A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

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INTRODUCTION

The Koran revealed to Muhammad during battle

There are about one billion Muslims in the world, making it the second largest religion after Christianity. Islam is the third of the monotheistic religions, after Judaism and Christianity. In the 7th century AD Muhammad received revelations from God which became the Koran, regarded by Muslims as the eternal unmediated word of God. Muhammad was from a merchant family, born in what is today Saudi Arabia. Muslims consider Abraham the first prophet and Muhammad the last.

In the 150 years following the death of Muhammad—the first age of conquests—Islam spread through Arabia, across North Africa and east into what is today Iran, Iraq and central Asia. This first period reached its zenith with the fall of Constantinople to Ottoman artillery in 1453. From the ninth to the 15th century Islam was the world's dominant force—militarily, culturally and scientifically.

The modern period, which saw Islam's power eclipsed by the west, was characterised by three great empires: the Ottoman empire, the Safavid monarchy of Persia, and the Mughal empire in India. By the 19th century

the three Muslim empires (Ottoman, Persian and Mughal) had entered a period of decline which gave birth to various religious revivalist movements. Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, was influenced by the fundamentalist Wahhabis. The Al Saud clan formed a religio-military alliance with the fundamentalist reformer, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab. In 1807 the Ottomans crushed this first Wahhabi state, but at the turn of the century Saudi fortunes were revived by Ibn Saud who would become the first king of modern Saudi Arabia, King Abd al-Aziz. Saudi Arabia is today one of six states that officially call themselves "Islamic states" the other five being Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, Pakistan and Sudan.

The basic duties of Muslims are known as the five pillars: the *shahada*, the declaration of faith according to the formula: "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God"; *salat* (worship or prayer); *zakat* (alms-giving); *sawm* (the fast during Ramadan); *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Muhammad was both a spiritual and temporal leader and the two have often been blurred in the Islamic world. There is no formal church in Islam but with the collapse of the first Arabian-Islamic empire in the 9th century religious authority was entrusted to the *ulama*, a class of scholars who acted as a break on the power of temporal leaders. They exhorted Muslims to build an *umma* (community) based on practical compassion. The political and social welfare of the *umma* came to have sacramental value for Muslims. If the *umma* prospered, it was seen as a sign that Muslims were living according to God's will.

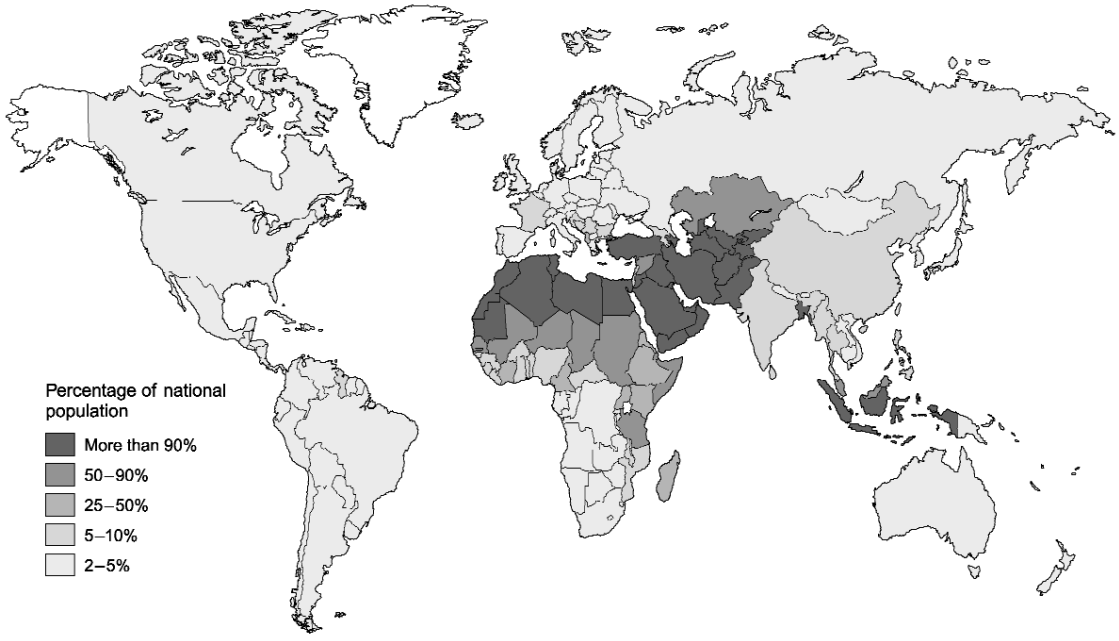
Unlike Christianity, Islam has seldom become a private religion of personal conscience and ethics. Rather it is a complete guide to existence, governing all aspects of life from dress codes to economic ethics, rates of taxation to justice and cookery. The word Islam translates from Arabic as submission or obedience (to the will and laws of Allah as set down in the Koran). The simplicity and strength of the religious conviction demanded of Muslims helps explain why Islam has, in recent times, spread so fast among the poor of the third world. The promise of paradise after death is contained within a powerful conservative ethic, which bolsters family life and protects communities against the enormous changes imposed on third world countries by contact with the developed world.

Like all religions, Islam has suffered splits and divisions and has sprouted a huge number of different schools. The original split between the Sunnis and the Shi'is arose from a struggle over the succession to Muhammad. Sunnis supported the claim of the *rashidun* (the four "rightly guided" caliphs—religious leaders—who were the companions and immediate successors of the Prophet: Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib). The Shi'a sect backed the claim of the murdered Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet, and revere a number of imams who are direct male descendants of Ali and his wife Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. Today the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni but there are 80m Shi'is, mainly in Iran (where Shi'ism is the state

religion), Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although there are no deep doctrinal differences between the two branches of Islam, the Shi'a have a more flexible interpretation of the holy texts and a more elaborate religious hierarchy.

The 20th century saw many attempts at modernisation and secularisation in the Islamic world, first in Turkey and Iran and subsequently with the rise of Arab nationalism (usually combined with socialism) in Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere. Whereas secularisation in the west has been a gradual and generally benign process—loosening state control of religion and allowing individuals to practice as they wish—in much of the Muslim world it has been experienced as an attack on religious observance. The failure of political and economic modernisation in the Islamic world has contributed to the rise of modern fundamentalism and hence to movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928 and to the Iranian revolution in 1979.

The centre of gravity of the Islamic world may now be shifting away from the Arab dominated lands of the middle east and west Asia to south and southeast Asia. Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, and Malaysia, one of the most economically successful, first came under Islamic influence in the 10th century in part through the teachings of Sufis (followers of Islam's mystical off-shoot). It is there that hope now lies for a more fruitful relationship between Islam and modernity.



A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

(1) THE BIRTH OF ISLAM

The Koran given to Jerusalem by Sultan Suleyman, 1556-1557

BEGINNINGS

In the early 7th century an Arabian prophet called Muhammad emerged in western Arabia. He belonged to the Quraish merchant tribe in Mecca and received his call to prophethood in the form of his earliest revelations from God in 609AD. These revelations were to form the corpus of the Koran, Islam's holy book. They called for worship of and obedience to the one God of Abraham. Muslims revere all the Testament prophets including Jesus—in whose virgin birth they believe—with the proviso that Muhammad was the "seal" or final word of the prophets.

The main body of Muslims, the Sunnis, believe that the Koran should be supplemented, as a guide to God's will and human action, by the traditions or *hadith* of what the Prophet and his companions had said and done. They believed also that the temporal authority of the Prophet over the *umma*, or community of Muslims, had been transmitted to a line of caliphs.

The basic religious duties of Muslims are known as the five pillars. These are: 1. *shahada*, a declaration of faith according to the formula "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God." 2. *salat*, meaning

worship or prayer. For devout Muslims this takes the form of ritual prostration five times a day (facing in the direction of Mecca) in which the bodily movements are as important as the mental activity. 3. *zakat*, alms-giving or charity. Nowadays giving is usually left to the believer's conscience. 4. *sawm*, the fast during Ramadan. The fast, in the ninth month of the lunar calendar, applies to eating, drinking, smoking and sex. 5. *hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca. This is required of every capable adult Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime.

The sacred law of Islam, the Shari'a, embraces all aspects of life, not just the religious. It has four sources, the Koran and the *sunna* (the actions and sayings of the Prophet), and the two ways in which these texts are elaborated: through consensus of opinion (*ijma)*, or through reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*). After the death of the Prophet, four schools of law emerged, the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali.

Apart from the pillars of Islam the Shari'a also covers areas that would be covered by secular law in western societies such as jihad ("struggle," or holy war), marriage, divorce, inheritance, women, penal law, commercial law, slavery and food taboos, such as ritual (halal) slaughter.

Muhammad faced opposition from the Meccan merchants and made his migration or *hijra* with his followers to Yathrib (renamed Medina) in 622. His message spread throughout Arabia and within ten years Mecca had accepted his call to submission (Islam) to the one God.

Muhammad's death in 632 saw the wars of apostasy where tribes who considered their allegiance applied only to the person of Muhammad tried to sever their relationship with Islam. The rebellion was defeated by Muhammad's closest colleague, Abu Bakr, the first caliph in the eyes of the Sunnis. Lightly armed Arab Muslim armies soon conquered Syria, Iraq and northern Mesopotamia. Under the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, they controlled the whole fertile crescent. Byzantine control of Syria and Palestine was brought to an end and Sassanian rule in Persia (Iran) was in disarray. By 641 Egypt had fallen with little bloodshed to the Muslims. From Egypt they pushed westwards across North Africa. In the north the Arabs had, by the mid 640s, pressed on into Armenia and Azerbaijan. Under the third caliph Uthman ibn Affan (644-656) they took all of Persia.

THE SPLIT BETWEEN SUNNI AND SHI'A

However, the murder of Uthman ibn Affan led to civil war and, then, to the murder of his successor, Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad—who many believers thought should have taken precedence over Uthman. This led to the foundation of the Ummayad caliphate in Syria under Mu'awiya. Ali's eldest son, Hasan, compromised with the new power structure and chose a quiet life in Medina. But when Mu'awiya was succeeded by his son Yazid his corrupt behaviour provoked a rebellion by Ali's second son, Hussein. Hussein and his fighters, heavily outnumbered,

were slaughtered at Karbala in southern Iraq beside the Euphrates.

His followers formed the Shi'a branch of Islam. The Shi'is believe that Ali was the rightful temporal leader of the community, that he was the imam ("leader") without error or sin, and that the title of imam should pass to other members of his and the Prophet Muhammad's family. In 749 the Shi'is formed a new dynasty that moved the capital from Syria to Iraq. To the disappointment of many of its supporters, however, the new ruler turned out to be a descendant not of Ali, but of Muhammad's uncle Abbas: closer to the Holy Family than the Umayyads, but not of the Prophet's progeny. This betrayal inspired the Shi'a leader of the day, Ja'far, to adopt a more quietist approach in the manner of Hasan rather than Hussein. Despite their acquiescence, Shi'a imams remained a thorn in the side of the new Abbasid caliphs. In the sacred history of Shi'ism, each imam in turn was secretly murdered—usually by poisoning. Eventually the Twelfth Imam—the Awaited One—disappeared altogether. He will return at the end of time as the Messiah (*al-Mahdi*) to bring peace, justice, and unity to a world torn by corruption, division, and strife. Thereafter Shi'ism was to oscillate between the quietism of Hasan and the activism of Hussein. The eschatological expectations surrounding the "Hidden Imam" can inspire revolts, some of which lead to permanent changes of government. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was largely inspired by Shi'ism—it is Iran's state religion. Overall there are about 80m followers of the "Twelfth Imam" in the world, most of the rest are in Iraq (where the ruling elite is Sunni). Another group of Shi'is, the "severners" or Ismailis, differed from the twelvers in their view of whom the legitimate Seventh Imam was and believed that it was his son who would return to bring peace and justice to the world in the fullness of time. The present day Aga Khans trace their descent from the Seventh Imam

Issues of leadership rather than doctrine were originally at the heart of the dispute between the Shi'a and the Sunni majority. But over time disputes about politics acquired a theological dimension. The "massacre" of Karbala—a fight between rival clans that lasted a day and left a few dozen dead—became the defining myth of Shi'ism, an emblem of suffering and martyrdom. Re-enacted on the anniversary in every Shi'i village with processions of bloody flagellants who punish themselves for the betraying of the Prophet's grandson, it does for Shi'ism what Christ's Passion does for Catholicism: it reconciles the believer to the world's injustices, while offering the promise of redemption. The imams acquire a supernatural dimension. They are the sources of esoteric scriptural knowledge, bearers of the Divine Light of Truth since the creation, who alone can understand and decode the meanings of scripture. In the twelver and Ismaili traditions, the absent imam's authority is exercised on his behalf by religious professionals or deputies. Among the twelvers this delegation of power has led to the elaboration of a hierarchy comparable to the Christian priesthood, without possessing its formal sacerdotal powers.

THE EARLY SPREAD OF ISLAM

In 711 the Arabs advanced into Spain but in 732 Charles Martel was to stop their further advance at Poitiers. In 750 the Umayyad caliphate was violently overthrown by the Abbasids who reflected the interests of non-Arab cultures to the east. The Abbasids made Baghdad their capital. The turn of the century saw a golden age centred on Baghdad under the Caliph Haroun ar-Rashid. The caliphate of al-Mamun saw the ascendancy of the Mu'tazila, theologians influenced by Greek rationalism. By the late 9th century the Abbasid Empire had broken up into separate provinces.

Various dynasties followed such as the Ismaili Fatimids in North Africa from their centre in Cairo (969-1171) and the Umayyad caliphate in Spain. The Fatimids and the later Mamluks were to leave behind a great architectural heritage, particularly in Egypt. The Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines at the crucial Battle of Manzikert in 1071. In 1099 the Crusaders took Jerusalem, massacring all the Muslims and Jews in the city. They remained until they were defeated in 1187 by the Ayyubid warrior Saladin. In the mid-13th century the Christian reconquest under Ferdinand and Isabella ended the Muslim presence in Spain.

In 1258 Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongols. In 1260 the Mamluk dynasty defeated the Mongols. Mamluk dynasties followed in Egypt and the near east, eventually giving way to the Ottomans who were to endure until the first world war. The Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror took Constantinople in 1453 and conquered Egypt and Syria in 1517. In 1529 the Ottomans were repulsed at the gates of Vienna.

Although India had been penetrated under the Umayyads, the spread of Islam in India was largely thanks to Mahmud of Ghazna (998-1030). In 1526 Babar, ruler of Afghanistan, had occupied the Kingdom of Delhi and became founder of the great Mughal empire. Under Akbar (1556-1605) the Mughal empire covered most of the Indian subcontinent. However, by the 18th century it was in decline. The *coup de grâce* of the Mughal empire and its replacement by the British empire was the Indian mutiny of 1857.

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND THE KORAN

The century or more of oral transmission between the life and death of Muhammad and the first biographies makes factual certainty impossible. What *can* be said is that the authority of the Koran and of Muhammad became of paramount importance in the disputes and debates that followed the Arab conquest of the fertile crescent. The material that found its way into the biographies appears to have been collected according to the same methodology that governed the *hadiths* or "traditions," the second tier, after the Koran, of the Muslim canon. The following account provides the bare essentials of a biography that would be elaborated over time to encompass the vast range of the anecdotes forming the core of Islamic law.

Muhammad was born around 570AD in Mecca, the site of an ancient sanctuary, one of several *hawtas* or shrines in the region where the warring

tribesmen would suspend hostilities during the months of pilgrimage and perform various rituals. Non-Muslims believe the rituals included fertility cults such as rain-making which are found in numerous cultures. Muslim tradition holds that the square temple at the centre of the shrine, the Ka'ba, was built by Abraham (Ibrahim) near the place of sacrifice. In the Bible, Abraham proves his devotion to God by offering to sacrifice Isaac, ancestor of the Hebrews, his son with the previously barren Sarah. In the Islamic version, the would-be victim is Ishmael or Isma'il, Abraham's son by the bondwoman, Hagar, who lived to become ancestor of the Arabs. The sacrifice is commemorated all over the Muslim world at the *Id al-Adha*, or feast of sacrifice, which comes at the climax of the *hajj* or greater pilgrimage, when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flock to the sanctuary to perform the reformed or de-paganised rituals instituted by the Prophet during the final year of his life. In the traditional Muslim view, the paganism prevailing in Mecca at the time of the Prophet's birth was not some primal religion evolving towards monotheism, but a manifestation of religious decadence. It was a falling off or backsliding from the original monotheism of Adam, Abraham, Moses, and other prophets and patriarchs.

