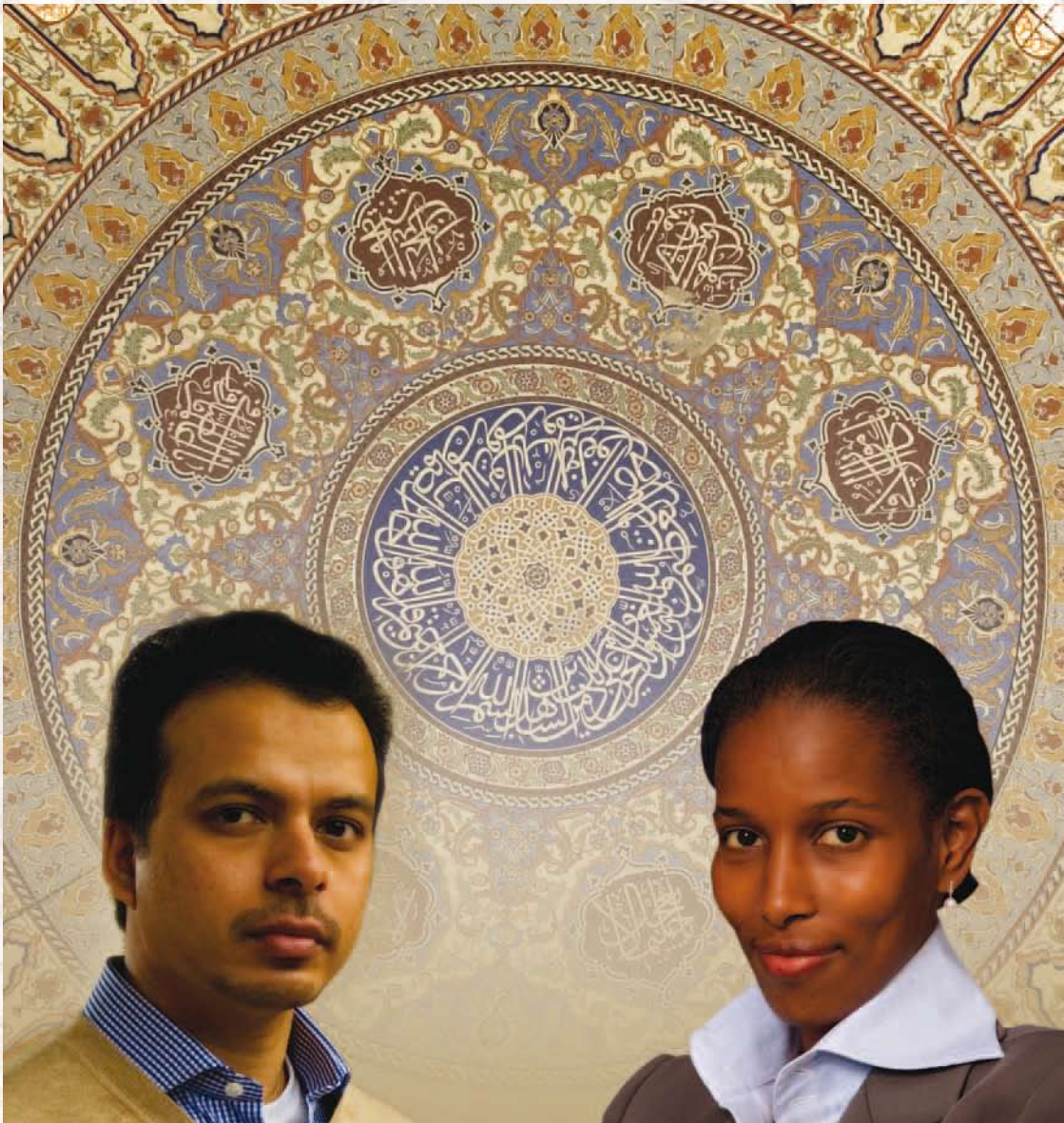


The West and the Future of Islam

A debate between Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ed Husain



The Centre for Social Cohesion

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**A DEBATE BETWEEN
Ayaan Hirsi Ali
AND
Ed Husain**

20 November 2007

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THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL COHESION

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Introduction

'The West and the Future of Islam', a debate hosted in London by the Centre for Social Cohesion, brought together two prominent speakers on Islam. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a self-declared Muslim apostate and former Dutch MP, and Ed Husain, a former member of the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir and author of the best-selling book *The Islamist*, went head to head discussing the compatibility of Islam and Western values.

Advocating an Islamic 'renaissance', Ed Husain argues that pluralist Islamic heritage can be reinterpreted to meet the challenges of the modern world. In response, Ayaan Hirsi Ali argues that Islam as a principle and body of ideas is opposed to the 'Enlightenment' values of the West.

This event took place in Westminster, London on 20 November 2007, an audio recording is available to download from the Centre for Social Cohesion's website (www.social-cohesion.co.uk).

Douglas Murray:

Good evening and welcome. This event is thrown by the new Centre for Social Cohesion. My name is Douglas Murray and I am the director of the Centre. Thank you for coming to tonight's event... It's a great pleasure tonight to have two such distinguished speakers to debate the issue of our time. I can't think of a better pair of speakers to have.

Ed Husain is the author of the best-selling book, *The Islamist*, which charts and describes his personal journey from membership of the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir to his present position as one of the most celebrated, and I think most eloquent, people to explain the Muslim faith and what it means to be a Muslim in Britain today. He writes regularly for the *Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Sunday Times*; he appears on Newsnight, CNN and Al Jazeera with great frequency. It's a great pleasure to have him here tonight.

We are also joined by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. It's a great pleasure to have Ayaan in Britain from her new home in the United States of America. She is most recently the author of the best-selling autobiography, *Infidel*. She was, until last year, a member of the Dutch Parliament and I think is, without doubt, one of the most famous speakers on this subject. She most recently came to international attention when the Dutch government withdrew her security protection, requiring her to – as is currently the case – raise money privately for her much-needed protection; and a fund has recently been set up for that...

Anyhow, without much further ado we would like to kick off tonight's debate on 'The West and the Future of Islam'. I'm going to invite Ed Husain to speak, then Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and there will then be questions. But first of all, Ed Husain.

Ed Husain:

Thank you very much, everybody. Can I begin by thanking the Centre for Social Cohesion for organising this debate... I'll get straight to the point. I agree with Ayaan on several issues – the oppression of Muslim women, domestic vio-

lence, forced marriages, extremism in Muslim circles. But we also disagree, and we disagree on much. And I think my primary point of digression from Ayaan's discourse is the fact that Ayaan, quite openly, has said – on at least one instance – that the War on Terror shouldn't be a War on Terror but should be a 'War on Islam'. I speak as someone who, once upon a time, had a mindset that would endorse, applaud, find something positive in martyrdom operations – so-called martyrdom operations – in Palestine. Osama bin Laden would have been a freedom fighter. For me to get away from that mindset, it was answers that I found within Islam – and not from without – that took me, and others, out.

“ It was answers that I found within Islam – and not from without – that took me, and others, out ”

So, when Ayaan and others talk about extremism and eradicating extremism, and then say that the War on Terror should, in essence, be a 'War on Islam', I see no difference in people like Zarqawi or Zawahiri – bin Laden's second in command – and bin Laden himself, saying those very things, and others who are, in theory at least, fighting those people, also coming out with the same rhetoric. So, it's a problem, I think, from within Islam to see, well, what exactly is going on here. And also, Ayaan and others have called for a reform of Islam, and I don't stand for a reform of Islam. I think Lord Cromer had it right when he said an Islam reformed is an Islam no more. For me it's about renaissance; it's about what the Prophet Muhammed said: *tajdid*¹ of Islam. That *tajdid*, that renaissance, that sense of renewing Islam comes from within Islamic tradition itself, and I'll try to illustrate today one or two examples of how that's done from within Islam and not necessarily coming from without.

“ Lord Cromer had it right when he said an Islam reformed is an Islam no more. For me it's about renaissance ”

“ Islam rescued me from extremism ”

Islam rescued me from extremism. There's a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the extremist organisation here in Britain, a leadership member who left recently, Maajid Nawaz, who

1 *Tajdid*: Renovation – a process of revival, independent thinking and innovation within faith.

spent time in prison, who sits here at the front today. It was Islam and Islamic pluralism that took him out of extremism and then took him out to a path of condemning extremism. Usama Hasan, Sheikh Usama Hasan, who is also in the audience today, someone who fought in the front line of the battle in Afghanistan, left extremism and came out and today quite openly speaks out against several Muslim practices, which I'll allude to later on. Asim Siddiqui, head of the City Circle, who is sitting in the audience today as well, who was raised on literature that painted a 'them and us' worldview of Mawdudi-based and Sayyid Qutb-based sects, also left and came out. All of us, and hundreds of others out there, too, who are moving out against extremism, came out because of answers we found within Islam and not without.

Now, before I move on to what we can practically do to foster an Islam and its relationship with the West that is positive and harmonious, I want to clarify two or three mis-

“ I'm not here to defend Muslims; I'm here to defend Islam. I find much to be condemned among contemporary Muslim practice ”

conceptions most people in the West, particularly the Western intelligentsia, have about Islam. I'm not here to defend Muslims; I'm here to defend Islam. I find much to be condemned among contemporary Muslim practice. But the first thing to say is that Islam – a religion – is not Islamism – a political ideology. Islamism is a political ideology set up in the 1950s – and earlier, in the 1940s – by people like [Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la] Mawdudi, who was the first in Muslim history to say that Islam is a political ideology. Before Mawdudi's writings in the 1940s – a Pakistani journalist – nobody referred to Islam as a political ideology. You can ask where he got those references and influences from, but he was the first to do so. Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian literary critic, took those teachings to their logical conclusion in advocating overthrowing every single Arab government, setting up a state that had an expansionist, totalitarian foreign policy, and – to cut a very long story short – anti-Western rhetoric, anti-fellow Muslim rhetoric; most Muslims were not considered to be Muslim enough if you weren't a member of what they called the 'Islamic movement', or fulfilling your obligations

to establish what they called an ‘Islamic state’. All of these are modern conceptions, but, broadly speaking, that is what Islamism, a political ideology, is all about. We in the West often confuse Islam – a 1,400-year-old spiritual tradition – with Islamism, the political ideology. Islam is a religion like all other religions: in the language of the Quran we believe that God talks about the word *deen*² to describe Christianity and Judaism, as well as Islam; but modern Islamists equate Islam with capitalism and socialism, so that again is indicative of a certain mindset.

