. Scores of books have appeared recently on the relationship of Islam and violence, or to be more specific, Islam and terrorism. In this paper, we will critically evaluate some of the passages from a significant book *The Crisis of Islam* by Bernard Lewis, a symbol of Orientalism in the contemporary world.

However, before discussing the views of Lewis on Islam and violence, we deem it better to first present a brief summary of the circumstances that led the Prophet (peace be on him) to take up arms against his opponents. We will also briefly discuss some of the instructions of the Prophet (peace be on him) for humanising warfare. This is necessary to contextualise the Prophetic teachings on *jihād*.

Efforts of the Prophet (peace be on him) to Avoid War

The early Muslim community faced bitter persecution at the hands of the Makkans. In the fifth year after the declaration of his prophethood, the Prophet (peace be on him) allowed some of them to migrate to the neighbouring Christian state of Abyssinia.⁹ When the false news of reconciliation between the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Makkans spread, some of these migrants came back and they faced even more severe persecution.¹⁰ Some of them had to migrate again to Abyssinia along with many other Muslims.¹¹ Several verses of the Qur'ān refer to this event and testify that Muslims were compelled to abandon their homeland to save their faith.¹²

After facing persecution and rejection for ten long years in Makkah, the Prophet (peace be on him) turned to Ṭā'if, then the second largest city in the

phenomenon of European colonialism. He remarks, "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness. . . . As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge." Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 204.

⁸ For instance, see William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet with Introductory Chapters on the Original Sources for the Biography of Mahomet, and on the Pre-Islamic Arabia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861), 63–81.

⁹ Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sirat Rasūl Allāh* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 146ff; Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1994), 81ff.

¹⁰ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 167–169.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Cf. Qur'ān, 22:40; 59:8.

Arabian Peninsula.¹³ However, the response from the ruling elites and common masses of Ṭā'if was even more disappointing.¹⁴ Hence, the Prophet (peace be on him) had to look for other alternative sites in the Peninsula.¹⁵

The *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) season offered an opportunity to meet the elites and masses from all over the Peninsula. In the eleventh year of the prophethood, six men from the town of Yathrib embraced Islam.¹⁶ The next year, twelve men from among the inhabitants of Yathrib embraced Islam and asked the Prophet to send someone with them to Yathrib so that they could preach the message of Islam to the local masses there.¹⁷ The Prophet (peace be on him) agreed to send his envoy and this step proved successful because in the next *ḥajj* season as many as seventy-two men and nineteen women came to embrace Islam and ask him to migrate to their city state.¹⁸ They offered every kind of support against the possible attack of the Makkans and others.¹⁹ The Prophet (peace be on him) took the pledge of allegiance from the leaders of the two major tribes of Yathrib for the same. He, then, allowed his companions to migrate to Yathrib.²⁰ Later, when the Prophet (peace be on him) also migrated to Yathrib, the town was renamed as Madīnat al-Nabī (the City of the Prophet) or simply al-Madīnah (the City).²¹ It may be noted here that the migration to Madīnah was different from the one to Abyssinia in that this migration was not just for the purpose of seeking refuge, but also for the purpose of establishing an Islamic state in Madīnah.

The Makkans did not tolerate the peaceful existence and flourishing of the Muslim community in Madīnah. They expressed their agony to their old friends in the Jewish tribes of Madīnah.²² Abū Jahl, one of the top leaders of the Makkans, precluded Sa'd b. Mu'ādh (Allah be pleased with him), one of the leaders of the Madīnan Muslims, from performing *'umrah* (minor pilgrimage).²³ This was in violation of a long standing custom of the Arabs whereby pilgrimage to Makkah was deemed a legal right of every person. Sa'd in response warned that the trade route of the Makkans to Syria via Madīnah

¹³ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 192–194.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 194ff.

¹⁶ Ibid., 197–98.

¹⁷ Ibid., 198–201.

¹⁸ Ibid., 201–07.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 208ff.

²¹ Lings, *Muhammad*, 120.

²² Ibid., 125ff; Shibli Nu'mānī, *Sirat al-Nabī* (A'ẓamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifin, 1364 AH), 1:305–06.

²³ Nu'mānī, *Sirat al-Nabī*, 1:306–307.

would no longer be deemed safe for the caravans of Makkah.²⁴ This was a kind of declaration of war from both sides.

The Makkans were preparing for a full fledged attack on Madīnah. The Makkan caravan was sent to Syria specifically for financing this war.²⁵ The Prophet (peace be on him) had to take measures to neutralise the growing threat of the Makkans. He concluded peace treaties with many neighbouring tribes.²⁶ He also had to send many expeditions to various destinations whenever a threat was felt.²⁷ When the Makkans felt that their caravan coming back from Syria was in danger, they came out to conquer Madīnah.²⁸ The Muslim troops encountered them at Badr and the Makkans faced huge losses in the battlefield.²⁹ This was the first major conflict between Muslims and Makkans. This encounter was followed by a series of wars, which were in the nature of “continuation of previous hostilities.”³⁰ Thus, in the next year the Makkans again came to invade Madīnah and take revenge of Badr.³¹ Muslim troops halted their march at Uḥud. After a fierce battle in which Muslims faced serious casualties, the Makkan troops turned back to Makkah.³² Then, in the fifth year after *hijrah*, the Makkans along with other allies from the Arab and Jewish tribes besieged Madīnah.³³ At this critical juncture, Banū Qurayzah, the only remaining Jewish tribe in Madīnah, also broke its alliance with Muslims and joined hands with the invading forces.³⁴ However, the siege proved unsuccessful and the invading forces had to go back without conquering Madīnah.³⁵

The next year, the Prophet (peace be on him) decided to go for *‘umrah* (minor pilgrimage) to Makkah.³⁶ This was a legal right of all the Arabs since the time of the Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be on him). The Makkans tried to stop them and finally a treaty was concluded whereby the Prophet (peace be on

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 1:315–16.

²⁶ Ibid., 1:309–14.

²⁷ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 281–89; Nu‘mānī, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:590–602.

²⁸ For a detailed analysis of the circumstances that led to the Battle of Badr, see Nu‘mānī, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:343–63.

²⁹ Some seventy Makkans were killed including their top leaders such as Abū Jahl, ‘Utbah, and Shaybah. Nu‘mānī, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:323–27.

³⁰ Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1945), 153.

³¹ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 370ff.

³² Ibid., 370–91.

³³ Ibid., 456–61.

³⁴ Ibid., 461ff.

³⁵ Ibid., 459–60.