Muhammad's tribe, the Quraish, had for several generations been guardians of the sanctuary. Mecca was situated near, but not directly on, the overland trade routes linking the Mediterranean with southern Arabia and the Indian Ocean. The caravans that stopped there were making a detour because of the city's holiness. Quraishi monopoly of the shrine was institutionalised through a religious association called the Hums, the "People of the Shrine," who distinguished themselves from the surrounding Bedouin by wearing special clothes. They never left the shrine, refusing to participate in those rituals that took place outside the sacred (*haram*) area. The pilgrimage brought a measure of prosperity to the Quraish in addition to the regular products they traded in, leather and raisins. Muhammad's grandfather achieved prestige and renown as provider of food and water for the pilgrims and was responsible for re-digging the famous well of Zamzam—associated in Islamic tradition with Hagar. Orphaned at about six, Muhammad was brought up by his grandfather and later by his maternal uncle Abu Talib. As a young man he entered the service of Khadija, a wealthy widow, and made several trading journeys to Syria on her behalf. She was so impressed by him that she married him. Muhammad, who is said to have married at least nine other women, remained faithful to Khadija during her lifetime. Despite her comparatively advanced age of 40, she is supposed to have born him seven children (including three sons who died in infancy).

At the age of about 40 Muhammad began undertaking regular retreats to a cave near Mount Hira outside Mecca. Scholars are divided as to whether the religious practices he adopted, including an annual retreat during Ramadan, were part of the existing pagan culture, or whether he may have adopted the pious practices of Christian anchorites he met on his

travels in Syria. By general consent, however, it was after a period of meditation that he received his first revelation. The awesome nature of the experience is captured in the 53rd *sura* (chapter) of the Koran (1–18).

Another visionary experience, also alluded to in one of the Koran's Meccan *suras*, is said to have occurred after Khadija's death, when Muhammad was transported by night "from the sacred shrine to the distant shrine" (17:1). The reference was elaborated by Muslim tradition into the famous Night Journey, when Muhammad was miraculously transported to Jerusalem on the mythical beast Buraq and thence to heaven where he was instructed by God to institute the five daily prayers governing the Muslim faith. The story is consistent with shamanic experiences in many other cultures.

Khadija accepted Muhammad's message as did his uncle's son, Ali. For three years, according to Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad refrained from proclaiming the message in public. In a small community such as Mecca, the message could not be confined to the family circle, and it spread widely. According to Muhammad's biographer, Ibn Ishaq, the message of Islam did not create opposition until Muhammad spoke disparagingly of the pagan deities.

MUHAMMAD AS A ROLE MODEL

The physical details of Muhammad's life—the cut of his beard, the clothes he wore, the food he liked, as reported in the *hadith* literature—came to be seen as models of human comportment and behaviour. Some people avoided certain foods such as garlic, mangoes, and melons, because he was reported to have disliked them, or because there was no record that he had eaten them. Honey and mutton were cherished because he cherished them; dogs were considered unclean because—according to a well-known *hadith* —"the angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or statues," but cats were approved of because, as he is related to have said, they are among the animals that grace human dwellings. The pre-modern mind saw in his every activity a direct guidance from God.

"Muhammad… had a white, circular face, wide black eyes and long eyelashes. When he walked, he walked as though he went down a declivity. He had the seal of prophecy [a dark mole or fleshy protuberance the size of a pigeon's egg] between his shoulder blades… He was bulky. His face shone like the moon in the night of full moon. He was taller than middling stature, yet shorter than conspicuous tallness. He had thick curly hair. The plaits of his hair were parted… Muhammad had a wide forehead and fine, long, arched eyebrows which did not meet. Between his eyebrows there was a vein which distended when he was angry. The upper part of his nose was hooked; he was thick bearded, had smooth cheeks, a strong mouth and his teeth were set apart. He had thin hair on his chest. His neck was like the neck of an ivory statue. He was proportionate, stout, firm-gripped, even of belly and chest, broad-chested, and broad-shouldered." (From

Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger.*)

The image of the Prophet, literary rather than visual, radiates throughout the Muslim world. The restriction on pictorial representation aids cultural diffusion, allowing peoples of different races and ethnicities to internalise its essential features—courage, calm, compassion, gravitas, and holiness. Muhammad claimed no superhuman qualities for himself. "I am only a warner, and a herald of glad tidings to people who believe."

There are miracle stories in which the Prophet emulates the Koranic Jesus by breathing life into a bird of stone, produces rain after drought or water from between his fingers, and causes a solitary barren sheep to provide enough milk for his thirsty companions and himself. Another food miracle in which 1,000 people are fed from a single sheep recalls the feeding of the five thousand. Camels and wild beasts prostrate themselves before Muhammad, knowing him to be a messenger sent by God, along with inanimate things such as rocks and stones and trees.

Muhammad, like Jesus and the founders of other world religions, is a bridge between myth and history, the realms of divine and human action.

A century ago, Muslims were often referred to as Muhammadans, the religion of Islam as Muhammadanism. Europeans, especially in south Asia, saw the respect Muslims accord their Prophet as tantamount to worship. Muslims did not usually refer to themselves as Muhammadans (except as a descriptive term when addressing Europeans), because to do so would seem to imply that they worshipped Muhammad as Christians worshipped Christ. For orthodox Muslims such an implication is offensive. Muslims worship God, not Muhammad. The Messenger was a prophet, not a deity or divine avatar. To suggest otherwise would be to breach the boundary between God and humankind, the creator and his creation. Theologically, maintenance of that boundary is the central article of the Islamic faith: "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

By the same logic the Muslim mystic is denied direct access to divine revelation, for Muhammad is the "seal" of the prophets, the final revelator sent by God to humankind.

THE KORAN AND THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

For the vast majority of Muslims the Koran is the speech of God, dictated without human editing. It is more than a sacred text such as is found in other traditions. A Muslim should not handle the text unless he or she is in a state of ritual purity. The exact pronunciation is as important as the meanings. Readings are preceded by the phrase "I take refuge with God from Satan, the accursed one," and followed by "God Almighty has spoken truly!" The opening and closing formulae establish a sort of verbal ritual enclosure or sanctuary around the recited text, preserving it from evil promptings or insincerity. Certain verses are credited with curative powers: for example, the first *sura* or chapter, known as the opening, is good for scorpion bites; the last two (*suras* 113 and 114) for other illnesses.

Much scholarly argument surrounds the assemblage of the text. Even non-Muslim scholars, with a few exceptions, accept that the written book contains a record of the divine utterances made by Muhammad in the course of his prophetic ministry starting around 609 and ending with his death in 632. According to various traditions, Muhammad fell into a trance-like state when revelations came to him. Muslim historians are generally agreed that some or all of these utterances, which are carefully distinguished from Muhammad's "normal" speech as recorded in the *hadith* literature, were written down during his lifetime. Muslim historians and traditionists are unanimous that the official codex of the Koran was adopted under the third caliph Uthman (644–56).

The book is organised into 114 chapters, arranged approximately in order of length, with the shortest at the end and the longest near the beginning. The most important exception to this pattern is the first *sura*, the *fatiha* or opening, a seven-verse invocation repeated during the five prayers Muslims are required to perform every 24 hours:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,
the All-merciful, the All-compassionate,
Master of the Day of Doom.
Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour.
Guide us in the straight path,
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.

In the subsequent *suras* the same fundamental message is repeated, elaborated, amplified, and illustrated with stories using the repertoire of Judaeo-Christian tradition with the addition of some distinctive Arabian elements. Adam and Noah, Abraham and Joseph, Moses and Jesus appear along with the Arabian prophets and sages—unknown to the Bible—Hud, Salih, and Luqman. The theology is an absolute and uncompromising monotheism. As in the Old Testament the prophets are sent to warn people against straying from the path of righteousness by worshipping false gods. Particularly heinous is the sin of *shirk* or "associationism" by which God's majesty is compromised through contamination, as it were, by lesser deities. God's will, majesty, and creative power are continually stressed and celebrated. Allah—the Arabic word for God—includes the definite article. It means literally "the God." Rather than speculating fruitlessly about his attributes, humans are urged to acknowledge his presence and obey the moral laws and commands deemed to have been revealed to them through successive messengers or prophets. The last of these is Muhammad. God is both transcendent and immanent, the Lord of Creation and One who is nearer to an individual than his "jugular vein."

That it is God, rather than Muhammad, who speaks in the Koran is evident from the way many of the utterances are prefixed by the imperative "Say!"—addressed to Muhammad. God refers to himself in the first person singular and plural; but the Prophet is also addressed, apparently, by the Book itself and told about God as a third person.

What the Koran lacks for the reader familiar with the Bible or Hindu epics is a coherent narrative structure. Although there are some individual narratives—notably stories of the prophets—the historical discourses are linked thematically rather than chronologically. The biblical narratives addressed to Christians and Jews are presented as reminders and reaffirmations of previous revelations, not as new revelations. Important differences of doctrine, however, emerge in these narratives. The most significant theological difference in terms of the historical development of Islam is the treatment of the Fall. Satan is punished for his refusal to bow down before Adam; and though Adam sins, as in the biblical story, by eating of the forbidden fruit, he repents and is soon restored to favour as God's deputy or vice-regent (*khalifa*), the first prophet in the line of prophets that culminates in Muhammad. There is no doctrine of original sin here, no idea of vicarious atonement. Where there is no original sin, there is no redeemer: the Koranic Jesus is a prophet, born of a virgin, but he is not the deity incarnate. Where there is neither incarnation nor redeemer, there can be no church, no "bride" nor "mystical body" of God. No Eternal Corporation is necessary to guarantee salvation. All that is required of humans is that they obey God's commands and use their intelligence in discerning truth from falsehood, using the Koran as their criterion (*furqan*). God reveals himself, not in a person, but in what becomes a text, the words of which are regarded by most Muslims as divine in themselves.

The verses into which the Koranic *suras* are divided are known as *ayas*—meaning "sign" and they are often employed in the Koran to demonstrate the existence of God. These signs, as well as referring to divine locutions, point to the evidences of God in nature. The theology of the Koran is thus suffused with what became known in Christian theology as the "argument from design." The act of reading is in itself an act of devotion.

Although Muhammad is mentioned by name on at least four occasions, there is almost nothing in the Koran, beyond the occasional hint, from which a biography of Muhammad or an account of his ministry can be inferred. In New Testament terms, it is as if the Epistles were preserved, without any of the four Gospels or Acts of the Apostles. The Koran is as little concerned with the events of the life of Muhammad as Paul was with the narrative life of Jesus.

The style of the Koran is allusive and elliptical. It is addressed to people already familiar with much of the material it contains. Far from being self-explanatory, it can only be understood by reference to material outside itself. The very difficulties it presents as a historical source are a strong

prima facie case for its authenticity. A work that had been subjected to any kind of editing would surely show more signs of narrative coherence. One has the impression that Muhammad's words (those articulated in the prophetic mode, when he is supposed to have been possessed by the Angel Gabriel) were regarded from the start as holy artefacts, distinct from his other utterances and worthy to be recorded and stored like sacred relics. Unlike the books of the Old and New Testaments, the Koran suggests itself as unedited raw material. The narrative context in which it occurred—the career of Muhammad—was something that had to be reconstructed in order to approach its multiple meanings.

MUHAMMAD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWS AND PAGANS

Muhammad respected the monotheism of the Jews and accepted a common patriarchal-spiritual lineage from Abraham, a true *hanif* or monotheist. It seems clear, however, that, while temporarily accepting Muhammad's political leadership, the Jews of Medina rejected him as a prophet in their tradition. After the victory of Badr, when Muhammad's position was greatly strengthened, his relations with them deteriorated. The political deterioration in relations with the Jews is complemented by developments on the religious front. The *qibla*—direction of prayer—changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. The Meccan sanctuary, and part of the Meccan pagan tradition, were reappropriated in stages and given new meanings within the monotheistic, Abrahamic tradition. In the sixth year of the *hijra* Muhammad attempted the lesser pilgrimage, or *umra*, leading a party of emigrants and helpers and some of the Bedouin tribesmen. The Meccans stopped them from entering the sacred area; but a truce is negotiated under which the Medinans would be able to perform the pilgrimage the following year. Muhammad benefited from the peace on his southern flank to turn his attention to the rebellious Jewish tribes at the oases of Khaibar and Fadak, suspected of being in league with the Meccans. Under the terms of surrender the Jews continued to work their plantations, giving half their produce to the Muslims. But later, believing that the Jews of Banu Quraiza had betrayed him, Muhammad had the adult males killed and the women and children sold into slavery. After his return the Meccans honoured their agreement with him, and Muhammad was able to lead a band of Muslims to perform the *umra*. However, the following year (628) the truce broke down and in January 630 he returned to the sacred city in strength. Taken by surprise, the Meccans offered no resistance. Their leader, Abu Sufyan, was captured by the Muslims, and decided to save himself by submission to Islam.

Muhammad entered the Ka'ba and smashed the 360 idols therein, sparing only two icons of Jesus and Mary. Other idols in the vicinity were destroyed, including that of the female deities al-Uzza, Manat, and al-Lat. The Prophet remained in the area of Mecca and defeated a hostile Bedouin confederation before making a second *umra* to the shrine. An expedition

launched to the north engaged a Byzantine army at Tabuk near present-day Aqaba. The Muslim *umma* was now the greatest force in the Arabian peninsula. During the year 630—the Year of Delegations—most of the tribes submitted; the remaining pagans were allowed the four months in which to make up their minds. After that they could be killed.

The Muslim *umma* in effect became a religious state or polity. Previously Muhammad had signed treaties with non-believers and even shared the booty of his campaigns with them. Now submission to Islam became the criterion of membership.

A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

(2) ISLAMIC LAW AND ITS TEACHERS

Sufis performing the dhikr near Omdurman

DEFINING ISLAM

"Islam" in Arabic means self-surrender to God. In its primary meaning (as employed in the Koran and other foundational texts) the word Muslim refers to one who so surrenders him or herself (from the active participle of the verb *aslama*, to surrender oneself). There is, however, a secondary meaning to "Muslim" which may shade into the first. A Muslim is one born to a Muslim father who takes on his or her parent's confessional identity without necessarily subscribing to the beliefs of the faith, just as a Jew may define him or herself as "Jewish" without observing the *halacha*.

The Muslims of Bosnia, descendants of Slavs who converted to Islam under Ottoman rule, are not always noted for attendance at prayer, abstention from alcohol, seclusion of women, and other social practices associated with practising Muslims in other parts of the world. They were officially designated as Muslims to distinguish them from (Orthodox) Serbs and (Catholic) Croats under the former Yugoslavian communist regime. The label "Muslim" indicates their group allegiance, but not

necessarily their religious beliefs. In this limited context (which may also apply to other Muslim minorities in Europe and Asia) there may be no necessary contradiction between being Muslim and being atheist or agnostic, just as there are Jewish atheists and Jewish agnostics. The word Christian, by contrast, has in normal usage come to imply a strictly confessional affiliation: a "Christian atheist" sounds to most people like a contradiction in terms, although we can still speak of western culture as predominantly Christian. It should be noted, however, that this secular definition of "Muslim" (sometimes the terms "cultural Muslim" or "nominal Muslim" are used) is a contested one. Just as fundamentalist Christians in the US have reappropriated the term "Christian" to apply exclusively to those who share their particular versions of the faith, so modern Muslim activists have tended to redraw the boundaries between themselves and other Muslims who do not share their views, in extreme cases going so far as to designate the latter as "infidels."

FAITH AND POLITICS

If there is a single word that can be taken to represent the primary impulse of Islam, be it theological, political, or sociological, it is *tawhid*—making one, unicity. Although the word does not occur in the Koran, the concept it articulates is implicit in the credal formula "there is no god but God" and there are references to the God who is without partners or associates throughout the holy text. The absolute insistence that it is unicity above all that defines divinity appears in striking, if ironic, contrast with the disunity observable in the Muslim world. It is as if the aspiration to realise divine unicity in terms of the social and political order is forever destined to wreck itself on the shores of human perversity.

The overwhelming stress on God's uniqueness reflects the polemical context in which early Islam was forged. *Tawhid* simultaneously challenges Arabian paganism, Zoroastrian dualism, and the Christian doctrine of divine incarnation in language that harks back to the uncompromising monotheism of the Hebrew prophets. The first great building constructed by the conquering Arabs in Palestine—the Dome of the Rock on Jerusalem's Holy Mount—occupies the site of the Jewish Temple on ground where Jewish tradition supposes that Abraham would have sacrificed his son, and where in later times the Ark of the Covenant came to rest. The exquisite octagonal building, with its marble cladding and golden dome, is decorated with Koranic inscriptions proclaiming God's unity and Muhammad's prophethood. The new shrine is close to the spot from where Muhammad is supposed to have ascended to heaven to be received by Abraham and Moses. The shrine is dedicated to the religion of Abraham. It replaces and supersedes the Temple of Solomon and mounts a direct challenge to Christianity, the imperial faith of Byzantium.

