

The Exceptional Faith

Five Essays on Doctrine History and Freedom of Conscience

By Panini | PDF Revision TWO

These five essays ask related questions without treating them as one continuous proof. The first explains why I examine political claims made in the name of Islam. The second states the method by which I judge those claims. The third describes my encounters with Indian leaders and the failure of sustained doctrinal study that I found afterward. The fourth tests the political theories of Maududi and Hamidullah against a peaceful India. The fifth proposes a united front grounded in equal freedom, evidence, and reason.

PART 1

Why Islam and Not Other Religions

Apostasy Blasphemy and Conflict Across Boundaries

I begin with a question that no serious defense of religious freedom can evade: may a believer leave? The Quran discusses consequences of apostasy in the hereafter. Classical jurists also drew on Hadith traditions to prescribe penalties in this life, sometimes capital punishment. Present-day laws and practice differ across countries. The existence of an enforceable penalty for leaving one's faith makes the issue political rather than merely devotional.[1]

This is what I mean by an exit policy. If a person may enter a religion but risks legal punishment or communal violence for leaving it, membership is not fully voluntary. The right to convert must include the right to deconvert. The right to preach must include the right to reject the preacher. Such reciprocity applies to every religion.

The four classical Sunni schools — Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali — developed penalties for apostasy with differences over procedure and the treatment of women. A study of traditional Twelver Shia jurisprudence reports that a majority of

jurists prescribed execution without a repentance interval for a male fitri apostate, meaning a man born into a Muslim family who later leaves the religion; the same study discusses later jurists who challenge that rule.[17] These are claims about historical jurisprudence whose application by modern governments requires separate evidence.

The same issue appears when criticism becomes a punishable offense. Pakistan's Penal Code contains Section 295-C, which concerns derogatory remarks about Muhammad.[2] Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab, was murdered after opposing the blasphemy law.[3] The precise reach of the law, its penalty, and its enforcement must be established from evidence.

The Penalty for Criticism

Apostasy and blasphemy demand separate scrutiny. Ibn Taymiyyah's treatise *Al-Sarim al-Maslul 'ala Shatim al-Rasul* argued for the execution of those who insult Muhammad, including after repentance.[16] The modern record includes Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 death decree against Salman Rushdie, the 2015 murder of Charlie Hebdo journalists in Paris, and the 2011 assassination of Salman Taseer for opposing Pakistan's blasphemy law. These events arose in different political settings, and the connection between an old juristic argument and each perpetrator requires examination rather than assumption. Each nevertheless poses the same public question: whether speech critical of a prophet can be punished with death.

I call attention to Islam's "bloody borders" because conflicts involving Muslim populations and Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or other neighbors recur across several regions. Nigeria, the Middle East, and South Asia have different histories and different causes. Territorial dispute, colonial rule, state policy, nationalism, and religious ideology may all matter. The claim of a single cause would need proof in each conflict. What demands investigation is the role that doctrines of community, sovereignty, apostasy, and jihad play when political actors invoke them.

India's history gives this inquiry special urgency. The conquest of Sindh is conventionally dated to 711 or 712 CE, beginning a long and changing encounter between Islamic states and the subcontinent.[4] It would be inaccurate to describe all the following centuries as one uninterrupted occupation of all India. It would be equally inaccurate to pretend that conquest, taxation, slavery, religious change, and resistance can be dismissed as a misunderstanding. India did not mount a

reciprocal religious campaign to conquer Mecca or Jerusalem. Iranian armies invaded India, while pre-Partition British India shared a frontier with Persia through Baluchistan.[5] The direction and justification of the campaigns require historical study, not inherited slogans.

The geography of the Hindu–Muslim conflicts examined here must be described in historical, not merely present-day, terms. The campaigns and wars took place on lands long inhabited by Hindus and shaped by Hindu civilization, including territory now within Pakistan and Bangladesh.[4] The borders drawn in 1947 did not make those earlier lands foreign to the people who had lived and built institutions there. Hindu kingdoms fought invading armies on their own civilizational ground; they did not wage a reciprocal religious conquest of Mecca or Jerusalem. This is the asymmetry I mean when I say the conflict was fought on what was once Hindu land.

The borders drawn in 1947 complicate every demographic comparison. Bangladesh’s 2022 census recorded Hindus as 7.95 percent of its population.[18] Pakistan’s 2023 census uses religious categories that must be read separately, including its treatment of Hindus and Scheduled Castes, and one cannot compare a percentage for all of British India at Partition with a percentage for present-day Pakistan as though the territory were unchanged.[19] Partition and later migration contributed to demographic change, while reports of land disputes, coercion, and attacks on minorities require investigation on their own evidence.[19]

The long transformations of Christian communities in Anatolia and Egypt, Zoroastrian communities in Persia, and Buddhist communities in Central Asia following Islamic conquests also call for historical study. Conquest, taxation, migration, conversion, local politics, and the choices of generations all affected the outcome; a changing religious map cannot by itself prove either the truth of a revelation or a single cause of conversion.[20]

From Text to Jurisprudence and Military Strategy

What does an influential twentieth-century Islamic political theory demand? Let its advocate answer directly, in his own words, without paraphrase softening the claim. Maulana Abul A’la Maududi wrote in *Jihad in Islam*:

Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme

of Islam regardless of the country or the Nation which rules it. The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of its own ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of the standard-bearer of Islam or the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic State. Islam requires the earth — not just a portion, but the whole planet... [6]

— Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, Jihad in Islam

This is not a description of private worship; it is a program of universal political transformation, stated by its own architect in plain declarative sentences. States opposed to the Islamic program possess no permanent legitimacy in this theory, and national borders impose no final limit upon it. The objective is not merely that Muslims be free to pray, preach, or organize — freedoms any pluralist society should defend — but the replacement of incompatible governments by an ideological Islamic state. Maududi's words establish what Maududi's political Islam demands; they do not prove that every Muslim accepts his program, and this essay does not claim otherwise. But Maududi was not an irrelevant eccentric shouting into a void. He was one of the twentieth century's most consequential Islamist thinkers and the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, an organization whose influence outlived him by decades. His argument must therefore be tested against the Quran, the Hadith, Muhammad's political career, and classical jurisprudence, to determine what he inherited, what he selected, and what he transformed for a revolutionary age. That is precisely the investigation India's prime ministers failed to conduct.

They did not ask whether Maududi invented a modern totalitarian ideology, recovered an older political doctrine, or fused inherited jurisprudence with twentieth-century revolutionary organization — and without that inquiry, appeals to communal harmony remain politically helpless against a doctrine that has already done its homework. Maududi saw clearly that ideas seek institutions; Nehru answered an ideological program with sentiment. He spoke of synthesis while Maududi spoke of power, government, territory, revolution, and the whole planet: one man stated his objective in full, and the other failed even to study it.

The Quranic passage most frequently placed at the center of this dispute is 9:5, commonly called the Sword Verse. In Marmaduke Pickthall's translation it reads:

Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.[7]

— The Quran 9:5, Marmaduke Pickthall translation

The immediate passage must be stated in full, or the citation becomes a distortion. Verse 9:4 exempts polytheists who honored their treaties, and verse 9:6 commands protection and safe conduct for a polytheist who seeks asylum to hear the divine message. Verse 9:5 therefore cannot honestly be presented as an instruction to every Muslim to kill every non-Muslim at every moment; its immediate setting concerns conflict, treaties, sacred months, and Arabian polytheists specifically. But historical context narrows the verse without eliminating the political problem beneath it. Classical jurists disputed how broadly the verse applied, whether it superseded more limited commands, and what choices were available to different classes of non-Muslims after conquest. Christians and Jews were generally classified as People of the Book and could be admitted to protected but subordinate status through payment of the *jizya*. Polytheists did not always receive the same legal option in theory, although Muslim governments sometimes extended comparable treatment to Hindus and other conquered peoples as a practical necessity rather than a doctrinal concession. The distinction matters directly for India.

Hindu and Buddhist civilizations contain images, temples, multiple deities, non-theistic schools, and metaphysical positions that Islamic theology may classify as shirk, idolatry, or unbelief — a classification with real legal consequence, not merely theological color.

Atheism and agnosticism reject revelation altogether, placing them outside even the subordinate protections available to Christians and Jews. Christianity and Judaism possess scriptural status in Islamic law, yet remain theologically rejected wherever they deny Muhammad's prophethood, a rejection built into the architecture of the law itself. Communism is explicitly materialist and atheistic, placing it in direct doctrinal conflict with any revelation-based sovereignty. Capitalism, liberal democracy, and popular sovereignty rest upon human institutions capable of making law independently of revelation, which is itself the objection political Islam raises against them. The conflict described by universalist Islamism therefore

extends well beyond Hindu-Muslim relations; its political theory challenges every order in which Islamic revelation is not sovereign, whatever that order happens to believe. A Buddhist state, a Christian state, a Jewish state, a communist state, a secular capitalist republic, and an atheist or agnostic political culture differ radically from one another in every respect but one. Each becomes objectionable, in this theory, to a doctrine requiring the whole earth to submit to a single Islamic political program. This is why Maududi's language cannot be reduced to a quarrel with Hinduism alone, however much Indian readers may be tempted to read it that way.

His declared object is universal, and the adversary he names is every government opposed to the Islamic ideology and program. Hindu India is one target within a theory whose territorial horizon is humanity itself — a fact India's leadership needed to understand precisely because it is larger than India.

The Quranic Architecture of War

One verse cannot bear the entire argument, and no honest inquiry rests its case on a single line torn from its surroundings. The relevant question is whether a connected political logic appears across the Quran's commands concerning fighting, submission, preparation, terror, religious authority, and peace. That answer cannot be obtained by collecting frightening fragments while suppressing restrictive passages, nor by quoting peaceful fragments while pretending the commands of battle do not exist. The only honest method is cumulative and contextual: place the verses beside one another, identify their occasions, examine how jurists connected them, and distinguish the text itself from every later interpretation laid upon it. Quran 2:190 begins with a limitation — fight those who fight you, but do not transgress — and that sentence is indispensable evidence against the claim that every Quranic command authorizes unlimited aggression. Yet the passage continues through 2:191–193 with commands to kill or expel opponents in the conflict and to fight until persecution or fitna ends and religion belongs to Allah.[10] The interpretive dispute turns on the meaning of fitna, the identity of "them," and the political meaning of religion belonging to Allah. A serious prime minister would have studied that dispute rather than converting a difficult text into a ceremonial assurance that every interpretation is peaceful. Quran 8:12 is tied to the Battle of Badr; it describes God promising to cast horror into the hearts of the disbelievers, and follows that promise with language about striking necks and fingertips.[11] The

historical setting restricts any careless attempt to turn the verse into a timeless command against all non-Muslims, but the verse also supplies the textual foundation Malik later uses to make the enemy's heart the objective of Quranic strategy.

Context explains the battlefield; it does not erase the theological union of divine assistance, terror, and physical violence within it.