³⁶ Ibid., 499ff.

him) agreed to go back to Madīnah and come for ‘*umrah*’ the next year.³⁷ The treaty also stipulated peaceful relations between Muslims and Makkans for a period of ten years.³⁸

However, the Makkans violated the terms of peace in the eighth year of *hijrah* and attacked Banū Khuzā‘ah, who were allied to Muslims.³⁹ The Makkans even rejected the peaceful gestures of the Prophet (peace be on him).⁴⁰ Finally, the Prophet (peace be on him) decided to march towards Makkah and punish the Makkans for violating the terms of peace and attacking the allies of the Muslim community. He, however, moved his troops in such a way that the Makkans could not withstand the attack and surrendered without fight.⁴¹ At that point, the Prophet (peace be on him) proclaimed general amnesty for his opponents.⁴²

This summary of the relations of the Prophet (peace be on him) with Makkans shows how war was imposed on him even though he did not want to wage war against his opponents.⁴³ We find the same pattern in his relations with other Arab tribes as well as the Jewish tribes of Madīnah and Khaybar. The same is true of his relations with the Christian neighbours.⁴⁴

Prophetic Instructions for Humanising Warfare

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to give a detailed exposition of the Prophetic injunctions regarding the conduct of hostilities.⁴⁵ However, we may

³⁷ Ibid., 504.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 540ff.

⁴⁰ Nu‘mānī, *Sīrat al-Nabī*, 1:510–11.

⁴¹ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 545ff.

⁴² Ibid., 550.

⁴³ Having said that, it must also be emphasised that the Prophet’s wars also contained an element of divine punishment for those among his immediate addressees who knowingly rejected the truth after the Prophet (peace be on him) had made it crystal clear for them. For a detailed analysis of this aspect of the Prophet’s wars, see Muhammad Mushtaq Aḥmad, “The Notions of *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dār al-Islām* in Islamic Law with Special Reference to the Ḥanafī Jurisprudence,” *Islamic Studies* 47, no. 1 (2008): 5–37.

⁴⁴ For a good discussion on the Prophet’s wars, see Zakaria Bashier, *War and Peace in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (Liecester: Islamic Foundation, 2006).

⁴⁵ For details on the Islamic *jus in bello*, see Ameer Zemmali, ed., *Maqālāt fi ‘l-Qānūn al-Durwālī al-Insānī wa ‘l-Islām* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2009); Muhammad Munir, “*Aḥkām al-Madaniyyin fi ‘l-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah wa ‘l-Qānūn al-Durwālī al-Insānī: Dirāsah Muqārinah*” (LLM thesis, Faculty of Shariah and Law, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 1996); Munir, “The Protection of Women and Children in Islamic Law and International Humanitarian Law: A Critique of John Kelsay,” *Hamdard Islamicus* 25, no. 3 (2002): 69–82.

briefly refer here to some of his injunctions relating to the prohibition of targeting non-combatants during war.

Before the first encounter of Muslims and Makkans, the Qur'ān warned Muslims to confine their war efforts to only those people who were bent upon fighting them: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not commit transgression. Verily, Allah does not like transgressors."⁴⁶ On the basis of the injunctions and actual conduct of the Prophet (peace be on him), the Muslim jurists declared that the prohibition of transgression in this verse included:

- the prohibition to initiate hostilities;
- the prohibition of mutilation of the dead bodies;
- the prohibition of maltreatment of the prisoners of war; and
- the prohibition of attacking non-combatants.⁴⁷

The argument for this is two-fold. First, the word *qātilū* (fight) in the verse is from group (*bāb*) of *muqātalah*, which implies participation from two parties who actively engage in the commission of the act, and not between a combatant and a non-combatant.⁴⁸ Second, there are several Prophetic traditions that prohibit killing of non-combatants. For instance, when the Prophet (peace be on him) found the dead body of a woman in the battlefield, he exclaimed, "Why was she killed when she was not fighting!" Then he issued a proclamation prohibiting the killing of women and children.⁴⁹ Many of the companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) report that on many occasions he prohibited his companions from killing women and children.⁵⁰ Then, there

⁴⁶ Qur'ān 2:190. Translation of the verse is of Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: Abridged Version of Tafhīm Qur'ān*, trans. and ed. Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2006).

⁴⁷ Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 2:189.

⁴⁸ The basic root of the word is *q-t-l* from which is the word *qātala* on the meter of *fā'ala* which is from the group (*bāb*) of *mufa'alah*. According to the Arabic grammar rules, it is the characteristic of the verbs of this group that they always show participation from two parties. E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2003), 2:2984

⁴⁹ Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Jihād wa 'l-Siyar, Bāb Qatl al-Ṣibyān fi 'l-Ḥarb; Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mājāh, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb al-Ghārah wa 'l-Bayāt wa Qatl al-Nisā' wa 'l-Ṣibyān.

⁵⁰ This tradition has been reported by several traditionists from a number of companions who include 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ka'b. (Allah be pleased with them). Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Jihād wa 'l-Siyar, Bāb Qatl al-Nisā' fi 'l-Ḥarb; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Min Musnad Banī Hāshim, Bidāyat Musnad 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās; Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb al-Nahy 'an Qatl al-Nisā' wa 'l-Wildān fi 'l-Ghazw.

is the famous tradition about the Prophet's commandments to his commanders.⁵¹ This tradition forms the basis of Islamic *jus in bello* and that is why Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805), the illustrious disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), and the father of Islamic international law (*siyar*), begins his *al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr* with this tradition.⁵² He also begins with it the chapter on *Siyar* in *Kitāb al-Aṣl*, which is his *magnum opus* and the primary text of the Ḥanafī School of law.⁵³ Among other commandments it include: "Do not break your pledge, do not mutilate [the dead bodies] and do not kill the children."

The underlying cause (*'illah*) for excluding women and children was their non-combatant status, as the Prophet (peace be on him) explicitly said, "Why was she killed when she was not fighting!" The rule can be extended to all classes of non-combatants on the basis of this underlying cause. Famous Syrian jurist Wahbah al-Zuhaylī (d. 2015) asserts, "In Islamic law, we do not enumerate all the classes of the people whom it is unlawful to target, but by analogy this rule will apply to all those who do not participate in war."⁵⁴

The reforms brought into warfare by the Prophet (peace be on him) greatly minimised the devastating effects of war. This is candidly proved by the fact that only a few hundred persons were killed during his wars with his opponents.⁵⁵ Surprisingly enough, Western scholars criticising the Prophet's

⁵¹ This tradition has also been reported from many companions including 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd, Anas b. Mālik, Samurah, Ya'lā, Buraydah, Shaddād, 'Imrān, and Abū Ayyūb. (Allah be pleased with them). Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Jihād wa 'l-Siyar, Bāb Ta'mīr al-Imām al-Umarā' 'alā al-Bu'ūth wa Waṣīyyatuh Iyyāhum; Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Siyar, Bāb Mā Jā' fī al-Nahy 'an al-Muthlah; Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb fī Du'a' al-Mushrikīn; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb Waṣīyyat al-Imām.