The classical authorities made a distinction between Islam as professed by the Muslim on the one hand, and *iman* (faith) of the *mumin* (believer) on

the other. In the wars that united the Arabian peninsula, the self-surrender to God, however sincere, occurred through the external pressure.

The puritanical Kharijis (seceders) cast their net narrowly, denying sinners the right to call themselves Muslims. The same puritanical tendency has been revived by militant groups today, who exclude lax Muslims from their definition of the *umma*, the community of believers.

The Kharijis' opponents, known as the Murji'a, allowed that virtually anyone could be considered a Muslim so long as they proclaimed the *shahada*, the public declaration of faith enshrined in the formula: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Most of the classical authorities took the broader view. Abu Hanifa, whose name was given to one of the four legal schools of Sunni Islam (the three others being named after Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i 767-820, Malik ibn Anas al-Asbahi 713-795, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal 780-855), stated that, "those who face in the direction of Mecca at prayer are true believers and no act of theirs can remove them from the faith." In time, a majority of Muslims came to accept the view that *iman* and *islam* represented the internal and external aspects of religious commitment, faith and works. The outward manifestations of the faith, through observance of ritual and adherence to the Shari'a law, defined the Muslim vis-à-vis the outside world; but many came to consider that true piety was to be found in esoteric dimensions of the faith known only to a spiritual elite. In the absence of a formally constituted hierarchy or church, members of this elite were known by their knowledge of the religious disciplines and their command of spiritual or ascetical practices not normally acquired by the majority. Among the Shi'a minority, the spiritual elite is characterised by its proximity in kinship to the Prophet Muhammad and his family. Esotericism, including the exploration of hidden meanings in scripture and secret or unconventional religious practices, became the hallmark of movements that dissented from the majority politically or in religious style. The broadly tolerant view that determined the faith by reference to *islam* as distinct from *iman*, allowed a great variety of spiritual growths to flourish without scandal.

No religion could prosper and survive, as Islam has prospered and survived into modern times, if it were bound only by the outward forms of observance. But the crisis many Muslims are facing in adjusting to the realities of the contemporary world does not seem to be the result of some inherent lack of flexibility in the realm of ideas. Historically Islam has shown enormous adaptability in accommodating different cultural systems within its overarching framework. The crisis of modern Islam is not so much a spiritual crisis as a crisis of authority—political, intellectual, and legal. Outside the Shi'a minority tradition, a leadership commanding universal support is conspicuously absent.

THE LAW, THE STATE AND THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY

There is no "church" in Islam, no formally instituted body empowered to supervise or dictate the religious agenda, to articulate an official Islamic view comparable to that of the papacy or the appointed or elected leadership of Protestant denominations. With the collapse of the Islamic superstate that lasted barely two centuries after the death of Muhammad, religious authority was entrusted to the *ulama* (from *alim*, "learned man"), a class of scholars, whose role as guardians and interpreters of the tradition is much closer to that of the rabbis in Judaism than that of a Christian priesthood. They did not exercise political power but acted as a break on the power of the rulers, the *sultans* ("authorities") and *amirs* ("commanders"), most of whom came to power by force of arms.

The most prestigious of these academies, Al-Azhar in Cairo, was founded in 971AD and claims to be the oldest university in the world. Though its rector enjoys pre-eminence among the Sunni *ulama*, his opinions are not binding on his peers; similarly, though all Muslim governments will appoint an official *mufti*, an *alim* possessed of the authority to deliver legal judgments on a variety of issues, his opinions are purely consultative unless given effect in a court judgment by a *qadi* (a judge). It is the ruler who appoints the judge, so the implementation of the religious law, but not its interpretation, is under state control. Mass education policies undertaken by most post-colonial governments have led to a relative decline in the prestige and authority of the *ulama* as graduates with mainly secular educational backgrounds forge their own interpretations of Islam's sacred texts, short-circuiting the religious elites.

Alternatively, in countries which have been less subject to modernising influences, such as Afghanistan or the rural parts of Pakistan, *ulama* or aspiring *ulama* may seek to exercise power directly, oblivious of the modern world's complex realities. In either case, the crisis of intellectual authority is ultimately the same: the traditionally trained *ulama* have failed to incorporate contemporary modernist or reformist thinking into their language. Activists seek to "Islamise" their societies, and bring them more closely into line with what they perceive to be Islamic law. But they ignore the centuries of nuanced and qualifying scholarship by which the *ulama* in the past reconciled the demands of the divine law with the realities of political power and everyday life.

Earlier this century a great modern jurist, the Egyptian Abd al-Razzaq Sanhuri (1895-1971), worked hard to reconcile Islamic law with the western systems of law that were introduced under the colonial and post-colonial governments of Muslim states. Radical Muslims who demand that the Shari'a be restored in its entirety do not acknowledge the extent to which this work, which was incorporated into the domestic legislation of many Muslim states, found common ground between formerly competing legal systems. In practice, demands for the restoration of the Shari'a tend to focus on particular aspects of the criminal law, notably the corporal

punishments specified in the Koran and early Muslim tradition for sexual offences and certain categories of theft. In some parts of the world the *hudud* penalties (such as amputation for theft or flogging for sexual relations outside marriage) have acquired a symbolic significance precisely because they are seen to confront licentious attitudes deemed to have been inspired by a decadent west. The traditional Islamic ban on *riba*, understood as all forms of money loaned at interest, has led to sometimes creative, sometimes disastrous, experiments in financial risk-sharing and equity participation by Islamic banks. They try to apportion the risks undertaken by lenders and borrowers more equitably than the conventional banking system does, but this is often based on romantic, ahistorical visions of the past.

Islamdom, like Christendom, its historical rival, aspires to universality. The failure of *dar al-islam* (the realm of Islam) to maintain its initial momentum and to incorporate the globe within its domain is hardly surprising, given the limitations of pre-modern technologies: the vastness of the territories encompassed by the Arabs in the first wave of invasions are astonishing enough. The very speed and range of the initial expansion, however, were the source of political problems that remain unresolved to this day. Islam initially expanded on the wings of tribalism. Submission to "God and his Prophet" was, in the first instance, submission to a victorious Bedouin army. From the first, the message of social justice and the equality of men (and, more problematically, of women) before God, as conveyed in Muhammad's preaching and preserved in the Koran, came up against the realities of tribal and dynastic power. The civil wars that occurred within a generation of the Prophet's death in 632, the split between Sunni and Shi'a, the collapse of the Arab empire, and the political fragmentation that occurred in its wake—all of these historical events bear witness to an unfulfilled project: the establishment of a divine empire on earth.

THE CALIPHATE

After its initial expansion, the Arab empire imploded. Islam's central institution, the caliphate, at first contested by rival factions, was gradually drained of legitimacy, as the caliph, the "shadow of God on earth" became the prisoner of palace guards recruited from the tribes. There were several towering caliphal figures; the "four rightly-guided caliphs"—Abu Bakr (632–4), Umar (634–44), Uthman, and Ali (656–61)—and the great Harun al-Rashid (786–809), the ideal monarch immortalised in the stories of the *Thousand and One Nights*, when the Arab empire was at its height.

Scholars are still debating whether the early caliphate was a predominantly religious or political office. The term is as ambiguous as the office it describes. In the Koran it is applied to Adam, the first man and God's vice-regent, and to David, a prophet who is also a king. The office as such emerged spontaneously after the death of the Prophet, who left no clear successor or rules for the succession. The first four caliphs succeeded

by acclamation, in accordance with tribal custom. Some jurists argued that thereafter the true caliphate ceased, and that subsequent caliphs were merely monarchs or kings. In orthodox writings the title caliph generally means deputy or successor to the Prophet Muhammad

The consequences of the caliphal debacle are far-reaching when the destiny of Islamic governance is compared with that of Christianity in the west, where the church under generally vigorous papal control retained a monopoly over Christian doctrine and the rituals that guaranteed salvation. The western state emerged as the church—the ideal corporation embodying the person of Christ—gave birth to secular offspring in the shape of cities and other public entities. The Islamic state, by contrast, never fully overcame its tribal origins. The end of the Arab empire compounded the caliph's failure to enforce religious conformity. Apart from the Shi'a, who held to the idea of a transcendent spiritual authority, the lack of any central institution in Islam impeded the emergence of its counterweight in the shape of the secular state. The law developed separately from the agencies entrusted with its enforcement, and so military-tribal rule became the norm. The state was thus something which sat on top of society, not something which was rooted in it. This created political immobility: dynasties came and went, but it was only the dynasties that changed. The political stasis in Muslim states lasted in many cases through to the modern period, when Muslim rulers became aware of the need to introduce changes into their societies in order to face the military and economic challenges posed by the west.

THE SUNNI CONSENSUS

After the failure of the attempted fusion of religious and political authority in the caliphate, religious leadership in Sunni Islam remained for the most part in the hands of the *ulama*—scholars whose authority was based on their knowledge of scripture, but not on hierocratic or spiritual power. There is no clear "pecking order" among the Sunni *ulama*: just as among American Protestants virtually anyone with a basic theological training can become a preacher, so amongst Sunnis any qualified lawyer can declare whether something is against Islamic law, so there can be as many versions of "orthopraxy" as there are jurists. Generally decentralised religious authority (as in American Protestantism) tends towards conservatism. Without a cult of divinely inspired leadership the text becomes paramount, and even if the text itself is deemed to be divine, interpretation is most likely to proceed in the safety of well-worn grooves.

The Sunni consensus opted for the safety of focusing on God's commands rather than indulging in speculation about his nature; but after their first encounters with Helleno-Christian thought some Muslim intellectuals went to considerable lengths to reconcile the Koranic deity with the God of the philosophers. Speculation about God flourished especially under the patronage of the Ismaili imams who elevated reason

to the highest level beneath the unknown and unknowable deity. This God is not in himself the cause of things: his being is beyond the whole chain of existence, of cause and effect. It was not only the philosophers and intellectuals who rejected literalistic interpretations of scripture. The mystically inclined Sufis—named after the coarse shirts of wool (*souf*) worn by some early adepts—rejected or de-emphasised outward or formalistic forms of observance in favour of a style of pietism that sought to apprehend the reality of God's unity through direct experience. Scholars have suggested that early Sufis may have been influenced by mystical tendencies among Eastern Christians, gnostics (who abounded in Alexandria), central Asian shamans and even yogis from India. But there are many Koranic passages that lend themselves to mystical interpretation.

THE SHARI'A, THE FIQH AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The Shari'a, the revealed law of Islam, has four main roots. The first two are the Koran and the *sunna* (the Prophet's custom as revealed in the *hadith*). But the *sunna* is far from self-explanatory: some *hadiths* will contradict others, experts will disagree about which are "strong" and which are "weak," so the two additional roots of law are required—*ijma* (meaning legal decisions arising through consensus) and *qiyas* (a form of analogical reasoning, similar to Talmudic discourse, which allows Koranic or Sunna principles to be applied to situations not explicitly described in the texts). The Shari'a is divine, co-eternal with God. The *fiqh*, by contrast, is the product of human endeavour; it is the record of human understanding of the divine will collated in a vast compendia of books. These books are not legal codes, but they do offer guidance for judges. The typical *fiqh* manual is divided into religious and social duties. It will have detailed prescriptions about ablutions, the times and exact performance of prayer; *zakat* (compulsory charity); the Ramadan fast, and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The *faqih*—one who practises *fiqh*—is a legal specialist who seeks to determine the implications of God's commands in particular instances. Juridical loyalties crystallised around the four leading figures credited with founding the four main legal schools (*madhabs*) of Sunni Islam. The differences between the four schools are mainly confined to questions such as marriage and guardianship, with the Hanafis taking a more liberal view of female rights than the Malikis. Although jurists from all schools with the exception of the Hanbalis continued to exercise *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) for many centuries, among Sunnis the doctrine emerged that the "gates of *ijtihad*" had been closed after the third Muslim century.

In Shi'a jurisprudence the "gates of *ijtihad*" are generally assumed to have remained open. Senior Shi'a *ulama* known by the title of Ayatollah (sign of God) are all *mujtahids*—individual interpreters of the law. Every believing Shi'i is supposed to place him or herself under the guidance of a mujtahid who acts as a "source of imitation." The Shi'a *ulama* are the recipients of

religious taxes (*zakat* and *khums*) and historically this has given them more independence of government than their Sunni counterparts.

The intellectual flexibility of the Shi'a *ulama* have given them the edge over their Sunni counterparts in adapting the law to contemporary circumstances. Where Sunni Islamists have actively sought political power, it has often been freelancers or religious autodidacts who have led the way.

The books of *fiqh* divide human conduct into five categories which cover everything "from murder to social etiquette, and from incest to the rules of religious retreat." The fivefold system represents the compromise made in the first two centuries between the moral perfectionism of early Muslim communities such as the Kharijis, and the demands of an expanding Islamic community that aimed to be inclusive and universal. In principle this scheme allows no ultimate distinction between religion and morality, law and ethics. All are seen as proceeding directly from the command of God, though there is room for humans to argue about details. Only God can judge the extent to which an individual's activities conform to the jurists' schema. Law in the narrower sense is restricted to dealing with those activities that are explicitly forbidden (*haram*) or to adjudicating between competing claims of individuals. The five categories into which the law books divide all human behaviour are:

1. Required, obligatory, behaviour "for the neglect of which one ought to be punished (both in this world and in the hereafter) and for the doing of which one is rewarded." Obligations are divided into individual duties, such as prayer, alms-giving and fasting; and collective duties, such as attendance at funeral prayers or participation in the jihad or holy struggle.
2. Proscribed or prohibited behaviour, acts "for the performance of which there is punishment and (according to most authorities) for the avoidance of which there is reward." The punishment is usually inflicted in this world according to Islamic law. Categories include certain types of theft, illicit sexual activity, wine drinking—the so-called *hudud* offences—for which specific penalties are prescribed in the Koran. The rewards for abstention are presumed to be in paradise.
3. Recommended behaviour: acts that are commendable but not required, "for the doing of which there is reward, but for the neglect of which there is no punishment." They include charitable acts such as the release of slaves, supererogatory prayers and fasts, pious deeds of all varieties.
4. Discouraged or odious behaviour, "acts for the doing of which there is no punishment, but for the avoidance of which there is reward." There is wide disagreement about this category but some authorities would include divorce, permitted by unilateral male declaration, but disapproved of by the Prophet.
5. Permitted but morally indifferent behaviour, "acts for the performance or avoidance of which there is neither reward nor punishment."

Western legal historians tend to argue that the Shari'a developed as an ideal system of law divorced from practice. The mainly oral procedure and

high standards of proof—though admirable for protecting the rights of accused persons in relatively small communities such as the Prophet's Medina—were less appropriate in the expanding cosmopolitan societies of the Arab empire. Strictures against *riba* (lending and borrowing at fixed rates of interest) were widely evaded by legal devices, making whole areas of commercial law impossible to enforce. As a consequence the administration of criminal justice was never fully entrusted to the *qadis*. The *qadi* courts were supplemented by those of the police, while the *muhtasib*, the inspector of markets, took a vast range of commercial practice under his wing. Where they found the Shari'a rules inadequate, inappropriate, or limiting the rulers added their own supplementary decrees and enforced laws other than the Shari'a.

ISLAMIC LAW AND THE LACK OF A PUBLIC SPHERE

Just as there is no doctrine of divine incarnation in Islam, so there is no church, no separate institution or body distinct from the rest of society charged with the task of conveying God's will, or the Prophet's teachings, to the ordinary believer. The term Shari'a applies to much more than law in the strictly legal sense. It includes the details of ritual, as well as a whole range of customs and manners, although local customary laws are also recognised. Shari'a means literally "the way to a watering place": the Koranic use of the term combines the notions of a vital means of sustenance in this world and access to the divine realm of the world to come. The law is there both for the purpose of upholding the good of society and for helping human beings attain salvation. Interpretations of the law may vary in accordance with time and place, but the Shari'a itself is considered to be a timeless manifestation of the will of God, subject neither to history nor circumstance.

The development of the Shari'a law was primarily the result of the historic conditions prevailing during Islam's three formative centuries. The early caliphs evidently saw themselves as the divinely appointed fountainheads of law. They based their legal rulings on the Koran, the so-called Sunna of local practice, and decisions based on their own divinely inspired insights. The civil wars and leadership struggles following Muhammad's death limited the caliph's power and contaminated his authority, leaving no source of authority save that of the Koran and the Prophet's precepts, embodied in the burgeoning corpus of *hadiths*.