Quran 8:39 commands fighting until fitna no longer exists and devotion or religion is entirely for Allah.[12] Modern translations frequently render fitna as persecution, while older and juristic interpretations may give it a wider meaning involving unbelief, disorder, or obstruction of Islam, and the difference is not verbal decoration but a fork in the road. If fitna means persecution, the command can be read as liberation from religious oppression; if it means the continued political obstruction of Islam, the same words can support expansion instead. The history of jihad jurisprudence cannot be understood without confronting that interpretive fork directly and naming both branches. Quran 8:60 commands the preparation of military power and cavalry to deter or terrify the enemies of God and the believers, and the very next verse, 8:61, commands acceptance when the enemy inclines toward peace.[13] Both propositions belong to the same text and cannot be separated without falsifying it. Malik concentrates on preparation and terror, while modern defensive readings emphasize deterrence and the command to accept peace, and a rigorous analysis must ask whether peace in this passage means permanent recognition of another sovereign order or only a contingent settlement with a present enemy. That is a jurisprudential question, not a problem that dissolves through translation alone. Quran 9:29 turns from Arabian polytheists to the People of the Book, commanding that certain scriptural peoples be fought until they pay jizya while submitting in a humbled condition.[14] This is why Christians and Jews occupy a category different from idolaters in classical law — a category of protection, but not of equal political sovereignty. Nehru celebrated Islamic brotherhood without giving sustained attention to the boundary of that brotherhood or the political position assigned to those who remained permanently outside it.

Quran 47:4 addresses encounter in battle, commands striking necks, then directs that captives be bound and later released by grace or ransom once the war has ended.[15] The same verse therefore contains violence, captivity, limitation, and release in a single continuous instruction, and anyone who quotes only the striking

of necks falsifies the passage by subtraction, just as anyone who quotes only the later release commits the same fraud in reverse. Empiricism requires the entire sequence and an honest investigation of how governments and jurists actually applied it, not the fragment that suits an argument already decided in advance.

These verses do not mechanically produce one uncontested political program, and this essay makes no claim that they do. The Quran is read through chronology, hadith, abrogation theories, legal schools, political circumstances, and the moral assumptions the interpreter brings to the page. That complexity is not an excuse to abandon judgment; it is precisely the reason sustained study is necessary rather than optional. The indictment of India's prime ministers is not that they failed to repeat my interpretation of these verses — they were entitled to reach different conclusions. It is that they failed to conduct and publish the comparative investigation through which competing interpretations could be tested openly before the Indian people, who were left to guess at a doctrine that governs their neighbors, their borders, and their wars.

Khadduri and the Classical Law of Jihad

Majid Khadduri was an Iraqi-born Christian scholar of Islamic law and international relations who taught at Johns Hopkins University, and his outsider vantage point is part of why his work carries weight here. In *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, he reconstructed jihad as a legal institution within the classical Islamic law of nations, rather than treating it as a modern slogan invented for propaganda. Across pages 62–65 of the 2010 Lawbook Exchange facsimile, Khadduri describes jihad as the instrument for carrying out Islam's universal objective, and presents the relation with the outside world as a continuing process that could be psychological and political as well as military.[8] Warfare was therefore one instrument within a broader process, not the entire meaning of jihad, a distinction routinely lost in popular argument on both sides. Khadduri's analysis also distinguishes collective from individual obligation: in the classical juristic construction, expansionary jihad was ordinarily a collective duty conducted under public authority, while defense against an attack could convert it into an individual duty upon every believer. This distinction rebuts two opposite simplifications at once. Jihad cannot be reduced entirely to private spiritual improvement, as some apologetics suggest, but neither can every individual Muslim be described as permanently engaged in unauthorized warfare, as some polemics insist. The

importance of Khadduri for this essay lies in duration and purpose. On pages 62–65, he describes a war permanently declared against unbelievers, and later explains how active jihad could enter a dormant status without the underlying duty being abandoned.[8] Permanent war, in this classical sense, does not mean uninterrupted fighting by every Muslim at every moment; it describes an enduring legal and political relationship between the Islamic state and the territories that remain outside its authority.

Actual combat could cease when weakness, necessity, or advantage required a truce, but the truce suspended hostilities without necessarily terminating the universal objective behind them. Page 75 begins Khadduri's section on jihad against polytheists, where he reports the classical rule in its severest form: no compromise, with acceptance of Islam or fighting presented as the only alternatives. He immediately records complications in definition and practice, including the treatment of Scripturaries, Magians, and populations outside Arabia, and it is this page that belongs at the center of an Indian inquiry.[8] Hindu and Buddhist communities forced Muslim jurists and rulers to confront societies that did not fit neatly into the original Arabian classifications, a friction the classical texts themselves record. Peace therefore could function as an armistice governed by circumstance rather than as a permanent recognition that rival systems possessed equal and final legitimacy. The military instrument could stop while persuasion, preparation, political pressure, and the claimed universal mission continued by other means. Time alone did not cancel the obligation in classical doctrine; changed circumstances determined only which instrument could be used at a given moment. This is the framework within which Maududi's declaration must be read, not as an isolated modern eccentricity but as a claim standing on inherited ground. Maududi converted an inherited universal claim into the language of twentieth-century ideological revolution, and his whole-planet program did not emerge from a political vacuum.

The serious question is how far his argument represents classical jurisprudence, how far it modernizes it, and whether contemporary Muslims accept, revise, or reject it — the precise examination India's fifteen prime ministers failed to undertake in nearly eighty years of governing its consequences.

Malik and Terror as Strategy

Khadduri explains the classical legal framework; Maududi turns universal jihad into a revolutionary political program; Brigadier S. K. Malik then carries the argument into modern Pakistani military thought, and the sequence matters because each step narrows theory into instrument. Malik was an officer of the Pakistan Army who later attained the rank of major general. His book *The Quranic Concept of War* appeared in 1979, during General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization of Pakistan. Zia, then Pakistan's ruler and army chief, contributed the foreword, and the jurist and diplomat A. K. Brohi contributed the preface.[9] Those endorsements make the book more consequential than the private reflections of a detached writer working alone.

They do not, by themselves, transform it into the official and permanent doctrine of every Pakistani commander who ever served. But they place Malik's interpretation squarely within the political and military establishment of a state created in the name of Islam and engaged in repeated conflict with India, which is precisely why India's leaders had a direct obligation to read it. In Chapter Seven, "The Strategy for War," principally pages 58–60, Malik does not treat terror as an accidental consequence of combat; he makes terror the desired decision imposed upon the adversary, and he says so in language that admits no ambiguity:

Terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is the end in itself. Once a condition of terror into the opponent's heart is obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved... It is the point where the means and the end meet and merge. Terror is not a means of imposing decision on the enemy; it is the decision we wish to impose upon him.[9]

— S. K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War*, p. 59–60

Malik rejects the idea that a mere display of weapons is sufficient to win a war in the Quranic sense he is describing. The strategy must reach inside the adversary and break the psychological and spiritual foundation of his resistance, not merely defeat his army in the field:

To instill terror into the hearts of the enemy is essential, because in the ultimate analysis, it is the only way to dislocate his Faith.

Psychological dislocation produced by a physical act is temporary, but spiritual dislocation is permanent.[9]

— S. K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War*

He states the conclusion without ambiguity, in a single declarative sentence that summarizes the whole doctrine: "The Quranic strategy, as such, aims at striking terror into the hearts of the enemy. War is fought to strike terror, and terror is the ultimate decision." [9] Malik's doctrine therefore reverses the conventional relationship between force and terror found in most Western military theory. In an ordinary military analysis, fear may assist the destruction or surrender of an opposing force as a byproduct of victory. In Malik's formulation, physical operations serve the deeper objective of terror, and the battlefield victory itself is incomplete unless the enemy's faith, confidence, and will have been dislocated at the root. This is not terrorism in the narrow contemporary legal sense of unlawful attacks upon civilians, and Malik's passage should not be carelessly substituted for a legal definition it was never meant to satisfy. It is a theory of terrorization as strategic effect, articulated by a serving general officer and endorsed by a head of state. That distinction does not soften the doctrine; it reveals its breadth, since every military method is to be judged by its capacity to implant terror and impose spiritual defeat on the enemy.

For India, Malik connects doctrine directly to an adversarial state on its own border. Nehru confronted Pakistan's creation but did not examine the theology behind its political demand. His successors fought wars against Pakistan, negotiated with its rulers, and responded to infiltration and terrorism for decades, yet no prime minister produced a sustained public analysis connecting classical jihad, Maududi's revolutionary program, and Malik's theory of Quranic warfare into a single coherent account. Malik restates the structure in his own summary on pages 143–145: jihad is total strategy, military strategy seeks terror from the preparatory stage onward, and preparation draws upon the whole of national power.[9] His summary also emphasizes limits, justice, restraint, and what he calls humanitarian content, and those claims must be examined alongside the doctrine of terror, not used to dismiss it. The book is dangerous precisely because it presents terror not as criminal chaos but as a morally authorized instrument inside a complete ideological system with its own internal justice. Here the intellectual sequence becomes clear and unavoidable. Khadduri describes jihad as an enduring

institution in classical law; Maududi demands the destruction of governments opposed to Islam and the establishment of an Islamic order across the whole planet; Malik identifies terror in the adversary's heart as the very decision sought by Quranic strategy. These are three distinct authors making three distinct arguments in three distinct genres — legal history, revolutionary manifesto, military doctrine.

Taken together, they present a body of political and military thought that India's rulers had a direct obligation to study and answer, and did not.

The exceptional claim I ask the reader to examine concerns an enduring combination of scriptural authority, classical jurisprudence, political sovereignty, and penalties for dissent in particular settings. It must be tested against the evidence of actual law and practice. The right to leave remains the standard by which the investigation begins.

Notes to This Essay

1. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Compendium of National Anti-Conversion Laws (2023), <https://www.uscirf.gov/publications/anti-conversion-laws-compendium>; Quran 2:217, 3:86–91, 4:137; Sahih al-Bukhari 6922 and 6878; Sahih Muslim 1676. The law and its enforcement differ by jurisdiction.
2. Pakistan Penal Code, Section 295-C, <https://pakistancode.gov.pk/pdf/files/administratord5622ea3f15bfa00b17d2cf7770a8434.pdf>.
3. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Pakistan: Still No Justice for Murdered Officials” (2011), <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/pakistan-still-no-justice-murdered-officials>.
4. André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 1, *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam* (Brill, 1990), on the Umayyad conquest of Sindh, conventionally dated to 711–712 CE.

5. British Library, India Office Records, boundary between Persia and British India in Baluchistan, <https://searcharchives.bl.uk/>;
Encyclopaedia Iranica, “Chronology of Iranian History,” Nader Shah’s invasion of India, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/chronology-of-iranian-history-part-1/>.

6. Abul A'la Maududi, *Jihad in Islam* (Lahore, 1939; repr. Islamic Publications, Lahore). This citation concerns the 1939 Lahore address, distinct from the longer book *Al Jihad Fil Islam*, issued in Urdu in 1930 and cited in Essay Four. Bibliographic record for the English pamphlet: <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA52156334>; transcribed text: <https://timothyabraham.org/islam/jihad-in-islam.html>.
7. The Quran 9:4–6, with 9:5 quoted in Marmaduke Pickthall's translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (1930).
8. Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Lawbook Exchange edition, 2010, pages 62–65 and 75.
9. S. K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War* (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1979; 1st Indian reprint, New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1986), Chapter 7, "The Strategy for War," pages 58–60, and Summary of Major Conclusions, pages 143–145; Joseph C. Myers, "Review Essay: The Quranic Concept of War," *Parameters* 36, no. 4 (2006).
10. Quran 2:190–193, commands concerning fighting, transgression, expulsion, fitna, and religion for Allah.
11. Quran 8:12–19, the Battle of Badr passage concerning terror, combat, and divine assistance.
12. Quran 8:38–40, fighting until fitna ends and religion or devotion belongs to Allah.
13. Quran 8:59–61, preparation of power to deter or terrify enemies, followed by acceptance of an enemy's inclination toward peace.
14. Quran 9:29, fighting People of the Book until payment of jizya in submission.
15. Quran 47:4, combat, binding captives, and subsequent release by grace or ransom.
16. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Sarim al-Maslul 'ala Shatim al-Rasul*, <https://islamport.com/l/tym/3871/514.htm>; *Islam Question & Answer*,

'Will the repentance of one who impugns the Prophet be accepted?', <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/150989>.

