

## ONE

# *An Anthropological Excursion into the Muslim World*



“THE ACTIONS OF Osama bin Laden, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Taliban, *even if* they kill women and children, are perfectly justified in Islam.” These chilling words, pre-saging more murder and mayhem, were casually uttered on a sunny day under a blue Indian sky by the politest of young men. The speaker was our host, Aijaz Qasmi, always smiling faintly behind his thick glasses and beard, and dressed in traditional South Asian Muslim attire, white linen pants with a long coat and small white skullcap. He was escorting me and my companions to an important stop on our journey into Islam: Deoband, the preeminent *madrasah*, or religious educational center, of South Asian Islam. Aijaz was one of its chief ideologues.

Deoband has given its name to a school of thought within Islam. Like the better-known Wahhabi movement in the Arab world, it stands for assertive action in defending, preserving, and transmitting Islamic tradition and identity. And like the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, Deoband is a beacon of Islamic identity to many Muslims. To many in the West, Deoband and its spokespersons such as Aijaz would be the “enemy.”

As we neared our destination, the landscape grew desolate; there were no road signs in any language, no gas stations, not even tea stalls. With lofty hopes of learning something about the state and mood of Islam in the age of globalization, I began my journey on this isolated narrow road several hours from Delhi. If we were taken hostage or chopped up into little

bits, I whispered to my young American team, “no one will know about it for at least two weeks.”

This was an attempt at levity to keep our travels from becoming too daunting for my companions—my students, Hailey Woldt and Frankie Martin—eager to venture into the world with the boldness that only comes with youth. Since I was an “honored” guest and said that Hailey was like my “daughter” and Frankie like my “son,” I was certain we would be perfectly safe. Although these students had read E. M. Forster’s classic depiction of Islam in *A Passage to India*, they had also been brought up on *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. They were accompanying me on this journey with total confidence, trusting their professor to bring them back safely. Like Professor Jones, I had to keep them out of harm’s way yet enable them to participate fully in the study.

Neither of them had been to the Muslim world before, now a particularly troubled one. Undeterred by this or the concerns of their family and friends, they took time off from their academic year, paid for the travel themselves, and placed their trust in me. No teacher can expect a higher reward, and I hope the reader will appreciate why they became such a special part of the project for me. I know they reciprocated.<sup>1</sup>

During our conversation in the van, Aijaz, who was sitting in the front seat and looking back, seemed to brush off any of Hailey’s questions and direct the conversation to me. As a Muslim, I understood that for him this was orthodox behavior. He was honoring Hailey’s status as a woman by not looking at her. To do so would be considered a sign of disrespect. He would have noted with appreciation that she was dressed in impeccable Muslim clothes, which she had gotten from Pakistan: a white, loose *shakwar kameez* and a white veil to cover her head in the mosque, as is customary.

*He won’t look at me*, she scribbled on a note in obvious indignation and passed it to me discreetly. Although I could see Hailey emerging as a perceptive observer of culture and custom in the tradition of the great Western female travelers to the Muslim world of the twentieth century, her American sense of impatience was never too far beneath the surface. I signaled to her to calm down. This was neither the time nor the place to escalate a clash of cultures.

One question she had posed was whether attacks against innocent people were justified in the Quran. We were talking of *jihad*, which derives from an Arabic word meaning “to strive” but which people in the West

have come to associate with aggressive military action. For the Prophet, the term had two connotations: the “greatest jihad,” the struggle to elevate oneself spiritually and morally, which has nothing to do with violence, least of all against innocent women and children; and the “lesser jihad,” the defense of one’s family and community in the face of attack. In this case, too, there is no mention of aggression. According to Aijaz, Muslim attacks on Americans and Israelis, which he considered one entity, were actually acts of self-defense; furthermore, American and Israeli women and children were not necessarily innocent, as was clear from their support of the military committing atrocities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine. Aijaz believed that Americans backed by Israelis even encouraged torture in places like Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay. Since the American and Israeli people could stop these crimes but were not doing so, they were theoretically guilty of the same atrocities.

Aijaz had made these arguments in a recent bestseller written in Urdu, *Jihad and Terrorism*.<sup>2</sup> Then in its seventh edition, the book reflected Muslim outrage because Muslims were under attack and being killed throughout the world. So-called Islamic violence, wrote Aijaz, was a justifiable defense against “American” and “Israeli barbarism.” Aijaz felt his way of life, his culture, and his religion were facing an onslaught. These “barbarians,” said Aijaz, were even assailing the holy Prophet of Islam, “peace be upon him.” Hence every Muslim was morally obligated to join the jihad, that is, the defense of the great faith of Islam and their “brothers” all over the world. Speaking passionately now, Aijaz told us that Muslims will never give up their faith, will defend Islam to the death, and will triumph in the U.S. war on Islam. For Aijaz, the true champions of Islam were the Taliban—and Osama bin Laden, to whose name he added the reverential title of *sheikh*. This attitude, I thought, was going to complicate matters for Muslims like me, who wished to promote Islam’s authentic teachings of compassion and peace.

To see whether he tolerated more moderate Muslim views, I asked his opinion of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and a leader who promoted women’s rights, human rights, and respect for the law. To my surprise, he did not condemn Jinnah as a godless secularist but thought him a great political leader, though not a great *Muslim* leader. This meant he was not necessarily a role model for Muslims and was thus irrelevant for Islam. Jinnah could be acknowledged for parochial reasons, to be sure. A

redeeming feature, for Aijaz, was that one of Jinnah's close supporters was a well-known Deoband religious figure. For Aijaz, the crux of every argument was the Deoband connection. Aijaz's own surname—Qasmi—was inspired by Maulana Qasim Nanouwoti, the founding father of Deoband.

When I sought his views about the mystical side of Islam, Aijaz became circumspect. I mentioned Moin-uddin Chisti, the famous Sufi mystic (1141–1230 C.E.) who promoted a compassionate form of Islam and who is buried in Ajmer, in the heart of Rajasthan deep in rural India. Aijaz said he had never visited Ajmer, looked away in silence, and left the matter there. Perhaps Ajmer was a dark and dangerous avenue for him to explore.

On the subject of technology, Aijaz's answers were again surprising. Instead of condemning modern technology as an extension of the West, which I thought he might do, he proudly pulled out his business card bearing the title "Web Editor" for the Deoband website. In this capacity, Aijaz explained, he was able to address, guide, and instruct thousands of young Muslims throughout South Asia. He saw no contradiction in using Western technology to disseminate the Islamic message.

This and other of Aijaz's remarks made all too clear the enormity of the gap between the United States and the Muslim world. Frankie's sober comment captured it simply and precisely: "I thought things were bad while I was in D.C., but it's even worse." On that day, these young Americans came face to face with their nation's greatest challenge in the twenty-first century: the crisis with the Muslim world.

### *Aijaz's Vision of Globalization*

Aijaz was in fact commenting on globalization without once using the word. In his mind, globalization was synonymous with the greed of multinational corporations that exploited the natural resources of Muslim countries, the anger vented by the United States in the bombing of Afghanistan and then Iraq after September 11, 2001, and the ignorance displayed in the Western media about Aijaz's religion, culture, and traditions. Aijaz also associated it with a culture of gratuitous sex and violence, glorified by Hollywood. Americans, he added, constitute only 6 percent of the world's population yet consume 60 percent of the world's natural resources, as confirmed by the epidemic of obesity throughout the country and the extravagance of even the middle class.

Aijaz had unwittingly equated the actions of the United States—and, correspondingly, the forces of globalization—with the “three poisons” that the Buddha had warned could destroy individuals and even societies: greed, anger, and ignorance. In Islamic theology, the “cure” for precisely these vices is *adl* (justice), *ihsan* (compassion/goodness), and *ilm* (knowledge). The antidote for greed is justice for others; anger can only be controlled by compassion; and ignorance dispelled by knowledge.

I dwell on Aijaz’s impassioned arguments at the outset of this discussion because they epitomize the crisis that globalization has wrought on the Muslim world and that is essential for Western minds to grasp. Contrary to the concepts of *adl* and *ihsan*, television screens are showing Muslims that CEOs of multinational corporations can amass tremendous wealth while other people in their own countries and elsewhere are starving, that thousands of innocent people can be killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, that the Palestinians in the heartland of the Muslim world can be oppressed without receiving any help or hope from the West, that hundreds of millions of Muslims can live under harsh governments with little hope of justice. Muslims feel they have no voice in these circumstances and are not invited to participate in many of the global events that concern them. To add insult to injury, American culture has invaded their society through the media and the deluge of Western products. The Muslim reaction to all this is colored with passion and anger. To cope with what is perceived as an out-of-control world and preserve their sense of security, Muslims are returning to their roots.

These overwhelming circumstances have encouraged some Muslim communities to cloak themselves with a defensive, militant, and strained attitude toward the West. This outlook, promulgated by influential leaders of these communities, threatens and unsettles human discourse globally, because it values indifference and cruelty, permits men like bin Laden to become heroes, and goes against the grain of notions of justice, compassion, and wisdom common to all religious traditions.

Since the “war on terror” was launched, communities in Iraq, and to some degree Afghanistan, have descended into anarchy, allowing ancient religious, tribal, and sectarian rivalries to surface once again. In the absence of daily calm, people begin to look at the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, for example, with something close to nostalgia. People live in a perpetual state of uncertainty: not knowing whether their homes are safe day or

night, whether they will arrive at work, or whether their children will return home from school. Even worse, the killers remain unknown and at large. Some blame American soldiers, others the shadowy insurgents, and still others elements within the Iraqi government forces. The war on terror is degenerating into a war of all against all. Taking a page from English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, Muslim jurists have historically considered tyranny preferable to anarchy, and this was reiterated in our conversations across the Muslim world. Over a millennium ago, Imam Malik, a highly influential jurist and founder of one of the four primary legal schools in Islam, stated: "One hour of anarchy is worse than sixty years of tyranny."<sup>3</sup>

While no one denies the great benefits of globalization—economic development policies like microfinancing have lifted millions out of poverty in India and Bangladesh, and new technologies have permitted the swift distribution of medical and relief aid to Pakistan's earthquake victims and to the survivors of Indonesia's tsunami—many of the world's citizens associate globalization with a lack of compassion. In better times, compassion could have prevented the savage cruelties of the past few years, such as the shooting of an entire Haditha family by American soldiers and the beheading of Nick Berg in Iraq and of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan. Since the war on terror began, neither side has regained its sense of balance, compassion, and wisdom that it once held so dear.

Throughout our journey, each and every discussion led directly or indirectly to events that took place far away in America on September 11, 2001, and to the passions generated by that day. The United States and the Muslim world had become irreversibly connected in an adversarial relationship, and henceforth every action taken by one side would elicit a reaction from the other. September 11 changed and challenged both worlds in unexpected ways.

### *September 11, 2001*

On September 11, 2001, a few minutes before 9 a.m., I walked into a classroom at American University in Washington, D.C., having joined the teaching staff only a few days earlier. I was about to hold my second class on the subject of Islam, which at that point seemed of remote interest to the young Americans seated before me. I wondered whether I would ever get their attention.