The Shari'a, both in theory and practice, thus became uncompromisingly individualistic. The absence of the concept of church—the mystical body of Christ that stood between the individual Christian and God through which alone salvation was possible—militated against the creation of institutions such as the medieval western city or trading company where the group interest transcended that of the individual. The Shari'a recognised no corporate entities which could be treated as persons in law. The purpose of the law, apart from enforcing God's commands, was to regulate the affairs

of men. One consequence of the absence of the concept of jural personality of groups may be seen in the proliferating alleyways of many pre-modern middle eastern cities, where private territory—cafés, workshops, stalls, and so forth—constantly encroaches on public space. The public domain, it is presumed, is simply the sum of its private components, not a separate entity requiring legal protection.

A negative consequence of the Shari'a approach to law has been the lack of legitimacy accorded the public interest in the form of city, state, or any other institution standing between the individual and God. Corruption and patrimonialism—the confusion of private and public realms—is rife in most developing countries. However, Islamic cultures—informed by the absence of institutional boundaries between the public and private spheres—may be more vulnerable to such abuses than ones where the boundaries are rigorously upheld by law. In western societies these boundaries are part of the historical residue of medieval Christendom, with its separate distribution of powers between church and state. Family values including those of the extended kinship group are fundamental to Shari'a and, where family values predominate, the state is vulnerable to manipulation by powerful family networks.

Moreover, the idealism implicit in the Shari'a, the utopian expectations it engenders, militates against the constitutional limitation of power. It is pessimism about human nature (a by-product, arguably, of the Christian doctrine of original sin) that leads to the liberal perception that all power corrupts, and that constitutional limitations must be placed on its exercise. This personalised or individualised nature of the Shari'a has not merely given its application an intimate and personal character—a character that is, arguably, reinforced, by the application of public corporal punishments including flogging and execution. It traps the modern Islamist political discourse in what might be called a "virtuous circle." Rather than addressing systemic or institutional reform, modern Islamist reformers like Maududi have simply stressed a "return" to the Shari'a, placing an excessive degree of emphasis on personal virtue. As the French scholar Olivier Roy points out, because the Islamist model is predicated on the belief in government by morally impeccable individuals who can be counted on to resist temptation, it does not generate institutions capable of functioning autonomously by means of checks and balances. Political institutions function only as a result of the virtue of those who run them, but virtue can become widespread only if society is already Islamic.

A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

(3) FROM JIHAD TO FUNDAMENTALISM

Hizbullah logo

THE SPHERE OF WAR

Jihad, like the word fatwa, is an Islamic term that has entered the lexicon, not least because of its use by modern Islamist movements, some of which have been involved in terrorism, kidnapping and other violent activities. In its primary meaning the word means "exertion" or "struggle," and its use in the traditional Islamic discourse is not confined to military matters. The usual translation "holy war" is therefore misleading. In the classical formulations, the believer may undertake jihad "by his heart, his tongue, his hands, and by the sword"—the most important of these being the first.

Jihad is a collective obligation for Muslims—a duty known as *fard kifaya*, distinct from the purely personal obligations of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. It can be undertaken by the ruler on behalf of the whole community. The classical doctrine of jihad was formulated during the centuries of conquest, when the faith sustained an outward momentum unprecedented in human history. The doctrine was both an expression of Islamic triumphalism and an attempt, comparable to the concept of the just war in Roman law, to limit the consequences of war. Adapting the customs of pre-Islamic Bedouin warfare, an element of chivalry was built into the

code: women and children, the old and the sick, were to be spared. Polytheists were faced with the choice of conversion or death, but the "Peoples of the Book"—initially Jews and Christians, later extended to Zoroastrians, Hindus, and others—were to be protected in return for payment of taxes. This is not religious tolerance in accordance with the values of post-Enlightenment liberalism. But it falls short of the position necessary to sustain the charge that Islam "converts by the sword." Polytheists get short shrift, and there is no question that in parts of Africa and Asia today people adhering to animist cults are subject to forcible Islamisation. By the standards of medieval Europe, however, the doctrine of jihad was more humane than Christian treatment of heretics.

Nevertheless the classical doctrine of jihad does imply that Islam will become victorious on earth. It is a doctrine that divides the world into two mutually hostile camps: the sphere of Islam (*dar al-islam*) and the sphere of war (*dar al-harb*). Enemies must convert, like the polytheists, or submit, like the Christians and Jews. Those who die in "the path of God" are instantly translated to paradise, without waiting for the resurrection or judgement day. They are buried where they fall, their bodies spared the ritual of cleansing in a mosque. The martyrs are pure already.

Muhammad distinguished between the "lesser jihad" of war against the polytheists and the "greater jihad" against evil. At its broadest, the latter was the struggle in which the virtuous Muslim was engaged throughout his or her life. Historically it was the greater jihad which sustained the expansion of Islam in many parts of the world. The dualism of good versus evil, *dar al-islam* against *dar al-harb*, was maintained less by territorial concepts than by legal observance. *Dar al-islam* was where the law prevailed. In pre-colonial times, before the military might of the west erupted into Muslim consciousness, that law meant civilisation itself.

The most active movements of resistance to European rule during the 19th and early 20th centuries were led or inspired by renovators (*mujaddids*), most of them members of Sufi orders, who sought to emulate the Prophet's example by purifying the religion of their day and waging war on corruption and infidelity—much as the Wahhabi movement (see page 28) had attempted to do in Arabia. Such movements included the rebellion led by Prince Dipanegara in Java (1825–30), the jihad preached among the Yusufzai Pathans on the northwest frontier of India by Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi in 1831, the Chechen leader Shamil's campaign against the Russians in the Caucasus (1834–59), and Abd al-Qadir's jihad against the French in Algeria (1839–47). Not all of these movements were directed at infidel Europeans: the Mahdi Muhammad ibn Abdullah in the Sudan originally campaigned against the imperial ambitions of the Egyptians or "Turks" he believed had abandoned Islam to foreigners; the "New Sect" in China, led by another Naqshbandi sheikh, Ma Ming Hsin, was behind a series of major revolts against the policies of the Manchu emperors during the 19th century.

THE STRUGGLE WITH EUROPEAN SUPREMACY

Once it became clear that Muslim arms were no match for the technical and military superiority of the Europeans, the movement for Islamic renewal took a radical turn. Among the elites which had been exposed most directly to the European presence, the failure of Islam was seen to lie as much in education and culture as in military defeat. A return to the pristine forms of Islam would not be enough to guarantee the survival of Islam as a civilisation and way of life. The more sophisticated renovators may be divided very broadly into reformists and modernists. Reformists usually came from the ranks of the *ulama* and were more concerned with religious renewal from within the tradition. One of their most influential reformist centres was the college of Deoband in northern India, founded in 1867. The Deobandis adopted a modernist stance in emphasising personal responsibility in observance of the Shari'a. They made full use of modern techniques of communication, including the printing press, the postal service and the expanding railway network. Deoband contributed significantly to the emergence of India's Muslims as a self-conscious community. Unlike the modernists, however, the Deobandis tried to have as little as possible to do with the British or their government. "To like and appreciate the customs of the infidels" wrote a leading Deobandi *alim*, Maulana Asraf Ali Thanawi, "is a grave sin."

The political elites and intelligentsias which had most exposure to European culture recognised that in order to regain political power Muslims would have to adopt European military techniques, modernise their economies and administrations, and introduce modern forms of education. On the religious front they argued for a reinterpretation of the faith in the light of modern conditions. The modernists' fascination with Europe and its works often led them to adopt western clothes and lifestyles which in due course separated them from the more traditionally minded classes. It was from modernist circles that veil-ripping feminists and the leaders of nationalist movements were to be drawn.

There are no clear lines dividing the two tendencies, which merge and divide according to circumstance. Leaders of both currents such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder of the Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh in India, and reformers like Muhammad Abduh founder of the Salafiyya movement in Egypt, tended to be found in the cultural centres of the Muslim world that had been most exposed to western influences. Their problem was not, as Abduh's patron Lord Cromer (virtual ruler of Egypt between 1883 and 1907) would argue, that Islam was beyond reform; but rather that there was no institutional hierarchy comparable to that of the Christian churches through which theological and legal reforms could be effected. Reformist *ulama* like Abduh or his more conservative disciple Rashid Rida had no special authority through which they could impose their views and many of their peers among the *ulama* remain unreconstructed traditionalists up to the present day.

THE WAHHABIS

One of the other main branches of 19th-century revivalism was the puritanical doctrine of the the fundamentalist reformer, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab. The energy of the so-called Wahhabis stemmed from conviction that it was the duty of the Muslim community to call the entire Islamic world to repentance for having broken away from the pure Unitarianism of early Islam. Wahhab sought a return to the purity of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Exploiting the military might of the Saudi clan and its Bedouin allies, he united with Muhammad Al-Saud to create a puritan Islamic state.

In 1802 the Shi'is of Iraq felt the sting of the Wahhabis when they sacked Karbala and destroyed the tomb of Hussein. In 1807 the Ottomans crushed this first Wahhabi state. However, it was not until 1818 that the Wahhabi leadership surrendered and was forced into exile in Kuwait.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Saudi fortunes were revived by Abd al-Aziz ibn abd al-Rahman Al-Saud (commonly known to the world as Ibn Saud). Setting out from Kuwait with a handful of followers, he regained the stronghold of Riyadh from the al-Rashid clan and proceeded to recover all the former Saudi dominions.

A conflict of identity was to ensue between Ibn Saud who remained a Wahhabi but sought to absorb the best of the modern world and the Ikhwan ("Brotherhood"), Muslim diehard extremists who rejected any deviation from the model of the Prophet's life based on the Koran and the *hadith* and opposed innovations (*bida*) such as cars, telephones and the radio. The conflict reached its turning-point in the rebellion of three Ikhwan leaders whom Ibn Saud defeated at the battle of Sibilla in 1929.

The history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia begins properly on 18th September 1932, when the kingdom of the Hejaz and Najd was unified under the name of Saudi Arabia. By the late 1940s the Kingdom's oil wells were flowing. A sudden access to wealth which proved a mixed blessing.

PAN-ISLAMISM OR NATIONALISM

On 11th November 1914 the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph Mehmet V declared a jihad against Russia, France, and Britain, announcing that it had become an obligation for all Muslims to support the struggle with their goods and money. The proclamation, which took the form of a fatwa, was endorsed by religious leaders throughout the Sultan's dominions. Its effect, however, was minimal. In Russian central Asia, French north Africa and British India the colonial authorities generally had no difficulty in finding *ulama* to endorse the Allied cause. Most galling for the Sultan-Caliph, his suzerain the Sharif Hussein of Mecca, Guardian of the Holy Places, refused to endorse the jihad publicly. He had already been approached by the British with a view to launching an Arab revolt against the Turks—the revolt whose success (with the help of TE Lawrence) would result in the Sharif's sons Feisal and Abdullah being given the British-protected

thrones of Iraq and Jordan. The Arabs of Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the Hejaz preferred freedom to "Islamic" Ottoman rule, even though for many that freedom entailed a new colonialist domination under the "infidel." Then, as now, pan-Islamic solidarity proved an illusion.

The collapse of the Ottoman armies in 1917–18 drove the point home. A revitalised Turkish nation under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the caliphate in 1924, bringing the crisis of Islamic legitimacy to a head. Though the decision was endorsed by the Turkish national assembly, and generally approved by Arab nations newly freed from Ottoman dominion, the move was preceded by a mass agitation by the Muslims of India protesting against the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire and the removal of the final link between an existing Islamic state and the divine polity founded by the Prophet Muhammad.

This movement—known as the Khilafat movement—represented a turning point in the anti-colonialist movement, as Muslims now joined Hindu nationalists in opposition to the Raj. That coalition proved short-lived, and the momentum generated by the movement would eventually lead to a separate destiny for India's Muslims in the form of Pakistan.

The movement, however, evoked no response in the Arab world and above all in Turkey, where the caliphate was associated with a discredited political system. For Arab nationalists the caliphate had come to be associated with hated Ottoman rule. The best alternative was a variety of Islamic nation states ruled by an enlightened elite in consultation with the people, able to interpret the Shari'a and legislate when necessary.

But nationalism, too, proved problematic in the Islamic world. The unity of the *umma* had long been an ideal. "It was not easy to build a national spirit, when Muslims had been used to think of themselves as Ottoman citizens and members of the *dar al-islam*," argues Karen Armstrong.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND MAUDUDI

The most influential Sunni pan-Islamic reform movement was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by an Egyptian schoolteacher, Hasan al-Banna. The brotherhood's original aims were moral as much as political: it sought to reform society by encouraging Islamic observance and opposing western cultural influences, rather than by attempting to capture the state by direct political action. However, during the mounting crisis over Palestine and the formation of a Jewish state after the second world war the brotherhood became increasingly radicalised. In 1948, the Prime Minister Nuqrashi Pasha was assassinated by a brotherhood member and Hasan al-Banna paid with his life in a retaliatory killing by the security services the following year.

The brotherhood played a leading part in the disturbances that led to the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy in 1952, but after the revolution it came into conflict with the nationalist government of Gamal Abdul Nasser. In 1954, after an attempt on Nasser's life, the brotherhood was again

suppressed, its members imprisoned, exiled, or driven underground. It was during this period that the brotherhood became internationalised, with affiliated movements springing up in Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In Saudi Arabia, under the vigorous leadership of Amir (later King) Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz, the brotherhood found refuge, and political and financial support, with funds for the Egyptian underground and salaried posts for exiled intellectuals.

A radical member of the brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, executed in 1966 for an alleged plot to overthrow the Egyptian government, would prove to be the Sunni Muslim world's most influential Islamist theorist. Some of Qutb's key ideas, however, are directly attributable to the Indian scholar and journalist Abul Ala Maududi, whose works became available in Arabic translation during the 1950s. One of Maududi's doctrines, in particular, would have a major impact on Islamic political movements. It was the idea that the struggle for Islam was not for the restoration of an ideal past, but for a principle vital to the here and now: the vice-regency of man under God's sovereignty. The jihad was therefore not just a defensive war for the protection of the Islamic territory or *dar al-islam*. It might be waged against governments which prevent the preaching of true Islam, against *jahiliya* (the state of ignorance before the coming of Islam).

Qutb advocated the creation of a new elite among Muslim youth who would fight the new *jahiliya* as the Prophet Muhammad had fought the old one. Like the Prophet and his companions, this elite must choose when to withdraw from the *jahiliya* and when to seek contact with it. His ideas set the agenda for Islamic radicals throughout the Sunni Muslim world. Groups influenced by them included Shukri Mustafa, a former Muslim Brotherhood activist and leader of a group known as Takfir wa Hijra who followed the early Kharijis in designating grave sinners (in this case the government) as *kafirs* (infidels); Khalid Islambuli and Abd al-Salaam Farraj, executed for the murder of President Anwar Sadat in October 1981; and the Hizb al-Tahrir (Liberation Party) founded in 1952 by Sheikh Taqi al-Din al-Nabahani (1910–77), a graduate of al-Azhar whose writings lay down detailed prescriptions for a restored caliphate.

THE IMPACT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

A major boost to Islamic radicals from Algeria to Pakistan, arrived when the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power after the collapse of the Pahlavi regime in February 1979. During the final two decades of the 20th century the Iranian revolution remained the inspiration for Muslim radicals from Morocco to Indonesia. Despite this universalist appeal, however, the revolution never succeeded in spreading beyond the confines of Shi'i communities and even among them its capacity to mobilise the people remained limited. During the eight-year war that followed Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 the Iraqi Shi'is who form about 60 per cent of the population conspicuously failed to support their co-religionists in Iran.

The revolution did spread to Shi'i communities in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, but generally proved unable to cross the sectarian divide. The new Shi'i activism in these countries either stirred up sectarian conflicts or stimulated severe repression by Sunni governments (as in Iraq and Bahrein).

Within Iran the success of the revolution had rested on three factors usually absent from the Sunni world: the mixing of Shi'a and Marxist ideas among the radicalised urban youth during the 1970s; the autonomy of the Shi'a religious establishment which, unlike the Sunni *ulama*, disposed of a considerable amount of social power as a body or "estate," and the expectations of popular Shi'ism for the return of the Twelfth Imam.

The leading Shi'a exponent of Islam as a revolutionary ideology was Ali Shari'ati (who died in 1977), a historian and sociologist who had been partly educated in Paris. Shari'ati reached large numbers of youths from the traditional classes by blending the thought of mystics such as Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra with the insights of Marx, Sartre and Camus. The result was an eclectic synthesis of Islamic and leftist ideas. God was virtually identified with the people, justifying revolutionary action in the name of Islam. Shari'ati's ideas, disseminated by means of photocopies and audio tapes, provided a vital link between the student vanguard and the more conservative forces which brought down the Shah's regime. The latter were mobilised by Sayyid Ruhallah Khomeini who had come to prominence as the leading critic of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's "white revolution" during the early 1960s. The Shah's agricultural and social reforms threatened the interest of the religious establishment, not least because the estates from which many of the *ulama* drew their incomes were expropriated or divided up. Exiled to Najaf in Iraq, Khomeini developed his theory of government which broke with tradition by insisting that government be entrusted directly to the religious establishment.