17. Syed Ali Imran, 'The Apostasy Ruling and its Justification in Twelver Shi'i Jurisprudence,' Al-Islam.org, <https://al-islam.org/apostasy-ruling-and-its-justification-twelver-shii-jurisprudence-syed-ali-imran/apostasy-ruling-and>; the article describes the majority classical rule and later dissenting views.

18. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 2022, Preliminary Report, religion distribution (Hindus 7.95 percent), https://nsds.bbs.gov.bd/storage/files/1/Publications/BBS_Preliminary_Census_2022.pdf.

19. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023, National Census Report, religion table, <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/National-Census-Report-2023-2.pdf>; U.S. Department of State, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/pakistan/>; U.S. Department of State, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bangladesh/>.

20. Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Harvard University Press, 1979), <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674732810>; Encyclopaedia Iranica, 'Conversion ii. Of Iranians to Islam,' <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/conversion-ii/>. The regional comparison is an invitation to further research, not a claim that all conversions had the same cause.

PART 2

How Do We Examine Islam

Islamic Claims Examined by Material Analysis Evidence and Human Rights

I do not answer the Quran with the Vedas, the Gita, the Bible, or another scripture. A rival revelation cannot provide a common test of whether a claim about God, prophecy, law, or political authority is true. I examine Islamic claims through dialectical materialism as ontology, logical empiricism as epistemology, and secular humanism as ethics. These methods ask what exists, how we know, and how people should be treated when a doctrine claims power over them.

A profound epistemological error lies behind the notion that victory proves revelation. Physical conquest and coercion cannot establish theological truth. Destroying a temple, subjugating a population, or winning a siege establishes a fact about military force, not the divine origin of a scripture. Where massacres, sexual violence, or enslavement occurred, those acts demonstrate severe harm and the abuse of power; they supply no evidence that a conqueror possessed supernatural knowledge. Logical empiricism asks what the evidence proves, while secular humanism asks what happened to the people subjected to that power.

Attempting to test Islam by quoting a Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, or Jewish scripture cannot resolve a disagreement about the authority of revelation. Each text requires its own justification before it can impose a rule on someone who rejects it. Classical Islamic jurisprudence developed its own categories for non-Muslim communities, including traditions it classified as polytheistic. I therefore examine Islamic political theology on its own stated terms, then test its historical assertions, institutions, and consequences by public evidence and universal rights. This is the route out of a dispute between inherited sacred authorities.

The Abrahamic model joins ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics.

Its ontology begins with one personal God who creates the universe and remains distinct from creation. God is not merely the highest being within nature but the sovereign source of nature. Creation depends upon divine will. Human life

therefore occurs within an order whose ultimate owner and legislator is outside the material world.

Its epistemology depends upon revelation. Human reason and observation are insufficient to discover the truths necessary for salvation. God selects prophets and communicates information unavailable to ordinary inquiry. The prophet's private or exceptional experience becomes knowledge for an entire community. Testimony is transformed into scripture, and scripture becomes the measure by which later testimony is judged.

Its ethics can become dualistic. Humanity is divided into those who accept God's message and those who reject it, those who obey and those who rebel, those who are saved and those who are condemned. Conduct remains important, but correct relation to revelation acquires eternal significance. Disbelief can be treated not as an honest intellectual conclusion but as moral refusal.

Its politics may become exceptionalist. If one community possesses the final or uniquely authorized revelation, that community can understand itself as carrying a mission for others. The mission may be peaceful preaching, but it can also unite with state power, law, conquest, or colonial rule. One God's universal sovereignty can become the model for one universally valid sacred order.

The problem is not the number one by itself. Philosophers may argue for a single ultimate reality without demanding one church or empire. The politically consequential combination is one personal God, one privileged chain of messengers, one authoritative revelation, one normative community, and one mission addressed to humanity.

From Judaism to Christianity to Islam

Judaism established much of the foundational grammar: creation by one God, covenant, prophecy, sacred history, divine law, judgment, and a people bound through collective memory. Its scriptures portrayed history as a field of divine purpose rather than an endless natural cycle. God commands, tests, punishes, saves, and promises.

Judaism's historical political form must be distinguished from later Christian and Islamic universalism. Jewish communities generally did not create a worldwide missionary empire, and European Jews were commonly persecuted minorities.

Judaism supplied concepts later universalized by others, but Jews should not be represented as equal partners in Christian and Muslim imperial expansion.

Christianity inherited Jewish scripture and messianic expectation while transforming them. Jesus was understood not merely as another teacher but, in orthodox Christianity, as the Christ whose life, death, and resurrection possessed universal significance. The church carried a message intended for all peoples. After Christianity allied with imperial power, conversion and political authority repeatedly supported one another. European peoples themselves were subjected to coercive Christianization before Christian European empires expanded overseas.

Islam emerged within a world already populated by Jewish, Christian, and related monotheistic traditions. The Quran incorporates Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Solomon, Mary, and Jesus into its sacred history. It recognizes earlier revelation while accusing some Jews and Christians of concealment, distortion, misinterpretation, or failure to follow what God had given them. Later Muslim theology often developed stronger claims about corruption of earlier scriptures.

Islam presents Muhammad as the final prophet and the Quran as the final, protected, and universally relevant revelation. Judaism and Christianity are thereby placed inside an Islamic account of history. Their prophets become Muslim prophets in the broad Quranic sense, while their communities are judged to have departed from the original submission to God. Islam does not appear as one religion among equals in its own classical self understanding. It presents itself as restoration, completion, and final correction.

This structure produces an epistemological circle. Muhammad's authority supports the Quran's status, while the Quran supports Muhammad's authority. Believers may regard the circle as confirmed by literary beauty, fulfilled prophecy, moral power, or tradition. But an outsider still requires independent evidence that the communication originated with God rather than Muhammad, his environment, or the community that preserved the text.

How do we know that Gabriel communicated with Muhammad? What publicly accessible evidence distinguishes a divine message from a sincerely reported human experience? The inquiry starts with the claim actually made, its historical context, and the evidence offered for its supernatural origin.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad illustrates the continuing problem. Ahmadis interpret his status as messianic and, in a qualified sense, prophetic while maintaining subordination to Muhammad. Most Sunni and Shia Muslims reject this interpretation as incompatible with Muhammad's finality. Both sides use inherited theological premises to judge revelation. Yet the neutral observer faces the prior problem: what publicly testable method distinguishes an authentic revelation from sincere conviction, imagination, altered consciousness, self interest, or institutional construction?

Each prophetic claim is unique and therefore resists comparison under common experimental conditions. The prophet reports an event unavailable to independent observers. The angel cannot be interviewed. The supernatural source cannot be isolated. The message cannot be reproduced on demand. A claim protected from every possible falsification may sustain faith, but it cannot compel the assent of those outside that faith.

Muhammad's historical importance cannot be understood if he is treated only as a preacher. He became the leader of a community, legislator, judge, diplomat, military commander, and ruler. His example therefore has religious, legal, and political dimensions. The Sunnah transforms reported acts and statements into normative precedent. Hadith literature extends prophetic authority into prayer, marriage, inheritance, punishment, warfare, trade, slavery, and government.

This fusion distinguishes Islam from a religion whose founder left no state or legal order. It does not prove that every later Muslim ruler faithfully followed Muhammad. Nor does it prove that every modern Muslim seeks the restoration of classical institutions. It does mean that arguments about Islam's relation to politics cannot be dismissed as external inventions. The founding narrative itself unites revelation, community, law, and power.

Jihad must be examined within that structure. The Arabic term includes striving and can carry moral and spiritual meanings. It also acquired an extensive juridical meaning involving armed struggle, state authority, territory, truces, booty, captives, and relations with non Muslim powers. A serious inquiry must neither reduce every use of jihad to terrorism nor conceal the developed military doctrine behind a purely inward translation.

Sharia likewise includes more than punishment. It encompasses worship, family, contract, inheritance, charity, and ethical conduct. Yet its comprehensiveness is

precisely why the source of its authority matters. If a law binds only voluntary believers, it may be understood as communal practice. If it governs dissenters, converts, women, religious minorities, or conquered populations, the evidentiary basis of revelation becomes a public question.

The same applies to fatwas and clerical interpretation. A fatwa is not automatically a state sentence, and Muslim legal traditions contain disagreement. But the accumulation of authoritative rulings demonstrates how a foundational revelation is extended into new circumstances. The chain from God to prophet to scripture to jurist does not become empirical merely because it is old or institutionally elaborate.

The essential questions are simple. What is the evidence that there is one God rather than many gods or no god? What evidence shows that this God communicated with a particular person? How can divine communication be distinguished from dreams, hallucination, altered consciousness, literary creativity, political calculation, or sincere mistake? What observation would falsify the claim?

Muhammad's historical existence does not establish Gabriel's presence or the divine origin of the Quran. History can investigate persons, texts, communities, and institutions. It cannot simply assume the supernatural cause asserted by the sources. The claim of revelation therefore requires an independent argument before it can justify public authority.

A responsible critic need not diagnose prophets from a distance or assert fraud without evidence. Muhammad may have sincerely believed he received revelation. Sincerity, however, is not proof. A person can be honest and mistaken. The limited but decisive conclusion is that supernatural communication has not been independently demonstrated. Therefore no person who does not accept it can justly be coerced by laws resting only upon it.

Logical empiricism asks what gives a proposition cognitive content, what evidence supports it, and under what conditions it could be tested. Statements about invisible beings may express emotion, moral aspiration, or symbolic meaning. But when presented as factual reports authorizing public power, they require evidence accessible beyond the believer's circle.

Popperian falsification sharpens the challenge. A theory that explains every possible outcome and permits no conceivable refutation is insulated rather than

confirmed. If success proves divine favor and defeat proves divine testing; if fulfilled predictions validate the prophet and failed expectations are reinterpreted; if belief confirms election and disbelief confirms human blindness, the system protects itself from correction.[1]

An empiricist cannot prove that no god exists. The burden lies upon those who claim not only that a god exists but that this god issued particular commands through a selected person. The more coercive the proposed consequence, the greater the evidentiary burden. Private hope requires tolerance. Public domination requires proof.

Sacred Genealogy and Political Claims

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians cannot responsibly be described as an unbroken quarrel beginning with Isaac and Ishmael. Modern Zionism, European antisemitism, Ottoman decline, British policy, Arab nationalism, migration, displacement, war, occupation, security, and competing national claims are indispensable to its history.

The ancient narrative remains relevant in a different way. Sacred genealogy can be used to project modern political claims backward into divine history. Communities interpret land, descent, suffering, and destiny through stories that cannot be adjudicated by archaeology or diplomacy alone. Metaphysical entitlement enters material conflict.

The central contradiction of coercive revelation is that its source is metaphysical while its enforcement is material. God is invisible, but the army is visible. Gabriel cannot be questioned, but the conquered population can be taxed. Heaven and hell cannot be inspected, but prisons, executions, enslavement, and dispossession are observable. A private claim about supernatural communication becomes a public command imposed upon bodies, land, labor, and institutions.

Religious authority at its most expansionary can develop through a recognizable sequence. First, there is said to be only one true God. Second, the missionary community identifies its God as that true God. Third, other gods are reclassified as idols, demons, or human inventions. Fourth, atheism and rejection of revelation become not merely intellectual positions but sin, rebellion, or corruption. Fifth, a prophet, messiah, or savior is presented as the uniquely authorized representative

of God. Sixth, a scripture and community preserve the authoritative meaning of the message. Seventh, outsiders are summoned to recognize that revelation.