⁵² Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, trans., *The Shorter Book on Muslim International Law: Kitāb al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1998), p. 1 of the Arabic text and p. 43 of the English translation. This is an important work of al-Shaybānī, which contains a precise summary of the position of the Ḥanafī school of law on important issues of *siyar*. The text of this work was preserved in *al-Kāfī* of al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd al-Marwazī, which in turn was an abridged version of the six basic texts—*zāhir al-riwāyah*—of the Ḥanafī school of law written by al-Shaybānī. Ghazi argued that al-Ḥākim summarised four of these books and instead of summarising the two books on *siyar*—*al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr* and *al-Siyar al-Kabīr*—he preserved the original text of *al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr*. Muḥammad b. Abī Sahl al-Sarakhsī also testifies to this in his commentary on *al-Kāfī*, namely, *al-Mabsūt*. Thus, he asserts at the end of his commentary on the chapter on *siyar*: "Here ends the commentary of *al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr*. . . ."

⁵³ Majid Khadduri, trans., *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybānī's Siyar* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1966), 75. This work contains chapters on *siyar*, *kharāj*, and *'usbr* from *al-Aṣl* of al-Shaybānī. Many scholars have mistakenly considered this work to be *al-Siyar al-Kabīr* of al-Shaybānī. That is, however, a different work the text of which is found along with the commentary of al-Sarakhsī in the form of *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Siyar al-Kabīr*.

⁵⁴ Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Āthār al-Ḥarb fī 'l-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 74.

⁵⁵ Historians disagree on the exact number of total casualties from both Muslims and non-

wars seldom refer to the actual number of casualties in these wars and never compare these figures with the number of casualties in other wars of the same period, let alone comparing them with the destruction resulted from the wars fought by the Western nations in the recent past and the contemporary world.⁵⁶

Bernard Lewis: The Principal Guru of the Neocons

Bernard Lewis (1916–2018) was one of the leading Western scholars on Islamic history, particularly the history of the Ottomans, and the interaction between the West and Islam. It is worth noting that he worked for the British intelligence as well as Foreign Office during World War II. In the 1960's, he was deemed “the most articulate and learned Zionist advocate in the North American Middle East academic community.” Even today, he is not only deemed an academic but also “the principal guru of the neocons and the proponent of the Iraq war.”⁵⁷ The administration of George W. Bush frequently sought his advice on key policy issues.

Lewis' political affiliation seems to have greatly influenced his academic contribution. As early as in 1967, he wrote *The Assassins* in which he traced the origins of the movement of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī⁵⁸ leader al-Ḥasan b. al-

Muslims, but in any case the number does not exceed 1500. This is despite the fact that approximately one million square miles of territory came under Muslim rule as a result of these wars. For details, see Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad* (Karachi: Huzaifah Publications, 1979), 5.

⁵⁶ In World War II, more than 70 million persons were killed. In the first Gulf War 1991, more than 150,000 people were killed.

⁵⁷ Oliver Miles, “Lewis Gun,” review of *From Babel to Dragomans*, by Bernard Lewis, *Guardian*, 17 July 2004.

⁵⁸ According to the doctrine of the Shi'a Imāmiyyah, Muslim community cannot live in accordance with the norms of Islam unless it is led by a rightful successor of the Prophet (peace be on him). This is known as the doctrine of *imāmah*. In their opinion, it was so important an issue that it could not be left for people to decide. Hence, they assert that succession to the Prophet (peace be on him) was to be declared by the Prophet through an explicit text (*naṣṣ*). Similarly, they believe that each successive imām nominates his successor through explicit text. They also hold that the successor of the Prophet (peace be on him) was to be from among the descendants of 'Alī (Allah be pleased with him). (Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Mutanabbī, 1992), 1:146. They further deemed it necessary that after the third Imām al-Ḥusayn, the second son of 'Alī, every successive imām should be a descendant of al-Ḥusayn (ibid.). Thus, for them, the first imām was 'Alī, followed by al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. After al-Ṣādiq, the Imāmiyyah got divided on the issue of his successor because his elder son Ismā'il predeceased him. Those who considered Ismā'il the seventh Imām are called the Ismā'iliyyah or the *Sab'iyyah* (the “Sevens”) (ibid., 1:166), while those who deemed Mūsā al-Kāzīm, the second son of al-Ṣādiq to be the seventh Imām, are known as the *Ithnā 'Ashariyyah* (the “Twelver”) because their line of successive Imāms stopped at the Twelfth Imām, al-Mahdī, who is believed

Ṣabbāḥ (d. 1124 CE)⁵⁹ calling it the first terrorist movement of history. One wonders how could he ignore the first century's Jewish militants known as zealots and sicarii?⁶⁰ In his preface to a recent addition of this book, Lewis asserts that there are many parallels between the modern-day terrorism and the movement of the Assassins. Thus, he says,

Certainly, the resemblance between the medieval Assassins and their modern counterparts are [sic.] striking: the Syrian-Iranian connection, the calculated use of terror, the total dedication of the assassin emissary, to the point of self-immolation, in the service of his cause and in the expectations of heavenly recompense. Some have seen a further resemblance, in that both directed their attack against an external enemy, the crusaders in the one case, the Americans and Israelis in the other.⁶¹

to be in occultation (*ghaybūbah*) (ibid., 1:164). The Ismā'īliyyah later got further divided on the question of the immamate of Abū 'l-Manṣūr al-Nizār (d. 1097 CE). While a majority of them followed al-Nizār, and are therefore called *al-Nizāriyyūn*, some of them accepted al-Musta'li, the half brother of al-Nizār, as the Imām. In the contemporary world, *al-Nizāriyyūn* accept the Aga Khan as their Imām, while those belonging to the Bohra community are the followers of al-Musta'li.