ROOTS OF MODERN FUNDAMENTALISM

The factors that contributed to the revolution in Iran sustained the Islamist movements elsewhere too. The socialism, secularism and dreams of pan-Arab nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s have given way to a form of political Islam known in the west as Islamic fundamentalism. The collapse of communism made Islam an attractive ideological weapon against post-colonial regimes perceived as corrupt and authoritarian. In countries lacking effective democratic institutions the mosque and the network of activities surrounding it can enjoy a degree of immunity. If governments dare to close down "rebel" mosques they confirm the charges of disbelief levelled against them by their opponents.

The explosion of information technology has also undercut the authority of the literate elites, while exposing ever-growing numbers of people to transgressive western entertainment and advertising. In many countries a rapid increase in urbanisation has created a vast new proletariat of recently

urbanised migrants susceptible to the messages of populist preachers and demagogues. In countries such as Egypt the Islamist (fundamentalist) political movements, through their welfare organisations, have been able to fill the gaps caused by government failure to deal with poverty, housing shortages and other social problems.

The religious revival in modern Islam is a reflection of the pace of social and technological change in the Muslim world. In this respect the causes are similar to those in Latin America and parts of sub-Saharan Africa where the late 20th century has seen a massive increase in the activities of Protestant churches. However, the increase in Islamic observance evidenced by such indicators as prayer, fasting, and attendance at the *hajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, is inevitably associated with the political aspirations of Muslims, most of whom live in post-colonial states run by governments perceived as lacking in legitimacy. The rise of mass education and, increasingly, the appearance of audio-visual modes of communication has led to a decline in traditional sources of religious authority among both the *ulama* and the leadership of the Sufi brotherhoods. The gap has been filled by a variety of movements and leaders, all of whom claim a religious legitimacy for their acts. The revivalist movements which dominate the headlines are modern, not just in their methods, but also in the sense that they have absorbed into a traditional Islamic discourse many political ideas imported from outside the Islamic tradition (see page 44).

Though Islamist movements have usually been inspired by local conditions, the international factors should not be ignored. Veterans of the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation formed the core of armed and trained Islamist groups in Algeria, Chechnya, Yemen, and Egypt—and seem to be the main recruits to Osama bin Laden's network. At the height of the Afghan war there are said to have been between 10,000 and 12,000 *mujahidin* from Arab countries financed from mosques and private contributions in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Many of them are reported to have been trained by the CIA. Saudi influence also operates at the religious or ideological level. Many of the Islamists active in Egypt and Algeria spent time in Saudi Arabia as teachers or exiles, where they became converted to the rigid version of Islam practised in that country.

Everywhere Islamisation policies, whether imposed from above by governments, or applied locally, have led to restrictions on the rights of women and religious minorities as modernist interpretations have given ground to more traditionalist attitudes. The tendency to articulate political aims in Islamic terms found constituencies in newly urbanised migrants whose understandings were typically formed in rural village milieus by mullahs or *ulama* with minimal access to modern influences.

THE FAILURE OF POLITICS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Modernisation has occurred in the Muslim heartlands, but it continues to generate significant resistance. It has happened through rural exodus,

emigration, consumption, the change in family behaviour (a lower birthrate), but also through the cinema, music, clothing, satellite television, that is, through the globalisation of culture. The resulting confusion has particularly affected the position of women, formerly the protected and symbolically "invisible" half of traditional Muslim societies. As in most other parts of the world the global economy is breaking down old extended family structures, leading to a growing necessity for women to earn cash incomes. Moreover, under modern conditions sectarian or ethnic rivalries that coexisted in a ritualised manner in pre-modern times acquire a murderous dimension. In marked contrast to their predecessors, modern Muslim governments have tried to enforce religious and ideological uniformity on all their citizens, regardless of religious background. The result has been a significant increase in sectarian conflicts in countries with different Muslim traditions, including Turkey and Pakistan.

The legitimacy of the territorial governments established after decolonisation was always open to challenge on Islamic grounds. The new national states were imposed on societies where the culture of public institutions was weak and where ties of kinship prevailed over allegiances to corporate bodies. In most middle eastern countries and many others beyond the Muslim heartlands, the ruling institutions fell victim to manipulation by factions based on kinship, regional, or sectarian loyalties. Even when the army took power, as the only corporate group possessing internal cohesion, the elite corps buttressing the leadership were often drawn from a particular family, sect, or tribe. In the period following decolonisation the new elites legitimised themselves by appealing to nationalist goals. The failure to deliver either economically or militarily (especially in the case of the states confronting Israel, and in Pakistan's failure to recover the disputed part of Kashmir from India) has led to an erosion of their popular bases and the rise of movements pledged to restore Islamic forms of government after years of *jahiliya* rule.

Following the collapse of communism, Islamism is likely to dominate the political discourse in Muslim lands for the foreseeable future. But for all the anxieties about a future "clash of civilisations" it seems unlikely to effect significant external political change. The practical effects of Islamisation entails, not a confrontation with the west, but rather a cultural retreat into the mosque and private family space. Because the Shari'a protects the family—the only institution to which it grants real autonomy—the culture of Islam is likely to become increasingly passive, privatised, and consumer-orientated. Yet the new technologies invade the previously sacred space of the Muslim home. It is impossible to censor satellite dishes, e-mail, or access to the internet—except in small, highly urbanised areas.

Existing Muslim states are locked into the international system. Despite the turbulence in Algeria and episodes of violence in Egypt there have been fewer violent changes of government in the middle east since 1970 than in the preceding two decades when different versions of Arab

nationalism competed for power. At the same time the political instability in Pakistan and the continuing civil war in Afghanistan indicate that Islam in its current political or ideological forms is unable to transcend ethnic and sectarian divisions. The territorial state, though never formally sanctified by Islamic tradition, is proving highly resilient, not least because of the support it receives militarily and economically through the international system. For all the protests by Islamist movements that Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 was a "Muslim affair" the result of Operation Desert Storm (in which the Muslim armies of Egypt, Pakistan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia took part alongside those of the US and Britain) demonstrated conclusively that where major economic and political interests are at stake, the status quo wins.

A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

(4) CHALLENGES FOR ISLAM

Woman in a burqa, Afghanistan

WOMEN AND THE LAW

No subject is more fraught with controversy than the relation of women and Islam. On one side of the debate there exists the widespread perception that the faith oppresses and even persecutes women; at the other there are arguments about cultural authenticity, about the rights of women to assert themselves in ways that differ from the habits of female self-assertion current in non-Muslim societies. Historically the patriarchal family and the extended networks of kinship connected with it have proved to be among the most durable social structures in Muslim societies, far more durable than structures built around professional association or class interest. Islamic law privileges the family over other institutions: the laws of inheritance, favouring males over females, are written in the Koran along with other discriminatory provisions, such as the inferiority of female testament in certain court proceedings. The law, however, is not always a reliable guide to actual social practice. Slavery and concubinage, widely practised in pre-colonial times, are permitted under the Shari'a, but both have diminished in Muslim societies. Unlike the *hijab* or "veil," they are not among the shibboleths insisted upon by today's Islamists. The patriarchal

family, upheld in the form of female chastity, is deeply embedded in the semantics of Islam. The word *haram* (sacred, forbidden, taboo) shares the same root with *harim*—the part of the household reserved for women. The power of the female hidden, as opposed to manifest masculinity, is fundamental to the Koranic notion of the divine.

Muslim traditionalists, most of them men, argue that the Prophet of Islam greatly improved the position of the Arabian women of his time, guaranteeing them basic rights in marriage that were denied to the women of the time of ignorance (the *jahiliya*). Meccan *suras* of the Koran refer with abhorrence to the custom of female infanticide and the neglect of widows and orphans. Islamic women were given guaranteed rights of inheritance under the protective umbrella of the family. A woman's husband was obligated to provide for her and her children. Although polygyny (one man and a plurality of wives) was permitted, the man was limited to four wives, each of whom had to be treated equally. No spiritual inequality is implied. The Koran explicitly addresses itself to females as well as males and, morally, women will be as answerable for their actions on the Day of Judgment as men.

That said, however, there are particular verses which testify to the legal inferiority of women. A husband may physically chastise a recalcitrant or disobedient wife, when other measures have failed. In certain legal proceedings a woman's testimony is only worth half that of a man (it is assumed that she will be unfamiliar with business matters and that she will need a friend to jog her memory). In 7th-century Arabia Islam improved the status of women, not least by improving their security in marriage and property, but modern feminists wishing to move beyond the draconian punishments for infidelity or illicit sexual activity (*zina*), face a theological obstacle. As the unalterable speech of God the Koran is deemed to be non-negotiable. To demand an end to the Koran's discriminatory provisions is to challenge the dogma that the text is fixed for eternity.

Marriage in Islam is contractual and, given that contracts are negotiable, reformers and modernisers have argued that legal imbalances can be countered by specific contractual provisions, for instance by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad's great-granddaughter, Sukayna bint Hussein. She stipulated that her husband remain monogamous. However, not all the legal schools accept the woman's right to set the terms of the contract in this way and in any case her ability to do so is likely to be contingent on the power and status of her family.

Young people in Islam are urged to marry with the explicit objective of avoiding exposure to sexual temptation. "Young men, those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it keeps you from looking at women and preserves your chastity," says one of the *hadiths*. Under the Shari'a, the marriage contract—*nikah*—is a legal contract sanctioned by divine law. It is not, as in Christianity, a sacrament. According to most legal authorities the woman's *wali* or guardian (usually her father) enters into the marriage

on her behalf and most agree that a virgin may be forced to marry a man of her father's choice. Only the Shi'a views the woman "as a full legal entity coequal with her male counterpart." A Muslim woman's interest is supposed to be secured by the *mahr*, or dowry, provided by her husband, a sum of money or its equivalent in household goods and chattels, which remains in her possession should her husband initiate divorce.

The husband has the right of divorce by *talaq*—repudiation or unilateral declaration. He must pronounce the formula, "I divorce you" three times; the first two declarations are followed by the so-called *idda*, or waiting period of three menstrual cycles, to ensure that the woman is free from pregnancy, or, if pregnant, to ensure the husband's paternity. During this period, family and friends are encouraged to effect a reconciliation. If this fails the third declaration finalises the divorce, without recourse to a court. A man will usually have custody of his children beyond the age of seven for boys, or nine for girls. If the wife initiates divorce, a procedure known as *khul*, she sacrifices her dowry. Muslim men are permitted to marry non-Muslim women from the People of the Book—Jews and Christians. But the reverse does not apply.

ISLAM AND SEX

Patriarchal assumptions pervade the Shari'a as interpreted by most traditionalists. A man's right to sexual satisfaction is divinely instituted. The wife does not have the right to refuse her husband's sexual demands. Among the Twelver Shi'a, men's sexual privileges are taken a stage further, with the temporary marriage contract (*mut'a* or *sigheh*), which may be signed for a fixed period of time ranging from one hour to 99 years. While critics see the institution as a form of legalised prostitution, leading figures in the Islamic Republic of Iran have actively promoted it, arguing that it constitutes, "an ethically and morally superior alternative to the 'free' relations between the sexes prevalent in the west."

"Copulate and procreate," runs a well-known *hadith*, "for I shall gain glory from your numbers at the Day of Judgment." Unlike the virginal Jesus, the Prophet of Islam is celebrated as enjoying not just the company of women but the pleasures of sex. After the death of his first wife, Khadija, Muhammad is said to have married at least nine women, possibly as many as thirteen. *Hadiths* proclaim his virility. One claims he had intercourse with nine of his wives in a single night. Christian polemicists used such images to depict the Prophet as a monster of sensuality. Modern Muslim apologists have reacted defensively, insisting that Muhammad's marriages were either political—aimed at cementing tribal alliances—or designed to provide social security for the women, several of whom were widows. While both these explanations are convincing in the context of a pastoral nomadic society where polygyny was the norm, they need not exclude the image of Muhammad as the ideal charismatic leader, a figure classically associated with sexual prowess.

Sexual desire is sometimes spoken of in Islam as a "manifestation of God's wisdom," and a motivation "to incite men to try and attain the perfect delight" of heaven. This allows sexuality to be seen as a form of piety. But it is also perceived as dangerous and potentially destructive of the social order determined by God. The sense that good social order is contingent on regulating sexuality—particularly female sexuality—becomes institutionalised. The seclusion of women is justified by fear of female sexual power: an atavistic cultural memory, perhaps, of the female deities destroyed by the prophet of a triumphant singular God.

Gender differences are strongly emphasised, and any aspect of behaviour in dress or comportment that clouds the distinction is discouraged. Homosexuality, in this view, is a major sin, "a reversal of the natural order." Men should grow beards in order to distinguish themselves from infidels. "Be different from the polytheists," says a *hadith*, "let the beard grow and trim the mustache." It is *makruh* (disapproved of) to shave the beard or drastically cut or shorten it, but it is *mustahab* (commendable) "to remove something from its length and breadth if it grows big."

Apart from her husband, if she is married, a woman's social circle must be confined, according to traditional interpretations of the law, to female friends and her *mahrams*—those male members of her extended family whom she cannot marry by law. These are fathers, sons, brothers, foster-brothers, nephews, and male in-laws. Local customs vary, but the taboo on female association with men outside the *mahram* relationship is widespread in Muslim societies from Morocco to South Asia.

THE FUNDAMENTAL UNIT OF THE FAMILY

There being no church in Islam to compete with the family as a focus of allegiance, the individual has remained much more closely tied to the bonds of kinship. Women may sometimes have enjoyed an honoured and protected position in this system, but their freedom was limited by their reproductive function as genetic carriers and bearers of kinship identity. Today, the privileged status that the family had under the Shari'a continues to militate against the assertion of alternative institutions or communities based on free association or common purpose. In many Muslim countries, public institutions have been subverted or undermined by the persistence of kinship solidarities: examples are the ruling Ba'ath (Renaissance) parties in Syria and Iraq, both of which are dominated by kinship groups from sectarian minorities.

The collapse of the majority of the world's Muslim states in the face of European military power during the colonial era made the family the primary refuge of Muslim identity. Men who were ridiculed or rejected in the new colonial governmental and economic structures, found their families a sanctuary, a representation of Islamic religious values in which they were honoured. If the family was a sacred area, relatively free from the humiliations imposed by colonial overlords, the woman was its centre, the

hub around which all its economic, personal and political activities revolved. Family law was the core of the Shari'a: because of its sacred resonances, reforming governments were reluctant to tamper with it, despite changes introduced in the areas of civil, commercial, and penal law. When reforms were introduced they were perceived by traditionalists as coming from a hostile west. Wealthy women such as Hoda Sharawi in Egypt were the first to throw off the veil, a symbol of oppression for emancipated upper-class women. But, for others, it remains a symbol of cultural authenticity. The upper classes who saw veiling as oppressive, and adopted European dress and manners, were perceived as having abandoned Islamic tradition, identity, and family values.

THE VEIL

The standardised Islamic dress worn by women in an increasing number of Muslim cities has no particular historical precedents, although it conforms in a general way to ideas of female modesty extrapolated from the Koran. Known as the *ziy shari'* and the *hijab* (veil), these robes with nun-like wimples covering the head are designed to conceal both hair and feminine curves and are claimed by their wearers to be similar to the costumes worn by Muhammad's wives (who are ordered to protect themselves from "behind the veil or curtain" in the only Koranic reference to female seclusion). This invented Muslim tradition first made its appearance among the female affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood (the Muslim Sisters) during the 1930s. It became increasingly popular during the 1970s and 1980s, and generally signals support among the women wearing it for the aims of the Islamist movements. Some analysts insist adoption of the *hijab*, far from signalling the internalisation by women of patriarchal attitudes, may actually represent the contrary, facilitating a new social and spatial mobility, allowing women to "invade" public spaces previously reserved for men. By adopting "Islamic dress"—it is argued—a woman may even defy patriarchal authority while making it plain to the non-*mahram* males she encounters of necessity outside the home that she is not sexually available, and that harassing her is tantamount to a sacrilegious act. The authority to which she considers herself answerable is no longer that of her father or brother, but that of God or perhaps the religious leader who claims to speak on his behalf. Yet studies show that women who adopt the *hijab* are less likely than unveiled women to seek work outside the home or to be involved in higher education. Whether adopted voluntarily or as a result of legislation, the veil has become a symbolic marker of cultural identity, a shibboleth by which the Muslim woman is seen to proclaim her religious and political allegiance. In Afghanistan, the tent-like *burqa*, completely covering the woman's body, became prevalent after decades of war increased pressures for female segregation and seclusion.