Eighth, conversion or submission brings entry into the community of truth. Ninth, the convert may be promised spiritual equality among believers. Tenth, land and resources are declared ultimately to belong to God. Eleventh, obedience to God becomes connected with obedience to scripture, prophet, church, caliphate, sacred law, or the institutions interpreting them. Twelfth, resistance can be punished twice: through a threatened afterlife and through coercion in this world.

The institutional pattern is nevertheless clear. Rulers, armies, jurists, and states have invoked sacred claims to administer conquered territory, collect tribute, distribute booty, regulate family life, suppress rival worship, or direct conversion. Material motives and doctrinal justification worked together. Theology could legitimize the desire for wealth or power, organize it, and transform victory into proof of sacred mission.

The supernatural promise remains unverifiable while the institutional benefit is concrete. Converts are promised salvation, paradise, or divine favor. The institutions receive loyalty, taxes, land, labor, prestige, and cultural authority. The afterlife cannot be audited. The treasury can.

A divine command does not, by itself, establish that an act is good. If moral judgment means obedience alone, the person affected by a command has no independent standing. Secular humanism instead judges conduct by its consequences for conscious beings, freedom, dignity, reciprocity, and preventable suffering.

Historical Genealogy and Empire

European colonialism is often described as an eruption of European greed into otherwise separate continents. Greed, competition, technology, state formation, navigation, disease, and commercial organization were crucial. But Europe had also undergone centuries of religious transformation before it exported imperial power overseas.

Christianity originated in the Middle East and spread through the Roman world. After alliance with imperial authority, it displaced, absorbed, or condemned older European religions. Indigenous European temples and sacred sites were destroyed, abandoned, or converted. Older gods were reclassified as demons or superstition.

Saxons, Baltic peoples, and others experienced coercive Christianization. Native European traditions survived in folklore, festivals, and transformed customs, but their public institutions largely disappeared.

Europe then became a battleground of Christian orthodoxy, heresy, Catholic Protestant conflict, and Christian Muslim war. Religious uniformity was enforced through law, persecution, expulsion, and violence. Jews were repeatedly persecuted as minorities. It would therefore be wrong to portray Judaism as a third imperial combatant equal to Christianity and Islam. The more accurate claim is that Jewish scripture supplied foundational concepts later universalized by Christianity and Islam, while actual Jewish communities frequently suffered under both.

European overseas empire joined crown, commerce, and cross in varying proportions. Spanish and Portuguese conquest in the Americas carried Catholic institutions. Other European empires combined trade, settlement, missionary activity, and racial hierarchy differently. Yet conversion frequently accompanied cultural destruction, and Christian assumptions helped Europeans imagine non-Christian societies as spiritually deficient and available for transformation.

Islamic empires developed through different peoples and institutions. Arab conquest carried the new religious state beyond Arabia. Persian, Turkic, Berber, Central Asian, and other Muslim powers adopted and reshaped Islamic imperial traditions. Military expansion, taxation, trade, Sufism, intermarriage, patronage, and social mobility all contributed to Islamization. Nonetheless, the distinction between Muslim rule and non-Muslim subjecthood had a basis in law and doctrine, and warfare could be interpreted through sacred categories.

The comparison should not become a competition over which civilization committed more crimes. The important point is that Christianity and Islam could unite transcendent certainty with organized expansion. European Christians and Muslim imperial formations carried different laws and histories, but both could interpret cultural replacement as service to a universal truth.

Slavery Conquest and Theology

The criticism is narrower and stronger. Sacred texts and legal traditions sometimes accepted, regulated, or legitimated practices that modern humanism rejects. Conquest could generate captives and booty. Enslavement could be incorporated into law. Religious difference could shape the status of captives, subjects, and

converts. The authority of revelation made reform more difficult because inherited rules were connected with divine or prophetic precedent.

Women and children have suffered particularly in conquest. Sexual violence, concubinage, forced marriage, sale, displacement, and the destruction of families recur across empires. These horrors should not be carelessly attributed to every missionary or imam, nor exaggerated through unsupported stories. The documented institutions are grave enough. Where theology classified captives and booty, the empirical suffering of victims must take priority over apologetic efforts to protect sacred reputation.

Secular humanism supplies the necessary standard. No human being becomes property through defeat. No woman becomes sexually available through conquest. No child inherits guilt from a defeated community. No scripture can make enslavement just. If a sacred precedent conflicts with human dignity, the precedent must be rejected.

The alternative is to examine claims to govern through publicly accessible reasons. If revelation is invoked to impose a law, that law must be judged by its observable consequences and the rights of those it governs. A declaration that God commanded it does not settle that public question.

What is required is a critique grounded simultaneously in dialectical materialism, logical empiricism, and secular humanism. Material analysis asks how ideas become institutions, property rules, taxes, borders, and armies. Logical empiricism, reinforced by Popper's challenge to unfalsifiable claims, asks what evidence could establish or disprove a claim about divine communication. Secular humanism judges the treatment of actual persons, including the right to reject or leave a faith without punishment. Together these tools move inquiry beyond theological apologetics and reactive grievance; they subject political theology to the standards used for other claims about power and human welfare.

Dialectical Materialism as Ontology

Dialectical materialism begins with a material world that exists independently of our beliefs about it. Human consciousness arises within that world through bodies, labor, language, and social life. An ontology is an account of what exists and what kinds of explanation we should seek. This ontology treats religions as historical human phenomena whose texts and institutions develop under material conditions.

It asks how rulers, classes, communities, and states acquire and exercise power. It studies contradiction, including the gap between a promise of spiritual freedom and a rule that denies political freedom. It recognizes that a believer can be sincere while an institution built around belief acquires coercive interests. It expects traditions to change through conflict, reinterpretation, and altered social conditions. It does not reduce every action to greed or deny the reality of conviction. Its question here is how claims of revelation become laws, taxes, borders, armies, and rights of command.

I use dialectical materialism to investigate how claims and ideas enter material life through institutions, laws, taxes, borders, and armies. I reject the rigid Marxist teleology that treats history as an inevitable march through predetermined stages toward a guaranteed final society. Contradictions identify tensions for investigation; they do not predict a single necessary outcome. The fate of a doctrine or an economic system must be judged from evidence, human choices, and changing conditions.

Logical Empiricism as Epistemology

Logical empiricism asks how we know that a factual claim is true. It requires clarity about a claim's meaning and evidence that other people can examine. An epistemology is an account of knowledge, justification, and the limits of certainty. Historical claims must be compared with documents, testimony, chronology, and competing explanations. A report of revelation is evidence that someone reported an experience, but it does not alone prove a supernatural source. Assertions about conquest, conversion, or law must be tested against the record rather than repeated as inherited slogans. When a claim predicts consequences, we ask what observation would count against it. Popper's test of falsification reinforces this demand without making every meaningful human judgment a laboratory experiment. Uncertainty must be stated where evidence is incomplete. The more power a claim seeks over others, the stronger its burden of public justification becomes.

Secular Humanism as Ethics

Secular humanism judges conduct by its effects on conscious human beings rather than by a claimed divine command. An ethical framework tells us how persons should be treated and which harms a society should prevent. Each person has an equal claim to life, liberty, dignity, and freedom of conscience. No one becomes

property through capture in war. No one loses citizenship for leaving a religion or criticizing its founder. A state must protect believers, dissenters, and unbelievers under the same law. A doctrine claiming authority over another person must answer to that person's freedom and dignity. Historical wrongs require evidence, remedies, and protection of living persons rather than inherited collective guilt. Reciprocity tests whether a rule remains just when those who imposed it must live under it. The ethical question here is whether any political theology can respect those rights without exception.

My tools are dialectical materialism, logical empiricism, secular humanism, free minds, and free markets. They have different jobs: materialism asks how institutions and material conditions shape belief and power; empiricism tests factual claims; humanism judges their effects on persons; free minds protect open inquiry; and free markets permit voluntary economic coordination. I am not married to any of these tools. If a better method explains reality, tests claims, or protects freedom more effectively, I will adopt it.

Materialism does not require the crude claim that every believer is motivated by money or power. Consciousness is part of material history. Love, fear, imagination, loyalty, and conviction are real forces even when their objects are imaginary or uncertain. A community can sincerely believe a revelation and still be mistaken about its origin. Institutions built around that belief can acquire interests exceeding the intentions of their founders.

Yet change does not erase foundations. The continuing authority of a prophet or scripture limits the range of permissible reform. Reformers often reinterpret inherited texts rather than openly reject them because communal legitimacy depends upon continuity. A materialist analysis therefore asks both how doctrine changes and why some claims remain protected from examination.

Empiricism is sometimes accused of being too narrow for religion. Love, beauty, consciousness, and moral value are not simple laboratory objects. This objection has force against a simplistic scientism. But the demand for evidence increases, rather than decreases, when a claim authorizes coercion. A person may privately interpret a dream as divine. He may not compel a neighbor to obey the dream without publicly accessible justification.

Logical analysis also exposes ambiguity. God can mean a personal creator, ground of being, moral ideal, cosmic consciousness, or poetic name for existence.

Revelation can mean literal speech from an angel, mystical insight, moral awakening, or accumulated communal wisdom. Before religious claims can be evaluated, their meanings must be clarified. A doctrine protected by constant movement between literal and metaphorical meanings evades accountability.

Falsifiability is not the only measure of meaning, but it is crucial when religions make predictions or historical assertions. What evidence would persuade a believer that a claimed revelation was human? If no possible discovery could count against it, the belief may remain existentially important but cannot claim the status of tested knowledge.

Free minds are the intellectual foundation of a peaceful society. No prophet, priest, imam, party, state, guru, or academic establishment should monopolize truth. Education should teach citizens how to examine claims, distinguish evidence from authority, and revise beliefs without fear.

Freedom of expression must protect criticism of religion, including severe criticism, while law protects persons from threats and violence. Blasphemy cannot be a crime in a society of equal citizens because the state cannot decide which metaphysical entities require protection. A god powerful enough to create the universe does not need police to punish skeptical sentences.[2]

Free markets form the economic component of this framework. Prices convey dispersed information, competing enterprises test different methods, and buyers and sellers can revise their decisions in response to results. This movement through competition, feedback, adaptation, and institutional change is dialectical in the practical sense I use here. A market cannot be free if officials or monopolies prevent entry, choice, or honest exchange. Voluntary trade gives people a means of cooperation without first requiring agreement about theology.

Markets can also concentrate wealth, exploit vulnerability, and cooperate with empire. They require enforceable property and contract rights, competition, transparency, protection against fraud and coercion, and the ability to revise harmful rules. I treat these limits as part of the material analysis of how markets actually operate. The East India Company demonstrates that commerce joined with state violence can become colonial rule.

I see no logical contradiction between dialectical materialism, understood as a method of studying material conditions and change, and free markets. My stronger

proposal is that a materialist who values decentralized experiment and correction has good reason to defend markets. This is my argument, rather than a theorem entailed by Marx's writings. Bertrand Russell separated Marx's economic predictions from his metaphysics, describing their connection as the mistaken notion that "a matter so purely empirical could depend upon abstract metaphysics." [3] Russell's point supports testing economic systems by evidence; he did not thereby endorse my claim that dialectical materialism demands free markets.