I had hardly begun explaining that Islam can only be understood in the complex framework of theology, sociology, and international affairs, that its story centers on a major traditional civilization confronting the forces of globalization, when two students abruptly left the class, only to return a few minutes later looking dazed and agitated. A ripple of hushed murmurs spread throughout the room. The only words I could make out were, "Something terrible has happened." A few more students walked out of the class, their cell phones in hand. Muslims had flown a plane into a building in New York, someone whispered. An ashen-faced student said a plane full of passengers had also smashed into the Pentagon, only a few miles away from our campus. This was beginning to sound like an implausible Hollywood film.

As I tried to continue my discussion of U.S.-Muslim relations, little did I realize that the most climactic moment of American history in the twenty-first century was taking place right outside our walls and a few hundred miles to the north. It did not take long for the enormity of the morning's events to sink in. Whatever had happened and whoever was responsible, Muslims everywhere would be tainted by the tragedies in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. The world would never be the same again.

What was transpiring was a massive Muslim failure. Not only were the perpetrators Muslims, but they had committed an act forbidden in Islam, namely the killing of innocent people. On a deeper level, Muslim leaders had failed to adapt to the rules of the modern world, and Muslim scholars had failed to disseminate their wisdom throughout their societies. Equally important, the world at large had neglected to understand Islam and accommodate one of its great and widespread religions.

Before arriving in Washington, I had spent many years explaining the complexities of Islam to a variety of people in different forums. At times I spoke to Muslim audiences to help them understand their world. As someone who had lived and worked in both Muslim and Western nations, I suspected that a storm of unimaginable ferocity was brewing, and when it finally did arrive on September 11, the need for understanding had become more urgent than ever before.

I was confident, however, that Americans would react with common sense, compassion, and wisdom. Such a response would not only show moral strength but also set the planet on a sound course for the future.

Little did I suspect that the response would come so swiftly and consist of unalloyed anger.

As a scholar teaching Islam and a Muslim living in the United States, I saw that I was facing the greatest challenge of my life. I resolved to put to good use my education, my friendships, and experiences in different Muslim communities: I would redouble my efforts to help non-Muslims and Muslims alike appreciate the true features of Islam and thereby forge a bond between them. Without that common understanding, the entire world would sink deeper into conflict.

Since then, not a day has passed that I have not spent time talking about Islam—in the media, on campus, or with colleagues committed to inter-faith dialogue. This book, which is the result of research conducted in nine Muslim countries and among Muslims living in the West, is part of that effort. The book is about that terrible day in September, the events leading up to it, the subsequent developments, and their implications for the immediate future and beyond. It is about the clash between Western nations and Islam—perhaps the most misunderstood of all religions—in an age of startling interconnectedness, when events in one part of the world make an almost instant impact on another part, drawing distant societies into immediate contact. It is, in essence, an attempt to identify the global problems societies face, to suggest solutions, and above all, to appeal to the powerful and prosperous to join in creating wider understanding and friendship between different communities through compassion, wisdom, and restraint.

### *When Worlds Collide*

The events of the past few years have cast an ominous shadow over our planet. They have unleashed what President George W. Bush has termed a global “war on terror.” It is like no other war in the past. There is neither a visible nor identifiable enemy, and there is no end in sight. It is not really about religions or civilizations, yet both are involved. Islam is not the central issue, yet it is widely believed to be inextricably linked with the widespread violence and insecurity. The cause is not globalization—the transformations taking place in technology, transport, economic development, media communications, and the conduct of international politics—yet because of the war, the pressures of change are advancing on traditional

societies such as Islamic ones. Never before in history has it been more urgent to define elusive terms like “war” and “religion,” to exercise wisdom in human relations, to recognize superficial opinions (in the media, these may be little more than prejudices related in thirty-second sound bites yet they are readily accepted as fact), or to decry cruelty and indifference to human suffering.

This global war is not about the end of time, yet presidents around the globe—both Muslim and non-Muslim—behave as if they are recklessly marching toward Armageddon. To many, the apocalyptic view is confirmed because of the widespread violence, anarchy, and the lack of justice—signs that the end of time is at hand. While Christian Evangelists talk fervently of the Second Coming of Jesus and the final battle between good and evil (in which it is implied that Muslims will be cast as the anti-Christ), most Muslim Shia await the return of the Hidden Imam who will lead them in a similar conflict. To complicate matters, Muslims believe Jesus will be on their side in the battle against evil and that they will triumph. President Bush’s policies, now known as the Bush Doctrine, which is based on notions such as “preemptive strike” and “regime change,” and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s statements calling for the eradication of Israel thus become the logical first steps toward the realization of this prophecy of confrontation between good and evil. Never has there been such a need for those rarely, if ever, mentioned words—“compassion” and “love.”

September 11, 2001, marked the collision of two civilizations: that of the West, led and represented by the United States, and that composed of Muslim societies, all followers of Islam. In Samuel Huntington’s thesis, this is part of an ongoing historic clash between Western and non-Western civilizations, which American commentators have further reduced to a confrontation between the United States and Islam. As if to drive home the point, the publishers of the first paperback edition of Huntington’s book on the clash had two flags juxtaposed on the cover, one representing the stars and stripes of the United States and the other a white crescent and star against a green background.<sup>4</sup> The matter is somewhat more complex.

Both civilizations were ethnically diverse, populated by communities with different historical backgrounds, and they were already in a tense relationship. The United States, freshly triumphant from the collapse of its old adversary, the Soviet Union, was psychologically ready to stand up to

another global threat. The provocative rhetoric of some Muslims, such as Osama bin Laden, and the bombings of the American embassies in Africa and of the U.S.S. *Cole*, had been the initial justification for targeting the Muslim world. Muslims were equally frustrated by a number of concerns: American impotence in resolving the Palestinian and Kashmir problem, the abandonment of Afghanistan after its population was decimated in fighting the Soviet Union, and the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites.

Even so, the wreckage, blood, and confusion of September 11 shocked the vast majority of the Muslim world, which sympathized with the grieving Americans. Public gatherings of support and prayers for the departed were held in Cairo, Tehran, and Islamabad. This goodwill did not last. Sorrow and sympathy turned into anger when the United States vented its fury on Afghanistan and, later, Iraq. As the United States continued its seemingly blind pursuit of the elusive goals of democracy and security, the relationship between the two worlds descended into conflict, and they appeared to move farther and farther apart.

I had known a different United States. Two decades ago I was a visiting professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, fresh from the rugged and isolated hills and mountains of Waziristan in Pakistan, now known as the place where bin Laden may be hiding. I was enchanted by the serene lakes, forests, and walks of the institute and dazzled by my distinguished colleagues, some Nobel Prize winners. The Americans I met were warm, open, and welcoming. Although I recognized this community did not fully represent American society, it left a lasting impression of American generosity, respect for learning, and openness to new ideas. When deciding in the summer of 2000 where to live, I easily chose the United States. That is how I found myself in Washington on September 11, 2001, when Islam made a direct, dramatic, and indelible entry onto the world stage.

The nineteen hijackers were Muslim. They had destroyed key financial symbols of globalization in New York and attacked the foremost military symbol of the United States. They had also killed 2,973 innocent civilians, with another 24 missing and presumed dead. The United States, the very embodiment of the concept and practice of globalization, was struck at its heart. These dire acts were also a serious blow to the values of justice, compassion, and knowledge that I admired in both civilizations.

The United States, the sole superpower of the world and the only one with the capacity to lead the way in meeting global challenges, instead paid court to anger, its energies and resources focused on exacting revenge. With Muslim anger and frustration mounting as well, both civilizations let hatred and prejudice dominate the new chapter in globalization. Since 9/11 both have turned their backs on other global crises of serious proportions, none of which will be resolved until the world of Islam is brought into a mutually respectful partnership with the rest of the world.

This will not be easy. If anything, 9/11 underlined the deep philosophic and historical divisions between the West and the Muslim world. The perception of Islam as out of step with the West is at the heart of Western self-definition. The West believes it has successfully come to terms with and has balanced faith and reason, whereas Islam has not. It is this contradiction between the West, supposedly dominated by secularist and rational thought, and traditional Muslim society that is seen as the basis for friction and misunderstanding. Is it to be assumed then that Islam, as some of its critics claim, is incompatible with reason?

Until half a millennium ago—in what Europe calls the Middle Ages—faith and reason did exist in comfortable harmony and accommodation in Islam. Scholars argued that faith enhanced understanding of the secular and material world and therefore deepened faith itself. As a consequence, the sacred text was reinterpreted. Many Muslim thinkers argued that if the Quran appeared to contradict what reason states God should be like, then the text needed to be reexamined and even reinterpreted in the light of contemporary perceptions. God, they said, has given humans not only the Word but also reason, which serves as a guide to the text.

About three centuries ago, reason began overtaking faith in Christian societies, necessitating the separation of church and state, and promoting rationalism, logic, and science, along with industrial progress. Material improvement soon became the primary goal of human society and in its highest form precluded religion, which, it was said, clung to outdated traditions. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent influence of capitalist thinking and practices were evidence of this new emphasis.

From the nineteenth century onward, European nations following this path expanded their power in the world, colonizing and exploiting less developed societies and bringing much of the Muslim world directly under the sway of European imperialism. By the middle of the twentieth century,

these Muslim lands began reemerging in different political forms as a result of diverse “independence” struggles. Some aspired to establish democracies, others were satisfied to embrace royal dynasties propped up by Western powers, and still others looked to socialist models, which were then fashionable and supported by Moscow.

Since the late twentieth century, the Muslim world has plunged into the age of globalization, which to many of its people resembles a new form of Western imperialism. Its emphasis is on producing the most goods at the lowest cost, along the way accumulating wealth for some and higher standards of living regardless of the cost to society. Neither faith, in its pure spiritual sense, nor reason, based in classical notions of justice and logic, appears to figure prominently in the philosophy of globalization. The absence of faith and reason along with the events of 9/11 have further distorted the West’s approach to Islam.

### *Journey to the Muslim World*

All these factors have created a great deal of consternation in the Muslim world. As a result, the voices claiming to speak on behalf of Islam since 9/11 have been divergent and conflicting. Struck by this turmoil and the West’s poor understanding of it, I decided to return to the Muslim world to hear what Muslims were actually saying and experiencing without the filter of CNN or BBC news and to assess how they were responding to globalization. Too often, visiting scholars become immersed in their own theories and neglect to look outside at the real Muslim world. I wished to avoid this mistake by observing, talking to, and listening to Muslims. When I discussed the idea of a long fieldwork journey of this nature with American University, the Brookings Institution, and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, they all gave it their support.