The second issue I want to try and highlight, and clarify misconceptions about, is the *sharia*.³ The *sharia* has received bad press over the last few years, to put it mildly; but the first thing, I think, to concede is that the *sharia* is not a monolithic entity, it’s not cast in stone. To say that it is, is to give credence to the argument of the Islamists and Saudi Wahhabists, who want to tell us that the *sharia* is something from the past already designed, devised, only to be – quote unquote – ‘implemented’. *Sharia* is in flux; it adopts; it adapts – it always has done. Take, for example, the arguments of a great classical Muslim scholar known as Imam Shatibi. He was the first, I think – perhaps second, after Imam Ghazali – who codified objectives of the *sharia*. *Sharia* is there to honour life, honour religion, reason and property. It was later that Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and others also echoed similar ideas. The point I am trying to make is [that] to say that the *sharia* is fixed, and we must implement something, is to give credence to an idea that’s modern – an idea that is served by a certain personal political ideology.

“ *Sharia* is not a monolithic entity, it’s not cast in stone ... *Sharia* is in flux ”

But, you may ask, what about stoning? What about those practices we find so horrendous? Well, my contention is

2 *Deen*: Religion - way of life.

3 *Sharia*: Islamic law – lit. ‘road’ or a legal modality of a people based on the Revelation of their Prophet. Based on Islamic principles of jurisprudence, it ranges from diverse traditions and interpretations of strict rules to broad principles and objectives.

yes, stoning is condemnable, but stoning didn't come about firstly and foremost with Islam. The Prophet Muhammed adopted stoning in Medina for adulterers. That was something that the local Jewish community also practised – look at Leviticus and you have at least 13 to 14 different verses talking about stoning, killing people who have committed different kinds of sin. So there is nothing new about that practice; it was a practice of the Abrahamic faiths in the past, and it's a practice that most countries and religions have done away with; and it's a practice that most religions, most Muslims today, don't implement.

A third area would be apostasy. I grant that there are Muslim attitudes of intolerance when it comes to those who have left the faith, I grant you that. But to say, as it's said often in our newspapers and our broadcast media, that killing apostates is in the Quran – you can't prove that; you can't find a single verse in the Quran that says people who leave Islam, become apostates – *murtadeen* in the language of the Arabic – should therefore be killed. So, it gives an attitude of Islam and the *sharia* being intolerant that's just not borne out by the facts. Where does killing of the apostates come from? It comes from Sayyidina Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam, who, in a political circumstance in view of treason – people were planning and plotting against the nascent Muslim community – it was in those situations that he said that those who leave the Muslim faith and then plot and plan against Muslims – treason, sedition, like any other community – in which he endorsed the killing of people who lost the faith. But it is interesting to note that Abu Hanifa, one of the great imams – of the four imams of the Sunni Muslim schools of law (schools, and not *a* school, again an indication of plurality) – he said that women who left the faith should not be killed because, in his time, in ninth-century Baghdad, women were not able to raise people in rebellion against the state. The point he was making is that it's about rebellion, it's about sedition, it's about treason, and it's not about those who disagree with the Muslim community and must therefore be killed. Sufyan al-Thowri, who was a Companion of the Prophet, openly said that those who leave Islam should not be killed. The Ottoman Empire, in

its last 200 years, did not implement these forms of capital punishment.

So the point I am trying to make is that the picture is a little bit more complicated than we want to make out. And so it is with much else: arguments within Islam to undermine Islamists and Saudi Wahhabists are much, much stronger, and they have much, much more of a resonance among Muslims all over the world than to come and say the problem is with Islam itself, the Quran itself and the Prophet Muhammed himself, because the fact of the matter is, it isn't! There is no monolithic Islam that we can adhere to and say: 'This is Islam in its purest and best form.' It's a myth – it never existed. To say that it's the case is to give ground to those who want us to believe in such things.

So the future of Islam and the security of the West, and what the West and we Westerners – Muslims – can do to bring about a more harmonious existence and, more importantly for me, to rescue Islam – my faith, our faith – from those who have hijacked it over the last 60 to 70 years... I want to highlight several themes, and I want to bring them out as macro-themes and micro-manifestations of how this might happen, and I'll try my best to be very quick.

The first point to bear in mind is the fact that there is something called Western Islam and it's in the making; whether we like it or not, it's happening. We have millions of Muslims living in the West. They're not living in deserts in Mauritania or in Sudan. The fact that they are here, the fact that they practise their Islam, indicates that there is something going on, and I'll show you how there are aspects of that Islam which are radically different from Islam in the Muslim East.

Micro-manifestations of that fact would be that there is Western Muslim scholarship that's emerging, pioneered by people like Imam Hamza Yusuf Hanson and others. But there are problems with that micro-manifestation of West-

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“ There is something called Western Islam and it's in the making; whether we like it or not, it's happening ”

ern Islam at its nascent stages now. Take the British case, for example – *madrasas*⁴ up north, where there is a scripturalist, literalist point of view about Islam being taught in *madrasas*, seminaries, up north – in the hope of creating English-speaking imams – a huge focus on that in the media and in government circles. But speaking English isn't enough; if you are speaking English but still spouting the same hatred that the *mullah*⁵ in Karachi is coming out with, I'm sorry, there is no point in speaking that English. So there's a real disconnection in those *madrasas* between mainstream British society and what is being taught in those *madrasas*. There is also a positive development at a micro-level, which is known as *fiqh ul-aqaliyyaat*,⁶ or the jurisprudence of Muslim minorities. A pioneering development, led by notable Muslim scholars – not least people like Sheikh Abdullah bin Baya in the Muslim world, who is helping the Muslims in the West develop a jurisprudence that's dynamic and relevant to the West, and not dependent on the Muslim East.

“ Speaking English isn't enough; if you are speaking English but still spouting the same hatred that the mullah in Karachi is coming out with, I'm sorry, there is no point in speaking that English ”

Another macro-theme would be for the Western intelligentsia – some of you here – and also for Muslims to challenge Muslim social conservative tendencies, because nothing – ostensibly at least – divides us more than these conservative tendencies that we have. Erasmus, when he visited England in 1499, he observed – and this was, you know, 500 years ago – that when English men and English women meet, they kiss on the cheeks, for example. Among Muslims, that's a huge no-no, because there is a sexualisation of that conduct. Again, these are micro-examples. That sort of separatism underpins social isolation. Headscarves in primary schools – I ask this question repeatedly in public – why is it that three-, four-, five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-

“ So to argue that women must cover their faces ... is a form of tyranny ”

4 *Madrasas*: Seminaries – traditional place of study and worship.

5 *Mullah*: Religious cleric.

6 *Fiqh ul-aqaliyyaat*: Religious edicts – developed for situations where Muslims are living as a minority.

year-old girls are wearing headscarves in primary schools? What develops that? Why is that not being challenged? Why is it all being accepted? In order to challenge Muslim social conservative tendencies, those are micro-issues we need to look at. The face cover, the *niqab*⁷, that Muslim women wear – again, there’s a certain mindset behind it going back to the ninth century, tenth century that indicates that the showing of a woman’s face would somehow tempt a Muslim man. Now, I like to think that, in 2007 in Britain, most men are beyond that. So to argue that women must cover their faces as a result of that mindset is a form of tyranny. Gender separatism – that’s predominant in lots of Muslim communities at weddings, a sort of gender segregation; and yet, back in the office on Monday morning, it’s all fine. So there is a sense of social conservatism there that needs to be challenged. And it’s to be challenged by Muslims; it’s to be challenged by ourselves. But the Western intelligentsia, I believe, has a role in highlighting this.

Another area would be the output of education systems that we have – especially schools, colleges and universities. If we are going to create a Western Islam that’s harmonious, then Muslims, particularly the Muslims in the West, or Western Muslims, need to understand how it is that the West, especially in our context here in England, or in Britain... [how] we got where we are. Part of the reason why I walked the extremist path is that at secondary school – and I’m not blaming anybody but myself – that it was not explained to me, what was the Reformation, the Civil War, the Enlightenment? How is it that Britain reached liberal democracy and governing by consensus? Why did the Church of England break away from the Catholic Church?

Again, the second generation or third generation is going through not having these things explained. So many of those bitter fights that we have within the Muslim community... I think we have got a lot to learn from the Christian

“ Part of the reason why I walked the extremist path is that at secondary school . . . it was not explained to me, what was the Reformation, the Civil War, the Enlightenment? How is it that Britain reached liberal democracy and governing by consensus? ”

7 *Niqab*: Veil – covers the entire face.

experience as to how you get away from bitter fights about theology and scripture. Parliamentary democracy: why is it that we have Parliamentary democracy? How did it come about? The Chief Rabbi makes a point in his new book, *The Home We Build Together*, that it took two world wars and 300 years of history to get where we are today. We can't have people who brought about an ideology from the Middle East and from Pakistan in a certain post-colonial milieu trying to undermine that. But it requires us to stand up and confront people who bring that kind of mindset.

Another macro-theme would be to aim to create genuinely pluralistic societies. Voltaire, when he visited England, saw Jews, Christians and Muslims trading together. If a Voltaire visited England today... Some parts of Britain are what I call 'mono-cultural ghettos'. And it's not just me: Trevor Phillips, the Chief Rabbi, a certain archbishop, they have raised these points and it's interesting that these voices of criticism are coming from people who aren't on the far Right. I was in Tower Hamlets today, near the East London Mosque: you can quite easily have access to a nursery, a bank, a mini-cab service, a school, Muslim cafes, restaurants; all within that vicinity, without having any access to the mainstream. That sort of separatist mindset creates a problem in the long term. But integration and pluralism is not just about Muslim communities, if I may say so. There is also responsibility on the mainstream society to accept things such as 'white flight'. Why is it that people who come out of East London and move further east towards Redbridge, say – the white neighbours put up 'for sale' signs within two or three months of their brown or black neighbour moving in? So it's a two-way process.