The contrast among planned and reforming economies is worth testing, rather than declaring settled by a label. The Soviet system collapsed, and Cuba and Venezuela have experienced severe economic difficulties, but their histories have several causes that must be separated. [4] China's reforms after 1978 and Vietnam's Đổi Mới reforms after 1986 expanded market activity and coincided with remarkable growth and poverty reduction. [5] Neither country is a pure free market economy: state direction and political controls remain central. These cases strengthen my case for market mechanisms while leaving questions about causation, institutions, and human freedom open to investigation.

The phrase elimination of metaphysics can sound like a proposal to eradicate religion or police private consciousness. That interpretation must be rejected. A state that forces atheism becomes another authority imposing an unfalsifiable philosophy. The objective is not to enter homes, close places of worship, or prevent spiritual exploration.

Elimination means removing metaphysical claims from compulsory public authority. A law must be defensible through reasons accessible to citizens who do not accept the religion behind it. A public school may teach about religions historically but should not certify one revelation. A court may protect worship but should not determine which god is true. Citizenship must not depend upon creed.

Public reasons must be intelligible to people who do not accept the doctrine behind a proposed law. A claim of Islamic legal authority therefore requires arguments that people can evaluate without first accepting Muhammad's revelation.

This principle also applies internationally. India and Pakistan cannot establish lasting peace if either state interprets the other through sacred destiny. Borders, water, trade, security, migration, minorities, and Kashmir must be discussed

through evidence, interests, rights, and negotiated law. Divine entitlement offers no shared measure.

The first objection is that secular ideologies have also produced mass violence. Communist regimes persecuted believers, suppressed inquiry, created prison systems, and killed millions. Nationalism, racism, and pseudoscience have justified empire and extermination. This is true. Materialism does not automatically produce humanism, and atheism does not guarantee liberty.

The framework consists of five interacting tools. Materialism investigates institutions, economic incentives, and historical change. Empiricism submits factual claims to public tests. Humanism evaluates their effects on living persons. Free minds protect criticism and correction. Free markets permit decentralized exchange and discovery within laws that prevent fraud, coercion, and monopoly. None is exempt from revision in the light of evidence.

The Same Questions for Every Revelation

Every revelation should face the same questions. Who received it? Who recorded it? How was the text transmitted? What independent evidence supports supernatural origin? What contradictions or historical influences appear? What observation could show the claim false? Who benefits materially when the revelation is accepted? What happens to those who refuse?

These questions do not predetermine the answer. They establish intellectual equality. Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Krishna, later messianic claimants, and modern gurus enter the same field of examination. No figure receives immunity because criticism causes offense.

The most important distinction is between a person's right to believe and a belief's claim to rule. Rights belong to persons. Propositions must earn credibility. Communities deserve protection from violence; doctrines deserve examination.

Objections and the Burden of Proof

The third objection is that modern believers interpret difficult texts metaphorically or historically. Such reform should be welcomed. But reform must be made explicit. If a rule is rejected because it violates human dignity, the reformer should acknowledge that human moral judgment has become superior to literal precedent.

Ambiguous reassurance cannot substitute for a clear renunciation of coercive doctrine.

The fourth objection is that Islam has no central church and contains multiple schools, cultures, and interpretations. Correct. Diversity makes generalization difficult. Yet diversity does not eliminate common sources. Quran, Muhammad, and Sunnah remain central across most traditions, though their interpretation varies. Critical inquiry should identify differences without declaring the foundational texts irrelevant.

The fifth objection is that the West uses criticism of Islam to justify domination. Colonialism, invasion, racial prejudice, and selective moral outrage are real. A doctrine can be criticized by hypocrites and still require criticism. Opposition to Western imperialism does not authenticate revelation. The standard must be universal: no American president, Hindu nationalist, communist party, pope, caliph, or prophet receives exemption from evidence and human rights.

Before reaching the conclusion, one final rule should govern the entire inquiry: the burden of proof belongs to the person asserting revelation, not to the person who withholds belief. A skeptic is not required to disprove every invisible being that human imagination can propose. The claimant must demonstrate why one alleged message deserves authority while thousands of competing visions, prophecies, miracles, and scriptures do not.

This rule protects religion as well as secular society. Without it, every new claimant can demand obedience merely by reporting supernatural appointment. The believer who rejects a later prophet already uses critical judgment, textual comparison, and inherited standards. The empiricist asks that the examination go one step further and include the founding prophet and scripture themselves.

The standard must also remain proportionate to consequence. A harmless private belief requires little public evidence because it binds only the believer. A request for voluntary cooperation requires reasons sufficient for the participants. A law restricting liberty requires strong public justification. War, enslavement, dispossession, execution, or permanent inequality require the highest possible standard and can never be justified by revelation alone.

Religious communities often reverse this burden. They demand that the dissenter prove God did not speak, prove an angel was absent, or prove a prophet was

mistaken. Such demands are impossible by design. Absence of disproof is then presented as permission for authority. Rational inquiry rejects this reversal. An unfalsifiable claim may be cherished, narrated, or symbolized, but it cannot acquire coercive force merely because nobody can enter the past and disprove an invisible event.

The same rule should govern historical memory. Evidence of conquest or persecution should be assessed critically, with sources compared and exaggerations corrected. Denial is not reconciliation, but mythology is not history. A materialist approach neither conceals crimes nor invents them. Its loyalty is to evidence, including evidence that complicates its preferred argument.

Only a movement willing to correct itself can credibly demand that religions submit to criticism. Empiricism is not another infallible scripture. It is a discipline of provisional judgment, open evidence, and revision. Its moral superiority lies not in possessing final truth but in permitting error to be discovered without killing the dissenter.

Notes to This Essay

1. Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (English edition, 1959); *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963). Falsifiability supplements rather than exhausts the methods discussed here.
2. United Nations Human Rights Office, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 18, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.
3. Bertrand Russell, *Freedom and Organisation 1814–1914* (1934), discussion of Marx’s historical materialism, p. 220 in the edition cited in secondary reproductions. The excerpt is quoted conservatively; Russell argues for empirical independence, not a mandatory market program.
4. International Monetary Fund, “From Centrally-Planned to Market Economies” (1991), <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/1991/017/article-A001->

en.xml; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2025, <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/90299-preliminary-overview-economies-latin-america-and-caribbean-2025>. Economic trajectories have multiple causes.

5. World Bank, China country overview, <https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/china>; World Bank, Vietnam country overview, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview.print>. The reported growth followed market reforms alongside other policy and global changes.

PART 3

From Hyderabad to New York

The Question I Put to Indian Leaders

I was born in Hyderabad, India, in a civilization whose encounter with Islamic power began long before my lifetime. I did not grow up with a systematic knowledge of the Quran, the Hadith, or Islamic law. What I inherited was a historical question: why had the relationship between Hindu civilization and Islamic political power remained unsettled for so many centuries? For years I could neither state that question precisely nor answer it. My own travels forced me to confront it.

From 1977 to 1979 I lived in Iran. The treatment of Hindus and other Indians that I witnessed there troubled me, and it made a distant historical problem immediate. I began to ask what India's leaders understood about the religious and political ideas that could affect Indians abroad and Hindus at home. At that stage I knew little about Islamic doctrine myself. I had experience and questions, not a finished theory. That distinction matters: I did not arrive in New York as an expert setting a test for politicians.

In the early 1980s I was living in New York. The city brought visiting Indian leaders within reach in a way India could not have done for an ordinary young man like me. I met Morarji Desai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Inder Kumar Gujral, P. V. Narasimha Rao, and Jyoti Basu in different settings. Desai had already served as prime minister; Vajpayee, Gujral, and Rao would hold that office later. Rao was then India's external affairs minister, and Basu was the sitting chief minister of West Bengal.[4] I did not meet them as a delegation or summon them to a formal hearing. These were opportunities created by my presence in New York.

I met Desai and Vajpayee at a friend's home, Gujral in a restaurant, and Rao privately at the United Nations Plaza Hotel. I encountered Basu at a gathering organized by Bengalis in New York. The settings differed in privacy and duration, but each gave me a chance I could hardly have arranged in India. I put substantially the same concern before them: why were Hindus and other Indians treated with contempt or exposed to pressure in places I had known, and why did Indian leaders

appear unable to address the deeper problem? I asked about what I had seen. I was still struggling to identify the doctrine that might help explain it.

I was in my twenties; Desai was an elderly statesman. I remember Desai as the kindest of the five. Rao and Basu struck me as the rudest. Their responses were not identical, and I cannot reconstruct every exchange as a verbatim transcript. What stayed with me was the sense of evasion and helplessness. In substance, I heard that neither they nor I could do anything about the problem. The conversations ended, but the unanswered question did not.

At first I examined those five men, their offices, and what they had written or said publicly. My immediate judgment concerned a failure of attention, not a proof that I knew more than they did. I knew almost nothing about the doctrine of Islam then. I was asking whether leaders with access to diplomats, researchers, public records, and state institutions had examined the beliefs and laws implicated by the questions I raised. Their replies gave me no sign of that examination. I later looked for it in their public work.

I am seventy-two now. I have never possessed their offices, advisers, or archives, but I have spent years reading about Muhammad, the Quran, Hadith, jihad, Islamic jurisprudence, and the legal status of non-Muslims. My understanding has grown because I treated the question as something a common person could investigate. I can distinguish what I witnessed in Iran, what I remember from New York, what the texts say, and what I infer from them. The younger man asked why leaders would not answer. The older man asks why India's public intellectual life had left so much doctrinal inquiry undone.

That change in my own knowledge widened the investigation beyond five encounters. I examined the published work of India's fifteen prime ministers from independence through 2026, counting Gulzarilal Nanda's acting service. Their work addresses Partition, Pakistan, Kashmir, communal conflict, elections, and secularism, but I did not find a sustained, connected study of Muhammad's political career, Quran, Hadith, jihad, sharia, apostasy, and the status of non-Muslims at the doctrinal root. Policy often approached religious communities through diplomacy, law and order, or electoral management without examining a claim to religious sovereignty as a theory of government. My charge concerns the leaders' public work and the research they could have commissioned; it is not a claim to know everything they read privately.

Gandhi and the Political Test of Partition

Gandhi was from a different universe. His moral and spiritual campaign belongs outside my indictment of the prime ministers who wielded state power, although its political expectations can and must be tested against Partition.

Gandhi is not one of the fifteen prime ministers examined here, and I set him aside deliberately, because the political test of his doctrine of Hindu-Muslim unity has already occurred and already failed. The Muslim League did not accept his assurance of an indivisible national family. It demanded sovereign political territory, and it obtained it. The Lahore Resolution was adopted in March 1940, and Pakistan came into existence in August 1947 — approximately seven years and five months later.[6] I have seen immigrants in the United States wait ten or twenty years for a green card, asking only for permanent residence inside a country that already exists. The Muslim League obtained a new country, with borders, sovereignty, armed forces, and international recognition, in less than eight years. That comparison exposes the scale of the political achievement Gandhi's theory failed to anticipate. A person may wait two decades for permission to live permanently in another man's country; a determined political movement secured an entire country for itself in seven. Pakistan was not a minor qualification to Gandhi's theory of national unity — it was its political refutation, delivered not through nonviolence but through mass killing, uprooting, abduction, and the division of the country. The relevant lesson is not that conciliation is always wrong; it is that goodwill cannot substitute for knowledge of the adversary's political purpose.

Nehru's weakest point was political, not historical. He lived in the age of Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Abul A'la Maududi, and he confronted directly the movement that created Pakistan. Yet he never adequately examined the philosophy behind its claims, and a leader who governs the consequences of an idea without examining the idea itself governs blind. He knew events; he failed to penetrate doctrine. That single gap — between administrative fluency and doctrinal ignorance — defines the failure this essay indicts across fifteen prime ministers, and Nehru simply exhibits it in its purest and most consequential form.