One obvious way to better understand Muslim society, it seemed, was to find out who has inspired its members and shaped their values from the past to the present. To this end, it was important to learn which books they are reading, how the Internet and international media are affecting their lives, and ultimately whether the Muslim psyche can be defined and how it relates to Islam. This was not going to be a typical “think tank” study consisting of interviews with like-minded counterparts in comfortable surroundings. Rather, it would be a genuine attempt to delve into Muslim

society and document the experiences and perceptions of ordinary Muslims across a broad geographical spectrum.

The regions we visited—the Middle East, South Asia, and Far East Asia—differ in several important respects. A distinguishing feature of the Middle East is that it has a common language, Arabic, which is also the language in which the Quran was revealed to the Prophet; furthermore, the Prophet himself was an Arab. Because the Quran and the life of the Prophet form the foundation of Islamic ideology and identity, Arabs have a proprietary sense of spirituality and advantage over other Muslims. Some Arab nations are rich in oil and some are directly affected by the conflicts in Israel and Iraq because of their geographic proximity. A striking feature of the next region, South Asia, is its Indic populations. Here Hindu yogis and Muslim Sufis have interacted to find mutual ways to understand the divine across the gap of different religions. This area still exudes the vitality that gave rise to the Mughals and other powerful Muslim empires, which rivaled those of the Arab region. The third region, Far East Asia, including Malaysia and Indonesia, is neither Arabic-speaking nor has been part of any great Muslim empire. Islam arrived there gently and slowly, through traders and Sufis, and has adjusted to and blended with different religions, notably Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

Our approach, by necessity, was multidisciplinary: we sought to draw from the best insights of political science, sociology, theology, and above all, anthropology. I believe anthropology presents as accurate a picture as possible of an *entire* society through its holistic and universal methodologies.<sup>5</sup> Anthropologists live among and interact with the people they study, collecting information on distinctive patterns of behavior through “participant observation,” as well as questionnaires and interviews. These patterns—in our case, patterns relating to leadership, the impact of foreign ideas on society, the role of women, and tribal codes of behavior at a time of change and widespread unrest and even violence—can provide clues to a society’s defining features and are what one of anthropology’s founding fathers, Bronislaw Malinowski, called “the imponderabilia of native life and of typical behavior.”<sup>6</sup>As another of the discipline’s senior figures has rightly pointed out, “anthropology provides a scientific basis for dealing with the crucial dilemma of the world today: how can peoples of different appearances, mutually unintelligible languages, and dissimilar ways of life get along peaceably together?”<sup>7</sup>

Even some of the books written by anthropologists a generation ago are worth reading for their perceptiveness, in contrast to the dismal state of contemporary commentary. Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* and Ernest Gellner's *Muslim Society*, for example, present a masterly analysis of Muslim communities from Morocco to Indonesia and constantly surprise the reader with fresh insights.<sup>8</sup>

When I worked on my Ph.D. at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies three decades ago and studied the Pukhtun tribes, called by the British the Pathans and who lived along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the social scientist, in the ideal, would spend a year preparing for fieldwork, then a year conducting research in the field, and a final year writing up the findings. Developments in information technology, communications, and travel since then have altered the conditions of traditional anthropological fieldwork, making even remote societies more accessible, but also inducing some changes in them. As a result, we found that an intensive few months in the field were sufficient to achieve our objectives. This, then, was not a traditional anthropological study but an anthropological excursion.

### *Research Method*

Our own questionnaires were designed to gain insight into contemporary Muslim society through real people's emotions and opinions on world affairs. They were administered to about 120 persons at various sites (universities, hotels, cafes, madrassahs, mosques, and private homes) in each country visited and included queries about what respondents read, what changes they had noted in their societies, the nature of their daily interaction with technology and the news, and, most important, their personal views on contemporary and historical role models (see the appendix).

The personal interview technique, however, proved especially valuable because respondents felt less inhibited in one-on-one conversations. In the repressive atmosphere of many Muslim nations where intelligence agencies are ever vigilant, individuals are reluctant to commit their true political opinions in writing. Often people would be frank in private conversations and guarded in their formal written answers. Many teachers, for example, told me that students had a much greater fascination with bin Laden than they had revealed to us in their classroom settings. Because of this, we did

not see our questionnaires as a standard statistical instrument, but rather as a supplemental source of information for “testing the waters” of each country rather than taking their accurate temperature.

Our overall approach was closer to a personal account and assessment of what has been happening in the Muslim world since 9/11. Interestingly, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, conducted at the same time on a large scale throughout the Muslim world, Europe, and the United States, broadly supports our findings and our conclusions.<sup>9</sup>

Though the questions appeared deceptively simple, they yielded important and relevant information. For instance, the first question of the list asks for five contemporary role models among Muslims (if the respondent had none, examples from outside Muslim society could be given). If the mystic poet Maulana Rumi was named here, we knew the respondent was more likely to be tolerant of others; if Pervez Musharraf was named, then the respondent might favor economic and political cooperation with the West. And if Osama bin Laden or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad were named, then the respondent probably preferred a role model that would “stand up to the West.” Personal conversations and responses to questionnaires alike indicated no clear-cut contemporary role models for Muslims in the Middle East and South Asia. Perhaps our respondents were being politically correct. But Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world, did show a clear—and radical—trend. Bin Laden was the second most popular role model there, and Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat competed for fourth place, with almost 20 percent of the vote. We surmised that respondents who selected figures representing Islamic modernity, such as M. Syafi’i Anwar—and Ismail Noor in Malaysia—must have felt isolated and persecuted in their society. A similar radical trend may well have existed in other Muslim societies we visited but was not expressed to us quite so openly. What was clear was that the sleeping giant of the East was stirring. The world needed to take notice.

Role models from the past also reveal a great deal about contemporary society. In Damascus, the two names at the top of the list of most of those we questioned were Umar, the caliph of Islam from the seventh century, and Saladin (Sultan Salahaddin) from the twelfth century—ahead of even the Prophet, who would be the expected top choice for most Muslims. But these answers contained a subtext: both Umar and Saladin conquered Jerusalem for the Muslims, both were magnanimous and pious Muslim rulers, and,

most important, both were victorious on the battlefield. With Jerusalem only a short drive away from Damascus and no longer under Muslim rule, Muslims are looking desperately for a modern Umar or Saladin.

Our informal surveys provided the beginning of what we anticipated learning more about—that while Muslims were aware of the processes of globalization and many wished to participate in them, they felt they were being denied access to its benefits. In their disappointment, they turned in anger to role models who promised them some hope of redeeming their honor and dignity. That is why so many young Muslims in the age of globalization prefer bin Laden to Bill Gates.

While our base of operations for the trip might often be a large hotel, we also visited places far from its confines. By visiting markets or remote towns or just taking taxis, for instance, we were able to converse with ordinary Muslims, usually wary of political conversations with strangers but more forthright when they came to know I was a Muslim. We thus saw a side of Muslim society that is not often on public display.

In addition, interviews with important Muslim figures provided a glimpse into their inner thoughts about not only their role models but also their vision of the future of the *ummah*, the global body of Muslims. Some of their responses were indeed unexpected. President Pervez Musharraf sat up excitedly as he described the successful military campaigns of his hero, Napoleon Bonaparte (Austerlitz was his favorite Napoleon victory). Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, whom we interviewed in Doha, named Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali, the renowned philosopher and scholar, as his role model. Benazir Bhutto spoke poignantly of her role model, Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, with whom she identified closely because both had lost their beloved fathers at a crucial time in their lives. Not surprisingly, the premier role model from the past for each of these Muslim world figures was the Prophet of Islam.

These Muslim leaders were reflecting a larger sentiment in the Muslim world. The Prophet was the ultimate role model for the vast majority of Muslims, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, or nationality. I was not surprised therefore to find that the distorted perception of Islam in the West—which includes the attacks on the Prophet—was uppermost in the minds of Muslims when asked what they thought was the most important problem facing Islam. The expected answers—Israel, the plight of the Palestinians, the situation in Iraq—were all overshadowed by the idea that Islam was being maligned in the West. Those planning a strategy in the



*Surrounded by portraits of Mughal emperors, the former prime minister of Pakistan, Chaudhry Shujat Hussain, second from left, and the chief minister of Punjab, the largest province of Pakistan, Parvez Elahi, far right, host a lunch at Elahi's office in Lahore for the team, including Akbar Ahmed on the far left and Hailey Woldt.*

capitals of the West to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world need to keep this reality in mind.

My team and I were fully aware of the cultural context of our survey. Because I was traveling as a Muslim, we all had extraordinary access to people throughout our journey. Many invited us to their homes for meals and informal gatherings, where we learned a great deal about the workings of their societies: among those extending such hospitality were friends in Istanbul, Sheikh Farfour in Damascus, friends and family in Karachi and Islamabad, and the head cleric in Deoband. Even well-known political figures invited us to lunch and dinner and shared their ideas about Islam and experiences in Muslim society. In Pakistan, for example, our hosts included Muhammad Mian Soomro, chairman of the Senate of Pakistan; senator Mushahid Hussain; former minister Shafqat Shah Jamote; Asad Shah; Sadrudin Hashwani; and Ghazanfar Mehdi.

Chaudhry Shujat Hussain, the former prime minister of Pakistan, and Parvez Elahi, the chief minister of Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, sent a police convoy to the airport in Lahore to escort us to lunch before we

departed for Delhi. They not only received us warmly but also gave each of us a colorful Pakistani rug as a token of our visit. Hussain was a friendly and gracious host, even when he jokingly complained that I was “as bad as Bush” after learning that I intended to spend double the amount of time in India as I did in Pakistan. He was referring to President Bush’s recent one-day visit to Pakistan, which created a storm of criticism in the media because he had spent almost a week in India. The image of young Americans lunching with the former prime minister of Pakistan in the grand private dining room of the chief minister of the Punjab, with its portraits of the Mughal emperors, was a testimony to the inherent hospitality of the people we visited and the range of our study. Throughout the journey we also received similar welcomes from the American embassies, usually guarded like high-security prisons, and the Pakistani embassies, and we gained further insights from the viewpoints and experiences of the diplomats.

Real and immediate dangers did not stop us from venturing beyond the high walls and security guards of the hotels and embassies. I gave public lectures in mosques and madrassahs, in addition to other forums. At each venue I faced a barrage of anti-Americanism and equally strong anti-Semitism (the latter becoming comparatively more nuanced, yet still passionate, as we moved out of the Arab world). I would respond that neither America nor the Jewish community is a monolith, pointing out that it is a mistake for Muslims as much as Americans to see the other in monolithic garb. I noted that a bishop and a rabbi, as well as others, had quite consciously reached out to me in Washington in the dark days after 9/11 and made me feel welcome, and mentioned especially the Christmas greeting sent by one—Bishop John Chane of the National Cathedral—which moved me greatly with its Abrahamic message of compassion, understanding, and above all, unity: “The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to reveal the Law to Moses,” it read, and to “reveal the sacred Quran to the Prophet Muhammad.” The greeting, with its acknowledgment of the Quran as “sacred” and Muhammad as “Prophet” was enough of a theological earthquake in my mind, but in the context of the general hostility toward Muslims after 9/11, the bishop’s words displayed extraordinary courage, imagination, and compassion.