But there are other things that, on a micro-level, we can do. Local council housing policies: why is it that a newcomer that comes into Britain and stops by at Tower Hamlets or Southwark then has every right to be re-housed within those areas? Why not disseminate that population and prevent the creation of these ghettos? And the creation of these ghettos – it's not just that it looks bad, it's that it does a disservice to those very people that we think we are do-

ing a favour to. So young women who can't speak English, don't have access to police, are suffering domestic violence, suffering marital rape simply because they don't have access to the system which would then intervene and help them. So we do not do a service to the very people we seek to help out. So having a genuinely pluralistic society helps both sides of what's now seen as the social divide.

The last point I want to make on the macro-level is the need, the urgent need, to counter Islamist thought. We need to recognise that we're humans first and foremost. And this is more easily said than done. On a micro-level, to amplify the testimonies of former Islamists – and there's no greater testimony than someone like Maajid Nawaz, for example, who spent four years in prison for his ideas... He came back, went to the leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and then had the audacity to stand back and say: 'No, I'm human first and foremost, my allegiance lies to humanity and not to sectarianism.' Those voices need to be amplified and put out there.

“ ‘I'm human first and foremost, my allegiance lies to humanity and not to sectarianism’ ”

Rehabilitation centres: we say that we are going to extend the 56-day detention, the 90-day detention and all the rest of it. But no-one's really put any serious thought into bringing about rehabilitation centres which are scripturally rooted. There is no better way into the mindset of an extremist than to say: 'Well, actually, you've got it wrong. Here are other scriptural proofs to illustrate to you that your point of view is scripturally unfounded.' As a minimum, you insert doubt; as a maximum you take him or her out of that mindset. To say that it's John Stuart Mill... It won't work...

And finally, it must be said that Western Islam is in its formative stages. The kind of Islam we foster here in Britain today, all of us, Muslims and non-Muslims, is a negotiated future, the kind of Islam that we see 20 or 30 years from today. Throughout the 1990s, Islamism in its various shades – and I am not generalising: you have extremist Islamists and so-called democratic Islamists, but the end game is the same: to have an Islamic state... Those were the guys who

were given a platform – the British government gave several people, Omar Bakri, Abu Qatada, Abdullah Faisal and others, a free ride in Britain. The discourse of the 1990s has created the mess, partly, we're in today; the kind of Islam we foster henceforth is the kind of Islam we will see 20 or 30 years down the road. And this is perhaps also an important point: that young Muslims – and this is based on my own experiences in the Middle East – that young Muslims in Jeddah, Damascus, Cairo, Rabat, look to us in the Muslim West to see how it is that we young Muslims come to terms with being Western, being Muslim in the heart of the West. If we fix it here, if we fix it for this generation, we have every chance of shining a beacon of hope back into the Muslim East. Thank you very much.

“ Young Muslims in Jeddah, Damascus, Cairo, Rabat, look to us in the Muslim West to see how it is that we young Muslims come to terms with being Western, being Muslim in the heart of the West ”

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Ed. I would first like to say yes, we do agree on many, many things. But to summarise what we agree on: we agree on condemning the behaviour such as stoning and the beating of girls, domestic violence, terrorism, and so on. I want to go one step further and say – and that's probably where we disagree – to say that behaviour is justified in the name of a principle, and it is high time that we started discussing that principle. I also wanted to make a small correction to what I said, as you quoted me: I did not say the War on Terrorism *should* be a 'War on Islam'; what I say and go on to say is: it *is* a 'War on Islam'. It's out there: I mean, you can call it terrorism. Terrorism is a tactic; what we are fighting are people who, in the name of their faith, say that they're waging war against infidels and non-Muslims. And it's not just a matter of them believing it: if you look at the body of work, the Quran, the example of the Prophet Muhammed, bin Laden does not say 'look like me' or 'become like me' or 'join my cause' – he points to the Prophet Muhammed.

“ Stoning and the beating of girls, domestic violence, terrorism, and so on . . . that behaviour is justified in the name of a principle, and it is high time that we started discussing that principle ”

The Prophet Muhammed as a moral guide is accepted by

1.2 – and the estimate is sometimes 1.5 – billion people in the world, and unless we start to scrutinise the principles and the morality that Muhammed left behind, then we cannot compete and consistently debate with someone like bin Laden. For me to remain a Muslim and to follow the moral guidance of the Prophet Muhammed, and to say ‘no’ to what bin Laden is inviting me to, is to create a cognitive dissonance that many, many Muslims have shown that they cannot live with. They’ve either gone mad, they have become very complacent and keep quiet and do not take part in the debate, or they get into a sense of contradiction, and I saw that contradiction within you. Every time Muslims try to defend the principles and say it’s not the Prophet who said it, they will open the book. I mean, I was a Muslim; I was also a fundamentalist, and I was drawn to it because it was very consistent with what was said. When Sister Aziza, my secondary schoolteacher, said ‘Do you pray five times a day? Do you fast?’, I stuttered. She then asked: ‘How can you call yourself a Muslim?’ And that started with the praying and the fasting. But then came the fifth obligation: if you can afford it, go to Mecca. The sixth obligation – wage *jihad*:⁸ first spread the faith to the unbelievers, and if they refuse to take it that way then bring it by the sword. These are facts that we cannot look away from. And in that I would say, yes, Islam can be reformed. But I’m not here to defend Islam. I’m here to defend Muslims.

I think it’s wrong to assume that Muslims are incapable, just like Christians and like Jews, and even like communists and people who believed in National Socialism – that they are incapable of reviewing and revising their own faith and the principles that they adhere

“ For me to remain a Muslim . . . and to say ‘no’ to what bin Laden is inviting me to, is to create a cognitive dissonance that many, many Muslims have shown that they cannot live with. They’ve either gone mad, they have become very complacent and keep quiet and do not take part in the debate, or they get into a sense of contradiction, and I saw that contradiction within you ”

“ I’m not here to defend Islam. I’m here to defend Muslims ”

⁸ *Jihad*: Struggle – it is usually defined in a religious sense as a ‘struggle in the path of Allah’. Interpretations range from a personal effort to live according to Islam or inner struggle against the self, to defence or propagation of Islam/Muslims by physical fighting.

to. And in part of what you said, you actually said the *sharia* is a body of work that evolved or should and can evolve; that evolution for me means reformation, revision of the works. Not to say stoning... It is not an argument to leave it at 'but the Christians used to practise it, the Jews used to practise it, and therefore' – what? Therefore, I would say the only group left behind today who have developed systems... Look at Iran, look at Saudi Arabia, look at Pakistan and those areas where *sharia* is actually introduced: stoning goes on; the amputating of hands goes on; the killing of apostates goes on. And it's done in the name of *sharia*, and *sharia* in that sense has not evolved. And if you listen to the polls of some of the researches that have been carried out here, some of the young people who want *sharia* introduced...is they want to see *sharia* introduced in that light to a liberal democratic society, let alone reform their own [*sic*, as heard].

“ The killing of apostates goes on. And it's done in the name of *sharia*, and *sharia* in that sense has not evolved ”

So I see no difference between Islam and Islamism – Islam defined as submission to the will of Allah. And then, where do you find that will of Allah? You find it in the Quran, it is called the Revelation, and with Muhammed as a moral guide to that in the *hadith*⁹ – that Islam, if it is practised as it is written in the book, then that is Islam. You can call it Islamism, as you can call it Wahhabism; you can call it Salafism; you can call it extremism, but then it would be Islam in its most pure form. But I do make a distinction between Islam and Muslims. Muslims as individuals are very diverse and they make choices in how much of Islam they want to follow, and how much of Islam they do not want to follow, and how they treat it. And the people we've come to call moderates are those Muslims who are not willing to follow every commandment in the Quran and take it literally, and do not by practice follow what the Prophet Muhammed says or what he did, but principally condone it. Because I have not seen, I've not heard you actually say, that the

“ I see no difference between Islam and Islamism ”

⁹ *Hadith*: Prophetic tradition - narrated reports relating to the words, deeds or incidents of Islam's Prophet Muhammed.

Prophet Muhammed was wrong, for instance, in marrying a nine-year-old child. But there are thousands of men who marry underage girls and defend that... When you say 'but you can't do this', who will say 'I can, it's morally right, the Prophet Muhammed did it, therefore I can do it.' There are many fathers who give away their daughters as minors, underage, and there are many men who would take them. And that's one example. And if you condemn that, if you condemn the behaviour but you don't touch the principle, you don't discuss the principle, then things will not change. And I believe that Muslims are capable of scrutinising that morality like all other faiths have done, and that they can change.

The issue tonight that I was asked to look at was: is there a conflict of values between Islam and the West, and, if so, what is that? Does this conflict matter? And can it be resolved, perhaps through compromise? Perhaps through a condition of agreeing to disagree? Or should it be fought out and should we then hope for – in my case, I would say, for the West to win? And how do you define victory? There is a conflict, there's a conflict of values between Islam as a body of values and the West, as we've come to accept it, that has to do with the fact that Islam demands of the individual to be a slave, to submit his entire will to the divine. The Western liberal systems are based on the individual being free to submit to whatever he or she wishes – or not to submit at all – and institutions safeguarding that freedom. And the idea that your freedom ends where mine begins, and all the institutions that are built around that, is to safeguard that. Submission to the will of Allah and the body of laws and the institutions that directs individual Muslims to that are written in the Quran and the *sunnah*¹⁰ or the *hadith*, and you can find it there.

“ I've not heard you actually say, that the Prophet Muhammed was wrong, for instance, in marrying a nine-year-old child. But there are thousands of men who marry underage girls ... who will say 'I can, it's morally right, the Prophet Muhammed did it, therefore I can do it' ”

“ There's a conflict of values between Islam as a body of values and the West ”

10 *Sunnah*: Prophetic custom – the way and manners of Islam's Prophet Muhammed.