Nehru requires separate attention because he wrote about Islamic civilization at much greater length than his successors. In *Glimpses of World History* and *The*

Discovery of India he discussed conquests, culture, learning, and the making of India.[2] He was a historical narrator and statesman, but these works do not examine the Quran, Hadith, and jurisprudence as a connected theory of political authority. His 1936 reply to Muhammad Iqbal is more revealing still: on the theological points in Iqbal's discussion of Islam and Ahmadism, Nehru said that he was neither competent nor sufficiently interested to pursue the argument.[3] That is a limit Nehru himself stated about that exchange. It does not erase his historical writing; it shows the difference between writing about a civilization and investigating its doctrines.

Nehru and the Limits of a Cultural Account

Nehru also praised the Arabs for carrying the torch of science and learning while Europe lived in darkness, and the description quietly confuses the language and government of a civilization with the identity of its actual creators. Work written in Arabic under Muslim rulers drew upon Greek, Syriac, Persian, Indian, Jewish, Christian, Central Asian, and other inheritances, absorbed and translated rather than invented from nothing. Many of the translators, physicians, mathematicians, and philosophers writing in Arabic belonged to conquered or incorporated peoples, not to the conquering faith itself. This objection was made forcefully by Peter BetBasoo, an Assyrian writer, publisher, software entrepreneur, and co-founder of the Assyrian International News Agency. BetBasoo came from an indigenous Christian people of Iraq whose history preceded the Arab and Islamic conquests by millennia, and that position shaped his challenge to the habit of crediting the rulers of a civilization with everything created by the peoples living under them. On November 7, 2001, BetBasoo addressed a letter titled "What Arab Civilization?" to Carly Fiorina, then chief executive of Hewlett-Packard. Fiorina had delivered a speech on September 26, 2001, shortly after the attacks of September 11, praising the architectural, mathematical, and medical achievements of the medieval Islamic world.[7] BetBasoo objected that the accomplishments of Assyrians, Persians, Christians, Jews, and other subject peoples were being silently transferred to an undifferentiated Arab or Islamic civilization that did not, in fact, produce most of them. His intervention matters because it asks a question Nehru also neglected: who actually performed the translation, the experiment, the calculation, the observation, and the authorship?

A discovery made by an Indian under British rule does not thereby become a discovery of Christianity, and a discovery made in Baghdad under a caliph does not automatically become a discovery of Islamic theology. Political possession is not intellectual authorship, and conquest does not grant the conqueror a patent upon the mind of the conquered. The Arabian birthplace of Islam gave the world three forces of enormous and lasting consequence: Muhammad, the Quran, and jihad. Much of the science later classified as Islamic flourished in older cultural centers outside Arabia and was created by peoples absorbed into expanding Muslim empires rather than by the empires themselves — a proposition that must be demonstrated scholar by scholar, not merely asserted, but one that stands as a legitimate empirical challenge to Nehru's indiscriminate praise.

Nehru admired what he called the remarkable energy and vitality of early Islam, but energy is not a moral category, and a historian owes his reader that distinction. The Mongols also possessed energy in exactly this sense. Conquerors can display courage, discipline, mobility, strategic intelligence, and confidence while simultaneously destroying cities, enslaving captives, and extinguishing the institutions of the people they overrun. History written from the saddle sees movement, expansion, and victory; history written from the defeated city sees death, dispossession, tribute, slavery, and cultural loss, and both perspectives describe the same events truthfully. A complete account requires both viewpoints held together, not one substituted for the other out of admiration. Nehru admired the velocity of conquest without reckoning adequately with the people standing in its path, and a prime minister writing history for a nation of the conquered owed those people a fuller accounting. Velocity is not virtue. Momentum is not justice.

A civilization that measures greatness by the speed of another's expansion has already conceded the argument before it begins. That concession is precisely what Nehru made, however unintentionally, and his successors never corrected it.

Nehru believed that Muslims who entered India ceased to be foreigners, made India their home, absorbed its culture, and became part of the Indian family without remainder. Cultural exchange certainly occurred, and occurred richly, in language, architecture, music, administration, clothing, food, and daily life, and that fact cannot be denied by anyone who has looked honestly at Indian civilization. But cultural exchange is not the same as common sovereignty, and the two must not be confused merely because both are pleasant to describe. A community can adopt local food, music, and language while retaining a separate sacred history,

communal law, political memory, and theory of legitimate government, all four surviving intact beneath the shared surface. The Muslim League, the Two-Nation Theory, Direct Action Day, Partition, Pakistan, repeated wars, Kashmir, and nuclear confrontation together prevent Nehru's account from being accepted as a completed integration, however comforting that account was meant to be. There was coexistence, and it was real. There was no final philosophical reconciliation of the underlying claim to sovereignty, and that absence is also real, and it is the one Nehru's narrative worked hardest to obscure. Shared food is not shared sovereignty.

Architectural mixture is not agreement about political authority. India's leaders repeated the comforting half of this sentence for eighty years and omitted the harder half, and the omission has a cost that outlives the comfort.

Nehru treated Akbar as the embodiment of an Indian synthesis achieved once and for all within a single reign. Akbar did move toward accommodation later in his rule: he abolished the jizya, incorporated Hindu elites, engaged Hindu and Jain teachers, and experimented with Din-i Ilahi, and these actions deserve honest recognition rather than dismissal. They also reveal the limits of Nehru's argument more clearly than Nehru allowed. Akbar expanded his empire through violence like his predecessors, and his departures from inherited exclusiveness remained dependent upon the will of one ruler rather than upon any institution built to outlast him. Din-i Ilahi attracted only a tiny circle at court and died with him, leaving no successor and no law. An exceptional emperor cannot establish a durable synthesis that his own successors did not preserve, and none of them did. Akbar is therefore evidence against Nehru's thesis as much as for it: proof that accommodation was possible under one extraordinary ruler, and proof that it was never made permanent. A single reign is not a settlement.

A single experiment abandoned at a ruler's death is not a tradition. Nehru cited the exception as though it were the rule, and the distance between the two is where his argument fails.

The Remaining Prime Ministers

After Nehru came fourteen other individuals who served as prime minister, counting Gulzarilal Nanda's acting tenure among them. They administered the results of the conflict without producing the examination of its doctrine that the

office required of at least one of them. They wrote memoirs, speeches, poetry, political defenses, economic reflections, and accounts of government, and none of that writing is worthless. But none produced a connected study of revelation, jurisprudence, jihad, apostasy, blasphemy, slavery, the status of non-Muslims, and divine sovereignty as one system, which is the specific and narrow charge this essay brings. P. V. Narasimha Rao came closest to examining one central dispute, in Ayodhya 6 December 1992.[8] But his subject was a constitutional and political crisis, not Islam as a metaphysical, legal, and political system in its own right. My personal encounter with him remains emblematic of the whole pattern: a man entrusted with immense authority responded to a civilizational question with irritation rather than inquiry, exactly as his predecessors and successors did in their own ways.

The others must not be exempted merely because Nehru wrote more and left a larger target. Their silence was itself a failure, not a neutral absence. India did not require every prime minister to become an Islamic theologian; that demand would be unreasonable and this essay does not make it. It required at least one of them, across nearly eighty years and fifteen tenures, to commission, understand, and publicly confront a rigorous comparative investigation. None did.

Narendra Modi changed the vocabulary of the Indian state more than any prime minister since Nehru. He placed Indian civilizational identity nearer the center of public life, abolished Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status, confronted Pakistan more aggressively, and ended much of the official embarrassment that had long surrounded Hindu symbols in public discourse. These changes distinguish him from many predecessors, and this essay does not minimize them. But Modi is not exempt from the intellectual test this essay applies to all fifteen, and popularity is not a substitute for doctrine. He has not provided a sustained examination of Islamic metaphysics, jurisprudence, political theory, sovereignty, or their historical relationship with Indian civilization, any more than Nehru did. India needs an account that can survive textual evidence, historical verification, philosophical criticism, and open debate, not merely an account that survives an election cycle. Until that account exists, even a strong government operates without a complete diagnosis of the disease it claims to be treating. Strength of will is not the same as clarity of understanding.

Modi has supplied the first. He has not yet supplied the second, and the office he holds cannot substitute for the scholarship it still lacks.

The Poverty of Analysis

For centuries, many non-Muslim accounts, including Hindu accounts, have recorded the damage done to communities, temples, and institutions. Those records matter. Yet a catalog of injuries cannot by itself explain how a reported revelation became a legal and political claim upon people who reject it. I looked for Indian writers who had examined the Quran, Hadith, prophetic authority, and jurisprudence at that foundational level. This is the poverty of analysis I mean: extensive knowledge of historical consequences alongside too little direct testing of the doctrine invoked to justify them.

The Historians Archaeologists and Political Thinkers

Indian scholarship about Islam is extensive, but most of it concerns conquest and government rather than revelation and doctrine. Jadunath Sarkar mastered Persian sources and wrote with great authority about Aurangzeb, Mughal administration, religious policy, jizya, temple destruction, and Maratha resistance. R. C. Majumdar studied Islamic conquest, Hindu resistance, and the distortion of history for political purposes. K. S. Lal investigated demographic change, conversion, enslavement, the Muslim slave system, and the institutional legacy of Muslim rule.

S. R. Sharma examined the religious policies of Mughal emperors. A. L. Srivastava and Ishwari Prasad wrote political histories of the Sultanate and Mughal periods.

G. S. Sardesai documented Maratha history and resistance to Mughal power. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri studied southern India and the effects of invasions upon its kingdoms. R. C. Dutt, Radha Kumud Mookerji, H. C. Ray, A. B. M. Habibullah, Parmatma Saran, and B. P. Mazumdar contributed to the political, administrative, social, and economic history of medieval India.

Their work remains indispensable. It tells us what rulers ordered, what armies destroyed, what taxes states collected, what institutions survived, and how conquered peoples responded. But a chronicle of government is not a critique of revelation. Persian proficiency does not by itself answer whether Gabriel spoke to Muhammad. A demographic estimate does not establish how a private claim of divine communication became a universal command. The historian can document that a temple was destroyed or that a tax was imposed; a foundational critic must also ask how an unverifiable metaphysical proposition acquired the power to authorize those acts.

Archaeologists and cultural historians addressed another part of the record. Meenakshi Jain studied temple destruction, Ayodhya, and the removal or protection of sacred images. B. B. Lal, S. P. Gupta, Makkhan Lal, K. D. Bajpai, and other archaeologists examined disputed sites and material remains. R. Nath studied Mughal architecture. Prafull Goradia wrote about temples, mosques, and political claims. These writers dealt with physical evidence, sacred geography, and historical memory. Their discoveries may reveal what happened to buildings and institutions, but archaeology cannot determine whether the supernatural command invoked by a conqueror was genuine.

Hindu nationalists and civilizational thinkers concentrated on political survival. V. D. Savarkar interpreted Indian history through conflict, resistance, conversion, and the construction of Hindu political identity. K. M. Munshi treated the restoration of Somnath as a symbol of civilizational recovery. Lala Lajpat Rai examined pan Islamism, Khilafat, separate electorates, and the difficulty of creating a common nationality.

Bhai Parmanand, Swami Shraddhananda, Madan Mohan Malaviya, M. S. Golwalkar, Deendayal Upadhyaya, Balraj Madhok, Girilal Jain, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, B. S. Moonje, and Bipin Chandra Pal addressed conversion, communal organization, Partition, national loyalty, and Hindu consolidation.