LEGAL REFORMS AND BACKLASH

The Taleban regime in the Afghanistan appears to justify the belief that women are entirely subjugated in Islam. However, in reality women have played a powerful role throughout Islamic history. In the Koran the *sura* of Mary is one of the most moving. She is considered the most perfect example of *ubudiyya* or "service" to God. Women played an exalted role in Islam during its early centuries. Sukaina, for example, the daughter of the martyred Hussein and the grand-daughter of the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law Ali, was the most accomplished and virtuous woman of her time. In the 12th century the Sheikha Shuhda, called by her admirers the Fakhr un-Nisa ("the glory of women"), lectured publicly at the great mosque in Baghdad. Had she belonged to the world of Christendom she would have been burnt to death as a witch.

In recent decades, under pressure from reformers, attempts have been made to rectify some of the legal inequalities facing women—for example, by restricting the right of unilateral divorce, or requiring that a wife register her permission with the court before her husband avails himself of the right to additional wives. Several countries have raised the minimum age of marriage. Nowadays it generally stands at 18 for boys, varying from 15 to 18 for girls, depending on the country. After the Iranian revolution of 1979, however, the victorious clergy abolished the family protection law introduced by the Shah, which set the age of marriage at 18 for girls and boys, restoring the minimum to 15 for boys and nine for girls.

Lowering the age of marriage is evidently designed to strengthen the patriarchal family against the pressures of individualism since parents are able to exercise more influence on younger people, especially girls, in their choice of marriage partners. At the same time established social networks are breaking down under the pressures of rapid urbanisation and economic change: everywhere women are exposed to encounters with men outside their *mahram* groups, encounters still deemed by many to be fraught with sexual danger. Governments, such as that of Pakistan, have responded to populist demands for a "return to the Shari'a" by enacting laws which introduce Shari'a penalties. In 1979 the military government of General Zia ul Haqq introduced the Hudood Ordinance prescribing the Koranic punishments for *zina* (illicit sexual activity), theft, drinking, and false accusations of *zina*. The safeguards are such, however, that no thief has had his hand amputated. In Sudan, by contrast, amputations have been applied to non-Muslims as well as Muslims convicted of theft.

The symbolism conveyed by veiling may be ambiguous, but there can be no doubt that Muslim women are becoming a force to be reckoned with in the public domain. Even Saudi Arabia, bastion of Islamic sexual apartheid, has witnessed a public demonstration by women protesting against Shari'a rulings forbidding them to drive motor vehicles. Among the less affluent, labour migration forces changes in the sexual division of labour, with a significant proportion of households now headed by women. The

universities are producing more and more female graduates, especially in Iran. Challenges to religiously grounded restrictions are inevitable. The signs of change are already apparent. The female vote is reported to have contributed substantially to the unexpected election of Muhammad Khatami to the Iranian presidency in May 1997, on a platform that included an easing of restrictions on women and greater female participation in management of the economy and state.

CENSORSHIP AND TOLERATION

In a modern western society it is generally taken for granted that other peoples' religious beliefs are to be tolerated, even respected. The exclusive truth of one's own religion is, however, a notion that was central to traditional Islam, as it was to traditional Christianity. In recent times it has survived better in Islam, the Koran scholar Michael Cook has argued.

According to Cook, traditional Muslim scholars saw the dispute over toleration in the Koran in two key verses. The first they dubbed the "sword verse": "Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; God is all-forgiving, all-compassionate." In other words you should kill the polytheists unless they convert.

The second verse, dubbed the "tribute verse," is far gentler: "Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden—such men as practise not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book—until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled." This is rather opaque but seems to establish a category of unbelievers who need not be fought (once they have experienced some sort of humiliation) and this category seems to include both Jews and Christians since both have been given the Book.

The Caliph Umar, in the 7th century, and the Muslim Kurdish warrior Saladin in the 12th both offered full protection to Jews and Christians. (The Crusaders slaughtered every Muslim and Jew in Jerusalem in 1099.) But while the early history of Islam was one of religious tolerance, political Islam has in recent times tended to reject this tolerance. The Taleban's destruction of the giant rock-hewn Buddhas at Bamiyan in March 2001 reflects the most extreme expression of Islamic iconoclasm. Other recent instances of Islamic intolerance have been the execution of a beautiful Saudi princess for adultery, televised in 1980 as *Death of a Princess*; the execution for blasphemy in Khartoum of the pious Sheikh Muhammad Mahmud Taha; the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini declaring Salman Rushdie an apostate for his novel *The Satanic Verses*; the banning of the Pakistani gynaecologist/writer Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja* for its sexual explicitness; and the forced annulment (on the grounds of apostasy) of the marriage of the Egyptian intellectual Abu Zayd to his wife Ebtehal.

As far back as 1926, Egypt's greatest writer Taha Hussein was attacked by the Al Azhar academy in Cairo for his *Fi l-Shi'r Al Jahili* ("On Pre-Islamic Poetry") in which he claimed that pre-Islamic poetry had been fabricated in the post-Islamic period. Although Hussein repented and rewrote his book, he was dismissed from his university post by then prime minister, Ismail Sidki, in 1931. Azharis led demonstrations against him that culminated in book-burning. He was harassed over a two year period and deprived of state employment.

It is probably appropriate, however, to date the modern banning of books in Islamic societies under the direct influence of the Al-Azhar academy to 1959 when Naguib Mahfouz's *Awlat Haritna* (translated as *Children of Gabalawi*) was serialised. The *ulama* accused Mahfouz of causing offence to the prophets of Islam from Abraham onwards.

The Algerian writer Tahar Djaout summed up the dilemma of the writer and thinker in the Islamic world today when he said, "Silence is also death. If you speak you die. If you keep quiet you die. So speak and die." Djaout was shot outside his home in May 1993 and died in a coma a week later.

IRAN: A FUSION BETWEEN ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY?

Ever since the Islamic revolution ushered in by the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, Iran has enjoyed open debate in the lower house of parliament and has allowed fairly open verbal criticism in the streets. There have been abuses of human rights but free expression has been permitted as a safety valve, unlike in neighbouring Iraq where a totalitarian government allows no debate at all. In Iran opposition newspapers have flourished, been suppressed and flourished again, depending on the balance of power between pragmatists and hard-liners in the government. While elsewhere Islam has tended to be imposed from the top by totalitarian regimes, it has emerged in Iran through the grass-roots.

Iran has an odd combination of representative democracy and Islamic rule. All citizens over 15 years have the vote. The prime minister leads the government and is elected by popular election every four years. But the head of state is appointed for life by Iran's Assembly of Experts. This assembly is the supreme constitutional authority; and candidates for it are vetted heavily by the clerics: reformers and women are almost always barred before the polls open.

The relative success of Iranian democracy goes some way to challenging the idea that Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible. But there are strong currents in Islam that make democracy problematic: the lack of a developed notion of the public sphere; the corresponding strength of patriarchal family allegiances; and the immutability of Islamic law (at least in some readings). In practice few Islamic countries can be classified as democracies with proper respect for individual freedom and the rule of law.

One reason why Iran has advanced as far as it has may be because it follows the Shi'a tradition. The mullahs in Iran exercise the right of

ijtihad—independent interpretation of the Shari'a—in contrast to most of their Sunni counterparts, who until recently tended to be bound by *taqlid*—imitation of precedents applied by their predecessors. The authority of the Shi'a clergy is reinforced by the considerable wealth they dispose of from numerous Shi'i shrines, religious taxes such as *zakat* and *khums*, and as the corporate owners of urban and agricultural estates. (For example, a religious endowment administered by the clergy owns more than half of Mashhad, Iran's eastern regional capital, a city of more than 1m inhabitants.) Prior to 1979 they had a long history of defiance to the state. In 1890 they launched a nation wide boycott of all tobacco goods in protest against the granting of a royal monopoly to an Englishman, forcing the Shah into a humiliating retreat. This triumph led directly to constitutional revolution in 1905-6, in which the clergy played a leading, if ambivalent, part, some seeking formal restrictions on the powers of the Shah while others strongly opposing a western-style constitutional settlement.

In 1963, Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, a senior clergyman from Qum, was expelled to Iraq after mounting a vociferous campaign of opposition to the pro-western Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's social and agricultural reforms. Under the self-interested protection of the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, Khomeini was free to preach his doctrine of *Vilayet-e faqih* (the "governance of the jurist"). This was in effect an argument that in the absence of the "Hidden Imam" the *ulama* had the right, if not the duty, to seize power. Photocopies and audio-cassettes of Khomeini's lectures were smuggled into Iran and widely disseminated among the population. In 1978, on the recommendation of the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, trying to patch up the differences between Iran and Iraq, Khomeini was expelled. He chose to settle near Paris where, by astute manipulation of the international media, he was able to present himself as the leader in exile (while secretly engaging in correspondence with the Shah). Unusually for a Shi'a Ayatollah, he allowed himself to be referred to by the title imam—normally reserved for the twelve holy imams in succession to the Prophet. When, in February 1979, following the Shah's departure, Khomeini flew to Tehran, 2m people turned up at the airport to greet him. As one of Khomeini's leading opponents, the conservative Ayatollah Shariatmadari, observed: "No one expected the Hidden Imam to arrive in a jumbo jet!"

Khomeini's dominance over the Iranian political scene until his death in 1989 gave the false impression that he spoke for the Iranian clergy as a whole. In fact, two of his most vociferous opponents, the Ayatollahs Shariatmadari and the popular left wing Taleqani, came from the ranks of the senior clergy. Ayatollah Montazeri, whom Khomeini had designated as his successor, was later set aside by Khomeini for defending opponents of the revolution and criticising the death sentence passed on Salman Rushdie. Many senior clergy remain opposed to Khomeini's idea that the clergy should take an active role in politics. As the clerical government

becomes increasingly corrupt and unpopular, it seems probable that the quietist tendency in Shi'ism will reassert itself. The election of the pragmatic Muhammad Khatami to the presidency in May 1997 by a landslide victory against the establishment candidate marked a significant step in this direction.

More than two years into his presidency, however, it became apparent that Khatami was far from being in full control of the state. Despite his liberalising instincts and his desire to end Iran's international isolation—symbolised by his government's formal undertaking to Britain not to implement Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie—Khatami was powerless to prevent the suppression of the pro-democracy student demonstrations that rocked Tehran during the summer of 1999.

The year 2001 has been good for the reformers. A reformist parliament was elected in the spring, followed by Khatami's landslide re-election in June. This is the strongest popular mandate yet for liberalisation. But the parlous state of the Iranian economy could still undermine Khatami, and the country remains caught between conservatism and reform. Khatami's support for the American led coalition against terrorism after the events of 11th September was quickly followed by an anti-American tirade from Iran's supreme spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran is one of the few countries in the Islamic world to which a Muslim might look for an Islamic renaissance. But the achievement remains fragile and incomplete. Indonesia and Malaysia have also shown progress towards a more democratic and pluralistic form of Islam but there have been setbacks there too. Indonesia looks less politically stable after the break away of East Timor. And despite Malaysia's recent economic success (partly thanks to the Chinese minority) the conflict between the country's leader Mahathir Muhammad and Anwar Ibrahim, his former deputy, has cast a shadow over Malaysian politics and set it on a less liberal course.

IS FUNDAMENTALISM INHERENT IN ISLAM?

The word fundamentalist has passed into English usage to describe those Muslims who seek by whatever means to restore or establish an Islamic state. According to this view it is the task of the Islamic state to enforce obedience to the Shari'a. The term fundamentalist has Christian origins: fundamentalism was a movement directed against liberal theology as taught in American Protestant seminaries, in particular those teachings that questioned literal understandings of such supernatural events as the six-day creation, the virgin birth, and the physical resurrection and imminent return of Christ. Muslim writers and ideologists described as fundamentalist have, on the other hand, all adopted some modernist and allegorical interpretations of the Koran, while, conversely, virtually all believing Muslims—not just those described as fundamentalists—see the Koran as the eternal unmediated Word of God.

Those seeking to defend Islam against what they see as the corrupting

effects of modern secularism focus on action rather than belief. Throughout history Islamic rectitude has tended to be defined in relation to practice rather than doctrine. Muslims who dissented from the majority on issues of leadership or theology were usually tolerated provided their social behaviour conformed. Muslim radicals look to a restoration of Islamic law backed by the power of the state to enforce behavioural conformity (ortho*praxy*) rather than doctrinal conformity (orthodoxy).

The means to achieving this end, however, may vary according to the political institutions of the country concerned. In some countries, such as Jordan, Muslim radicals sit as parliamentary representatives. In Algeria, and to a lesser extent Egypt, they are engaged in an armed conflict with the state. In Sudan and formerly in Pakistan, they have exercised power on the backs of military dictatorships. In Iran they operate under a hybrid system, sitting as parliamentary representatives chosen from a restricted list of like-minded candidates. However, even when, as in Jordan, they adopt democratic channels as a means to an end, democracy as such may be rejected. Most Muslims belonging to the militant tendency challenge the fundamentals of the western-derived international order: in the terms of one of their most influential mentors, the Indian born intellectual Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (1903–79), they aim to replace the sovereignty of the people expressed through parliamentary legislation with the sovereignty of God as revealed in its perfection and finality through the Shari'a.

Critics of this approach—and there are many within Islam—have two main arguments. Historically, they point out that no Islamic society, even during the high tide of Islamic civilisation in the 9th to the 15th centuries, has been governed exclusively according to Islamic law. There has always been a gap between the formulations of the jurists and the exercise of political power. Moreover, given the enormous differences between Muslim societies, Islamic law has everywhere been supplemented by local customary laws. The Shari'a has never been a historical-legal reality.

The second, more damaging, criticism is misrepresentation. Far from being exclusively Islamic, the ideologies being advanced are really hybrids mixing Islamic concepts with 20th-century ideas, liberal and totalitarian. The founders of modern political Islam—the Indian Maududi (1903-1979), the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) who was executed by Nasser, and the Ayatollah Khomeini (1902–89)—were profoundly influenced by the western political and intellectual cultures they professed to oppose. Thus Maududi's critique of western materialism and moral decadence was informed by fascist attacks on democracy and an admiration for the dictators of the 1930s. Qutb's call for action against barbarism (*jahiliya*), far from being based on traditional Islam, is thoroughly modern in espousing an "existentialist," action-oriented commitment, while his claim that democracy and social justice have Islamic origins is considered by some to be spurious, based on an ahistorical reading of Islam's sacred texts. (Even the anti-Semitism he adopted in the wake of the Arab–Israeli conflict is

partly based on European ideas.) Likewise the Islamic constitution of Iran, introduced by Khomeini in 1979, is a mixture of western and Islamic forms, not an Islamic constitution as such. Far from being subject to Islamic law, Khomeini made it clear that the Islamic state, as successor to the Prophet Muhammad, had the power to override Islamic law, even in such fundamentals of the faith as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage.

In the view of political Islam's numerous critics, Muslim and non-Muslim, Islam as religion should be distinguished from Islam as political ideology. To call the latter "fundamentalism" is not only misleading, it concedes too much to the advocates of political Islam by implying that the defence of Islam's fundamentals invariably demands radical political action. On the contrary, moderate Muslims argue that so long as a government does not prevent the believer from carrying out his or her religious duties, it cannot be described as un- or anti-Islamic.

A MYSTICAL FUTURE?

The call for a return to the Shari'a reflects a popular need in the Islamic world for a cultural identity challenged by the inroads of the west. Among many modern Muslims there exists a desire to use the methods and technologies of the west without adopting the lifestyle of the west. Koranic punishments, the veiling of women and the segregation of the sexes have all become symbols of this new cultural thinking. Ironically, the Islamic movement has often been spear-headed not by illiterate fanatics but by westernised elitists such as Hasan Al-Turabi, the Svengali of the past decades of Islamic rule in Sudan. Osama bin Laden and many of his associates come from the wealthy, well-educated elite. Islamic scientists and engineers have, in particular, felt that their studies have forced them away from the Islamic heritage in which they seek their roots.

In the long term the globalisation of culture through the revolution in communications technology must lead to a form of secularisation in Muslim societies, with far more religious and cultural choice. A significant factor will be the presence of a large and growing Muslim diaspora educated in the west, and able to rediscover in Islam a *voluntary* faith freed from the imperatives of enforcement and national pride. The Ismaili community headed by the Aga Khan offers an impressive example of how Islamic concerns for welfare and social justice can be harnessed to the ancient structures of learning and belief—the two jihads, the activist and the quietist, have been fused together in a dynamic combination.

The challenge for Islam today is to find forms of Islamic expression that can restore dignity to a Muslim word fractured by the impact of modernisation. The answers may lie in the spiritual disciplines of Sufism and the forward-looking orientations of modern Shi'ism. Some modern scholars link the rise of the Islamic fundamentalism with the decline of the Sufi orders. Without mysticism contemporary Muslims have been reduced to an Islamic form of western modernism.