Liberal Western societies have separated the divine or the realm of God from that of secular law. In Islamic theology, attempts have been made to do that, but anyone who did attempt to do that is labelled an infidel, and such groups have been marginalised and called heretics. There is a scholar called Bernard Lewis, who believes that, if you limit Islam to the Meccan period, then you can have Islam with a separation of Church and state, and it dates from that time. But in reality, what we see is that most Muslims have accepted that the Medinian verses have sort of cancelled the Meccan ones. In a liberal society, men and women are viewed equal; homosexuals and heterosexuals are viewed as equal; we are all equal before the law. What we do in our own private homes and as private citizens, that's our own business; but we are viewed as equal before the law. In Islam it's

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not the case: we all submit to God, women submit to their husbands, children to their parents, and so on. And all that is carried out not only by the state, but there is the obligation or the doctrine that says every Muslim ought to teach good or be an example of goodness, to command good and to forbid what is bad; so that, as a Muslim who no longer wishes to be a Muslim, I do not only face a state, a *sharia* state, that might want to kill me, but random Muslim individuals who believe that, by killing me, they are committing an act of good and that they will be rewarded in the hereafter. And that's one example. And I would like you please, in the discussion, to comment on that.

Assuming now that there is a conflict of values, the next question is: 'Does it matter?' There is a conflict of values between Western secular, liberal laws and liberal life and, say, orthodox Christianity or Christians who take the Bible literally. There is a conflict with Jews. There was a conflict with Communism and Nazism and so on. Does it really matter that this conflict of values is there? Yes and no. It does not matter and is insignificant, and was insignificant, when the two, the West and Islam, meet. Muslims would not, in a liberal society, demand to have parts of *sharia* or the whole of *sharia* introduced. But once Muslims do that, then it's the

obligation of every liberal person who understands the fundamentals of liberty to shout them down, to oppose them, to expose the propaganda that, in the name of Islam, is being spread. And Ed is doing that, among other things. And I think that's a good thing. And I think it is a good thing if Muslims themselves do that and if Muslims show it. But the ongoing debate on whether, and how and if these conflicts can – if these value systems can – be compromised, will continue.

Now, when we talk about compromise, if you disagree on a piece of land you can compromise on who gets a little bit more, a little bit less, or meet half way. But there are things in these two value systems that, as a liberal, I would not compromise: life, freedom, the equality of men and women. The Muslim who believes that he is adhering to God, and that God is the law giver, and that he will be punished for it, will probably not compromise on the same issues. So that will mean an ongoing conflict, and [that] can only be contained if one party is so weak as to accept the strength of the other party. And for a long time, that was the case. When that wasn't the case, then there was a condition of 'let us agree to disagree; what does it matter?' If Muslims want to have *sharia* in their own countries, good luck; if we want to have liberal societies here, then that's how we do things. And for many decades that's how we lived together.

The minorities that were in the West were so insignificant that it didn't really bring about what we now call the War on Terror. The Western minorities in Muslim countries – take, for instance, Saudi Arabia – accepted to live by the laws laid down by that society, based on *sharia*, and so it wasn't very interesting. But after 11 September, after Madrid, after London, after Casablanca, Bali... the citizens of democracies being massacred indiscriminately, then I think we have come in a situation where we no longer can

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“ After 11 September, after Madrid, after London, after Casablanca, Bali... the citizens of democracies being massacred indiscriminately, then I think we have come in a situation where we no longer can say: 'It's your own business if you have *sharia*; you can have it in your own country, and you can't have it in ours.' It's leading to deaths and it's leading to mass murder ”

“ If you want *sharia*, you always have the choice of going back ... you either put up or you shut up ”

say: ‘It’s your own business if you have *sharia*; you can have it in your own country, and you can’t have it in ours.’ It’s leading to deaths and it’s leading to mass murder. With the arrival of many immigrants from Muslim countries – like myself... And immigration from a Muslim country into a non-Muslim country is a choice – please do not confuse it with slavery or colonialism! We come here because we are seeking a better life, and I think the only way to resolve that is for liberal Western societies to say: ‘Welcome, you have a package of rights but there’s also a package of obligations.’ And to spell out to the Muslim – and not only the Muslim, but any other immigrant and, by the way, even citizens of these countries – what the fundamental basics of our societies are. And if you do not want to accept that, if you want *sharia*, you always have the choice of going back. If you attempt to introduce it into the country, then you are going to be met with opposition, which means you either put up or you shut up. Thank you.

Douglas Murray:

Great, thank you very much... I open the floor to questions... Firstly, could people please state their name and organisational affiliation, if you have any; if not, just say your name...

David T – Harry’s Place:

My question is really what should the government and state be doing to address the challenge of Islamism? The reason I ask is because, in the last year, there are two events that really sprung out as very odd events for me. One was a conference on civil liberties and Islam that was organised by Liberty, and that conference was co-organised with an Islamist organisation connected with the Muslim Brotherhood, called British Muslim Initiative. And it was not just co-organised with Liberty, which is a progressive, liberal and socialist organisation, but it was also attended by front-bench Liberal Democrats and Conservative spokesmen. The second thing is, next week there is a Global Peace and Unity conference, which is being addressed by a number of speakers, including one of the major recruiters – a Saudi sheikh

– one of the major recruiters, and indeed the organiser of the *fatwa*¹¹ which told Saudis to go and fight *jihad* in Iraq. And that is being sponsored by the Mayor of London. It is also being co-sponsored by the Metropolitan Police. Vincent Cable is addressing that conference, so is Simon Hughes and so is Jack Straw. Now, these organisations... I should say it also has senior figures from Jamaat [-e-Islami] involved in it. Now, if Jamaat and the Muslim Brotherhood are co-organising conferences with major liberal organisations [that are] being addressed by government ministers and leaders of the opposition, then what should we be doing to address that problem? Because it seems to me as if we are not even realising that there is an issue here in the first place.

Douglas Murray:

Ed Husain, if you can start.

Ed Husain:

David touched on some very important points there, but I think the first thing is what you're correctly identifying... It is great to know that that view is now being confounded... That government's got to start to distinguish between Islam, Muslims – those ordinary people like everyone else – and Islamists who have a political agenda, and jihadists, who back up that political agenda with violence. It's difficult to say what the government should do, because the government wants to listen to everybody and [be] seen to be popular, and there are government people in the audience, and I say this with all respect to them: that you can't, on the one hand, condemn Saudi Wahhabism and say we're not going to be open to Saudi influences, and then give the Saudi king red-carpet treatment for five days in Buckingham Palace, which happened three weeks ago. And I've raised this in private with the FCO people – that someone like Salman al-Awda, and there are people in the audience that might want to defend him: please go ahead and do so! You

“ You can't, on the one hand, condemn Saudi Wahhabism and say we're not going to be open to Saudi influences, and then give the Saudi king red-carpet treatment for five days in Buckingham Palace ”

¹¹ *Fatwa*: Religious ruling – an authoritative statement on a point of law issued by an Islamic scholar.

are correct to identify his *fatwa* and his own son acted on that *fatwa*, went out to the Iraqi border to fight and then got the Saudi police force to bring him back home again. But it's quite okay for the thousands of others who went out there – and I met people out there while I was working with the British Council in Jeddah, young men who went out and who know people who have gone out to fight in Baghdad. There's no point in talking about the fight against terror when, on the other hand, you invite the very people who endorse that fight against Western governments in the name of faith.

You're correct to identify GPU [the Global Peace and Unity conference], but will anything happen? I doubt it very much. There is a sense of short-termism in government thinking that this guy, Salman al-Awda, was, once upon a time, very close to Osama bin Laden; now that he's turned against Osama bin Laden, we can use Salman al-Awda to appeal to jihadists. But the problem is: what you do with that is the very mistake the British government made two centuries ago, which was backing the Saudi Wahhabis in their nudge against the Ottoman Empire to bring down the Turks. But now what we've created is a Wahhabi beast that's now backed by Islamism, and we have al-Qaeda. By backing Saudis today – whether it's Salman al-Awda or whether it's the Saudi monarch, hoping somehow that this will neutralise jihadis – is... in the long term, you create a problem of literalism, confrontation, scripturalism, and opposition and antipathy to the West.

In the long term, it's a blunder; but in more practical terms, I go back to what I said earlier – there is no better tool to get through to extremists' mindset than to say you do *x*, *y* and *z* in the name of literalist reading of scripture. We take you back to scripture as it was understood by 1,400 years of scholarship, and you inject doubt as a minimum in their mind; because, if they have doubt in their mind, they will not become suicide bombers, because suicide bombers act on something called *yaqeen*,¹² that they are definitely head-

12 *Yaqeen*: Certainty – an absolute conviction in ones faith or one's point of view about something.

ing towards heaven. You put doubt in their minds: 'By the way, you are *not* heading towards heaven if this thing goes off and you kill people! Scripturally rooted arguments here suggest, if anything you are a murderer and not a martyr, and therefore are going towards hell!' You have every chance of bringing these people back, or at least injecting doubt and therefore preventing violence, and in the long term fostering other arguments. So, rehab centres for me – and I've said this again and again – are key in getting people to think, but within the Islamic tradition. Sorry to quote a scholar who is often seen to be acrimonious: Daniel Pipes. It was he who said that if extremist Islam is the problem, then moderate Islam is the antidote.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I will come back to the second part of what you just said about hell and heaven. But on the question of what governments should be doing, I think what should precede that is: what should civil society be doing? Government is bad if they appease and if they accommodate Muslims, and what we should do is vote them out of office. In a democratic society, that is a very painful and very slow process. But the only thing a well-informed, awake, alert civil society can do is kick out that government and let in or vote the next time [for] a better government. It is amazing to see how not only government, but those whose job it is to inform the public – and the public, who should be informing themselves – are just as complacent as the politicians, and just hope that the whole thing will go away. I was in your House of Lords today, and one of the politicians said: 'Maybe we should not even call or not refer to it as Islamism, or Islamic terror or not connect it at all to Islam.' That's a very, very bad approach, as in: 'Let us pretend that it will all go away, let us not talk about it because it's going to go away.' It's not going away. Vote them out of office if they're bad.