Their concern was understandable. A community facing political pressure naturally asks how it can organize, defend itself, and preserve its institutions. But political organization is not philosophical investigation. These thinkers usually treated Islam as an already formed force confronting Hindu society. They did not place the claim of revelation itself on trial before a common court of reason and evidence.

India's major spiritual philosophers also stopped short of this inquiry. Vivekananda made observations about Islam's social equality, discipline, strength, and religious exclusivity. Sri Aurobindo wrote perceptively about pan Islamism, national cohesion, and the psychology of Hindu Muslim unity. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan compared Indian spiritual experience with Christianity and other religious traditions. Gandhi approached Islam through ethics, nonviolence, Khilafat, and interreligious friendship. Rabindranath Tagore and Vinoba Bhave emphasized universal humanity and reconciliation.

These thinkers sought synthesis, ethical improvement, or national peace. They did not systematically demand evidence for the proposition that God communicated

with Muhammad through Gabriel. Their generosity toward religious experience often prevented them from asking whether some experiences, however sincerely reported, should be treated as private psychological events rather than universally binding knowledge.

The Congress secular tradition followed a similar path. Tara Chand emphasized the influence of Islam on Indian culture. Humayun Kabir, Abul Kalam Azad, Aziz Ahmad, Mushirul Hasan, Rafiq Zakaria, and Asghar Ali Engineer explored composite culture, nationalism, reform, and coexistence. Their work helps explain the interaction of communities, but shared music, food, language, architecture, and administration cannot authenticate revelation. Cultural synthesis answers how people lived together. It does not answer whether one community's prophet possessed divine authority over another.

Historical work on Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori can tell us how conquest advanced, but it cannot establish that either conqueror possessed divine authority.[10]

Mohammad Habib wrote about Mahmud of Ghazni, the Delhi Sultanate, Sufism, and medieval political culture. Irfan Habib studied the Mughal agrarian system, economic history, and class relations. Satish Chandra investigated the Mughal state, nobility, jizya, and religious policy. Nurul Hasan and Athar Ali studied administration, landholding, and the ruling class. D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, D. N. Jha, Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar, K. N. Panikkar, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, and R. Palme Dutt interpreted history through social formations, material interests, nationalism, and colonial strategy.

These approaches corrected many romantic and communal accounts. They demonstrated that rulers often acted from revenue, military, and dynastic interests as well as religious conviction. But in reducing religion to class interest or political instrument, Marxists often avoided studying religious ideas as forces believed by their adherents. A doctrine need not be supernaturally true to become materially powerful. An unverified revelation, once embodied in law and institutions, can direct real armies and organize real states.

M. N. Roy and Rahul Sankrityayan came closer. Roy wrote about Muhammad and the historical role of Islam but largely presented early Islam as a revolutionary and progressive force. Sankrityayan wrote a concise materialist outline of Islam.

Neither produced a comprehensive critical study of Muhammad, Quran, canonical Hadith, jihad, Sharia, and the Abrahamic genealogy of revelation.

The Marxists asked who owned the land but not how God was alleged to have conveyed rules governing land. They asked how surplus was extracted but not how divine ownership could be invoked to legitimate tribute and booty. They explained communalism through colonial policy but did not adequately examine how the distinction between believer and unbeliever existed before British rule and could retain power after colonialism.

An economic interpretation is necessary but insufficient. Human beings act not only for material interest but through meanings, identities, loyalties, and imagined destinies. When a community believes that God has selected its messenger and law for humanity, that belief becomes a material force. A complete materialism must explain how metaphysics enters history, not pretend that metaphysics has no causal power merely because its supernatural claims are unproven.

Ram Swarup, Sita Ram Goel, and B. R. Ambedkar stood out in my reading. Swarup worked directly through Hadith reports in *Understanding Islam through Hadis*. Goel connected Islamic doctrine with the ideology and record of conquest. Ambedkar examined questions of political allegiance, religious community, law, and equal citizenship in his writings on Partition.[5] Their approaches differ, and I do not claim that no other Indian has studied Islam. My narrower finding is that sustained doctrinal investigation has been strikingly scarce beside the vast literature on Hindu-Muslim conflict.

Other historians and public thinkers made substantial contributions to understanding particular periods and institutions. Jadunath Sarkar, R. C. Majumdar, K. S. Lal, Irfan Habib, and Satish Chandra, for example, addressed aspects of conquest, the Mughal state, revenue, conversion, and political life. The work deserves to be read on its own terms. My question to that scholarship is specific: where is the equally sustained inquiry into the truth claim that a prophet received binding instructions from God and into the institutions erected upon it? A chronicle of an empire and a critique of its claimed authority are different studies.

The Three Doctrinal Critics

Ram Swarup's *Understanding Islam through Hadis* engaged directly with Sahih Muslim. He examined faith, ritual, marriage, punishment, slavery, jihad, war booty,

and relations with non Muslims through reports attributed to Muhammad. His importance lies in shifting attention from what later rulers happened to do toward what authoritative tradition says Muhammad did and commanded. He treated Hadith not as decorative literature but as a foundation of Islamic law and moral imagination.

Swarup also compared prophetic monotheism with Hindu spiritual pluralism. He argued that traditions centered upon one exclusive revelation create a different religious psychology from traditions accepting multiple approaches to transcendence. Yet his standpoint remained spiritual. He defended a richer conception of divinity against a narrower one. He did not suspend all supernatural claims and ask what evidence proves that any divine realm exists.

Sita Ram Goel was broader. He connected Quran, Hadith, Muhammad, jihad, Dar al Islam, Dar al Harb, and the believer unbeliever division with the record of conquest. He also examined Christianity's missionary claims and recognized structural similarities between Christian and Islamic exclusivism. Goel refused to separate ideology from conduct when rulers explicitly invoked sacred authority.

Nevertheless, Goel's mature position was Hindu civilizational and spiritual, not materialist. He defended Hindu gods and traditions against hostile monotheism. He did not fully reconstruct Islam as a later formation within the Jewish and Christian history of revelation, nor did he make falsifiability the final test of all sacred claims, including Hindu ones.

Ambedkar critically examined jihad, Dar al Islam, Dar al Harb, slavery, women, Muslim brotherhood, political loyalty, and the tension between religious solidarity and territorial nationality. He saw that brotherhood within a creed could coexist with exclusion beyond it. His constitutional mind recognized the danger when religious allegiance competes with equal citizenship.

Ambedkar's treatment was penetrating but incomplete. He relied substantially on translations and secondary authorities. He did not work systematically through the major Hadith collections, biographies of Muhammad, Quranic chronology, abrogation, classical commentaries, and the schools of jurisprudence. His later commitment to Buddhism also meant that he replaced one ethical and philosophical inheritance with another rather than making the suspension of all metaphysics the sole foundation of public reason.

The importance of these limitations is not to diminish the three thinkers. It is to identify the unfinished work they left behind. They demonstrated that doctrine matters. The next step is to ask whether doctrine possesses any authority before it is allowed to shape law, conquest, or relations between civilizations.

The gap is especially puzzling in the work of Indian Marxists. Material analysis could have followed the passage from reported revelation to legal rule, from legal rule to taxation and property, and from communal identity to state policy. Instead, much of the scholarship I examined emphasized class, land, revenue, colonialism, and nationalism while leaving the claim of divine authority insufficiently tested. A doctrine can be unproven as supernatural knowledge and still act as a material force. To study its material effects properly, one must examine its content.

This is the collective intellectual misery I see in a Hindu civilization that has faced nearly fourteen centuries of conflict and contact with Islamic power.[1] Hindus studied invasions and rulers, but too few studied the doctrines invoked to justify law, sovereignty, and conquest. India did not need a rival revelation to answer those claims. It needed the patient investigation of texts, history, institutions, and human consequences described in the preceding essay. My argument is a call to do that work, beginning with what can be documented.

When Blood Is Spilled Empiricism Is Required

When blood is spilled, empiricism is required, and sentiment is not a substitute for evidence at that price. Brotherhood must be tested against institutions and conduct, not against professions of goodwill alone. Equality must be tested against inherited status, law, and social hierarchy, wherever those are found. Tolerance must be tested against the actual treatment of dissenters, apostates, rival religions, and conquered populations, not against the treatment promised in theory. Claims of scientific achievement must identify the actual discoverers, translators, languages, sources, and institutions responsible, by name where possible. Claims of integration must be tested against separatism, Partition, competing sovereignty, and durable political allegiance, not against shared cuisine. Empiricism permits no sacred exemption for anyone, and it asks only one question of any institution: what does it actually do to the living human beings inside it? This is the fundamental difference between analysis and propaganda.

Propaganda begins with the innocence of one's own side; analysis permits no innocent civilization, no infallible scripture, no unquestionable leader, and no historical claim protected in advance from evidence.

The Psychological Revolution

India's failure is therefore larger than one religion or one prime minister, and reducing it to either would misstate the argument this essay has built. A society trained to wait for a mahatma, a high command, a dynasty, a foreign patron, or a government office loses the habit of self-defense and self-government, one generation at a time. Apathy, dependence, opportunism, corruption, and fear then become political institutions in their own right, as durable as any law. India requires a psychological revolution founded upon independence of mind, not upon a change of government alone. Reason must replace obedience to gurus, maulanās, babas, political families, and party high commands, whichever authority happens to be demanding it. Self-reliance must replace parasitism at every level of public life. Citizens must learn to protect the vulnerable, resist corruption, defend the environment, build livable cities, and accept responsibility for the country they claim to love, rather than delegating that responsibility upward and then complaining about the result. The model is the saint and the soldier joined in one person: moral restraint without cowardice, and courage without cruelty, both held at once rather than traded off against each other.

This principle can be embraced equally by a believer or an atheist, since it demands nothing of theology and everything of character. It does not demand aggression. It demands freedom from fear, which is a harder and rarer thing to demand of any people. Political reform must follow this psychological change rather than precede it: Indian parties should democratize the selection of candidates through genuine primary elections or similarly open internal contests, because a party high command that decides who may seek office makes the citizen politically dependent before the election even begins, and democracy cannot flourish when candidacy is distributed as patronage.

A Challenge to the Published Record

I therefore make a comparison that many will call arrogant, and I make it anyway because the alternative is silence of the kind this essay indicts. I place my own work on Islamic imperialism, published at Reason in Revolt and in Islam and the Clash of

Civilizations, beside the published work of all fifteen prime ministers of independent India.[9] I ask the reader to judge the comparison rather than dismiss it because I held no office, since office is not evidence and never was. Which side examined Muhammad's political career, the Quran, the Hadith, jihad, jurisprudence, epistemology, and the Islamic theory of government more systematically? Which side confronted the universal claims of Maududi, the permanent-war doctrine described by Khadduri, and the strategy of terror articulated by Malik? Which side attempted to explain what these doctrines mean for Indic civilization, in writing, where the argument could be checked? A prime minister possesses prestige, ministries, archives, intelligence agencies, diplomatic reports, scholars, and public money; I possessed none of those advantages, and the disparity should have made their silence harder to explain, not easier. Authority does not determine truth. Evidence does, and evidence is available to anyone willing to do the work.

My challenge is therefore open: compare my arguments and sources at www.reasoninrevolt.com with the books, speeches, and published analyses of the fifteen prime ministers, and judge for yourself which body of work actually confronted the doctrine. If one of them conducted a more sustained doctrinal examination, produce it, and I will withdraw the charge. If no such work can be produced, then the disparity between their power and their intellectual preparation becomes part of the indictment itself.