On the Muslim side, the Syrian minister of expatriates, Bouthaina Shaaban, and many other Muslims throughout our travels expressed similar sentiments of communal spirituality. Shaaban told us that “from 627 to 647 C.E., Muslims and Christians were praying together in the Umayyad



*Inside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Muslims pray at the shrine of St. John the Baptist, known as the Prophet Yahya in Islam. Saladin, the great Muslim ruler, is buried within the mosque precincts.*

Mosque until they decided to build a church. We shouldn't think of East and West. You can't be a Muslim until you believe in Abraham and Christ. The oldest synagogue in the world is in Damascus. The oldest church in the world is in Damascus."

Bouthaina Shaaban is right. Islamic history reflects a cultural richness and complexity that affirms Islam's capacity to accommodate different traditions. This was confirmed for us by a visit to the Grand Mosque in Damascus, built by the Umayyads, the first great Muslim dynasty. When it was erected in the seventh century, the mosque shared space with a preexisting church, and Muslims and Christians worshipped together. In the eighth century, however, the caliph of Islam ordered a full-fledged mosque built in its place in order to symbolize the growing importance of Damascus as the capital of the Muslim world. The largest and most impressive of its time, the Grand Mosque is said to have contained the largest golden mosaic in the world until a fire in 1893 damaged the mosaic and almost destroyed the mosque.

The architecture of the Grand Mosque dramatically illustrates Byzantine, Roman, and Arabic influences, although the overall plan is based on the Prophet's house in Medina. The mosque holds a shrine dedicated to the head of John the Baptist, who is revered in Islam as Yahya the Prophet; another shrine for the head of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam and the son of Ali, who is especially venerated by the Shia; and, just outside the mosque's walls, a simple and small grave for Saladin, one of the greatest rulers of Islam. Pope John Paul II visited the relics of John the Baptist in 2001, thus becoming the first pope ever to visit a mosque. On my visit, I saw all manner of pilgrims at each of these historical sites: Christians and Muslims praying at John's shrine, Shia women dressed in black who were from Iran and still mourning the death of Hussein, and scholars and tourists paying quiet tribute to the great Saladin.

Many Muslims on the journey mentioned that Jews and Christians were the "People of the Book" whom God holds in the highest esteem and with whom Muslims share common bonds. This was a message that I had been endeavoring to spread in the United States. During my talks before Muslim audiences, I would also mention that I was personally inspired by the example of my friend Judea Pearl, who had lost his only son, Danny, in a brutal and senseless killing in Karachi. As a father, I knew how deep the wound was for Judea and his wife, Ruth. Having gotten to know him as a friend over the years through our dialogues conducted nationally and internationally in promoting Jewish-Muslim understanding, I have seen him heroically transform this personal tragedy into a bridge to reach out to and understand the very civilization that produced the killers of his son. I would also explain that friendships such as these have helped transform the relationships among Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the United States.

Danny Pearl was killed by hatred, and the problem with hatred is that it thrives on falsehood. I was shocked to discover the extent to which fictitious literature such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was being used to propagate hatred against Jewish communities. Films made recently in the Middle East are based on this fiction, and millions appear to accept the *Protocols* as the truth. In this climate, statements questioning the Holocaust and encouraging the extermination of entire peoples are accommodated, although many Muslims such as myself find them unacceptable and tasteless and have said so in public. At the same time, similar lies about Muslims being "Satan worshippers" and followers of a man who was a "terrorist" are

being circulated and accepted as truth. Such stereotypes encourage further falsehoods and create an atmosphere that can lend itself to violence.

To check the spread of such misperceptions requires more than polite manners. The idea that the Jews somehow directly or indirectly “control” the world through different forms of conspiracies permeates discussion in the Muslim world on many levels, from passionate expressions of an ideological worldview to idle chatter in the bazaar. Even high-profile politicians may make lighthearted references to it, as I discovered in my personal conversation with Benazir Bhutto in Doha in February 2006. Benazir, who in spite of being prime minister of Pakistan twice—a tough job that had led her father to the gallows—still retains a youthful sense of humor. When we met, she coyly said, with a twinkle in her eye, “So, you are now working for the *Sabaaan* Center?” Even if she had not elongated the vowel, I would have understood the innuendo linking my association as a fellow at the Brookings center with the patron after which it was named, a prominent Jewish philanthropist. I smiled, thinking of the irony: we were both guests at the conference organized by the very same center and dedicated to promoting understanding between the United States and the Muslim world.

Because of the high levels of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism we encountered on our journey, many people were inclined to blame non-Muslims for various conspiracies against Islam. Many told our team that the violence on September 11, and, later, the London bombings on July 7, 2005, was not committed by Muslims but by people who wish to defame Islam. This clear state of denial was distressing to people like me who condemned the violence and accepted the overwhelming and widely available evidence—including interviews on television. Equally distressing, Muslims seemed unable to accept the fact that Muslims were responsible for the bloody clashes between Shia and Sunni in the mosques of Pakistan or the suburbs of Iraq, or the brutal deaths of Daniel Pearl, Margaret Hassan, and Nicholas Berg. In forum after forum, I spoke out against such violence and the need to emphasize to Muslim youth that this does not comport with the true nature of Islam.

In its ideal teachings, Islam has always given priority in human affairs to learning and the use of the mind rather than emotion and anger. As I would remind my Muslim audiences, the Prophet said, “The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr.” This saying is of

immense significance and has ramifications for the contemporary situation in the Muslim world. Too many young Muslims are being encouraged to reverse the saying of the Prophet and are being instructed to emphasize sacrifice and blood over scholarship and reason. I would want every Muslim teacher and leader to use it as their motto; I would want every non-Muslim to understand the true nature of Islam through it.

Even more startling than the skepticism expressed by Muslims about events surrounding 9/11 was the change in American attitudes toward the events of that day: by 2006 one-third of Americans were expressing doubts, and a growing literature was putting forward different controversial theories.<sup>10</sup> People were, slowly at first, challenging the administration's policies not only on the war on terror, but also on Iraq and even its strategy for security.

In response to the high levels of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism on our trip, I could not resist giving in to my professorial instincts and suggesting some relevant reading material to my audiences, whether in mosques or madrassahs. The first book was *The Dignity of Difference* by Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi of the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> A powerful plea for Abrahamic understanding in the age of globalization, it underlines the need for compassion in all areas of global interaction, including the distribution of wealth. This was probably one of the few times that a Muslim recommended a Jewish author, a rabbi at that, in a mosque in Damascus, the Royal Institute in Amman, and in the madrassahs of Delhi—much to the surprise of the audience, I am sure.

I also recommended Karen Armstrong's *The Battle for God*, which describes the intense internal debate taking place in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam between the fundamentalists and their more moderate or liberal coreligionists.<sup>12</sup> *Islam under Siege*, my own book, would be the third recommendation. It argues that the societies of today are all feeling under siege.<sup>13</sup> After 9/11 Americans felt continually under attack; indeed, the news was broadcast on TV as "America under Siege." Israelis have always felt embattled, surrounded by millions of neighbors who would like the state to disappear from the map. Muslims, with many grievances, feel very much under siege. When societies feel hemmed in, they tend to become defensive, and there is little room for wisdom or compassion.

In addition, when I introduced the Americans who had accompanied me on my travels, I reminded audiences that it was unfair for Muslims to dismiss all Americans in monolithic terms as haters of Muslims. After all,

here were these idealistic young students traveling to the heart of the Muslim world in friendship and with a desire to improve understanding. By creating goodwill and exemplifying public diplomacy at its best, these young Americans were true ambassadors of their society because they had taken the trouble to visit Muslim lands, were committed to building bridges, and were raising the right questions, as shown by Jonathan Hayden's comments in the field:

In Jakarta, Indonesia, I handed out a questionnaire to a class of fifty college students at an Islamic University. The questionnaire was designed to reveal their feelings toward the West, globalization, and changes within Islam. The class was about 70 percent women, aged nineteen to twenty-three. Their *hijab* [or head covering] was mandatory, but if the women were to take it off, they would've looked like any college class in America.

They were sweet, funny kids who wanted to take pictures afterward and ask questions about the U.S. Why, then, did roughly 75 percent of them list as their role models people like Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini, Yousef al-Qaradawi (of Al-Jazeera), Yasser Arafat, and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad? We obviously have a problem. If these young students are choosing as heroes people who are hostile to the U.S., what can we do to change this? What has led to this? Who can help us? And where are the moderate Muslims? We must try to answer these questions if we are to build bridges with countries with a largely Muslim population and avert the "clash of civilizations."

The answers obviously do not come easily and will take much time to work out. But one of the things I noticed in Malaysia and Indonesia is the vital role that moderate Muslims will play. I hesitate to use the word "moderate" because of its negative connotations. From what I've gathered, moderates are viewed as people who are unwilling to stand up for anything.

But the people that I am talking about when I use the term "moderate Muslim" are those who are standing up for the true identity of Islam while actively living in this "age of globalization." From what I've learned on this trip, moderate Muslims are practicing the compassionate and just Islam that is taught in the Quran without rejecting modernity and the West. They are, as I learned, hardly weak.<sup>14</sup>

The power and effects of the global media also became clear during our travels. The global media have fed into the feeling of urgency and terror associated with Islam. While in Amman, we heard reports of an explosion that had killed an American diplomat and several Pakistanis yards from the Marriott Hotel in Karachi adjacent to the American consulate, just days before we were due to arrive; another recent explosion hit the Marriott in Jakarta where we had stayed; and explosions shook Istanbul, Delhi, and Islamabad just after our visits. It felt like Russian roulette—how long could we escape the fatal hit?

Our own trip had not escaped media attention. It was faithfully recorded as a “travelogue” on Beliefnet.com, where I gave updates and insights into the countries we were visiting, and Hailey, Frankie, Jonathan, and Amineh Hoti provided their own articles.<sup>15</sup> I was interviewed at length by some of the leading national newspapers, such as the *Nation* in Pakistan and the *Indian Express* and *Hindustan Times* in India. I also appeared on Al-Jazeera in Qatar and Doordarshan in India, which broadcast the interview in prime time to an estimated audience of 500 million people in South Asia. My team took a tour of the Al-Jazeera studios and watched the filming of the nightly news. We found Muslims everywhere well informed about world events because of the media. The imam of Delhi’s Jama Masjid Madrassah told us that he knew exactly where Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was traveling at all times.

As I approach the twilight of my life, this journey had a final great-adventure quality for me. My last long excursion through the length and breadth of the Muslim world had taken place for the BBC television series “Living Islam,” broadcast in 1993, but developments in politics, economics, the media, and information technology since then had moved at a rapid pace. On this trip, everywhere I went someone had either read something by me on the Internet or seen me on television.<sup>16</sup> In Istanbul, as I sat having lunch with the head of a leading think tank early in the tour, a large man with a thick and somewhat unruly beard aggressively strode up to our table and stood towering over us. “You are Akbar Ahmed, are you not?” he said soberly. I nodded my head and smiled slowly, trying to ascertain which way the conversation was going to go. “I am a Muslim convert from Chile, and I saw you explaining Islam on the Oprah show,” he continued. “Thank you for your work.”