A CONCISE GUIDE TO ISLAM

(5) STATES OF ISLAM

The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem

PROFILES OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Islam is the majority religion in 48 countries and a big minority in many others. The largest Muslim population is in Indonesia (160m), the second largest in Pakistan (156m) and the third largest in India (107m). The spiritual heartland of Islam is the Hejaz province of Saudi Arabia whose two cities Mecca and Jeddah were the backdrop to the introduction of Islam by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century AD. Traditionally Egypt has been the intellectual fulcrum of Islam because the most important centre of Islamic learning is Cairo's Al Azhar University.

Most of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) is Sunni Muslim. Sunnis form a majority in Egypt, the northern part of Sudan, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan), Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Gulf States, Yemen, Indonesia, Malaysia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Mali and Mauritania. Most Iranians are Shi'is. The Shi'is are about 60 per cent of the populations in Iraq and Bahrain.

The followers of the Shi'a "Twelfth Imam," who now number some 80m in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Gulf, are usually known as Imamis. The Ismailis found in India, Pakistan, east Africa, Europe, and north America as well as western China and central Asia, believe that their current imam, known by his Persian title of Aga Khan, is the 49th imam in a direct line of descent from Ali.

Islamic minorities exist worldwide including in Russia and China (where there are somewhere between 18m and 40m). Islam has spread quickly in poorer parts of the world, including Africa, where Christianity is considered a colonial residue and over-complex. Islam has also grown significantly in the west where it is the second largest religion in many parts of Europe and the third in the US. Variant forms of Islam exist among black Americans where movements such as the Nation of Islam have moved so far from orthodox Islam that they are considered distinct religions by some Muslims.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria

Of Algeria's population of over 31m almost all are Sunni Muslim. After a century of rule by France and a bloody civil war, Algeria became independent in 1962. The National Liberation Front (FLN) which fought for independence went on to build an "Islamic socialist" state, combining elements of Islamic doctrine with *dirigiste* economics. The regime had some economic success, based on oil and mineral exports, but in the 1980s a weakening economy and increasing social liberalism (including formal equality for women) fostered the growth of an Islamist opposition. The surprising first round success of the fundamentalist FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) party in a December 1991 ballot led the army to crack down on the FIS and postpone the subsequent elections. The Algerian army's dismantling of a democratic process which was favouring Islamic fundamentalists led to appalling bloodletting by the *eradicateurs* in the army on one side and by Islamic militants on the other. The FIS and the even more militant Islamic Armed Group (GIA) fought a low-level civil conflict with the secular state apparatus. The FIS's armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army, disbanded itself in January 2000 and many armed militants surrendered under an amnesty programme designed to promote national reconciliation. Nevertheless, residual fighting continues. Other concerns include large-scale unemployment and the need to diversify the petroleum and gas-based economy.

Egypt

Since its foundation by the Fatimids (969-1169) Egypt's Al Azhar University has been the intellectual centre of the Islamic world. Recent fatwas against intellectuals for supposed apostasy or heresy have been delivered by Al Azhari clerics. Hasan al Banna's Muslim Brotherhood, the

spearhead of Islamic fundamentalist movements, was founded in Cairo in the 1930s. Today Cairo is home to some of the most militant fundamentalist movements who rejected the secular socialism of President Gamal abd al Nasser and today reject the secular liberalism of the west.

Osama bin Laden's key advisers in his al Qaida organisation are said to be Ayman al Zawahiri and Sheikh Taseer Abdullah, both Egyptian. Abdullah is hoping to merge his Islamic Jihad movement with the Gama'a Islamiya led by Sheikh Umar abd al-Rahman, the blind Egyptian preacher jailed in America after being convicted for his role in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre. Another high-ranking Egyptian member is said to be Shawki al Islambouli, a brother of the militant fundamentalist who assassinated President Sadat in 1981. Muhammad Atta, the man US investigators suspect of having coordinated the 11th September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, was Egyptian. The fact that most of Bin Laden's closest associates are Egyptian may reflect the success of Egyptian President Mubarak in expelling his Islamist opponents.

Libya

Of Libya's 6.3m people, 97 per cent are Muslim. Since he took power in a 1969 military coup, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi has espoused a combination of socialism and Islam which he calls the Third International Theory. Regarding himself as a revolutionary leader, he used oil funds during the 1970s and 1980s to promote his ideology outside Libya, even supporting terrorists abroad to hasten the end of capitalism. Libyan military adventures failed. For example, Libyan troops sent into northern Chad were finally repelled in 1987. Libyan support for terrorism decreased after UN sanctions were imposed in 1992. Those sanctions were suspended in April 1999 when Qadhafi surrendered to a Scottish court sitting in the Hague the suspected terrorists, one of whom was later convicted of bombing Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie with the loss of 270 lives.

Sudan

Of Sudan's 29.8m people 75 per cent are Muslim. Southerners are Animist-Christian although the Christian population may only be 5 per cent. Military dictatorships have mostly run the country since independence from Britain in 1956. From 1969 the country was headed by Colonel Ja'afar Nimairi, a left-wing secularist. However, in 1983 he introduced Shari'a law which was applied rigorously. His execution of Mahmud Muhammad Taha, the elderly leader of the Republican Brothers, shocked many Sudanese. He also badly mismanaged Sudan's frail economy. In 1985 he was removed by the army. Over the past two decades, a civil war pitting black Christians and animists in the south against the Arab-Muslims of the north has cost at least 1.5m lives in war and famine-related deaths and displaced millions of others. A coup in 1989 brought an Islamic regime to power, formally headed by General Omar Bashir but supported by the Islamist leader

Hasan al-Turabi. Sudan soon became a pariah state. US missiles flattened a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum in 1998 (with one fatality), two weeks after 240 people were killed in bomb blasts at the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The Americans claimed, on evidence subsequently heavily criticised, that the factory was manufacturing chemical weapons and was linked to Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden himself, who had spent five years in Khartoum funding the building of bridges, roads and farms while developing his al Qaida terrorist group, had been forced to leave Sudan two years earlier in 1996. In September 2001 the US agreed to a lifting of UN sanctions against Sudan because it had backed their campaign against international terrorism.

Tunisia

Most Tunisians are Sunni of the Hanafi legal school. Since independence from France in 1956 Tunisia has enjoyed a reputation as the most pro-western of all North African countries and as the most moderate, although the regime has become increasingly repressive of late. It has maintained close relations with France. Its first president Habib Bourguiba ruled the country as a patriarchal figure until he became senile in 1987 and was replaced by President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. In 1971 the government unwittingly helped the budding fundamentalist movement by supporting the creation of an Islamic group at the University of Tunis in its effort to capture increasing Islamic sentiment and counter leftist intellectuals. The new government announced in 1988 that it would establish an Amnesty chapter, the first one permitted in the Arab world. At the same time Ben Ali ordered policy changes which would give Islam a more prominent role in public life. *Hijra* dates, for example, appeared on official documents. However, when this strategy failed he began to purge the Islamic tendency. Hundreds were arrested. The civil war involving radical fundamentalists in Algeria since 1991 has made Tunisia particularly edgy.

Tunis played an important role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, then peace process, when it offered a home to the PLO after it was expelled from Lebanon by the Israeli invasion in 1982. Tunisia was dragged into the wider forum of middle eastern politics after the Israeli attack on the PLO headquarters in Tunis in 1985. Under Ben Ali Tunisia's status as a moderate Arab state was maintained. In 1988 Tunisia resumed diplomatic relations with Egypt. Most Arab countries had severed them over Egypt's 1979 Camp David Accords with Israel.

THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

Iran

Of Iran's population of 76.4m, 89 per cent are Shi'a and 10 per cent Sunni. The Safavid empire was created by Shah Ismail (1502-24) who made Shi'ism the state religion. Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling Shah Reza Pahlavi was forced into

exile. The focus of opposition, the Ayatollah Khomeini, returned to Tehran in triumph. Conservative clerical forces subsequently crushed liberal, westernising elements. Militant Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran on 4th November 1979 and held it until 20th January 1981. During 1980-88, Iran fought a bloody, inconclusive war with Iraq over disputed territory. Iran agreed to end the war after Iraq's Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against the Kurdish village of Halbja. Khomeini's fatwa judging Salman Rushdie an apostate for his novel *The Satanic Verses* was a milestone in Islam's relationship with the west. In recent years Iranian pilgrims have used the *hajj* to Mecca to make political statements attacking Israel, the west, and by implication the pro-western Saudi dynasty.

In recent years the country has liberalised and created an amalgam of representative democracy and Islamic theocracy (see page 42). The liberals are led by Iran's popular President Khatami; the hard-liners by its supreme spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The possibility of a rapprochement with the US increased after the World Trade Centre was destroyed on 11th September 2001. Iran sent its condolences and the chant "Death to America" was dropped from prayer services in the mosques.

Iraq

Of Iraq's population of 23.1m 97 per cent are Muslim (Shi'a 60-65 per cent, Sunni 32-37 per cent). Formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq became an independent kingdom under British auspices in 1932. The king and the crown prince were brutally killed in 1958 and a republic was proclaimed. A series of military strongmen have ruled the country since, mainly from Sunni backgrounds, the latest being Saddam Hussein, who emerged from the pan-Arab secular Ba'th party. Territorial disputes with Iran led to a disastrous war (1980-1988). In August 1990 Iraq seized Kuwait, but was expelled by US-led, UN coalition forces during January-February 1991. The coalition did not occupy Iraq, however, thus allowing the regime to stay in power. In August 1992 the US, Britain and France began to enforce an air exclusion zone over southern Iraq in response to government persecution of Shi'a Muslims. On the 10th November 1994 Iraq recognised the independence and boundaries of Kuwait. Nevertheless, for the rest of the decade relations with the west were poor. In September 1996 US forces fired missiles at targets in southern Iraq after the Iraqi occupation of Kurdish Arbol. Following Kuwait's liberation, the UN Security Council required Iraq to destroy all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and to allow UN verification inspections. When Saddam Hussein suspended co-operation with UN arms inspectors in December 1998 there was a further round of US and British air strikes. UN trade sanctions remain in effect because of incomplete Iraqi compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. But contrary to popular belief, Iraq is allowed to use unlimited funds from oil sales to pay for food and medicines.

Jordan

Jordan's population of 6.3m is 92 per cent Sunni Muslim and 6 per cent Christian. For most of its history since independence from British Mandatory administration in 1946, Jordan was ruled by King Hussein (1953-1999). A pragmatic ruler, he successfully navigated competing pressures from the big powers, Arab states, Israel, and a large internal Palestinian population, through several wars and coup attempts. The 1970 civil war between the Jordanian army and Palestinian militias led to the expulsion of the latter and indirectly to the Lebanese civil war which started six years later. In 1989 the King resumed parliamentary elections and gradually permitted political liberalisation; in 1994 a formal peace treaty was signed with Israel. King Abdallah II—the eldest son of King Hussein and the English born Princess Muna—assumed the throne following his father's death in February 1999. In 1999 Jordan arrested dozens of Islamists on charges of being linked to Osama bin Laden.

Lebanon

Of Lebanon's 3.3m population 70 per cent are Muslim (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Ismaili and Alawi) and 30 per cent Christian (including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) although a pretence has been retained of an equal Muslim-Christian balance. Lebanon has made progress toward rebuilding its political institutions and regaining its national sovereignty since 1991 and the end of the devastating 16-year civil war. Under the Ta'if Accords—the blueprint for national reconciliation—the Lebanese have established a more just political system, particularly by giving Muslims a greater say in the political process while maintaining the institutionalisation of sectarian divisions in the government. Since the end of the war, the Lebanese have conducted several successful elections, most of the militias have been disbanded, and the Lebanese army has extended central government authority over most of the country. The Hizbullah ("Party of God"), the radical Shi'a party, retains its weapons. Syria maintains about 25,000 troops in Lebanon based mainly in Beirut, North Lebanon, and the Beka'a Valley. Syria's troop deployment was legitimised by the Arab League during Lebanon's civil war and by the Ta'if Accords. Israel's withdrawal from its security zone in southern Lebanon in May 2000 encouraged many Lebanese to demand that Syria withdraw its forces as well.

Palestine

Of the Palestinian West Bank's population of 2m, 75 per cent are Muslim, 8 per cent Christian and the remaining 17 per cent Jewish (in Jewish settlements). Of Gaza's 1m population all are Muslim apart from several thousand Jewish settlers. On 14th May 1948 the British pulled out of Palestine, handing over to the UN. The creation of the state of Israel the following day and the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians became for the latter the *Nakba* (catastrophe). Four Arab Israeli wars followed in 1948,

1956, 1967 and 1973. The Camp David Agreement of 1979 brought Egypt out of the conflict and saw a bitter division between Arab countries willing to recognise Israel and those who were not. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and Iraq's defeat at the hands of the US and its allies the following year widened these rifts.

The intifada against Israeli occupation lasted from 1987 to 1991 when the secret Oslo peace accords began. The Palestinians felt compelled to sue for peace after losing the support of the Arab Gulf countries during the Gulf war. The Oslo peace process, however, came to an abrupt halt with the so-called Al Aqsa intifada which was sparked off by Ariel Sharon's visit to Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock in September 2000. When America was attacked on 11th September 2001 Palestinians feared that Israel's hard-line government would capitalise on media attention to re-occupy Palestinian territory. Arafat gave blood and offered the US his fullest support.

Syria

Of Syria's population of 16.1m 74 per cent are Muslim (Alawi, Druze and other Muslim sects). Sixteen per cent are Christian. Following the Anglo-French carve-up of the Ottoman Empire during the first world war, Syria was ruled by France until independence in 1946. In the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Syria lost the Golan Heights to Israel. Since 1976, Syrian troops have been stationed in Lebanon, ostensibly in a peacekeeping capacity. In recent years, Syria and Israel have held regular peace talks over the return of the Golan Heights. Until its support for the US-led allies in the 1991 Gulf war Syria was labelled a terrorist state by the west but since Hafez Asad's death in 1998 and replacement by his son Bashar, Syria has started to liberalise and to open up slowly to the outside world.

When Bashar came to power Asad's brother Rifaat Asad was threatening a comeback although his own son has pledged his loyalty to Bashar. The 62 year old Rifaat has lived in exile since the 1980s after his defence brigades mounted a failed challenge to Asad's power base when the President was dying. Challenges may now come from power groups within Syria's Sunni majority or from Alawis angry with recent corruption trials. However, the mostly Alawite officer class, much of which has become rich through corruption, may not want to rock the boat. If the Alawites fall there is likely to be a bloodbath. Rifaat, who supported his brother in the destruction of Hama's old town in 1982, would not be a popular figure. It seems more likely that the power cabals will want to manipulate an apparently malleable Bashar.

Henry Kissinger called Asad the cleverest politician in the middle east. When the Soviet Union fell Asad turned away from Moscow and allied Syria with the US during the war against Iraq. With Saudi and American support and the discovery of oil the Syrian economy prospered.

Turkey

Of Turkey's population of 65.7m 98 per cent are Muslim, mostly Sunnis. In 1453, the Ottomans captured Constantinople, destroying the eastern Roman empire. At its height the Ottoman empire stretched from Morocco to Persia, and westwards to the Balkans, but by the 17th century it was in decline. In the 19th century, the Ottomans tried hard to protect themselves from western encroachments. Sultan Mahmud II used the Janissaries, a Christian slave elite, to bring local warlords to heel, then in 1826 exterminated this fractious militia. The Ottomans then started to build on western structures. The important edicts of the period, the Noble Rescript of the Rose Chamber (1839) and the Imperial Rescript (1856), declared that all the Sultan's subjects, irrespective of religion, were equal. The state was rejecting its former Islamic basis. At the end of the Ottoman era Abdulhmamid tried and failed to appeal to the *ulama* by restoring the old Islamic identity. The Turkish war of independence (1919-22) followed the disintegration of the empire. It was led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on behalf of the grand national assembly which first met on 23rd April 1920.

Turkey became a republic on 29th October 1923. Religious courts were abolished and Islam ceased to be the official state religion. In 1945 Turkey joined the UN and in 1952 it became a member of Nato. Turkey occupied the northern portion of Cyprus in 1974 arguing that it was preventing a Greek takeover of the island; relations between the two countries remain strained. Periodic military offensives against Kurdish separatists (20 per cent of the population is Kurdish) have dislocated part of the population in the southeast and drawn international condemnation.

THE GULF STATES

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabi's population of 21.6m consists of 18.2m Sunni Muslims and 640,000 Shi'i. This figure does not include some 5m guest workers who live temporarily in Saudi Arabia, although they enjoy few rights. Until the 1990-91 Gulf war these were mostly Arab, of which many were Palestinian. Since then there has been a much greater reliance on South Asian and East Asian workers. Today, an increasing number are non-Muslim Asians, considered to pose a much smaller political challenge to the Saudi monarchy than muslims.