⁵⁹ Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ is the famous Ismā'īli-Nizārī *dā'ī* (missionary) of the sixth/eleventh century who organised the well-known movement of the assassins. For details, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁶⁰ The name "zealots" was given to those revolutionary Jews who resisted the Roman occupation of Jerusalem initially by rising up against the effort of the Roman government to conduct a census for the purpose of taxation and then by *assassinating* the Roman officials as well as the Jewish elites whom they deemed supporters of the Romans. Among the disciples of Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) one was named Simon the *Zealot* (Luke 6:15). It is for this reason that some Western scholars tried to interpret the struggle and mission of Prophet 'Īsā (peace be on him) as a revolutionary and political movement. For instance, see A. Richardson, *The Political Christ* (London: SCM, 1973); Kamal Salibi, *Conspiracy in Jerusalem* (London: Tauris & Co., 1988); J. D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1994). The sicarii (pl. of sicarios) were those fanatics among these zealots who would use daggers—*sica* in Hebrew—for assassinating their targets. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus and the Talmud testify that the zealots and sicarii had caused terror in the society. They also successfully overthrew the Romans and resisted them for quite some time. When the Romans re-entered Jerusalem, some 960 zealots turned to mountains and for three years they resisted the Roman forces from their camps in Masada. When finally the Romans managed to destroy their safe haven, they found that all the remaining fighters and their families had committed suicide. One may also refer here to the practice initiated by Moshe Dayan (d. 1981), the fourth Chief of Staff of the Israeli defence forces (1953–58) and later defence minister and foreign minister of Israel. The practice is that the swearing-in-ceremony of new recruits to the Israeli defence forces who complete their basic training is held on top of Masada and the ceremony ends with the declaration: "Masada shall not fall again!" Is it not astonishing, then, that Lewis overlooks these zealots and sicarii?

⁶¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), viii.

This is how Lewis supported the political agenda of the American administration against Iran and Syria.

This Muslim-bashing is more evident in his 1982 work *Muslim Discovery of Europe*, the basic theme of which is that Muslim societies could not keep pace with the West and that the decay of the Islamic societies was apparent even in the eleventh century. He suggests that the primary cause of this decay was not external pressures in the form of crusades, but internal problems particularly the “cultural arrogance,” which was a barrier to creative borrowing.

In his 1986 work *Semites and Anti-Semites*, Lewis tried to answer the criticism on Israel for being a racist state. He also claimed that the Arab rage against Israel was disproportionate to other injustices in the Muslim world, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As we shall see later, he also asserted this claim in his later work *The Crisis of Islam*.

Part of his *The Political Language of Islam* is also related to the issue of *jihād*. Look at the following passage where Lewis in his usual Orientalistic style starts discussion from a positive point about Islam and ends it on a point, which is nothing short of distortion and misinterpretation:

The basis of the obligation of *jihad* is the universality of the Muslim revelation. God’s word and God’s message are for all mankind; it is the duty of those who have accepted them to strive (*jāhada*) unceasingly to convert or at least to subjugate those who have not. This obligation is without limit of time or space. It must continue until the whole of the world has either accepted the Islamic faith or submitted to the power of the Islamic state. Until that happens, the world is divided into two: the House of Islam (*Dār al-Islām*), where Muslims rule and the law of Islam prevails; and the House of War (*Dār al-Ḥarb*) . . . comprising the rest of the world. *Between the two there is a morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory state of war*, until the final and inevitable triumph of Islam over unbelief.⁶²

The 1990’s essay of Lewis *The Roots of Muslim Rage* used the phrase “clash of civilizations” to denote the relations between Muslims and the West. Later, this phrase got popular because of the work of Samuel Huntington. This essay is also credited with introducing the phrase “Islamic fundamentalism” to North America. He reasserted his thesis on the problem of the Muslim world with modernity in *What Went Wrong?*⁶³

⁶² Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73; emphasis mine.

⁶³ Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Although the book appeared in 2002, Lewis had written it before the

The Crisis of Islam: A Masterpiece of the Orientalists' Mindset

After the 9/11 incidents, Lewis came up with his explanation of the causes of these events and summed up his thesis in *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*.

The Basic Theme of the Book

The basic purpose of writing this book was to answer the question raised by US President George W. Bush after the 9/11 incidents: "Why do some people 'hate us'?" Many scholars have been perceptive enough to realise that the atrocious acts of 9/11 should be considered the acts of a few individuals rather than be regarded as something inalienably related to Islam or its followers. Lewis, however, seems to have a different view because he is of the opinion that Islam *per se*, like other religions, sometime leads its followers to violence. Thus, he says,

Islam, like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that we have to confront part of the Muslim world while it is going through such a period, and when most—though by no means all—of that hatred is directed against us.⁶⁴

At another place, he says, "Significant numbers of Muslims are ready to approve, and a few of them to apply, this interpretation of their religion. Terrorism requires only a few."⁶⁵ If it is true that terrorism requires "only a few," these few can be found anywhere in the world and among the members of any religion or civilisation. One wonders what should one say about those in the West who unabashedly talk of nuking Makkah? One only hopes that such people are "only a few!" Why should then one put the blame on Muslims only? Why should one try to establish a direct link between terrorism and Islam when Muslims display a wide range of attitudes towards the other?

9/11 incidents.

⁶⁴ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003), 21–22; emphasis mine. Even the title of the book *The Crisis of Islam* suggests that the author considers Islam to be the root cause of the problem, particularly because the preposition "of" in the title of the book has been italicised for putting emphasis. Iftikhar Malik writes, "The title is totally judgemental as it perceives Islam lost somewhere in a serious crisis within the only two trajectories of terror and *Jihad*—both justified in the name of Islam. To any reader, the title itself comes about as a powerful verdict on an entire civilization." Iftikhar H. Malik, *Crescent between Cross and Star: Muslims and the West after 9/11* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105.

⁶⁵ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, xxx; emphasis mine.