Throughout the journey I was struck both by the global reach of the U.S. media and the global spirit of the Muslim population. The world had



*At a mosque and madrasah complex in Delhi, a crowd of youngsters gathers with the team, seen in the back, for a Friday night lecture. The location is near the great mosque built by the Emperor Shah Jehan.*

come closer in a way I could not have imagined on my last long trip, and much had also changed. I quickly became aware that the problem of understanding and dealing with global Islam is far larger than I had anticipated. Even so, I returned with a fresh sense of hope after seeing concerned and kind-natured individuals from all races and religions on every leg of my journey. Their vitality and passion demonstrate that a common ground for dialogue exists. Therefore the book documents the several layers of our journey: it describes an extended field trip to the Muslim world by a professor and a young, curious, and energetic team; by a social scientist seeking a theoretical understanding of the impact of globalization and the challenges posed to traditional societies; by a revenant Muslim scholar attempting to comprehend his community with a view to helping it find its way; by a Pakistani visiting home after several years in the West; and by an optimist seeking to promote dialogue and understanding between two increasingly hostile civilizations by making both aware of the global dangers facing everyone.

*Islam in the Age of Globalization*

Unlike other discussions of Islam, this one will not treat Islam as an isolated case in diagnosing its ailments. To the precepts of my earlier book, *Islam under Siege*, in which I argued that all societies today feel under physical threat, I would now like to add that all—perhaps with the exception of American society—also feel threatened culturally by the tidal wave of globalization. Islam is of particular interest because of its close negative and positive relationship to the United States, but also because its followers now number 1.4 billion and span five continents, which makes it the perfect subject for a case study of a traditional civilization undergoing change in the age of globalization.

The scale of the problems posed by globalization has been widely discussed, but with few suggestions as to how they might be solved. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, one of the best-known commentators on the subject, takes a benign view, equating globalization with “Americanization” and the spread of democracy and American values.<sup>17</sup> Although Friedman is aware that India and China are vigorously challenging the United States for primacy, he remains optimistic about the spirit and age of globalization. Ideally, it is expected to create conditions that will connect the different nations of the world and thereby establish a mutually beneficial “global village.”

Other views are darker. Standard textbooks point to the massive social, economic, and technological transformations now under way because of globalization, with consequences that are difficult to predict.<sup>18</sup> Rapid and far-reaching social, economic, and technological changes in its wake are forcing people around the world to adjust their lives. Faced with so much change, many individuals are uncertain and anxious about the future, which scholars label “panic culture” or “risk society.”<sup>19</sup> For Anthony Giddens, a leading social scientist, globalization “creates a world of winners and losers, a few on the fast track to prosperity, the majority condemned to a life of misery and despair.”<sup>20</sup> Thus he sees globalization as little more than “global pillage.”<sup>21</sup>

Borrowing a phrase from anthropologist Edmund Leach, Giddens argues that globalization is creating a “runaway world.”<sup>22</sup> Leach had used the phrase in the title of a lecture series, punctuating it with a question mark, but, says Giddens, developments over the past few decades indicate

that now it *is* a runaway world: “This is not—at least at the moment—a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an anarchic, haphazard, fashion. . . . It is not settled or secure, but fraught with anxieties as well as scarred by deep divisions. Many of us feel in the grip of forces over which we have no power.”<sup>23</sup>

Although both Friedman and Giddens recognize globalization’s economic successes and failures, they fall short of raising the greater moral issues, particularly the fact that globalization lacks a moral core. This is precisely the reason that greed, anger, and ignorance—Buddha’s three poisons—are able to flourish without restraint and define the present age.<sup>24</sup> Although these three negative qualities have always been part of the human fabric, they have been kept in check by traditional ideas of faith and codes of behavior, which embody justice, compassion, and knowledge. These concepts, respectively, are the antidotes to the poisons and can be found in all great faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam—and indeed Hinduism, which gave birth to Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> Each religion believes it best equips individuals to deal with the poisons, however different the method of tackling them.

The Abrahamic approach—which is to balance living in this world with an eye on the next—an idea that is more developed in Christianity and Islam than in Judaism—is radically rejected by the Indic religions. In Hinduism, which provides the template for the Indic faiths, death, the climactic and final event in the life of the Abrahamic believer, is but the start of yet another cycle of birth and rebirth. The approach to material life is thus less urgent and compelling. Traditional Hinduism divides an individual’s life into four stages, each spanning about two decades: student, householder, ascetic, and, finally, the seeker. The last two stages are sometimes merged, and in them a man, accompanied by his wife, is expected to leave all his material possessions and withdraw from the world to live in forests and mountains searching for truth. The poisons are no longer a threat now because at the moment of renouncing the world, the individual discovers the antidote. The Indic approach is not only philosophically attractive but empirically known to be effective in the lives of individuals. Perhaps the Abrahamic faiths need to learn from it by looking more closely at their own rich spiritual and mystical legacy.

For the purposes of the present argument, however, one needs to point out that globalization is a juggernaut, and that no society, Abrahamic or Indic, can escape its embrace.

Hindu and Buddhist societies face much the same challenges as other societies, as is evident from the Hindu majority's violence against the Muslims in India and the Buddhist majority's treatment of Hindus in Sri Lanka. They too are still grappling with the poisons, despite the Indic philosophy of withdrawal and nonviolence. The scale and intensity of the riots there took the people of Indic faiths by complete surprise, for they never imagined that such violence was possible. This violence between religious groups is fueled by the technology, international media images, and global networks available to local groups, which are part of the process of globalization. In addition, there are other aspects of globalization that affect societies influenced by the Indic religions, such as the weakening of the central state structures and the excessive harshness of their response to what they see as signs of dissent among the minority community; both the majority and minority communities are also now too quick to use the lethal weapons so easily available to them on civilian or military targets. Thus, the ethnic and religious bloodshed is both a cause and a symptom of the anger, hatred, and ignorance of societies in our age of globalization.

More modern philosophies, such as nationalism, socialism, and fascism, which tend to dismiss traditional religions as backward and outdated, have not managed to check the poisons either. If anything, under them the spread has accelerated through the power and use of technology. Even those who reject religion altogether often bear prejudices such as racism, which provide rich soil for the spread of the poisons. There is ample evidence of so-called Western liberal and humanist commentators parading their anger, hatred, and ignorance of Islam after 9/11.

Over the past half century, globalization has produced physical as well as moral consequences. Perhaps most serious, rampant industrialization and consumerism have abetted global warming. The frequency of cyclones and tornadoes, record temperatures, excessive rains, and severe droughts, as well as the more rapid melting of glaciers, are all symptoms of the problem.<sup>26</sup> Even so all countries continue to follow in the footsteps of Western nations, with Asian industrial giants like China more interested in becoming part of the globalized economy than protecting the environment.

Another consequence of globalization can be seen in the economic sphere, in the greatly increasing asymmetry in living conditions. Poverty kills thousands of people annually through the lack of health care and food; about one billion people earn less than a dollar a day; and, as if to mock

these figures, 358 individuals own more financial wealth than half of the world's population collectively.<sup>27</sup> The statistics of despair, like the figures of disparity between the rich and the poor, are widely available (for example, see United Nations reports). To add to the problem, the world's population jumped from 2.5 billion half a century ago to 6.5 billion today and will be about 11 billion by the middle of the century.<sup>28</sup> These demographic trends cannot be ignored. The planet's natural resources will be unable to sustain human life without some drastic measures to control population, either through human efforts or those of Mother Nature.

Globalization has also brought increasing access to tools of violence, from homemade bombs to biological weapons. Anyone, anywhere, and at anytime, could fall prey to religious or ethnic hatred. Admittedly, societies have faced such hatred before, not to mention the problems cited earlier—the exploitation of natural resources, excessive interest in amassing material wealth, the pressures of large populations—and have often gone to war over them. It is the scale and scope of globalization today that, without restraint or balance, places humankind at a dangerous point in its history. Disillusioned with the promise of globalization and alarmed by the nature and extent of the violence in its wake, concerned intellectuals are writing books with titles such as *World on Fire* and *Savage Century: Back to Barbarism*.<sup>29</sup>

All religions and societies are responding to the problems culminating in the crisis of globalization in different ways, some even ignoring them. As in the Islamic world, backlashes against globalization can be seen in Latin America, for example, where Leftist governments have swept into power in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and in China—with an estimated Muslim population of anywhere between the official figure of 20 million to perhaps as many as 100 million—where widespread economic inequality and privatization policies have led to tens of thousands of protests, riots, and other instances of social instability in recent years.<sup>30</sup> Islam, the focus of this study, provides fertile ground for examining the impact of and response to global forces in a largely traditional context. Its followers are spread across the world and in markedly different ethnic settings. Their behavior can shed greater light on traditional societies that can help improve relations between them and industrialized societies. Perhaps most important, it will help others better understand Islam, which has now attained global significance.

*New and Old Patterns in Muslim Society*

Before setting out on our journey, I expected to rely on Max Weber's classic categories of leadership—charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal authority—to define styles of leadership in the Muslim world. Charismatic leadership is rooted in personality traits that attract followers yet need not be a permanent part of an individual's character. Indeed, charisma actually resides in the mesmerized eyes of the follower. Charisma is thus an evanescent quality and its assessment subjective, as one man's charismatic leader may be another's villain. What is clear is that a correlation exists between success and high levels of charisma, on the one hand, and between failure and plummeting charisma, on the other. By contrast, the next two categories of leadership have little to do with individual qualities. Traditional authority is a product of lineage and birth. An individual in a certain kind of society may assume a leadership role because he is the elder son or has inherited his father's estate or legacy. Rational-legal authority is a social construct that evolved in Europe as a result of society's need to impose rules and regulations to control elected officials governing the population. This is considered the best form of authority as it is bureaucratic and regulated and therefore "controlled."

The Weberian categories were excellent as background theory. Once in the Muslim world, however, I realized that relations between it and the United States, the still unfolding events since 9/11 and the processes of globalization, have affected the forms of Muslim leadership so drastically that the Weberian categories would prove inadequate. The shadowy "insurgent" is but one example that does not fit neatly into the Weber scheme. Having no concrete or tangible identity, this individual falls outside all three categories. In any case, too many Muslim leaders straddle two or three of the Weberian categories and therefore make it difficult to explain Muslim leadership through this conceptual frame. The late King Hussein of Jordan, for example, can be classified as a charismatic, traditional, or even rational-legal leader; he inspired his people, was descended from the Prophet's lineage, and worked with a parliament that ratified the monarchy.