“ Put doubt in their minds: 'By the way, you are not heading towards heaven if this thing goes off and you kill people! ... If anything you are a murderer and not a martyr, and therefore are going towards hell ”

“ Government is bad if they appease and if they accommodate Muslims, and what we should do is vote them out of office ”

“ 'Let us pretend that it will all go away, let us not talk about it because it's going to go away.' It's not going away ”

“ You go on about the scriptures: the fundamentalists, well versed in scripture, will always win because their message is very consistent ”

On the hell and heaven thing, I think why on earth should it be only within Islam? I think it's justified to ask any Muslim here: 'Is there a hell? Is there a heaven?' And it's such questions that create the greatest amount of doubt. You go on about the scriptures: the fundamentalists, well versed in scripture, will always win because their message is very consistent – if you leave Islam, you will go to hell; if you don't follow it in exactly the way the Prophet has prescribed, which is an older *hadith* where there is no controversy on it, you'll go to hell. Why not start the whole thing – what's going to happen? Maybe you will die and you'll rot. That creates the greatest amount of doubt.

Ed Husain:

That's your belief, it's not mine.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Well I know that, but why do you want to trap Muslims? Why do you want to trap millions of people in a mindset that has them fixed on only your perspective of things, which is when you die, you will stand up and trot around from hell to heaven?

Ed Husain:

Well no, it's not as simple as that. I wish it were... This is interesting, because it brings up the whole argument that your argument isn't against Islam itself, but against religions of all shades, because most Abrahamic faiths have a sense of belief in the afterlife. And that's why it is called a belief, a faith. And that's what we believe, and I think we are entitled to that belief. That's the whole point of liberal democracies – that you're entitled to believe what you want to believe. You don't bring that about by imposing it on others or being violent. But on that point, if I may just make two brief points... You said that Sister Aziza in your school somehow said that: 'Unless you pray, unless you fast you are not a Muslim.' That is a very literalist Wahhabist approach... This *hadith* comes to mind, when the Prophet said:

“ Your argument isn't against Islam itself, but against religions of all shades ”

'Inna Shara'ia al-Islam kathurat allaya' – a Bedouin came to the Prophet and said that the ways – not the *sharia*, the *shara'ia* – 'the ways of Islam are difficult on me, so tell me something that I can do that makes it easy for me'. And he said: *'Ma yazalu lisan nik rutban bi-zikr-illah* – as long as your tongue is moist with the remembrance of Allah, that's enough.' So it's not asking you to pray and fast and give *zakaat*¹³ – that's just one approach.

After the Prophet's passing away, there were at least 200 years of conflict as to what it means to be Muslim – must we practise, must we mainly believe, must we mainly love? There is a whole tradition of dispute on this issue of what it means to be a Muslim, as it was with Christianity. The very last point, and this is a really important point, because I have heard you and others talk about it repeatedly. And this is that the Prophet Muhammed married a girl who was nine years old – he didn't. And I hope that somehow tonight it's rectified and it's not repeated again. In the battle of Badr, which took place after the Prophet and his Companions moved to Medina from Mecca, Sa'ida Aisha took part in that battle. Those who took part in the battle were all adults, post-pubescent. There's a very strong narrative to say that this girl that the Prophet allegedly married wasn't nine, that she may well have been post-pubescent, 15 or 16 – that's the first point. It's a disputed matter. Accept that disputation at least – that it's not a fact, that it's disputed. That's the first point, and the second point is that we shouldn't be judging the people in the past through our prisms today. In that case, we will find faults with everybody from Shakespeare, Nietzsche downwards. So those are the two points that ought to be borne in mind when we start making those sorts of heavy accusations.

“ We shouldn't be judging the people in the past through our prisms today ”

Douglas Murray:

Would you like to respond to that, Ayaan?

¹³ *Zakaat*: Alms for the poor – one of the the five pillars of Islam.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I will start by saying the Prophet did not marry a nine-year-old: he married a six-year-old.

Ed Husain:

Disputed, disputed.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

According to the traditions – and there is consistency on that – she was six, and he consummated the marriage when she was nine years old. Now, I don't care what Shakespeare did when he was this old or that old, and I really don't care about what the Prophet Muhammed did when he was whatever. This whole thing dates from the seventh century. The people who are pulling that out of its context are those

“ If Christians have accomplished that process of reason and enlightenment, and Jews have done that, why can't Muslims do it? ”

“ As individuals born into Islam, we are capable of dealing with the unbearable reality that after we die we may not rise again ”

Muslims who still feel, and there are about 1.2 billion of them, who do not want to dispute the dogma that every Muslim should live according to the moral guidance of the Prophet Muhammed. So we have no way to go around, except, yes... not only limit the debate to disputations within Islam, and what one theologian says against another Muslim theologian, because you're going to fix the debate in the seventh, eighth and the ninth centuries. What you need to do, and you can do – what for me has worked just like you when I became familiar with, for instance, this whole process of the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and so forth – that, as an individual human being – and, like you, I emphasise our common humanity – as an individual human being you can ask questions yourself and follow your reason and get to those answers without a divine father or God helping you. Kant left with me the message: grow up, become mature, why do we as humans need to be led by the hand? And if Christians have accomplished that process of reason and enlightenment, and Jews have done that, why can't Muslims do it? Why do we have to limit the debate only to within this box, which says there is a hereafter? I think I see a young Muslim man nodding here. As individuals born into Islam, we are capable of dealing

with the unbearable reality that after we die we may not rise again, and that life is only limited to this earth. For what it's worth, it's good and it's bad, and I think what you're doing is very brave, but I also think it is possible you can widen that debate.

John Marks – Educational Research Trust:

I very much admire your book, Ed. It was very, very moving all the way through, until you get to the last chapter, where you then talk about how you recapture the Islamic knowledge that you had when you were brought up by your family in the East End. What I'd like to ask is: you didn't do it in your book, but should we not be looking at the different verses that contradict what you believed when you were in Hizb ut-Tahrir? Should you not be dealing with the whole process of abrogation, whereby the more violent verses in the Quran override those in the Meccan times? Should you not be dealing with *taqiyya*¹⁴ – the deception of people in times of conflict – and informing the rest of us about what's going on? Perhaps it's another book; perhaps it's asking too much to do it all in one book. Would you agree that this needs to be done?

Ed Husain:

I think you've answered your own question: it's material for a second book. Absolutely. You've answered the question by saying it's material for a second book; that book was just narrative. You're right to identify those issues, and those issues need to be brought out in the open. And one remains hopeful that they will be out in due course. Thank you.

Anonymous – former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir:

Ed, you talked about renaissance; Ayaan, you talked about reformation. I suppose what I wanted to ask both of you in a slightly different way is this word *ijtihad*.¹⁵ I think, Ed, if you would start, when you start answering/explaining (al-

¹⁴ *Taqiyya*: Concealing or disguising one's beliefs and convictions.

¹⁵ *Ijtihad*: Interpretation – refers to the process of exhaustive scholarly enquiry and interpretation of the legal sources, the Quran and *Sunnah*, in order to arrive at an understanding of Islam pertaining to a specific issue.

though it's a very learned audience) what that really is and what role you feel that has to play today in the context of – you talked about the principles of the *sharia*, the *maqasid al-shara'ia*,¹⁶ and so on – and how the role of *ijtihad* and that understanding might benefit Muslims and Islam today? And why you think that the stagnation of that thought and tradition has occurred? To Ayaan, I suppose, why do you feel – or do you feel? – that that isn't a relevant tool (along with many others, not to suggest it being the only one)? That that isn't something relevant to use today as well?

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Thank you. I do agree with you that *ijtihad*, or the process of reasoning and asking questions, is exactly what I am proposing. I think it's a wonderful tool and I have seen Irshad Manji use it. I've decided not to be a Muslim and I've decided not to convert to another religion, to another faith. It's

“ I'm not telling Muslims you should all become atheists; I'm just saying, if you want us to think about the morality and the basic values and where we conflict, these are the questions that I have. Can you follow the example of Muhammed in the 21st-century context in England? ”

a personal decision. I'm not telling Muslims you should all become atheists; I'm just saying, if you want us to think about the morality and the basic values and where we conflict, these are the questions that I have. Can you follow the example of Muhammed in the 21st-century context in England? If you do that, many of the things he did according to the national law here, to the European law, to the American law, they are called crimes. So what do you do from that? Where do you go from that? And it's people like Irshad Manji, who want to remain in the faith and need the spiritual side of it, who say that you can definitely re-open the gates of reason and *ijtihad*.

Can you be a Muslim and have a separation of Church and state? Scholars like Bernard Lewis support Irshad Manji in this, and I believe you will find a strong and large enough number of Muslims who will argue and develop the theology only during the period of Mecca; then you can have an Islam where you have this spiritual

¹⁶ *Maqasid al-shara'ia*: Objectives or principles of the *sharia*

side of it, and you can become secular; or you can live in a secular society without needing to go to the dogmas of *jihad*, and the doctrine of commanding good and forbidding bad, and treating women in the way they are treated. And so all of that is possible, but there has to be a will, and it has to be collective, and it's for all those silent Muslims today to stand up and fight against the ones who want to say 'Let's emphasise the Medinian *suras*.'¹⁷

Ed Husain:

Just very briefly, that the prerequisites of a *mujtahed*¹⁸ in the classical sense are extremely tedious and there are very few people in our time who actually meet the criteria. But *ijtihad* has been alive and booming in the Shia tradition for the last 800 years, so I think it's not necessarily right to say that *ijtihad* is completely closed down. Someone like Ayatollah Sistani has a lot of clout and kudos among ground-level Shias throughout the Middle East, and is able to call back people from all sorts of horrible things, not least attacking American troops, simply because he is a *mujtahed* who is respected.

In the Sunni tradition, there are several leading Muslim scholars who might not define themselves as *mujtaheds* but have come out with new scripture-based reasoning, to accommodate Muslim ease [*sic*, as heard] in the Muslim world. So I think it's wrong to say that *ijtihad* has been closed; new *fiqhiya*¹⁹ approaches have always been there and they are coming out. In the classical sense, to call someone a *mujtahed* is a very high honour and it takes 20 years of training; and in today's world there are very few centres, if any, in the Sunni world at least, that offer this level of training.

17 *Sura*: Chapter of the Quran – the Quran is composed of 114 *suras*.

18 *Mujtahed*: Someone qualified to carry out *ijtihad*, traditionally an Islamic scholar.

19 *Fiqhiya*: Islamic religious rulings.