Identifying the Enemy: Three Categories of Muslims

After the demise of the Soviet Union, it did not take long for Western intellectuals and foreign policy experts to prop up a new enemy of devilish proportions to replace the earlier demonic monster—the Communist Bloc.⁶⁶ Much effort was made to dramatise the threat posed by this new monster, a threat to Western values, human civilisation, and the very existence of the West.⁶⁷ While commenting on this new threat, Lewis points out that there are some Muslims “who desire nothing better than a closer and more friendly relationship with the West and the development of democratic institutions in their own countries.” However, he finds other Muslims who are hostile to the West. “But a significant number of Muslims—notably but not exclusively those whom we call fundamentalists—are hostile and dangerous, not because we need an enemy but because they do.”⁶⁸

Lewis then identifies three major trends among Muslims in the contemporary world. Some Muslims, according to him, consider “the West in general and its present leader the United States in particular” the archenemy of Islam, a “serious obstacle to the restoration of God’s faith and law at home and their ultimate universal triumph.”⁶⁹ He also finds other Muslims who, while remaining steadfast to their faith and understanding the flaws found in the West, “also see its merits.” These, says Lewis, “seek to join us in reaching towards a freer and better world.”⁷⁰ Finally, Lewis finds a third trend among Muslims: those who consider the West as their ultimate enemy, but they are aware of its power and, therefore, “seek some temporary accommodation in order to better prepare for the final struggle.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ For a good analysis of this issue, see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶⁷ One may refer here to the work of the so-called “Team B II” in the United States of America. The basic purpose of Team B II is to give a second opinion on the threat to America, an opinion that may not be similar to that of the official position of the US government. A similar exercise was made in the 1970’s to form a second opinion on the communist threat and, it is said, Ronald Reagan zealously followed the recommendations of Team B at that time. The new Team B (i.e. Team B II) comprises of experts from academia as well as retired officials from military and intelligence agencies. The report prepared by Team B II concludes that it is the *shari’ah*, which poses a serious threat to America. The report also talks of the so-called *stealth-Jihadists*, those Muslim scholars who present Islam as the religion of peace. “Shariah: The Threat to America,” <http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Shariah-The-Threat-to-America/-Team-B-Report-Web-09292010.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

This analysis has several serious flaws. First and foremost, it divides over a billion human beings into three broad categories. This is preposterously simplistic, if not altogether ridiculous. This classification does not take into account the wide variety of attitudes and behaviours characterising this staggering mass of humanity. Second, this classification is based not so much on how Muslims look at the West, but on how some of the Westerners look at Muslims. Thus, if some Muslims uphold democratic values they are placed in the first category, although many of them may uphold these values not because of their Western provenance but because they consider them to be rooted in the value-system of Islam. Similarly, those who reject the Westminster form of democracy may be rejecting only a particular form of government, although they may, at the same time, believe in the basic values of democracy, freedom, plurality, tolerance, and a participatory system rested on mutual consultation. Third, this classification ignores the excesses committed by the Western powers in the Muslim world during the colonial and post-colonial era, while it is these excesses that ignited violent reactions in some of their victims. The net conclusion is that this classification has been made simply for achieving one purpose: to put a one-sided blame on Muslims for all that is evil in the contemporary world.

Thus, while defending the policies of US, Lewis says, “President Bush and other western politicians have taken great pains to make it clear that the war in which we are engaged is a war against terrorism, not a war against Arabs, or against Muslims.”⁷² However, to trace the roots of the present conflict, like several other Western scholars, Lewis cites numerous conflicts of the twentieth century which, in one way or another, involved Muslims. This is one way of putting the blame on Muslims for the present conflicts and tensions, while there have been numerous wars and conflicts in recent times (World War II, the Korean War, the Cuban Missiles Crisis, the War in Vietnam, the African civil wars, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada—to cite just a few) in which Muslims were totally out of the picture. Lewis, however, fails to take any of these into account.

Tracing the Roots of the Present Conflicts: The American Presence in Arabia

Lewis asserts that the seeds of the present conflicts lie in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and what was called the redrawing of the map of the Middle East. He also rightly points out that the Western concept of nationhood and nationalism is alien to the Muslim notion of *Ummah*.

⁷² Ibid., xv.

Thus, starting from World War One and discussing thereafter a number of different conflicts in the Muslim world, Lewis reaches the first Gulf War 1991. For him, the Americans liberated Kuwait from Iraq. However, he acknowledges that many Muslims saw it as a desire for American occupation of the holy land of Islam insofar as the American troops were stationed in Arabia. He rightly asserts that this is the fundamental cause for the spread of anti-American sentiments in the Muslim world and the militant resistance movements gaining strength across the globe.

It is surprising, however, that the learned scholar ignores the American support to the *mujāhidīn* in Afghanistan against the Soviet invasion, while it is that support which primarily strengthened the militant organizations, as has been pointed out candidly by many scholars.⁷³ Thus, Lewis tries to exonerate the American government of all the alleged wrongs it committed. He may have preferred to do so, but he should have analysed the issues, which he himself raises without giving a satisfactory explanation. For example, he says,

But Middle Eastern resentment of imperial powers has not always been consistent. The Soviet Union, which retained and extended the imperial conquests of the czars of Russia, ruled with no light hand over tens of millions of Muslim subjects in Central Asia and in the Caucasus. And yet the Soviet Union suffered no similar backlash of anger and hatred from the Arab community.⁷⁴

Lewis expressed this view in his other works as well but he leaves this issue unresolved and moves to discuss other issues. This arrogant attitude on the part of Lewis is a peculiar characteristic of the Orientalists' mindset and another way of putting the blame of irrational behaviour on Muslims.

Denying Muslims' Attachment to Jerusalem: An Attempt to Rewrite History

In the same tone, Lewis takes great pains to establish that the word "crusade" has no religious connotation.⁷⁵ One suspects this to be merely an attempt to justify President Bush's use of the word "crusade" for his global war on terror. Lewis goes to the extreme of asserting that Muslims historically did not give much importance to the crusades and to the occupation of the Holy Land by the crusaders till the nineteenth century.

⁷³ For instance, see Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (2000): 115–26; John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 75.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

To judge by the Arabic historiography of the period, it aroused very little interest in the region. Appeals by the local Muslims to Damascus and Baghdad for help remained unanswered, and the newly established Crusader principalities from Antioch to Jerusalem soon fitted into the game of Levantine politics, with cross-religious alliances in a pattern of rivalries between and among Muslims and Christian princes.⁷⁶

This seems strange, indeed, because Muslims have historically considered the fall of Jerusalem to be a great loss.⁷⁷ This is because of the religious and spiritual attachment of Muslims to Jerusalem. For it was their first *qiblah* and it was from there that, as the Muslims believe, the Prophet (peace be on him) ascended to heavens (*mi'rāj*).⁷⁸ Even Lewis admits that “local Muslims” had appealed to the rulers in Damascus and Baghdad. Is it not surprising that Lewis considers the attitude of the corrupt rulers of Damascus and Baghdad to be representative of the Muslim behaviour and undermines the feelings and perceptions of the bulk of the Muslim population? After all, why did Muslims never admire these rulers? Instead, they always hailed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī [Saladin] (d. 1193 CE) as their hero. Lewis further says,

After a long period of relative obscurity, interest in the city was reawakened in the nineteenth century, first by the quarrels of the European powers over the custody of the Christian holy places, and then by the new Jewish immigration. . . . The same period saw a first awakening of interest among Muslims in the Crusades, which had aroused remarkably little concern at the time they occurred.⁷⁹

Thus, he tries to prove that the Holy Land and the crusades became important for Muslims only in the nineteenth century. One wonders how a scholar of Lewis' stature can engage in misinterpreting, or even re-writing, history.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁷ For details, see Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁷⁸ *Qiblah* is the direction of the regular daily prayers. Initially, Muslims prayed in such a manner that they would face the *Ka'bah* in Makkah as well as the *Bayt al-Maqdis* in Jerusalem. When Muslims migrated to Madīnah, this arrangement was no more possible. They continued praying in the direction of Jerusalem till the Qur'ān commanded them to pray towards Makkah. For details, see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 2:3-49; Nu'mānī, *Sirat al-Nabī*, 1:299-304.