Apart from Weber, I build on and extend the arguments of other transcendental figures of the social sciences, such as Ibn Khaldun and the more contemporary Emile Durkheim. Ibn Khaldun's theory posits that the rise

and fall of dynasties has more to do with the loss of social vitality and social cohesion than with the moods of God. Durkheim explains the levels of suicide in society, for example, as a reflection of social breakdown rather than divine wrath or moral turpitude. Weber's discussion of the Protestant work ethic illuminates how religious behavior can affect the spirit of capitalism and consequently improve economic growth. The accumulated work of these thinkers leads to the broad conclusion that one cannot understand how humans see and relate to the divine without understanding society itself. Sociology, then, determines the kind of theology a society will formulate and practice.

Durkheim and Weber are giants among the preeminent European social scientists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was a time of intellectual effervescence that produced in one spectacular burst figures like Marx, Freud, Tolstoy, H. G. Wells, and Einstein. By contrast, Ibn Khaldun is unique in that he seems to appear from nowhere in a dusty and obscure North African town and leaves behind no local schools of thought or army of disciples. He is a true one-off, a one-man intellectual powerhouse whose ideas continue to dazzle scholars all over the world, even today.

For several years I have been studying—and writing about—leadership models in Muslim society so as to suggest how to change and direct it toward a better future. In *Islam under Siege*, I explored two categories: inclusivists and exclusivists.<sup>31</sup> Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, typified the former, and the Taliban of Afghanistan the latter. Earlier, I had identified two enduring strains in Muslim society: the first, mystic and universalist, and the second, orthodox and literalist.<sup>32</sup> Dara Shikoh, the elder son of Shah Jehan, the Mughal emperor of India, personified the former, and his younger brother, Aurangzeb, the latter. In this book I develop these ideas further.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how Muslims are constructing their religious identities—and therefore a whole range of actions and strategies—as a result of their current situation. Today, every violent action in one part of the world is capable of provoking an equally violent reaction in another. The chief catalyst is the transmission of television images and those on the Internet that create a heightened sense of tension. The rapidity of the responses and the publicity they are given in the media ensure that every society is kept in a state of high anxiety as ordinary people become caught up in this rapid series of actions and reactions through

their television sets. Certain kinds of leaders have emerged to represent the current mood, whereas others have been marginalized. Style of leadership is clearly related to the rapidity with which actions and reactions can be presented.

All world religions seek to discover the best path to understanding the divine in order to lead a fulfilling life on earth. In this search, some people try to look for parallels and analogies outside their own tradition; others try to incorporate principles from life around them to strengthen their own beliefs; and still others focus on preserving their own legacy as much as possible. These different approaches give rise to internal contradictions and dilemmas within the major world faiths, and they also affect relations with other religions. Take, for example, Judaism, the oldest Abrahamic faith. Judaism has resolved its inner tensions to some extent by demarcating and identifying its different perspectives within three branches: Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative. Of course, other interpretations are offered by smaller branches such as Hassidism and Reconstructivism. Members of each persuasion believe they are interpreting Judaism with integrity.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Islam attempts to differentiate its various approaches or worldviews, some of which overlap while some are in opposition. These approaches can best be summarized as “accepting,” “preserving,” and “synthesizing.” Those who believe in acceptance approach the divine through universal mysticism; those who believe in preserving opt for straightforward orthodoxy or a literal interpretation of the faith; and the synthesizers seek to interact with modernism and the ideas it values, such as democracy, women’s rights, and human rights. Again, each perspective is considered the truest form of the faith and a means of counteracting the three poisons. Each is affected by globalization, and each causes internal tensions within Islamic society. Hence Islam’s response to the forces of globalization also takes at least three distinct forms: mystics reach out to other faiths, traditionalists want to preserve the purity of Islam, and modernists attempt to synthesize society with other non-Muslim systems. Because most people in the West do not understand the complexity of Muslim society through models such as ours, they reduce understanding of U.S. relations with the Muslim world to good versus evil, and divide Muslims crudely into moderates versus extremists.

*The Three Muslim Models in Play Today*

Three towns in India serve as metaphors for these worldviews: Ajmer, Deoband, and Aligarh, respectively. Just as Waterloo has come to mean more than a geographical location in Europe, so these three names represent different interpretations of Islam in the minds of local people associated with a particular Muslim perspective. The fact that all three towns are situated in South Asia—and, as it happens, in India—is merely a neat coincidence of history and geography. The important point is that the models named after them can be recognized universally in Muslim societies, although sometimes disguised under different labels and forms.

Although the word “model” is somewhat amorphous for this context, it does capture the sense of a “system,” or way of thinking. If there is a mystic model of human thought and practice in Islam, it is Sufism. Thus, those who love Moin-uddin Chisti, the founder of the Chisti order whose shrine is in Ajmer, would also find Rumi, who is buried in Konya in Turkey, an inspiring and beloved Sufi master. All Sufis are passionately inspired directly by the Prophet of Islam, whom they see through a mystic lens:

It is said that when God existed alone, the silent totality resonating in the darkness before light, the immersion of all that was to be in the solitary, unique One, after a period of timelessness which cannot be described or reckoned, something happened, something changed or shifted and a stunning, luminous presence emerged from all that was contained. In amazement God contemplated this light, radiating His consciousness as perception and awareness, asking it to identify itself, and the *nur* replied to our God that it was a light which had been with Him and had come from Him, a light which was the expression of His grace, His plentitude, His totality. God, who was delighted with the response, gave this extraordinary light the name *Nur Muhammad*, declaring then He would make all that would be created with this *nur*, this *Nur Muhammad*.<sup>34</sup>

The Prophet radiates and has come to embody *nur*, or light: “Nur Muhammad.” It is what characterizes human beings since Adam: “Finally, He created Adam, man, the most exalted of His creation, pressing the light of *Nur Muhammad* on his forehead, announcing that human beings would

know what even the angels would not know.”<sup>35</sup> For a Sufi, the Prophet, Islam, and Sufism are fused into one with the goodness and compassion that radiates from God. This is how a leading contemporary Sufi defines Sufism:

Sufism and Islam cannot be separated in the same way that higher consciousness or awakening cannot be separated from Islam. Islam is not an historical phenomenon that began 1,400 years ago. It is the timeless art of awakening by means of submission. Sufism is the *heart* of Islam. It is as ancient as the rise of human consciousness. . . . Genuine Sufis are essentially similar wherever they come from, in that they share an inner light and awakening and an outer courtesy and service to humanity. Apparent differences between Sufis tend to relate to matters concerning spiritual practices or prescriptions for the purification of hearts. The sweet fruit of Sufism is the same. It is only the trees which may look different and which may flower in different seasons.<sup>36</sup>

Those who adhere to this model range from austere puritanical mystics to those who take drugs and even alcohol, which are prohibited in Islam: “Also, as with other spiritual movements and revivals, we find instances of some Sufis taking things to extremes and even distorting the multi-dimensions of Islam. Excess esotericism or the rejection of the bounds of outer behavior or the balanced prophetic way, are examples of this phenomenon, although they are the exception rather than the rule.”<sup>37</sup>

During World War II, local Sufi groups in the Balkans saved Jewish lives from Nazi persecution. Norman Gershman, an American who plans to write about this little-known period in history, was told that this was “a religious act of faith” for the Muslim Bektashi sect headquartered in Albania.<sup>38</sup> In an interview with Gershman, the world head of this sect explained: “We Bektashi see God everywhere, in everyone. God is in every pore and every cell. Therefore all are God’s children. There cannot be infidels. There cannot be Discrimination. If one sees a good face one is seeing the face of God. ‘God is beauty. Beauty is God. There is no God but God.’”

Throughout this book, I use the word “Ajmer” to refer to all those Muslims inspired by the Sufi and mystical tradition within Islam. I use “Deoband” to refer to all mainstream Islamic movements—whether the

Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia or the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in the Middle East—that have a deep affinity with its position. In other words, Deoband is a generic term for Islamic movements based in orthodox Islam that consciously trace their worldview to mainstream Islamic tradition and thought. These movements also identify themselves through their association with some key figures in Islam—for example, the scholar Ibn Taymiyya from the past, and, more recently, Syed Qutb from the Arab world, and Maulana Maududi from South Asia. Many of the Deoband persuasion would consider Aurangzeb, Mughal emperor in India, the ideal Muslim ruler.

Ibn Taymiyya, one of the most influential Deoband thinkers, lived and wrote in the fourteenth century, when the Muslim heartland was reeling from the Mongol invasions from the east and earlier attacks by the Crusaders from the west. The uncertainty and violence in the wake of these invasions made an impression on Taymiyya's thinking, which therefore needs to be understood in the context of his times. Gone was the easy, open acceptance of non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians, of Ibn Rushd or even Rumi. However distrustful of non-Muslims, Taymiyya remained an Islamic scholar who insisted on religious freedom and security for Jews and Christians in accordance with the *Quran*.

Ibn Taymiyya's significance today is that he introduced two themes into Islamic discourse of lasting influence in Muslim societies. First, he stoutly rejected fatalism or passivity in the face of injustice and its reliance on the intercession of saints, instead emphasizing personal responsibility for one's own life. Second, he stressed the need to keep Islamic law as flexible as possible within the concept of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning based on the *Quran* or scholarly texts). Islamic law, he argued, was open to reinterpretation and needed to take into account the context in which society functioned. *Ijtihad* must remain active, he said, for otherwise Islamic law itself would become ossified and irrelevant. He vigorously opposed the widespread idea—which is still mentioned in ultraconservative circles—that the gates of *ijtihad* were closed forever by the four great jurists of Sunni Islam. In Taymiyya's view, Muslims in every generation must constantly revert to the original seventh-century sources rather than mindlessly apply the teachings of the scholars, however noteworthy and pious. The failure of *ijtihad*, Ibn Taymiyya argued, meant the loss of vitality in Muslim society and therefore set the course for its downfall.

The call for *ijtihad* was echoed in the eighteenth century by Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, the founder of what in time would be called the Wahhabi movement. Abdul Wahhab interpreted Taymiyya in an even more literalist manner than Taymiyya himself may have wished. Wahhabis, taking their cue from Abdul Wahhab, have been particularly dismissive of Sufi thinking and practice and in favor of the aggressive identification of what was pure in Islam from the seventh century. Some orthodox scholars argue—despite a clear injunction in the Quran against suicide—that suicide bombings that kill innocent civilians are justified, because Muslims are in the middle of an all-out and total war against their faith in which their own innocent people are being killed. This kind of reasoning is *ijtihad*.

Taymiyya is the inspiration for a wide range of Muslim scholars such as Syed Qutb and Maulana Maududi, schools of thought such as Deoband, and activists like bin Laden and the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. Today, Taymiyya's message has been reduced to two precepts: the need to actively defend Islam and, simultaneously, to strive to re-create the purity of early Muslim society. This is the interpretation of Islam that Western commentators characterize as "radical Islam," "political Islam," "jihadist," or the recently coined term, "Islamofascist." Taymiyya's complex ideas have been reduced to a bare shibboleth, a rallying slogan, a battle cry that is the charter of action for millions of Muslims across the world.