Tony Curzon Price – Open Democracy:

I have a joint question to Ed and Ayaan. Firstly, from the perspective of a broadly liberal-minded Westerner, I have to say that there is something extremely... comforting, wonderful, in seeing the two of you who have taken this path out of Islamism, and both of you in your ways are pioneering paths out of it. One to a very radical liberalism and the other to what you're calling Western Islam, Westernised Islam. I wonder whether the difference between the two, Ayaan – how much that has to do with your experience as a woman in Islam? The follow-up question to Ed is: where in Western Islam is the place for feminism?

Amol Rajan – Independent:

I'm not Muslim, but I do nod lots when Ayaan speaks. The question is to Ed, really. We need to hear more from you, Ed, on this fundamental question of law. It seems to me that what coheres Western societies, the two pillars on which they were built, was, first, Roman secular law and, second, Christianity. And there is a separation, as Ayaan constantly says, between the two. The source of authority for law in the West is sovereignty, political sovereignty. The source of authority, as I understand it, in Islam is divinity, which, being other-worldly, is not very democratic. I just wanted to hear slightly more from you on that distinction. And also, a lot of people talk about Abu Hamza as the most dangerous man in Britain, or they talk about how people like you are influenced by these dangerous guys. It seems to me that the substance of what they say really is things like, 'Britain is a nation of binge-drinking paedophiles', and I don't think you find that in the Quran, but I do think you find it on the front pages on lots of our newspapers. I just wanted to know to what extent you, as an ex-Islamist, think that Islamism is, if you like, leeching on a Western sense of insecurity and self-loathing.

Ed Husain:

Islamism does feed off what they call moral bankruptcy in the West. But if it wasn't that, it would be other things, and that's the point to bear in mind – that's just an excuse. If you are concerned about morality in the West based on religious

grounds, then look to morality in the East and you find those same problems vis-à-vis moral bankruptcy, hypocrisy, still exist. The difference is – it’s all underground. The difference is that it’s only for the wealthy. Go try living in Saudi Arabia: everything that goes on here, whatever is considered to be sinful, also happens there – the difference is that it’s only the princes and the wealthy ones who get to enjoy it, and here you have Sally and Sharon from Essex also able to enjoy it. There’s no point pretending that somehow the East is morally superior to the West, because it simply isn’t. The facts speak for themselves. Just go and visit the club scene in Cairo. It’s just an excuse. If it wasn’t morality, it would be foreign policy; if it wasn’t foreign policy, it would be the education system; if it wasn’t education, it would be something else. This is the grievance victimhood mentality that feeds off whatever it finds. So, that’s my brief response to that.

In terms of sovereignty and divinity, Maajid Nawaz has written extensively about this. Maajid, he’s got a whole blog on all this, and it’s worth Googling up. But... God doesn’t speak to us. It’s ultimately we who interpret; it’s ultimately men for whom there is sovereignty. This idea that it’s God’s law – Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, one of the strict scholars in classical Islam, spoke out against it and said that nobody who claims that should be called a Muslim, because you can’t claim this is God’s law. God does not come and make law. Human beings interpret it. Sovereignty is for human beings and not for God in any way.

Feminism. This is a really interesting question that you raise within Western Islam. And it’s something that has been on my mind since I had a baby daughter four months ago, because suddenly all of this means a lot more. Do I want her to grow up in a world in which, when she is 20 or 21, somehow someone will tell her that her testimony in court is only worth half that amount, or that if, when she inherits

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“ God doesn’t speak to us. It’s ultimately we who interpret ”

whatever wealth I have, she will only inherit one-third of that of a son that I might have. I'm sorry, but this sort of reasoning just doesn't sit with me. I can't accept that, and those of you who have conservative tendencies in the audience, if you want to go and make remarks on my not being Muslim anymore, go ahead and do so. But I think the Prophet Muhammed came in a world in which women, young daughters, were being buried alive. Women were considered to

“ Feminism ... I had a baby daughter four months ago. Do I want her to grow up in a world in which, when she is 20 or 21, somehow someone will tell her that her testimony in court is only worth half that amount, or that if, when she inherits whatever wealth I have, she will only inherit one-third of that of a son that I might have. I'm sorry, but this sort of reasoning just doesn't sit with me ”

be chattels. Women, step-mothers, were inherited by their sons as sexual objects. In that world of women not even having human status, he gave women full human status. He went as far as he could in those circumstances. So it's for us in the West today, in 2007, to say that we will move in the full spirit of the Prophet, which is to recognise women as full human beings and give them their full rights. But that comes not just from Muslim men like myself, but from Muslim women, who must raise that debate.

And I want to share a very quick anecdote with you. I was at a feminist conference in Vienna recently, and on the way back in a plane I was having a discussion with a Muslim woman. I was saying to her that: 'why can't it be the case that a Muslim woman's testimony in court is equal to that of a man's, because Muslim women today are just as good as – if not better than – men in many circumstances?' And her response was: 'Well, don't you know that women menstruate every month and during menstruation we can't think straight?' This is from a Muslim woman! Here is a Muslim man trying to convince her that she should be advancing the cause of equality. What can you say? You can't win. My only response was: 'Tell the judge, darling, that you'll be back in six days' time!' But don't say that: 'I'm not equal to a man.'

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I am enjoying every minute of this. The question that was put to me was: how much does my own experience explain the radical liberal position that I take? My initial experience,

until before 11 September, actually between 1992 when I came to the Netherlands, I was rebellious enough to think I don't want to spend the rest of my life as a chattel, with a man I haven't chosen. I don't want to mother children for a man I haven't chosen. I don't want to repeat the life of my mother and all the other women I have seen around me who lived by rule of the tradition.

And many of them actually argued... And when I was growing up, because I grew up in that argument, I agreed with it! I did not want to offend God; I did not want to offend the Prophet; I wanted to remain a good Muslim, but I also wanted to be free. And it is with that dissonance that I came, and I voted with my feet. I went to the Netherlands and I managed to control my mind, and not think about it at all as I sinned every day, at least according to the moral framework that I was brought up in. I could escape it, and attending college, taking political theory, was torture because even reading the book was challenging the idea of sovereignty, and is it God who made laws? Or is it we, the people, who make laws? Being a witness every day to the fact that man-made laws were so much better – at least for me as a woman – and so much more comfortable.

So it's that background, this sort of gradualism... And then the whole thing was triggered after 11 September. It was then that I felt, as a Muslim, I was put in a position that I could not live with that dissonance anymore and I had to answer it for myself. I came to the conclusion that, for me, I would either go mad, join the bin Ladenists or step out of it. And that stepping out of it opened within my mind, and it is not something that Muslims are incapable of doing; I believe many Muslims are capable of doing that. Stepping out at least gives you the opportunity to look inside without that fear of hell, and then to see it all.

“ I was rebellious enough to think I don't want to spend the rest of my life as a chattel, with a man I haven't chosen. . . . I don't want to repeat the life of my mother and all the other women I have seen around me who lived by rule of the tradition ”

“ I voted with my feet. I went to the Netherlands ”

Daniel Johnson – editor of *Standpoint*:

“ Are you an Enlightenment fundamentalist? ”

The first question is for Ayaan: are you an Enlightenment fundamentalist, and do you think that the fact that you were accused of being one might have something to do with the fact that you are the person you are? Would any white, Western, male intellectual have that sort of thing thrown at them? The second question is for both of you, really. There has, of course, been recently this letter from 189 Muslim scholars to Christian leaders. Is your interpretation of that, that it's a genuine olive branch, as, for example, Prime Minister Gordon Brown apparently thinks it is, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and all sorts of other important people? Or do you agree with those like Melanie Phillips, who is in the audience, that this is actually just another ultimatum: submit or we will fight you?

Frank Gaffney – Center for Security Policy:

Good evening, I am Frank Gaffney, actually imported from Washington, where I run the Centre for Security Policy, and I am delighted to be here. We have made a film, in which we have been trying to amplify the voice of Muslims like yourselves called *Islam vs. Islamists: Voices from the Muslim Center*. And I commend you both for sallying forth to address what is indeed the topic of our time. I wanted to come back to the first question on the nature of the government's role in this challenging topic. There is emerging a new phenomenon, in which the government here, in particular, is taking a very prominent and direct role. It is, in fact, in the news today that the government intends to offer shortly so-called *sukuk*²⁰ bonds, *sharia*-compliant financial instruments. And I wonder if the two of you have thought about this at all; if you might comment on the implications of having a government like that of Britain's – and in due course, presumably, others elsewhere in the West – following the course that has now been charted by many of the investment houses and banks throughout the West, to promote what is unmistakably an instrument of *sharia*. Both by legitimating it and by employing some of the most, well frankly, frightening of the

20 *Sukuk*: Premium bonds compliant with *sharia* finance.

Islamists on the planet as *sharia* advisors, and finally as a means of funnelling *zakaat* or tithing into the hands of those who are pursuing terror and enabling it.

Douglas Murray:

Ayaan, first of all, are you an Enlightenment fundamentalist?

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I think the two... It's an oxymoron. It doesn't go together, Enlightenment and fundamentalist. If I define Enlightenment as using human reason with such elements as doubt and reflection being essential to human reason, the Enlightenment process was a process of trial and error, and most of the Enlightenment thinkers did not agree – but they agreed on not killing each other. That was probably the only dogma. So in that case you cannot say Enlightenment fundamentalist.

What is my response to the people who call me an Enlightenment fundamentalist? I try to explain it to them this way: would a white intellectual be called an Enlightenment fundamentalist? White intellectuals, especially if they are in middle age, are called many names.