⁷⁹ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 43.

⁸⁰ Iftikhar Malik, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, calls Lewis “a committed Zionist and Neo-Orientalist” and says that he “does not lose any chance of disputing Muslim spiritual and historical claims on Jerusalem.” Malik, *Crescent between Cross and Star*, 111.

Comparing the Concepts of Jihād and Crusades

Lewis compares the concepts of *jihād* and crusades in this way:

Jihad is sometimes presented as the Muslim equivalent of the Crusade, and the two are seen as more or less equivalent. In a sense this is true—both were proclaimed and waged as holy wars for the true faith against an infidel enemy. But there is a difference. The Crusade is a late development in Christian history and, in a sense, marks a radical departure from basic Christian values as expressed in the Gospels. . . . Yet in the long struggle between Islam and Christendom, the Crusade was late, limited, and of relatively brief duration.⁸¹

As opposed to this view, the Christian clergy has persistently held that war for a just cause is not against the basic Christian values as expressed in the Gospels. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 CE) explained how a Christian ruler was under a religious duty to wage a just war. He also declared that a war fought for defending and propagating the true creed of the Church against the heretics, the pagans, and other non-Christians was always just. He explained how this duty came from the basic Christian value of charity. For Augustine, there was no conflict between this duty of charity—i.e., the duty to turn the other cheek⁸²—and one's moral obligation to provide for the defense of the weak. He considered just war and charity to be two sides of the same coin. Thus, he argued that the Christian ruler was under a religious obligation to make peace for the protection of his subjects even if the only way to eliminate a threat to such peace was through the use of armed force.⁸³

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 CE) further elaborated this concept on the basis of arguments from the Christian theology.⁸⁴ It is the same theory that Hugo Grotius (d. 1645) modified a little to explain the wars fought by the nation-states after the fall of the Holy Roman Empire.⁸⁵ Even today, the Catholic church owns this belief.⁸⁶ Had the crusade been a radical departure from basic Christian values, there would not have been so overwhelming response for it

⁸¹ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 31–32.

⁸² Matthew 5:40; Luke 6:28.

⁸³ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. John Healey (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909). For an academic study of the issue, see John Mark Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler et al (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), vol. 20.

⁸⁵ Book II of Grotius' *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (the Law of War and Peace) is devoted to this issue.

⁸⁶ For a good collection of essays on this issue, see John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson, eds. *Just War and Jihad* (Westport: Greenwood, 1991). Also see James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

in the Christian West. As Karen Armstrong has shown, the Christian West so overwhelmingly responded to the call for the crusade proclaimed by Pope Urban II in 1095 CE as if it had been eagerly waiting for it.⁸⁷

Jihād as a Perpetual War: Misinterpreting the Islamic Norms

Like other Western scholars, Lewis also equates *jihād* with the theory of perpetual war between Muslims and non-Muslims, and puts forward the argument that the earlier Muslim jurists divided the world into two hostile entities, i.e., *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*:

In Muslim tradition, the world is divided into two houses: the House of Islam (*Dār al-Islām*), in which Muslims governments rule and Muslim law prevails and the House of War (*Dār al-Ḥarb*), the rest of world, still inhabited and, more important, ruled by infidels. The presumption is that the duty of *jihad* will continue, interrupted only by truces, until all the world either adopts the Muslim faith or submits to Muslim rule.⁸⁸

Lewis is not alone in holding this view. Following Majid Khadduri,⁸⁹ most of the modern scholars have adopted this theory. Those among the Muslim scholars who reject the theory of perpetual war between Muslims and non-Muslims feel compelled to reject the division of the world into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*.⁹⁰ The fact remains, however, that the division of the world into two domains had no direct and causal link with the theory of perpetual war. This division was envisaged by the Ḥanafī jurists on the basis of the principle of territorial jurisdiction. Jurists of others schools did not accept the principle of territoriality and, therefore, asserted that this division has no practical effect on the legal consequences.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Karen Armstrong (b. 1944) is worth quoting here: “Clearly crusading answered a deep need in the Christians of Europe. Yet today most of us would unhesitatingly condemn the Crusades as wicked and unchristian. . . . Yet I would argue that holy war is a deeply Christian act. . . . For over a thousand years European Christians tried to hold out against this violent tendency and to keep Christianity a religion of love and peace, yet when Pope Urban called the Crusade they responded with a sigh of relief and reproduced the pattern of holy war with uncanny accuracy. It is as though they felt that at last they were doing what came naturally.” Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today’s World* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 4.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 27.

⁸⁹ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1955); Khadduri, *Islamic Law of Nations*, 10–22.

⁹⁰ For instance, see ‘AbdulḤamid A. AbūSulaymān, *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993); Tariq Ramadan, *To be A European Muslim* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999); al-Zuhaylī, *Āthār al-Ḥarb fi ‘l-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, 192–96.

⁹¹ Muslim scholars have generally rejected the notion of perpetual war between Muslims and

Undermining the Provisions of Islamic Law on Peaceful Relations with Non-Muslims

According to Lewis, the Muslim jurists “in certain periods” recognised an intermediate status between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* known as *dār al-ṣullḥ* or *dār al-‘ahd*.⁹² He considers *dār al-ṣullḥ* a part of *dār al-Islām* although it had “a large measure of autonomy” in internal affairs.⁹³ One wonders how a scholar of Lewis’ stature can make such claims. Even more surprising is the fact that many Muslim scholars accept these claims without looking into their implications and without checking their veracity.