Not everyone adhering to the Deoband model would agree with or accept the methods of bin Laden, however. Most of its followers simply wish to retain their ideals and practices with integrity and without external interference, especially by the West, but do not necessarily support violence. There is clearly a range of opinions and methods on how best to defend tradition in the Deoband model. In this discussion, then, the term "Deoband model" conveys a range of Muslim responses that are broadly similar in their purpose and content, despite variations due to culture, region, and personal convictions.

Like Ajmer and Deoband, "Aligarh" in this book conveys a broad but distinct modernist Muslim response to the world. This branch began in the nineteenth century as a direct consequence of Western imperialism. Its followers range from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in India and Muhammad Abduh in Egypt in the nineteenth century to socialist leaders of the Middle East, the modernizing Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, shah of Iran, and the democratic leaders of Malaysia in the twentieth century. Leaders of this

persuasion include genuine democrats and military dictators—all espousing democracy. Whether they are devout or more secular Muslims, followers of Aligarh share the desire to engage with modern ideas while preserving what to them is essential to Islam.

A Muslim must balance the need to strive for the next world while living in this one—it is well to recall the classic definition of ideal Islam as achieving perfect equilibrium between these worlds, *deen* and *dunya*, respectively, or between spirituality and worldliness. Each of the models just defined attempts to achieve precisely this, although by means of manifestly different strategies. In each case, Muslims work to find a happy medium between the pull of the market and the mosque. The problem, as will become clear, is that each lays greater emphasis on one or the other, which upsets the delicate balance that Islam once struggled so assiduously to maintain. So while Ajmer followers may spend more time thinking of the hereafter and ignoring this world, those favoring the Aligarh model may be doing the opposite. Confident that it is the guardian of the faith, Deoband believes that it has struck the right balance between *deen* and *dunya*.

The models just described also provide some perspective on the broad Muslim responses to one another. That is one of the advantages of reducing large and complex populations to models and categories. Ajmer followers, for example, think Deobandis are too critical of other faiths and too preoccupied with opposing mysticism, while they find Aligarh followers too concerned with the material world. For their part, the followers of Deoband would consider those of Ajmer guilty of innovation and close to heresy and those of Aligarh far too secular and too influenced by the West. The Aligarh group would perceive Ajmer as backward and would dismiss Deoband as little more than a rabble of ignorant clerics, country bumpkins, and benighted rustics. President Ayub Khan of Pakistan, who had studied at Aligarh and came to power through a military coup, would publicly refer to the latter as “those damn mullahs.” Jinnah, although he had not studied at Aligarh himself, saw its students as “the arsenal” of the Muslims in his campaign for a modern Muslim homeland to be called Pakistan and himself was constantly attacked by clerics as a “nonbeliever.”

However, these are not watertight models but “ideal types” that only approximate reality, and this is one of the drawbacks of categorizing people into special groups. The categories are not a substitute for reality. At

times the models overlap, and at others individuals move from one to another. Furthermore, some Muslim thinkers have sought to reconcile the three models. Back in the eleventh century, Ghazzali, when a university instructor in Baghdad, studied Sufi mystic thought, orthodox Islam, and Greek philosophy—from which the Ajmer, Deoband, and Aligarh models are descended. Something of a celebrity in scholarly circles, Ghazzali withdrew from society to grapple with the main intellectual trends of his time and reemerged with a series of influential works offering a balance between mysticism, faith, and rationality. Over the centuries, Muslim intellectuals have turned to Ghazzali's work to find inspiration and help them meet the challenges of life. Not surprisingly, throughout our trip leading Muslims regularly named Ghazzali as a role model. Yet because of the ambitious sophistication of his thought, he is consistently misunderstood and misquoted.

Another individual whose work synthesizes the different and often contradictory views that the three models represent is the poet and philosopher Allama Iqbal, who touched a vast number of ordinary people. In his unrestrained admiration for the thirteenth-century poet and mystic Rumi, he appears to advocate the Ajmer model, yet his most popular poems, the "Shikwa," or "Complaint" (of Muslims to God for their plight), and the "Jawab-i-Shikwa," or "Reply to Complaint" (God's answer), embody the Deoband worldview. Letters written during the last months of his life to Jinnah, who best symbolizes the Aligarh model, developed the idea of a modern Muslim nation to be called Pakistan, meaning the "land of the pure." To Muslims, Iqbal's verses are not contradictory but a manifestation of the struggle of ideas in human society. Iqbal's universal popularity was confirmed for me as people throughout our journey referred to him as a worthy role model. A poet's capacity to cross linguistic, cultural, and international borders was illustrated during our stop in Damascus, at a farewell dinner given in our honor by the Pakistan ambassador: one of our Syrian hosts, Muhammad Habash, recited an Arabic version of Iqbal's two poems. His enthusiasm was as apparent as the delight of the audience.

Contradictory as it may seem, all three models draw their inspiration from the one name that provides unity to the diverse global Muslim community: the Prophet Muhammad. He is so greatly respected that traditional

Muslims will invariably say “Peace be upon him” whenever his name is mentioned. In the Iqbal poems just mentioned, God advises Muslims:

If you are faithful to Muhammad, then I am yours.  
Why do you want this universe?  
I will give you the key to knowledge itself.

Muslims everywhere, regardless of race, age, social class, gender, or sect, relate to him in a special way. They see in the Prophet an inspiration for their own lives.

The Prophet’s popularity reflects both the paradox and strength of Islam: the Ajmer mystics will sing songs of love for the Prophet and trace their spiritual lineage directly to him; the orthodox Deoband will hold him up as their ultimate exemplar, imitating him down to style of beard and length of trousers; and the Aligarh modernist will cite him proudly as the original revolutionary of history, who gave rights to women, minorities, and the disenfranchised. All agree that the Prophet is the best interpreter of the Quran and accordingly Islam. His powerful words provide the unity that binds the diverse cultural and political branches of Islam, especially when faced with a common threat.

Many Western commentators consider Ajmer and Aligarh followers to be “with us” and the Deoband “against us.” Yet if the often repeated question “Where are the moderates?” is any indication, they appear to think the former have disappeared from the radar. By showing the complexity and nuances of the Muslim world, I hope to suggest ways for the West to understand Muslim society.

Moreover, these models shed light on the “them” in the war on terror, making clear that Muslim countries do not neatly fit one model or another. Afghanistan, where the Taliban have reemerged and where the insurgents are fighting on behalf of the Pukhtun tribes against U.S. soldiers and the northern tribes, provides a prime example of the three models in concert. The Afghans have a known love for mystic literature—this is the land that gave birth to Rumi—but they also supported the Deoband model during the rule of the Taliban, especially in Kandahar and Kabul. The present presidential form of government with a new national army and police structure leans more toward the Aligarh model. These are still early days for the Aligarh model, and there is evidence that the Deoband model

remains strong. A similar interplay between the three models can also be seen in other Muslim societies such as in Somalia. It is essential not only to identify these models but also to relate them to each other and to larger theoretical discussions about leadership. Their relevance is not only historical and theoretical but of direct sociological concern to any discussion of contemporary Islam.

With the aid of these models, one can also better appreciate how mainstream Muslims view themselves. Structurally, ideologically, and philosophically, the Ajmer model is antithetical to the strongly material and consumerist philosophies behind globalization. Sufis—who are to be found among both Shia and Sunni—emphasize concern for common humanity, poverty, and the imperative for compassion. Sufi thought urges people to constantly contemplate the afterlife and not concentrate so much on wealth or material gain in this life. Hence the Sufis are almost invisible in the age of globalization, yet not inactive. They are neither consumers nor aggressive advocates of their way of thinking but offer a genuine and long-term solution to some of the problems facing all of human civilization. The Ajmer model, which embodies pluralism and acceptance of others, is perhaps the only one that can lead Muslims out of the ethnic, religious, and political conflicts that globalization has thrust on them and that they continue to ignore at their peril.

For Deoband, faith and reason cannot be separated. Many verses in the Quran, Deoband followers would point out, emphasize the use of the mind and reason. The word for knowledge is the second most prevalent word in the Quran after that for God. God, they would say, has stated there is no greater quality than the intellect. One cannot fully worship God unless one does so intelligently and puts to full use one's capacity to reason. According to Deobandis, the great days of Islam were a consequence of the fusion of faith and reason. That was when Islamic scholars shone and their knowledge stood at the cutting edge of intellectual development. The general collapse of political power and influence over the past two centuries can be overcome, Deoband supporters would argue, by reviving the purity of Islam through the earliest model, which led to the triumph of the Muslims in the first place.

Because Deoband maintained its "purity" by drawing boundaries around itself, it is able to protect itself best from the tidal waves of globalization. With logic and consistency, Deoband can point to and resist the hollow-

ness of globalization, its crass materialism, and images of moral laxity depicted on television. It therefore emphasizes the moral superiority of Islam and seeks to create a sense of pride based on Muslim identity. In the Deoband view, the West is not only morally bankrupt but also violent and sadistic, especially since 9/11. The scandals of Abu Ghraib attest to this and confirm the prediction of Muslim sages and saints that Islam will ultimately triumph. Far from being apologetic, Deoband is riding a crest in the Muslim world, although it may take very different forms and reactions, ranging from suicide bombings to participating in local elections and processions in the streets. Globalization appears to be stimulating the Deoband model more than the other two models and pushing it to take a more active role in Muslim society.

On the surface, the Aligarh model seems more in tune with the West's modern terminology and concepts such as democracy, reason, progress, and science than the other models. According to quintessential figures in this model, such as Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan in South Asia and Muhammad Abduh in the Middle East, Islam by definition means the balance between faith and reason. They hoped Muslim society would achieve a synthesis between Islamic tradition and Western modernity. Some Muslims advocated the complete separation of church and state, as in Turkey under Kemal Ataturk. Indeed, Turkey had even gone to the extreme of beginning to reject Islam in many of its forms. But the promises of nationalist achievement, genuine democracy, and economic progress for all never really materialized. Most Muslim countries have not embraced genuine democracy or widespread and permanent economic progress. Instead, experiments with this model are beset by regimes of the strongman type or, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, are plunged into turmoil and anarchy and are considered shoddy imitations of the West that have failed to deliver. Muslims in this model face the danger of compromising faith without acquiring reason.

Our travels in the Muslim world confirmed that Muslims align themselves according to these models. Those we encountered who believe in the Ajmer model had deep faith in their own position but appeared on the defensive, not only because they were under attack by the more orthodox Muslims—especially some groups of the Deoband model—but also because it was difficult to survive in the age of globalization and make their voices heard. Those of the Aligarh model appeared in disarray and saw the

future in uncertain terms. Confidence, aggression, and a sense of triumph marked those of the Deoband model. History had finally turned their way.