And in fact, many of them have already defined themselves as the only ones who are so morally superior that they're responsible for the moral history of all humankind, and the moral presence and also the moral future defining all others, including women, only as victims of what they have done. And it's with that group of white intellectuals... And I think that is where it comes from... If I am seeing and viewing people only as groups, individuals as groups – I am not going to name any names – but one of the questions that I am repeatedly asked from individuals within that white community is: but you have no following, you have no hundreds and thousands of Muslim women following

“ One of the questions that I am repeatedly asked from individuals within that white community is: but you have no following, you have no hundreds and thousands of Muslim women following you, and therefore your voice is illegitimate ”

you, and therefore your voice is illegitimate. It's useless. It's like taking water to the sea. And my response to them is: within the history of the Enlightenment there was never such a following. In fact, the Enlightenment was a reaction to that, to the masses going after an individual saying he got a revelation, or the Bible, or... The whole idea was as an individual to think for yourself, free yourself from dogmas, and therefore carry moral responsibility – your own moral responsibility – and the lessons of history for moral progress; what we will learn from the past mistakes of humans, not carry them on... Because of the colonisation, slavery, and so on, we are going to allow ourselves now to be colonised and enslaved. That would be a ridiculous way for an Enlightenment thinker.

Ed Husain:

Frank Gaffney's point about the government playing a prominent role in countering extremism or supporting certain *sharia*-based products: it should be said that the government's done many things that are right on this issue. I mean, sponsoring the Radical Middle Way project, and there are several other things that this government, more than any other government in Europe, in fact, or even in America, has gone out of its way to reach out to grass-roots level Muslims and brought on board prominent Muslim scholars who have legitimacy in the Muslim world and among young Muslims.

But it must be said that all this Islamic finance business... For me, the whole thing is questionable. And if you doubt what I'm saying, read Charles Tripp's book called *Islam and the Moral Economy*. Very brief example: if you take out a mortgage, say from your average High Street bank, and you end up paying x amount over 15–20 years, and you take out the so-called Islamic mortgage from the Bank of Kuwait, or the Islamic Bank of Britain or whatever it is, and over time you spend, you pay back twice as much as you pay to Barclays or HSBC in the name of being Islamic – I am sorry, it's not Islamic. Because Islam in essence is about

justice and fairness; the whole point is that the *maslaha*²¹ is overridden there. The whole pink-pound debate... This is a Muslim-pound thing – it's good to cash in on all the Islamic fervour at the moment, so, whether it's Islamic or not is questionable.

On the signatories point I think Daniel [Johnson] raised: I am humbly admitting that I know several other Muslim scholars who are signatories to this, and they're not people who would be making a show on this. Their gesture is legitimate, and I beg to differ with Melanie on this one.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Well, I just wanted to say, I would like to agree with Melanie on that one.

Ed Husain:

That's where we disagree.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

First of all, those people bearing the letter, they brought it to governments which they know are secular, that separate religion from state. And if they take it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, that would be fine... There is so-called inter-faith dialogue, where Christians and Jews are sitting together – and Muslims – and they're trying to work out their own differences. I do not know if that is effective.

Ed Husain:

But they delivered it to the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury and so on.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

But the Pope has no political power, and the veiled threat in the letter is: if we don't get what we want, we might have a war. Now, in the Western world, wars today, in the 21st century are not started by churches, they're started by governments; and if you then come with a letter like that,

21 *Maslaha*: In the public interest, or in the interest of the people or Islam.

and you end up coming to the conclusion that you haven't got what you wanted, then I think I would be very suspicious of those people who signed the letter. And Ed may be right: maybe many of them just mean well. Maybe it's an ineffective threat; but it's a threat nevertheless if you read that letter.

I just want to make one comment, please, on the question that Frank Gaffney put to us. In democratic societies, if you have bad governments, it's we, the people, who vote them out, and I think the more civil society, people like here, inform themselves, and the more we inform each other, the more we can elect better politicians. Between now and then, I think there is nothing else but to suffer the policies made by bad politicians, because we can't take to the streets and disrupt the peace, and do all of that. It's a long process; it is a painful process for many; we will suffer; but in a democratic society we have our civil societies, as civilians, the option to vote them out, and it's our responsibility to inform each other on that.

Anonymous – former member of Islamist group:

I spent some time in Saudi Arabia. I used to lecture there in one of the institutes, one of the universities. I was also involved in some of the Islamist movements. I'm not going to give them the joy of mentioning their name. Just to come back to the actual question that you mentioned – that you were given, which is: is there a compatibility, or lack of compatibility, between liberal society and between Islam. If I can just very briefly ask: is that the view of both speakers? Is there an inherent contradiction between liberal values and liberal society, and Islam as a faith?

Carol Gould – journalist:

I'm a writer; I have lived here for 32 years. We have a holiday coming up this Thursday in America called Thanksgiving, and every family in America is going to be celebrating it, whether they are Muslims, Hindu, Jewish, Christian. I am interested in the fact that Muslims in America have assimilated seamlessly, and interestingly enough, 9/11 was perpetrated by people

“ Do we need fewer faith schools? ”

who did not live there. Now, coming back to this country, you mentioned, Ed, growing up here and not really taking much notice of the Reformation, the Renaissance, etc. I met some young Muslim men at the Global Conference two years ago at Canary Wharf, and I was showing them a building that survived the Blitz, and they said: 'Who bombed it?' I said: 'The Luftwaffe'. And they said: 'Who was that?' It's not their fault. Can you explain to me what can the Muslim community in Britain do in liaising with the educational system in this country to somehow make British history more attractive? And perhaps, do we need fewer faith schools?

Maajid Nawaz – former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir:

I have a question for Ayaan. I thank you both, first of all. And Ayaan, with respect, I believe you are in danger of defining yourself against the very people you hate. I think that you are a product of extremism. And, with respect, the reason why I believe that is – I want to draw an analogy between you and Sayyid Qutb. Sayyid Qutb, the founding father of modern-day jihadism, who wrote and authored *Milestones* in the prison within which I served, went to America and saw what he believed were the everyday practices of American culture. In actuality, what he did is he came back and portrayed the worst elements that he perceived of American culture and generalised them, and then defined himself as against those elements of American culture. Now, what you've done, I believe, is you've had a certain specific upbringing; you've seen certain things within Muslim practice, and have defined yourself against that and have said: 'This is Islam.' So you mentioned state, Islamic state, sovereignty for God, legislation. I don't know if you're aware, but there is not one reference in the Quran to the word 'sovereignty'. The word didn't exist in the Arabic language. It's a modern word. *Siyada*,²² 'state', again doesn't exist in the Quran or in the *hadith*, and nor does 'legislation'. So my question is: actually, aren't you in danger of assuming the paradigms of terrorists? Again, 'terror-

“ Ayaan ... I believe you are in danger of defining yourself against the very people you hate. I think that you are a product of extremism ”

22 *Siyada*: Sovereignty.

ism' never existed until modern times. Aren't you in danger of assuming the paradigms of terrorism and defining Islam by those very paradigms?

Douglas Murray:

Would you like to respond to the last point first, perhaps?

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I think that, by reducing the issue of Islam and the West to my upbringing – let's assume I am doing that; let's assume I am defining myself against Islam, because of my upbringing. That does not explain the upbringing of the 19 hijackers on 11 September, or the Glasgow car hijackers or the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, and all the attempts across the world committed by Muslims in the name of Islam... Them quoting bin Laden, quoting full-scale the Quran, and all you have to do is download, as I did, his speeches... Take those quotes and compare them to the Quran. I've seen that, and before that, before 11 September, as I just explained, I could live with my own dissonance. I wasn't living and practising as a Muslim, but I had called myself a Muslim; and that dissonance within my mind wasn't really challenged. But it is that act that challenged it. It is an act of war – it's an act of war in the faith that I was brought up in, and I felt the moral obligation to go and seek and make a choice. Do I then define myself against Islam? Obviously yes, because I have to look at whether that moral framework is right or wrong, and I've come to the conclusion that many things within that moral framework do lead... And Sayyid Qutb did not invent a new religion, he just revived the sayings and the acts of Muhammed and modernised them, and made it into a movement or laid down the basis for an intellectual movement. But he does not invent something new. And if we continue to deny, those of us who were brought up in Islam, that there is nothing wrong with the faith, then there is no point in having a debate on reformation or renaissance or any sort of change. Because if it is perfect – as most Muslims want us to believe – then there's nothing to change. I was brought up in Islam and I

“ Do I then define myself against Islam? Obviously yes ”

“ Sayyid Qutb did not invent a new religion, he just revived the sayings and the acts of Muhammed and modernised them ”

made that change, and I don't think that I'm defining myself against that terrorism.

Douglas Murray:

Ed, would you like to answer Carol Gould's points?

Ed Husain:

Yes, that is an interesting point you brought up about American Muslims and British Muslims, or European Muslims. I think it was Alistair Campbell who famously said that 'We don't do God'; and as a result of that, there is a vacuum here in the West, particularly in England and France, and in the public sphere there's no expression of religiosity. And as a result, you find that Muslims often find it difficult to bring out their faith-based convictions into the public realm – which, I stress, should be peaceful, much like Christian democrats. We should have Muslim democrats, and not Islamists who are dedicated to iconoclastic politics. But also in America there's a strong concept of American patriotism and immigrants coming on board, and everyone feeling more a sense of a national identity. Whereas here it is very much – you are forever the outsider. There are ways the native English always identify who the outsider is. On the faith schools question: I think it depends on the kind of faith school. I'm very much against [the notion that] all faith schools should be accepted, or all faith schools should be rejected. There are plenty of faith schools that have very good practice, and there are certain faith schools that don't; so, on a merit by merit basis.

“ We should have Muslim democrats, and not Islamists who are dedicated to iconoclastic politics ”

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

I just want to give a warning. Yes, it's true that Muslims living in America are more assimilated than Muslims living in Europe. That's a fact. But assimilation does not mean that you cannot become a jihadist. Most of the hijackers we have seen who were highly assimilated – in fact, people like Ed Husain and some of the individuals sitting here tonight, you are more British than the British themselves; but yet, at one point you were attracted, too... And I say that because Islam

“ Assimilation does not mean that you cannot become a jihadist ”

is a body of ideas. It doesn't have to do with race. So you can be persuaded to come and accept the enticement of totalitarianism; it doesn't mean that you can't accept it, and that is one of the reasons why, I think, Islamic schools are bad. Because if you have children indoctrinated into this doctrine with taxpayers' money and they behave accordingly, and then you put them in jail, that is not only perverse but it's also wrong against the very children who are supposed to be – and we are supposed to be – investing into become, as I believe, enlightened people.