The fact remains that *dār al-ṣullḥ* existed since the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) because he concluded peace treaties with other communities. The same was the case with his successors. That is why the Muslim jurists have always, not just in certain periods, recognised this category. Moreover, the legal status of this category varied on the basis of the actual terms of the treaty and in most of the times *dār al-ṣullḥ* enjoyed complete independence. Thus, al-Shaybānī asserted that Islamic law could not be enforced in such territory.⁹⁴ Furthermore, contrary to what Lewis presumes,

non-Muslims. In the process, however, they also rejected the division of the world in the domain of Islam and the domain of disbelief presuming that accepting this division implies accepting the theory of perpetual war. Thus, Tariq Ramadan asserts that this division is irrelevant to the contemporary international legal order. Interestingly, the argument he gives is the same as forwarded by Lewis: the universality of the message of Islam! “*Dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* are two concepts which cannot be found either in the Qur’ān or in the *Sunna*. They actually do not pertain to the fundamental sources of Islam whose principles are presented for the whole world (*lil-‘ālamīn*), over all time and beyond any geographical limitation. It was the ‘*ulamā*’ who, during the first three centuries of Islam, by considering the state of the world—its geographical divisions, the powers in place through religious belonging and influence as well as the moving game of alliances—started to classify and define the different spaces in and around them.” Ramadan, *To be A European Muslim*, 23. Also see al-Zuhayli, *Āthār al-Ḥarb fī ‘l-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, 192–96. This position, however, is not acceptable from the perspective of Islamic law and it creates more serious problems than those it tries to solve. That is why, we find the approach of Ahmad more solid as he argues that this division of the world was for the purpose of ascertaining the jurisdiction of the Muslim courts for enforcing Islamic law and that it had no direct and causal relationship with the theory of perpetual war. Thus, he supports this division and rejects the notion of perpetual war. Ahmad “Notions of *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dār al-Islām*,” 5–21.

⁹² Many modern scholars assume that the category of *dār al-ṣullḥ* or *dār al-‘ahd* was added by later jurists, particularly the Shafi‘ī jurists. This is surprising because the earliest manuals of the Ḥanafī jurists have chapters devoted specifically to the rules about *dār al-muwāda‘ah* (the territory of peace). Khadduri, *Islamic Law of Nations*, 142–57; Ghazi, *Shorter Book on Muslim International Law*, 60–64.

⁹³ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 36.

⁹⁴ Khadduri, *Islamic Law of Nations*, 142–43; Ghazi, *Shorter Book on Muslim International Law*, 60.

the Muslim jurists also allowed peace treaties without a fixed time-period⁹⁵ and they do not consider it necessary to impose “poll-tax” on the other party.⁹⁶

Dividing Jihād into “Offensive” and “Defensive”

It is worth noting that *jihād* against “infidels” is not waged just because of their being infidels? Had it been the case, non-Muslims could not have been allowed to reside under the guaranteed protection in *dār al-Islām*. Worse, it would have led to compulsion in religious matters, which violates a fundamental norm of Islamic law.⁹⁷ Lewis asserts that the Muslim jurists divided *jihād* into offensive and defensive and that they declared that in case of defence *jihād* was an individual obligation of each and every Muslim.⁹⁸

The fact is that this division is the invention of modern jurists, not of the classical Muslim jurists who looked for underlying cause of the obligation of *jihād*, as they do for every other rule of Islamic law. They concluded that *jihād* became obligatory when a community committed *muḥārabah* (waging war) against Islam or Muslims.⁹⁹ To counter this *muḥārabah*, sometimes it becomes necessary to strike first. That is why, classifying *jihād* into “offensive” and “defensive” is of no use. Once it is established that *jihād* becomes obligatory only against *muḥāribīn*, the Muslim jurists consider whether this obligation is on the community as a whole (*fard kifā'i*) or on each individual (*fard 'aynī*). They concluded that it was a communal obligation and like other communal obligations it sometimes became individual obligation. After this, they gave the examples of such situations and asserted that when a Muslim territory was attacked, every Muslim in that territory had the individual duty to participate in repelling that attack.¹⁰⁰ This participation does not necessarily mean taking part in actual combat. However, in an emergency situation civilians may feel compelled to take part in combat in order to repel the attack.¹⁰¹ As a

⁹⁵ Abū Bakr b. Mas'ūd al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' fi Tartīb al-Sharā'i'* (Quetta: al-Maktabah al-Rashīdiyyah, n.d.), 6:77.

⁹⁶ Khadduri, *Islamic Law of Nations*, 142; Ghazi, *Shorter Book on Muslim International Law*, 59.

⁹⁷ Aḥmad b. Shihāb al-Dīn b. Taymiyyah, *Ajwibat al-Masā'il* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1949), 123–25.

⁹⁸ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 36.

⁹⁹ Muḥammad b. al-Humām al-Iskandarī, *Fath al-Qadīr 'alā al-Hidāyah Sharḥ Bidāyat al-Mubtadī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1970), 4:291; Saḥnūn 'Abd al-Salām b. Sa'id b. Ḥabīb al-Tanūkhī, *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Dār al-Bāz, 1323 AH), 2:6

¹⁰⁰ Al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i'*, 6:58

¹⁰¹ Contemporary international law both in customary form as well as in treaty form acknowledges the status of “combatants” for *levee en masse*—common masses who take up arms against the invading forces without having time to organise under a responsible command or to adopt a distinctive uniform or emblem. (Art. 2 of the Hague Regulations IV, 1907, and Article 4 A (6) of the Third Geneva Convention 1949)

hypothetical possibility, it is sometimes asserted that there might be a situation in which each and every Muslim would be under an obligation to participate in combat in order to repel the attack. As is obvious, this is just a hypothetical extreme. Hence, to say in general terms that *jihād* is an individual obligation in case of defence, as Lewis wants us to believe, is half-truth.¹⁰²

Some Apparently Innocent Remarks with Far Reaching Implications

At times, Lewis gives some apparently “innocent” remarks *en pass out* which have far reaching implications and, hence, if someone does not read this book carefully he may unconsciously fall prey to misperceptions. For instance, he says, “The first *jihad* was waged by the Prophet against the rulers of his birthplace and ended with the conquest of Mecca.”¹⁰³ It gives the impression that it was the Prophet (peace be on him) who initiated the war. This is nothing short of inventing history. For it was these rulers of Makkah who persecuted Muslims for years and did not let them live in peace and in accordance with the requirements of their faith even in Madīnah.¹⁰⁴ Lewis says that after the conquest of Makkah, “the next task was the extension of Muslim authority to the rest of Arabia and, under the Prophet’s successors, the caliphs, to the rest of the world.”¹⁰⁵ This theory, however, is not acceptable. While discussing the Prophet’s wars, the Western scholars as well as many Muslim scholars ignore that he was a Prophet and that his opponents deserved divine punishment like the earlier nations, which received divine punishment after they rejected the message of their Prophets.¹⁰⁶

One has to give credit to Lewis for pointing out that the *hijrah* of the Prophet (peace be on him) to Madīnah was not “flight”¹⁰⁷ However, his

¹⁰² One may compare such a situation with spontaneous mass uprising against the invading forces. International law acknowledges the right of the common masses to resist the occupation of their land and to raise arms against the invaders. For details, see Sadia Tabassum, “The Problem of Unlawful Combatants: A Hard Case for International Humanitarian Law” (LLM thesis, Faculty of Shariah and Law, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2010).