In 1902 Abdul al-Aziz Ibn Rahman al-Saud (known as Ibn Saud) captured Riyadh and set out on a 30-year campaign to unify the Arabian peninsula. In the 1930s, the discovery of oil transformed the country. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saudi Arabia accepted the Kuwaiti royal family and 400,000 refugees while allowing western and Arab troops to deploy on its soil for the liberation of Kuwait the following year. A growing population, aquifer depletion, and an economy largely dependent on oil, are all concerns. Saudi Arabia has the largest reserves of oil in the world (26 per cent of proven reserves) and is the globe's largest

exporter. The oil sector accounts for 75 per cent of budget revenues, 40 per cent of GDP, and 90 per cent of export earnings.

Osama bin Laden, and many of the hijackers that flew planes into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11th September 2001, were Saudis. Although the Saudis are Wahhabis (see page 28) and claim to run a fundamentalist Islamic regime, they are vulnerable to the charges of hypocrisy from younger Wahhabi militants like bin Laden especially since the stationing of US troops on Saudi soil since the Gulf war. In 1979 the Great Mosque in Mecca was taken by militants who had to be removed through military action. Recent bomb attacks on American interests in Saudi Arabia's eastern province are thought to the work of Osama bin Laden. There is considerable support among ordinary Saudis for bin Laden. Soon after the attacks Prince Turki al Faisal, the head of Saudi intelligence, resigned. He was thought to have once been close to the Taleban but to have become increasingly disenchanted.

SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan

Of Pakistan's population of 156m, 84 per cent are Sunnis and 15 per cent Shi'is. The separation in 1947 of British India into the Muslim state of Pakistan (with two sections, West and East) and largely Hindu India was never satisfactorily resolved. Tension between East and West Pakistan broke out into civil war in 1971. This resulted in East Pakistan seceding and becoming the separate nation of Bangladesh. A dispute over claims to Kashmir with India is continuing. The army has provided the impetus for a series of interventions into government, usually on the grounds that they have been too corrupt or insufficiently Islamic. A coup led by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq in July 1977 ousted the venal government of President Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto was hanged and ul-Haq became president. The constitution was set aside and there were no elections until February 1985, when the President set up a national security council to control the new government. In 1986 an amendment to the constitution stated that Islamic teaching must be the basis of national law. The 1990s were also turbulent; successive prime ministers were dismissed by their presidents, and on the 12th October 1999 Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf suspended the constitution and took the title chief executive. This coup was validated by the Supreme Court in May 2000. Musharraf initially projected a secular image, appearing in photographs with his dogs (a most unIslamic thing to do). But he subsequently toned down his secularism, probably in response to Islamists in the army. Islamic radicals have never won much support in elections but began penetrating the army 15 years ago and now hold many key positions.

In response to Indian nuclear weapons testing, Pakistan conducted its own successful nuclear tests in 1998. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, refugees began streaming over the borders

into Pakistan. By 1990 approximately 3.2m refugees had settled there. America was a strong supporter of Pakistan until the end of the cold war. It now has a more even-handed approach between India and Pakistan.

Afghanistan

Almost all Afghans are Muslim, the vast majority Sunnis. In the 19th century Afghanistan was a buffer state between Russia and British India. Of its population of 25.5m, 47 per cent are Pashtun. The first of two Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-1842 and 1879-1880) led to heavy British losses. Britain installed the Durranis as *amirs* (rulers), a dynasty which continued until 1973 when Prince Muhammad Daoud staged a military coup and abolished the monarchy.

In 1978, Daoud was overthrown and executed. The new president, Nur Muhammad Taraki, signed a 20-year treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union but in 1979, Taraki was ousted. Finding their position in Afghanistan imperilled, the Soviet leadership decided to invade the country in December 1979. Soviet troops installed Barbak Karmal. The invasion resulted in world-wide condemnation of the Soviet Union. In a 1986 attempt to win Afghan support for the Soviet-installed regime, Karmal was replaced by Sayid Muhammad Najibullah and a campaign was intensified calling for national reconciliation between the Soviet-supported regime and the Islamic resistance, the *mujahidin.*

According to a US estimate made in 1987, almost 1m Afghans had been killed and more than 5m had fled the country since the 1979 Soviet invasion. In 1988, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed accords, with the US and the Soviet Union acting as guarantors, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Afghanistan over a nine-month period beginning on 15th May 1988. The withdrawal was completed in early 1989. Once the Soviets had withdrawn and the cold war had been won, the Afghans felt bitterly that Washington had lost interest in them.

The US insisted that the moderate communist president Najibullah step down. In his place it installed the seven squabbling factions of the *mujahidin* and in 1992 Afghanistan was declared an Islamic state. Pakistan was unhappy with the choice of a Tajik, Burhanuddin Rabbani, as president rather than a Pashtun. It encouraged its protégé Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to oppose him. Hekmatyar was one of the most extreme figures in the *mujahidin.* Women who refused to wear *burqas* (the tent-like veil) had acid thrown in their eyes by his followers. When Hekmatyar's forces failed to defeat Rabbani, Pakistan supported the newly emerging Taleban and the US gave it at least indirect support.

An arrangement between the forces of Ahmad Shah Masoud, a Tajik *mujahidin* commander (who was killed three days before the World Trade Centre attack) and Abd al-Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek leader had brought about the collapse of Najibullah's Marxist government in Kabul. However, they failed to create from this a credible Islamic government because of

widespread mistrust, encouraged by foreign patrons, among the factions.

In 1996 the Taleban emerged. These were theological "students" of the rural *madrasas* (schools) whose power base was Kandahar and who represented Afghanistan's Pashtun majority. Supported by Pakistan (and indirectly by the US) who saw in them a stable power-base which would ensure drug control and the security of the vital trade routes from Pakistan through to the oil and gas rich central Asian republics. The Taleban were soon to control 90 per cent of the country under their remote leader Mullah Omar. Nevertheless, real military power and the regime's financial backbone lay with Arab *mujahidin* and their leader, Osama bin Laden—"a leader without a country in a country without a leader." The Taleban, fanatically Sunni, were responsible for the massacre of between 2,000-5,000 members of the Shi'i Hazara community after the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998. They brought Iran to the brink of intervention by murdering nine of its diplomats in Mazar.

When the Taleban seized Kabul they were determined to purge what they saw as a satanic den of iniquity and set about imposing their fanatical rule. Music and television were forbidden. Women were banned from schools and universities, and from leaving their homes without a male relative. They were made to wear the *burqa*. The Taleban victory was a visible symbol of the revenge of the countryside on the city.

There are many in Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency who are long-term supporters of Osama bin Laden. The ISI was the principal conduit for western aid to the Afghan *mujahidin* during the war against the Soviet Union. The then ruler of Pakistan, Zia ul-Haq, encouraged hardline Islamists in the army and the intelligence services as a counter to the more secular opposition to his dictatorship. Ten years later, they have risen to the senior ranks. Pakistani police say they believe they failed to capture bin Laden last year after he was warned of their raid by sympathetic ISI elements.

The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001 may have been a turning point, creating splits between Taleban hard-liners and moderates. Nationalist members of the Taleban realised that they had destroyed the greatest symbol of their heritage. The order to destroy the statues had almost certainly come from bin Laden and his Arab coterie who had effectively appropriated Mullah Omar's power. They were already resented as foreigners indifferent to Afghanistan's heritage by other members of the Taleban. A post-Taleban Afghanistan will almost certainly involve the 86-year old exiled King Zahir Shah. At a conference in Peshawar of all the Afghan ethnic groups held in early October 2001 most speakers wanted the ex-King to come to the region to convene a Loya Jirga, a national conference which has for centuries been Afghanistan's way of reaching major decisions. It can only be convened by the king.

Kazakstan

Of Kazakstan's population of 17m some 10m are Muslim. Kazaks are by tradition Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. Mosques increased from 100 in 1990 to 5,000 in 1996. There are some 6m Kazak Muslims and some 6m Russian Orthodox. Native Kazaks are a mix of Turkic and Mongol nomadic tribes who migrated into the region in the 13th century. They were rarely united as a single nation. The area was conquered by Russia in the 18th century and Kazakstan became a Soviet Republic in 1936. During the 1950s and 1960s agricultural "virgin lands" programme, Soviet citizens were encouraged to help cultivate Kazakstan's northern pastures. This influx of immigrants (mostly Russians, but also some other deported nationalities) upset the ethnic mix and enabled non-Kazaks to outnumber natives. Independence has caused many of these newcomers to emigrate.

Uzbekistan

Of Uzbekistan's 25m people some 88 per cent are Muslim, mostly Sunni. Russia conquered Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Resistance to the Red Army after the first world war was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic set up in 1925. During the Soviet era, intensive production of cotton and grain led to overuse of agro-chemicals and the depletion of water supplies. This has left the land poisoned and the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry. Independent since 1991, the country seeks to reduce its dependence on agriculture while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves. Present anxieties include insurgency by Islamic militants based in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has been waging armed struggle against the secular neo-communist regime of President Islam Karimov for the past few years. Some 15 per cent of Afghanistan's population is Uzbek.

Tajikistan

Of Tajikistan's 6.4m population 80 per cent are Sunni Muslims and 5 per cent Shi'a Muslims. Tajiks (excluding the Pamiris who are mostly Nizari Ismailis loyal to the Agha Khan) are by tradition Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. Twenty per cent of Afghanistan's population is ethnically Tajik. During the 1992-97 civil war in Tajikistan between an Islamic-led coalition and secular neo-communists, Afghanistan served as a safe haven and training ground for Islamist fighters. With the anti-Taleban Northern Alliance huddled into a small corner of Afghanistan adjoining Tajikistan, the importance of Tajikistan in the war in Afghanistan has risen.

Kyrgyzstan

Of Kyrgyzstan's 4.5m population 65 per cent are Muslim. A central Asian country of incredible natural beauty and proud nomadic traditions, Kyrgyzstan was annexed by Russia in 1864; it achieved independence from

the Soviet Union in 1991. Present problems are mainly over inter-ethnic relations and terrorism. Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia provide funds for Islamic activities. In 1985 there were 40 mosques. Today there are 200. Islam is strongest in the rural south

EAST ASIA

Malaysia

About 45 per cent of Malaysia's population of 22.3m is Muslim. The country was created on 31st August 1963 through the merging of Malaya and former British Singapore. Malaysia became a member of the Commonwealth. Singapore separated from the union in 1965. Under the leadership of Mahathir Muhammad, prime minister since 16th July 1981, Malaysia prospered economically, thanks mainly to the Chinese minority. Between 1991 and 1995 economic growth averaged 8.7 per cent a year. But Malaysia was damaged by the Asian crisis of 1997 when the ringgit fell by 48 per cent. The failing economy caused political turmoil. In September 1998 finance minister and deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim was sacked. His policy of economic reform was abandoned by Mahathir and replaced by measures designed to insulate the economy. By 2000 government fiscal stimulus and the high price of oil had caused some improvement. In the last parliamentary elections, the Islamic party of Malaysia gained a majority only in the state of Kelantan. Islamic control is increasing in some parts of the country. Nevertheless, Malaysian Muslim women are among the most educated in the world and work in all sectors, including the army and the police. Mahathir Muhammad remains southeast Asia's longest serving ruler.

Indonesia

Of Indonesia's 212.5m people, 75 per cent are Muslim. Between 1500 and 1800 Islam came to influence most of the peoples of present-day Indonesia. In northern Sumatra, long exposed to Arab and Indian Muslim trade and culture, Islamic orthodoxy took root. On the other hand in Java where Hinduism and Buddhism had flourished, Islam took root more cautiously. While sculpture of the human form was abandoned the Hindi epics were still valued and the intercession of certain goddesses sought.

The world's largest archipelago, Indonesia achieved independence from the Netherlands in 1949. On 30th August 1999, almost 80 per cent of the population of East Timor, who are mostly Christian, voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia in a referendum. Within hours of the announcement of the results on 4th September, the Indonesian armed forces and their militias launched a systematic campaign of terror. By the end of September, over 250,000 East Timorese were in refugee camps in West Timor. The international community, however, forced Indonesia to withdraw. The independent status of East Timor—now under UN administration—has yet to be formally established.

Today Indonesia has the largest Muslim population of any country. But religious liberty is officially granted to all denominations

COUNTRIES WITH A SIGNIFICANT MUSLIM MINORITY

India

Of India's population of one billion only 12 per cent are Muslim, but that gives it the third largest Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan. Although India had been penetrated under the Umayyads, the spread of Islam was largely thanks to Mahmud of Ghazna (who ruled from 998-1030). In 1526 Babar, ruler of Afghanistan, had occupied the Kingdom of Delhi and became founder of the great Mughal empire. Under the tolerant Akbar (1556-1605) the empire covered most of the sub-continent. But by the 18th century it was in decline and British influence had increased from its commercial ports. The *coup de grâce* of the Mughal empire and its replacement by the British empire was the Indian mutiny of 1857.

In 1940, foreseeing a Hindu-dominated independent India, the Muslim League (founded in 1906 to protect Muslim interests in the subcontinent) began to press for an independent state. In June 1947 the scheme for partition was announced, after negotiations in which Gandhi had taken part. This division of the subcontinent into the secular state of India and the smaller Muslim state of Pakistan led to violent clashes between Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. Throughout the 1990s Hindu/Muslim violence was widespread, and led to the political rise of Hindu nationalism in the form of the BJP. But India is a secular state—any worship is permitted, but the state itself has no religion.

India carried out five nuclear tests in May 1998, as a result of which US President Clinton imposed wide-ranging sanctions, lifted when India and Pakistan reached an accommodation on nuclear development.

China

Of China's 1.3 billion population some 3 per cent are Muslim. Although official Chinese statistics only record 18m Muslim, estimates go as high as 40m. Islam in China has been propagated over the last 1,300 years primarily among the people known as the Hui in the border areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakstan. The Islamic revival in China dates from the late 18th century when a number of Naqshabandi sheikhs led a jihad against the emperor from Uzbekistan. After 11th September Osama bin Laden was rumoured to have fled into the mainly Muslim region of China bordering Afghanistan although the rumour turned out to be false. After the bombing, China closed its borders with Afghanistan. It has a grievance against the Taleban from whose training camps some of the Uyghur separatists in its southwestern province of Xinjiang have emerged.

WHERE IS ISLAM GROWING?

In America Islam has taken many forms but it is most significant among black Americans where it has sometimes played a militant role. African Muslim slaves from Senegal, Gambia, the southern Sahara and the Upper Niger were brought to the Americas between the mid-1500's and the mid-19th century. In the late 1800s Arabs from Greater Syria began to arrive. A third wave of Muslim immigration after the second world war included many people from the elites of the middle east and south Asian countries seeking education and professional advancement. A fourth wave began in the 1960s, made possible by the easing for professional people of US immigration laws.

Black Americans have tended to convert to Islam because of a consciousness of a lost Islamic heritage dating back to the days of slavery, a proliferation of quasi-Islamic movements during the 20th century, and a trend of conversion to Islam as an alternative to Christianity in correctional facilities. In 1913 in New Jersey, Timothy Drew announced that black Americans would find their identity through the Koran. Christianity was a religion for the whites, Islam for Asiatics as black Africans were categorised by Drew. In 1930 WD Fard founded the Nation of Islam in Detroit. After his mysterious disappearance the movement was carried on by a black American called Elijah Poole. Fard became Allah incarnate and Elijah Muhammad (Poole) his prophet. Whites were regarded as devils. One of Elijah Muhammad's most important associates was Malcolm X (1925-1965), who was assassinated in 1965. Since then he has become the symbol for militant black Islam. His embracing of Sunnism has increased identification with mainstream Islam. Elijah Muhammad's son, Wallace Deen Muhammad, shifted towards normative Islam but Louis Farrakhan renewed the separatist strand in black American Islam by re-affirming aspects of Elijah Muhammad's message, demonising white society. Orthodox Muslims in America reject Farrakhanism as a distinct religion. There is a considerable cultural and economic gap between Muslim immigrants arriving in the US and most black American Muslims. The US has a Muslim population of about 4m.

In addition to well established Muslim communities in the Caribbean, there are immigrant communities in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Venezuela.

In Europe, where about 15m Muslims live, many mosques have been built and strong Muslim cultural identities forged. Britain has become an important focus of Islamic activity. The Regent's Park Mosque in London lies at the centre of the community but many northern towns have a strong Islamic presence. While the great majority of Muslims in Britain belong to quietist traditions, such as the Barelwis and Tablighi Jamaat (both of which originated in India), a minority of mostly young people of south Asian origin have demonstrated support for militant groups operating in Kashmir and Palestine.