Charles Moore – *Daily Telegraph*:

I'm instinctively much more sympathetic to Ed's view that religion can develop a way of living in a liberal society. I mean, that is what's happened since the conversion of Constantine, creating the character of Western society with Christianity. But I nevertheless want to direct the hard question to him: aren't there things in the life of Muhammed which are much, much more problematic than there are in the life of Jesus for what we are talking about?

“ Muhammed was a political and military leader, and Jesus wasn't ”

Because Muhammed was a political and military leader, and Jesus wasn't.

Shiv Malik – *Freelance Journalist*:

I would like to declare, I am a militant atheist. On this basis I was going to ask a theological question, which was just to follow up really from what Charles [Moore] was saying: how do we then treat the life of Khalid bin Walid, the general to the right of Prophet Muhammed? And if he is a Companion, can we say that anything that he did was *haraam*?²³

George Perlman:

I have a question for you, Ayaan. With your experience in the Netherlands, where do you see Dutch society currently going in dealing with this conflict – a country that has, by its great instinct and nature, considered itself extremely liberal?

23 *Haraam*: Religiously illicit.

Douglas Murray:

Ayaan, would you like to answer that one first?

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

There is a great disconnect between the Dutch population and the current coalition in Holland. It seems as if the Dutch population feels, especially after Theo van Gogh, that Islam should be treated like any other body of ideas and Muslims should make a choice: either become Dutch, adopt Dutch values or go back where you came from. The coalition feels that strategically, if you criticise Islam, for instance the way I do, that that will lead moderates, assuming in large numbers, into the hands of the radicals. I don't know how this disconnect is going to work out... We don't have any radical extremist right-wing parties in the Netherlands now. We do have parties that get a huge following just because they criticise Islam, just because they voice what the people are saying; but they're not like the BNP here. But in a worst-case scenario, what you could have is a population that does not feel represented by its own government, reacting violently towards a minority, and a minority containing, according to the Dutch case, up to 6 per cent of people who have become as radical as Mohammed Bouyeri, willing to kill and be killed. Those two groups confronting each other in a very small, densely populated country – that's the worst-case scenario, and I hope with all my heart that we can prevent that.

Ed Husain:

Shiv, I am glad you point out that you come to this as a non-Muslim and as an atheist, but it's worth bearing in mind that I think there's been historical debate as to whether the *Sahaba*,²⁴ or the Companions of the Prophet, were perfect. Most people, most jurists, would say they weren't, and I think the answer to your question comes directly from the Prophet Muhammed himself, who witnessed on several instances Khalid bin Walid, who was a military commander, vicious, a fighter who came from a certain Arab background of free-wheeling killing at the time of the seventh century

24 *Sahaba*: Companions of the Prophet.

among the Bedouins... It was he who said ‘*Allahuma inni barriu minma fa’ala Khalid*’, that ‘I, oh God, am innocent of what Khalid has done.’ So the question is answered by the Prophet Muhammed himself – that he sought protection from the extremes of killing and mayhem among certain Arabs of the time.

To come to Charles Moore’s point, it’s a difficult one for me to get into to say that we don’t know much about Jesus, but I think that historians have repeatedly said Muhammed lived in the full light of history. So therefore there is greater historical scrutiny of the life of Muhammed. But even if we look at it, wasn’t it Jesus in Matthew who said, ‘I bring not peace but I bring the sword’? I’m not sitting here and justifying any of this, but the point I’m trying to make is this: yes, the Prophet was a military leader, a political leader, a tribal leader, a man of peace at the same time. And I think those were his qualities and this is what’s known as a *mu’jiza*,²⁵ or a Prophetic miracle – that he was able to combine all of this in his person. But I don’t think it’s something anyone since then has done, and the fact that three of the four Caliphs were killed proves that they were not able to hold all those offices together. But the final point must be this:

“ Fighting Adolf Hitler was a legitimate *jihad* ”

that yes, he was a military leader, and we Muslims aren’t pacifists – we’re not! I’m not going to say *jihad* doesn’t exist: it does exist. Fighting Adolf Hitler was a legitimate *jihad*, and millions of Indian Muslims took part in that. So we are people who believe in just war, and the Second World War was an example of that, that we stand up against that, but with rules! The Prophet Muhammed also said on the very final point that: don’t kill innocent people, don’t kill those who are unarmed, don’t kill people who are from *rahbaniyya*²⁶ – or people who are monks and so on – don’t kill children, don’t kill animals, don’t poison wells. So there’s a code of conduct. So to say he was a military leader, an outright killer, is just not true.

²⁵ *Mu’jiza*: Prophetic miracle.

²⁶ *Rahbaniyya*: Monasticism.

Ayesha Khan:

I'm a Muslim woman, very fiercely liberal, very fiercely Muslim and happy with the generation. My question being to Ayaan, what exactly do you think you're achieving when you say or insinuating – and do you understand what you are insinuating – when you say the War on Terror is a 'War on Islam'? And can you see how it could have been said? I mean, it is like saying that the English population is somehow represented by the BNP.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

What exactly am I achieving when I say the War on Terror is a 'War on Islam'? I am simply sharing an observation with the world, and I welcome any opposition to that, any differing view on that – it's an ongoing debate. Once again, I did *not* say it *should be* a war: I'm just observing that in the name of Islam war is declared, and the response has been termed by the leaders of the liberal West as a 'War on Terror'. But terrorism is just a tactic, and you can't declare war on a tactic. The people who are using terror as a tactic want to achieve – they have an aim, they want something. And by defining it as it is, it helps us expose what it is that they want – the Caliphate, what does that mean? Why are they getting support from Muslim individuals? What are they telling them? Can we give Muslims a different message, can we challenge that propaganda? That's what I think I am achieving, and I think it is possible. I think it is possible for many Muslims who have been persuaded to go in that direction to come back from it, if it's either to stop using violence, or going with them, or contributing money, or accommodating it in any of these ways; or to radically oppose it and say: yes, it's in the name of Islam; yes, this is what Islam says, but it's wrong to do it – and then challenge it. Debate and discussion – that's what I am hoping to achieve.

Precisely what we have here, precisely the opportunity to debate with someone like Ed Husain, where we can exchange views on me thinking it's

“ In the name of Islam war is declared, and the response has been termed by the leaders of the liberal West as a 'War on Terror'. But terrorism is just a tactic, and you can't declare war on a tactic ”

“ Can we give Muslims a different message, can we challenge that propaganda? ... Debate and discussion – that's what I am hoping to achieve ”

a 'War on Islam'. It's very different from saying all British people are represented by the BNP, because all British people are not represented by the BNP. The BNP is a British party, but there are liberal British people, there are conservative British people, there are social democrats, there are people who are sympathetic toward communists, and there are British Muslims. There is all this variety. So I think, in the use of language and in the debate, let's not confuse the terms. Being British is not just a body of – it's an ethnicity... It cannot really be defined the same as Islam, which is just a set of beliefs. And I think the comparison of Islam as a set of beliefs to other sets of beliefs is more accurate. And I think by doing this and by defining it – coming down to what the problem is – it will help all of us, Muslims and non-Muslims, to make a moral choice. Either you defy that and you stand up against it... And Muslims, I believe, should take to the streets when, in the name of their Prophet, people are beheaded and passengers are blown up, and not only when drawings of Prophet Muhammed are made, which is a very interesting drawing, because, if you look at the number of bombs that are thrown in the name of Muhammed with no response from Muslims, it's very odd that then lots of Muslims take to the streets and feel offended when such a drawing is made. In a liberal society, sometimes we do communicate through cartoons.

Douglas Murray:

Thank you, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, for coming here tonight... It just remains for me to say: whatever the differences between our two distinguished guests tonight, I hope you will join me in thanking them.

About the speakers

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of *The Caged Virgin* (2002) and her memoir *Infidel* (2007), served as a member of the Dutch Parliament from 2003 to 2006. In 1992 she fled Somalia to the Netherlands to escape a forced marriage. An activist for Muslim women's rights, Hirsi Ali collaborated with Theo van Gogh in 2004 to make the film *Submission*, which highlighted domestic violence against Muslim women in the name of Islam. A self-declared Muslim apostate, she is a fierce critic of Islam and the target of death threats by violent Islamists. Forced to emigrate to the United States of America, she now lives permanently under constant security protection. In 2006, Hirsi Ali joined the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), an American think-tank based in Washington D.C., where she researches Islam in relation to the West.

Ed Husain is co-director of the Quilliam Foundation, a counter-radicalisation think-tank in London founded by former Islamist extremists. His best-selling autobiography, *The Islamist* (2007), traces his life as a young adult through radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jamaat-e-Islami. Since turning his back on religious extremism, Husain has advocated the need to adopt and revive a pluralistic Islam. Husain is a regular commentator on social, political and counter-terrorism issues, writing frequently for British media outlets, as well as appearing on international news channels.

The Centre for Social Cohesion

The Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) is a non-partisan think-tank that studies issues related to community cohesion in the UK. Committed to the promotion of human rights, it is the first think-tank in the UK to specialise in studying radicalisation and extremism within Britain. The CSC is headquartered in London, and was founded in 2007 to promote human rights, tolerance and greater cohesion among the UK's ethnic and religious communities and within wider British society.

Previous CSC publications include:

HATE ON THE STATE:

How British libraries encourage Islamic extremism

CRIMES OF THE COMMUNITY:

Honour-based violence in the UK

VIRTUAL CALIPHATE:

Islamic extremists and their websites

ISLAM ON CAMPUS:

A survey of UK student opinions

VICTIMS OF INTIMIDATION:

Freedom of speech within Europe's Muslim communities

The West and the Future of Islam

A debate between Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ed Husain

'The West and the Future of Islam', a debate hosted by the Centre for Social Cohesion in London, brought together two prominent speakers on Islam for the first time. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a self-declared Muslim apostate and former Dutch MP, and Ed Husain, author of the best-selling book *The Islamist* and former member of the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, discussed the compatibility of Islam and Western values.

This booklet is a transcript of the debate, in which Ed Husain advocates an Islamic 'renaissance', arguing for a pluralist reinterpretation of Islam to meet modern-day challenges. In response, Ayaan Hirsi Ali argues that Islam as a 'body of ideas' is opposed to the 'Enlightenment' values of the West.



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