¹⁰³ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 45.

¹⁰⁴ This prejudice of the author becomes evident when one looks at his labelling of the 1973 war as “Egypt’s war against Israel” (ibid., 20). Even a more obvious example of prejudice is his statement that “*khalifa* was the title adopted by the Prophet’s father-in-law and first successor, Abu Bakr” (ibid., 6), as if the foremost qualification for the Prophet’s successor was that he was the Prophet’s father-in-law!

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁶ That the Prophet’s wars contained an element of punishment for his opponents is the position taken by some of the contemporary scholars and it has some support in the juristic discourse, particularly in the Ḥanafī manuals. For details, see Ahmad “Notions of *Dār al-Ḥarb* and *Dār al-Islām*,” 29-36.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 28.

assertion that the people of Madīnah “installed the Prophet first as arbitrator and then as ruler”¹⁰⁸ is not acceptable because the people of Madīnah had accepted him as a “Prophet” first and as such had already agreed to obey all his commands. By virtue of the *bay‘ah* of ‘Aqabah they had also accepted the Prophet (peace be on him) as their ruler. The Pact of Madīnah was, thus, a constitutional document that laid down the broad principles of the state of Madīnah.¹⁰⁹

Some Fresh Insights into the Religion, Culture and Society of Muslims

Lewis’ work gives some fresh insights into the religion, culture and society of Muslims. For instance, he says that the dichotomy of regnum and sacerdotium, which is very essential to Christendom, is not found in Islam.¹¹⁰ This is because, says Lewis, Muslims consider God to be the sole sovereign of the universe. However, the conclusion he draws from this—that this belief necessitated the struggle to dominate the whole of the world—does not carry much weight, as noted above.

Lewis also rightly points out that there is no priesthood in Islam and that the hierarchy of the *‘ulamā’* in Ottoman Turkey had no priestly powers and functions. He observes, “Some modern institutions influenced by the West resemble the churches of Christendom but this is [a] departure from classical Islam because there is no division of clergy and laity in Islam.”¹¹¹ While talking about the differences between Islam and other religions, Lewis says, “It is in the realm of politics—domestic, regional, and international alike—that we see the most striking differences between Islam and the rest of the world.”¹¹² Thus, he points out that the heads of states or ministers of foreign affairs of the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom do not hold Protestant summit conferences. Similarly, says he, the rulers of Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union did not hold regular meetings on the basis of their current or previous adherence to the Orthodox Church.

The very idea of such a grouping, based on religion, in the modern world may seem anachronistic and even absurd. It is neither anachronistic nor absurd in relation to Islam. Throughout the tensions of the Cold War and after, more than fifty Muslim governments—including monarchies and republics, conservatives and radicals, practitioners of capitalism and of socialism, supporters of Western

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ For details, see Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1975).

¹¹⁰ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 5.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹¹² Ibid., 11.

bloc, the Eastern bloc, and a whole spectrum of shades of neutrality—built up an elaborate apparatus of international consultation and, on many issues, cooperation.¹¹³

These comments of Lewis should serve as an eye-opener for those who often criticise the poor performance of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) without appreciating the significance of the very fact that such an organisation was established at all in the contemporary ages.

While analysing the role of religious parties in the Muslim world, Lewis asserts that in non-Muslim states “there are relatively few of these parties, and still fewer that play a major role. Even with these, religious themes are usually of minor importance. Yet in many, indeed in most, Islamic countries religion remains a major political factor—far indeed in domestic than in international or even in religious affairs.”¹¹⁴ This again seems to be an oversimplification of the issues because the role of Hindutva in India¹¹⁵ or that of the Christian Fundamentalists in America should not be underestimated. Moreover, some people may argue that secular parties are also preaching the “pseudo-religion” of secularism because secularism has its own set of beliefs, rituals, and worldview.

Do Muslim Sanctities Enjoy Immunity from Critical Comment?

To the end, a comment should also be made on Lewis’ assertion that Muslim sanctities enjoy immunity from critical comment or discussion. He remarks, “Indeed, this privileged immunity has been extended, de facto, to Western countries where Muslim communities are now established and where Muslim beliefs and practices are accorded a level of immunity from criticism that the Christian majorities have lost and the Jewish minorities never had.”¹¹⁶ This seems strange indeed because to deny, or even to challenge, the accuracy of the popular image of the Holocaust is an offence in many Western countries. One wonders why “the right to criticise” is equated with blasphemous outbursts

¹¹³ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁵ The term Hindutva, literally “Hinduness,” was coined in 1923 by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (d. 1966), also known as Veer Sarkar. This term is used to denote the Hindu nationalist movements. Sangh Parivar, an umbrella organisation in India, works for this purpose. It comprises of several important political parties and pressure groups including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.), Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.), Bajrang Dal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

¹¹⁶ Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 14–15.

when it comes to Islam and why it is labelled “anti-Semitism” when anyone tries to ascertain the veracity of the popular descriptions of the Holocaust.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Western scholars have a centuries long tradition of depicting Islam as a religion that promotes violence. Bernard Lewis carried forward this tradition in many of his writings, particularly in *The Crisis of Islam*, which links Islam with violence by selecting isolated texts of the Qur’ān and *sunnah* and some incidents from the life of the Prophet (peace be on him) and general Muslim history and interpreting them in a way to suit the political agenda of the author which was to provide moral justification as well as theoretical framework to the US hegemonic policies in the Muslim world. In the process, he marginalises not only the Islamic teachings to humanise warfare and minimise sufferings during war but also overlooks those acts of terror and violence, which were committed by the Jews in ancient times, the crusaders in the middle ages, the colonial powers in recent past, and the sole super power in the contemporary world. This is how Orientalists treat Islam and Muslims in the garb of academic and objective studies.



¹¹⁷ That the cold-blooded mass killing of Jews in Nazi Germany was an outrageous monstrosity is denied by no one. It is only some of the details of the tragedy that are considered by some to be questionable.