Not surprisingly, then, members of my team elicited a wide range of reactions in the communities we visited on our journey. They were observing us just as much as we were observing them. I have used some of this material in the text. Muslim reactions to our female companions, Hailey and Hadia, provided a telling contrast, allowing us to observe firsthand how these reactions worked within our three Muslim models and to comment on their authenticity and integrity. Blond with blue eyes, Hailey represented the typical American female with European ancestry. With her brown eyes and olive complexion, Hadia symbolized a new kind of American of Arab and Muslim parentage, and she wore the *hijab* over her hair. The mystics of the Ajmer model accepted Hailey with the same easy hospitality they extended to the entire team, while those of the orthodox Deoband model, with impeccable propriety, extended her hospitality only within their women's gatherings, all the while pretending she did not exist. It was left to the modern young Muslim male, whether in Istanbul or Amman, to see her as a stereotype—the waiting-to-be-seduced Western female. Their attitude toward Hailey rather neatly summed up the predicament of the Aligarh model. They had abandoned traditional Muslim behavior and had not quite made the transition to Western social behavior, education, and culture and were therefore inclined to easily misread signs and situations. Thus they ended up being neither of the past nor really of the present.

Matters for Hailey quickly improved when she learned how to read signals in Muslim societies, even in the greeting of people. A handshake between a male and female is not encouraged in traditional society, as it would violate established social norms. A young Muslim male being offered a hand to shake by a young American female could well read something more into it than a social greeting. Clothing also had significance. When Hailey began to dress in more traditional outfits, such as long skirts, loose shirts, and an occasional headscarf, particularly in houses of worship, she found herself no longer attracting unwelcome male attention. In Karachi she refused to enter Jinnah's mausoleum until she found a headscarf to show respect for the memory of the father of the Pakistani nation, and when I mentioned this to a large audience at a public event in Islamabad, just after she had spoken, people were impressed. The next day the



*Hadia Mubarak answers questions in a madrassah in Delhi about her experiences as an American Muslim. Questions about American Muslims and the negative image of Islam in the West were frequent on the trip.*

national press noted her gesture of respect with appreciation. At the end of a long day at the university at Deoband in India, a senior member of the faculty who had been escorting us around expressed his gratitude for our visit in a classroom full of bearded young men. So impressed was he with the deportment and dress of Hailey that he addressed her as “holy Hailey.” At a time of high levels of anti-Americanism in the region, a student had won friends for the United States by showing cultural sensitivity.

Hadia was another matter. She was accepted by the mystics at Ajmer and welcomed with admiration by Deoband followers. The latter saw her as proudly representing Islam in the United States and were grateful. Even the orthodox madrassahs, normally an all-male preserve, invited her to speak to a gathering of several hundred young male students, who were enthralled by what she had to say in Arabic. Whether in Istanbul or Aligarh itself, those of the Aligarh model once again had problems. In Istanbul, they even tried to prevent Hadia from entering the premises of a university campus because of her hijab. In Aligarh, an angry mob of students assailed her with a barrage of hostile questions about American for-

eign policy. While not making any improper sexual suggestions, they nonetheless expressed an undefined anger when dealing with her. Perhaps they considered her hijab a symbol of their own predicament: they were constantly on the defensive because Islam has been criticized for being a backward religion.

### *Differences between the Shia and Sunni Sects*

To add to its complexity, Islam is composed of two major sects, the Sunni and the Shia, each of which has been influenced by the worldviews of our three models in varying ways. Today, roughly 85–90 percent of the Muslim world is Sunni and the rest mainly Shia. On a theological level, the two sects show virtually no differences—both believe in the same God, Prophet, Quran, and the values that are inherent in Islam. There are distinct differences on a political and sociological level, however, and they date back to the death of the Prophet in 632 C.E.

Shia belief and identity originate in the question of who should have been the first political successor to the Prophet of God and borne the title of first caliph, or head of the Islamic community he had established. Shia believe that the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, was the rightful successor. Ali was not only an extraordinary figure—a wise scholar and brave warrior—but also the first male to declare his belief in the message of Islam. Ali did become the ruler of Islam, but only after Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman—all three highly revered figures in Sunni Islam—had held the position. Ali is also the father of the prominent Shia figure Hussein, who would be martyred at Karbala, in modern-day Iraq—a seminal event in Shia history and marked by massive pilgrimages to Karbala today.

This initial difference over the succession developed into a sectarian schism under Umar's rule, when what was then the Persian Empire converted to Islam. The Persians brought with them—as did people in other parts of the Muslim world—many of their customs and sense of national pride. They had just suffered defeat at the hands of the Arabs, whom they despised as backward tribesmen lacking in culture and intellect. It seemed logical for them to identify with Ali in their new religion because this affiliation enabled them to retain a sense of superiority while seeing themselves as a persecuted minority within the world body of Muslims dominated by the Sunni. Over time, sociological differences seeped into religious

observance, which affected rituals. The respect and status that Shia clerics enjoy in society is unmatched in the Sunni sect, whose religious scholars have to compete with traditional leaders and with other leaders for a voice. Furthermore, Shia identify with Ali so intensely that Sunni often accuse them of paying more respect to Ali than to the Prophet himself in the Islamic cosmos. Paradoxically, both Sunni and Shia revere and are inspired by the same historical figures—the Prophet, his daughter, Fatima, her husband, Ali, and their son, Hussein.

Umar, the second ruler of Islam after the Prophet's death, is a particular flashpoint between the two communities. Sunni consider him a role model, as responses to our questionnaires indicated, whereas Shia have mixed feelings about him: he is one of those who usurped Ali's rightful place as successor to the Prophet but also the ruler who ordered the successful invasion and conquest of Persia that brought the Persians into Islam. Sunni elders oftentimes whisper that in the old days, when Shia warriors went hunting, they would pull back the bow with the arrow in position and whisper a prayer that it might find its true mark in the heart of Umar.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the Islamic revolution in Iran against the shah, came to represent everything that was opposed to Western modernity in the view of people in the West and even the modernists among the Shia who believed in their own version of the Aligarh model. Khomeini did reach out to the Sunni, however, arguing that there was no theological difference between the two sects. His slogan was "neither east nor west, Islam is best," but in the end, the politics of Iran engulfed him. His country plunged into a long and bloody war with Iraq, and the Iranian revolution ran out of steam.

The animus between Shia and Sunni has often sparked rioting in areas where Shia are in the minority, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In Iran, on the other hand, the Sunni minorities, especially tribal groups such as the Kurds on the western borders and the Baluch on the eastern, have historically been persecuted by the Shia. As Khomeini pointed out, this friction between Sunni and Shia has little to do with substantial or irreconcilable theological differences. Rather, the blame lies with ethnic, sociological, and psychological factors.

Currently, the bonds and relationships between Shia and Sunni are collapsing into sectarian violence in Shia-dominated Iraq, Sunni-dominated

Pakistan, and in Lebanon where both are balanced in strength. Friends and neighbors are inflicting extreme pain on each other, knowing as they do their mutual weaknesses and sensitivities. Dark and deep irrational impulses prompted by malice are being expressed through the most vicious acts of cruelty. The intensity and widespread nature of the current violence within Islam confirm that something is amiss in the human condition today.

Sociologically, Shia communities exhibit many Ajmer tendencies, since the Sufi component of Ajmer has contributed richly to Shia culture. At the same time, religious Shia clerics who feel particularly strongly that they are defenders of the faith appear to be more in line with the Deoband model, and until recently the Shia response to modernity has seemed closer to the Aligarh model. Recall that Persia (Iran), a Shia stronghold, was never colonized by the West—there was no Aligarh university and therefore no Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, Allama Iqbal, or Jinnah. For the Shia, modernity meant rejecting both the Shia equivalent of the Ajmer and Deoband models—that is, any form of traditional religion—and being blindly infatuated with the West. From the 1950s until he was overthrown, the shah of Iran came to embody this embrace of the West and rejection of traditional values and was alienated from his people. Shia Islam does have a few modernist figures, however, such as the Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati, trained in France. But none of them has ever been in power. Today, the Shia equivalent of Deoband dominates Iran. The country's present drive to build a nuclear program that could provoke another world crisis needs to be seen in the context of the Shia sense of persecution and the Iranian Shia position within the ideology of Islam.<sup>39</sup>

### *At the Crossroads*

What lies at the core of all great world faiths is clearly missing in today's world: a sense of justice, compassion, and knowledge. The tidal wave of globalization has swept over the world with economic and financial might, fomenting anger, greed, and ignorance. In such an environment, feelings of compassion and understanding for others become irrelevant—human beings and human relationships do not appear to matter. This characteristic of globalization has been accelerated since 9/11. Learned professors of law—those who should know better—have justified the use of torture in

its most degrading forms in secret prison camps.<sup>40</sup> The U.S. war on terror has become a distorted symbol of globalization associated with torture and the suspension of human rights to millions of the poor and dispossessed and those who feel for them. This challenges the naïve, ethnocentric assumption of Western intellectuals that globalization promotes “cosmopolitan tolerance” and that this is a characteristic of Western culture that can now be transmitted to the rest of the world.<sup>41</sup> The human race is at the point of losing what makes it human: compassion. It needs to rediscover compassion for every one of its social units, from immediate kin to the larger societies that share this planet.

Governments therefore need to be encouraged to conduct serious dialogue and make efforts at understanding even those they strongly oppose, instead of isolating and alienating them. A rejection of the Deoband model in the Middle East, for example, not only further radicalized its supporters but in the end broadened its base in society. The tactic of neither recognizing nor talking to Deoband supporters has palpably failed. Governments also need to help revive the models of Ajmer and Aligarh marginalized at present. Compassion for and understanding of other societies is the only way to resolve the serious problems civilization now faces. In Muslim society alone, those problems are multifold: illiteracy, lack of health care, poverty, and legitimate political grievances relating to Palestinians, Kashmiris, Muslims in the Balkans, and Chechens. To add to this complexity, Muslims form a traditional yet global community committed to their faith. The future of the human race depends on international dialogue with these and other populations.

That means doing something that has never been done before in human history: jointly applying the moral codes universal to all faiths and great legal systems. Time is of the essence here. The poisons are spreading so rapidly that without immediate remedial action, no antidote may ever be found.

This book represents a crucial first step in that direction: it explains why defining the problem of Islam’s relations with the West is not just a routine exercise of an academic nature but, because incorrect assumptions will invariably lead to flawed conclusions, vital to the process of true understanding. Labeling Islam with newer and ever more widely extravagant titles, such as “Islamofascism,” may create more problems than can be

imagined. We have therefore probed deeply into how Islam is being defined in our time, who is doing the defining, and why. We have suggested alternative ways of looking at the same problems.

The book also proposes how to achieve dialogue and understanding between societies through practical examples from the field. It not only raises theoretical questions but recounts actual cases describing real people. From the bazaars of the Middle East, the mosques and temples of South Asia, and the college campuses of the Far East we hear voices—Muslim and non-Muslim—that are seldom if ever heard. The book echoes their faith and message of hope.

Unfortunately, American thinkers and policymakers appear to be as transfixed with negative energy about Islam as Muslims are about American culture and its policies. Neither is showing the wisdom, courage, and commitment needed to make the world a better—and definitely safer—place. This will require a change of mind and, more important, a change of heart.