This comparison does not ask the reader to accept my conclusions on authority, and I want that stated plainly rather than implied. It asks the reader to perform the examination that political India avoided for eighty years: identify the propositions, inspect the primary texts, test the historical claims, locate counterexamples, and reject whatever fails under that pressure. I claim no sacred exemption for my own work, and none should be granted to it. If my evidence fails, discard my conclusion without hesitation. But if fifteen prime ministers left the central doctrine unexamined while a private citizen confronted it openly and in public, then rank becomes irrelevant and their silence becomes evidence in its own right. That is not vanity. It is the elementary democracy of reason: the argument with the strongest evidence wins, regardless of the office held by the person who made it. A civilization cannot resolve a conflict its leaders refuse to understand, and India has not yet resolved this one.

India needs freedom from fear, independence of thought, historical honesty, doctrinal knowledge, and the courage to test every sacred claim against evidence, including its own. The first revolution India requires is psychological. The second is intellectual. Without both, political independence remains incomplete, whatever the calendar says about the year of its founding.

The personal story thus leads to a defined scholarly task. I was born in Hyderabad, questioned Indian leaders in New York after living in Iran, and then went back to the sources that none of those encounters had clarified for me. Two influential theorists of Islamic political order, Maulana Maududi and Muhammad Hamidullah, were born in the former Hyderabad State. Their arguments allow me to move from the question I put to politicians to a question I can test on the page: what political future do these doctrines permit for a peaceful, independent India that rejects their religious claims? The next essay examines their own words.

Notes to This Essay

1. The Umayyad conquest of Sindh and the Battle of Aror are conventionally dated to 711–712 CE; the duration stated here marks a long historical encounter, not uninterrupted warfare.
2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History and The Discovery of India*. The assessment concerns the published record reviewed in this essay, not a complete account of any officeholder's private study.
3. Jawaharlal Nehru, "To Mohammad Iqbal," 18 June 1936, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, First Series, vol. 7, pp. 363–364, <https://nehruarchive.in/documents/to-mohammad-iqbal-18-june-1936-1716k>.
4. Prime Minister of India, biography of P. V. Narasimha Rao, listing his tenure as external affairs minister from 14 January 1980 to 18 July 1984, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/former_pm/shri-p-v-narasimha-rao-2/. The accounts of the five meetings are the author's recollections.
5. Ram Swarup, *Understanding Islam through Hadis*; Sita Ram Goel, *The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India*; B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*.

6. All-India Muslim League, Lahore Resolution, adopted March 23, 1940; Pakistan became independent in August 1947.
7. Peter BetBasoo, "What Arab Civilization?," letter to Carly Fiorina, November 7, 2001; Carly Fiorina, "Technology, Business and Our Way of Life: What's Next," Minneapolis, September 26, 2001.
8. P. V. Narasimha Rao, Ayodhya 6 December 1992.
9. A. Panini, Islam and the Clash of Civilizations; A. Panini, Reason in Revolt, www.reasoninrevolt.com.
10. André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 2, *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries* (Oxford University Press, 1997), <https://books.google.com/books?id=Ps1nzwEACAAJ>.

PART 4

The Political Theories of Maududi and Hamidullah

The Peaceful India Test

My inquiry began in Hyderabad and returned there by an unexpected route. Two thinkers born in the former Hyderabad State gave influential accounts of Islamic political order: Muhammad Hamidullah classified war and relations between Islamic and non-Islamic states, while Maulana Abul A'la Maududi presented Islam as a revolutionary political project. After the leaders' evasions and my review of Indian scholarship, their texts offered something definite to examine. What follows for a peaceful India if a state accepts the principles these authors defend?

Hinduism as Polytheism and Idolatry

The Qur'an does not mention Hinduism or India by name. It does, however, repeatedly discuss polytheists, idol worshippers and those who associate partners with Allah.[4]

The Arabic term commonly used for this theological offense is shirk. A person who commits shirk is described as a mushrik, one who associates partners with God.

Hinduism contains many traditions, schools and philosophical positions. Some Hindus understand ultimate reality as one; others worship God through many forms; some follow devotional traditions centered upon particular deities; and some do not believe in a personal God. Nevertheless, traditional Islamic theology generally classifies Hindus as polytheists or idol worshippers because Hindu traditions permit divine plurality, sacred images and forms of worship that Islam rejects.

This classification is fundamental because the Qur'an does not treat polytheism as merely one religious choice among many equally valid alternatives.

Surah Al-Nisa 4:48 declares that Allah does not forgive the association of partners with Him, although He may forgive lesser sins. It calls the association of partners with Allah a tremendous sin.

Surah Al-Bayyinah 98:6 says that disbelievers among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists will remain in Hell and calls them “the worst of creatures.”

These verses establish the Qur’an’s theological judgment of polytheism. Hindu doctrines and practices classified as shirk are not accepted as alternative paths to the same religious truth. They are placed in direct opposition to the Qur’anic doctrine of Allah’s absolute unity.

For Hindus, the important issue is what follows from that classification when Islamic theology becomes the basis of state power and international law.

The Qur’an and Warfare Against Polytheists

Surah At-Tawbah 9:5 commands Muslims, after the sacred months have passed, to kill the polytheists wherever they are found, capture them, besiege them and wait for them at every place of ambush. It then provides that they should be released if they repent, establish prayer and pay the alms-tax.

The verse arose within a particular historical conflict involving Arabian polytheists and treaties. That historical setting must be recognized. The words of the verse, however, expressly identify the religious category of the people involved: they are polytheists.

The terms offered in the verse are also religious. The polytheists are told to repent, establish Islamic prayer and pay the Islamic alms-tax. These are marks of entry into the Muslim community.

Surah Al-Anfal 8:12 describes Allah casting terror into the hearts of disbelievers and commands blows against their necks and fingertips.

Surah Muhammad 47:4 commands believers, when meeting disbelievers in battle, to strike their necks until they are subdued and then bind the captives firmly. The verse subsequently mentions release through grace or ransom.

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:191 commands Muslims to kill their opponents wherever they encounter them and drive them from the places from which Muslims were driven.

The verse also restricts fighting at the Sacred Mosque unless Muslims are first attacked there.

Surah At-Tawbah 9:123 commands believers to fight the disbelievers nearest to them and to let those disbelievers encounter firmness.

These verses did not remain isolated statements. Muslim jurists and scholars interpreted them, related them to the conduct of Muhammad and incorporated them into extensive legal discussions concerning jihad, treaties, prisoners, conquered territories and relations with non-Muslim states.

The question of India therefore cannot be answered by quoting one verse alone. It must be answered by examining how Muslim scholars applied Qur'anic categories to an independent civilization populated largely by people classified as polytheists.

Jizyah and the Position of Hindus

Surah At-Tawbah 9:29 provides the Qur'anic foundation for jizyah. It commands fighting specified non-Muslims among the People of the Scripture until they pay jizyah in submission.

The verse refers expressly to the People of the Book, especially Jews and Christians. It does not name Hindus.

This created a legal question when Muslim armies entered regions inhabited by religious communities outside the original Jewish and Christian categories. Muslim jurists and rulers had to decide whether Hindus could be granted protected status and permitted to retain their religion upon payment of jizyah.

In practice, Muslim governments frequently collected jizyah from Hindus. This allowed Hindu populations to continue existing under Muslim political supremacy without conversion to Islam.

The extension of jizyah to Hindus did not necessarily mean that Islam recognized Hinduism as true. It meant that Hindus could sometimes be incorporated into an Islamic political order as a subordinated and taxable non-Muslim population.

Jizyah must therefore be distinguished from an ordinary tax imposed equally upon citizens. In the classical legal setting, it marked the political and religious status of a non-Muslim subject living under Muslim rule.

The possible extension of jizyah to Hindus offered survival without conversion, but it did not establish equality between Hinduism and Islam. Nor did it recognize an unconditional Hindu right to political independence.

Hamidullah and a Peaceful India

Muhammad Hamidullah was born in Hyderabad, Deccan, in 1908, when Hyderabad was a princely state ruled by the Muslim Nizam but inhabited overwhelmingly by non-Muslims. Hindus constituted the great majority of the population, and Telugu, Marathi, and Kannada were the principal regional languages, alongside Urdu and other languages. Hamidullah grew up, therefore, not in an exclusively Muslim land, but in a plural society whose public revenues were generated primarily by subjects who did not share his religion.[2]

He studied at Nizam College and Osmania University, earning degrees in law and international law, before continuing his education at the universities of Bonn and Paris. Osmania was a state university. It is consequently reasonable to say that his education formed part of a public system supported by the revenues of Hyderabad State, to which its Hindu majority necessarily contributed. This is a historical and moral inference from the demographic and institutional facts; it is not a statement made by Hamidullah in *The Muslim Conduct of State*.

He later lived for decades in France, another non-Islamic country, and spent his final years in the United States. He died in Jacksonville, Florida, on December 17, 2002. These biographical facts create a serious tension with the political theology presented in his book. Hamidullah benefited from life, education, security, scholarship, and residence in societies not governed by Islamic law. Yet *The Muslim Conduct of State* describes a legal order under which an independent non-Islamic state may be required to accept Islam, pay jizyah, or face war when a sufficiently strong Islamic state is able to impose the demand.[1]

The unequal principle at the center of his theory deserves examination. Non-Muslim societies gave Hamidullah education and refuge without requiring him to abandon Islam or pay a religious tribute. The international law he defended does not necessarily grant an equally peaceful non-Muslim state the same unconditional independence.

Consider a hypothetical India that is entirely Hindu, polytheistic, and devoted to image worship. It contains no Muslim citizens, residents, merchants, travellers, or

prisoners. No Muslim minority exists to be rescued. India has never attacked, threatened, insulted, or obstructed the neighbouring Islamic state. It has violated no treaty and has taken no Muslim property. It seeks peaceful diplomatic and commercial relations while preserving its own theology, temples, civil laws, and sovereign government.

India nevertheless refuses two demands. It will not convert to Islam, and it will not pay jizyah or acknowledge Islamic political supremacy. The issue is whether its peaceful conduct protects it under Hamidullah's own classifications. It does not. Four kinds of war he discusses would be unavailable, but his fifth category, which he calls "idealistic" war, supplies a separate basis for invasion.

Hamidullah's first lawful category is the continuation of an existing war. A conflict may have stopped because the parties were exhausted, their armies separated, or they agreed to a temporary truce. When the agreed immunity expires, hostilities may resume. He interprets the command concerning the Associators in Qur'an 9:5 in this setting: al-Sarakhsi's explanation, which he adopts, connects it to expiration of a truce (pp. 153-154).

This category cannot apply to the imagined India. India and the Islamic state have never fought. There is no interrupted conflict, no expired armistice, and no earlier belligerency. The mere existence of Hindu theology cannot be redescribed as continuation of a war that never began.

The second category is defensive war. Hamidullah includes resistance to invasion and action against a foreign state whose behaviour has become intolerable. His account also permits preventive action against a danger believed to be developing, and he describes the attack on Khaybar as an instance of forestalling war (pp. 154-155).

The facts of the hypothetical exclude this category. India has no aggressive intention, makes no threat, mobilizes no army, and interferes with no Muslim interest. An invasion could not truthfully be called defensive or preventive on Hamidullah's stated facts. The Islamic state would be the initiator.

The third category is sympathetic intervention. Hamidullah relies on Qur'an 8:72 and 4:75-76 to justify aid to Muslims suffering under a foreign non-Muslim government, subject to existing treaty obligations (pp. 155-156).

There are no Muslims in the hypothetical India. Nobody is being denied a mosque, prevented from practising Islam, or asking an Islamic power for liberation. This ground disappears completely. No claim of rescuing co-religionists can be made.

Hamidullah's fourth category is punitive. It encompasses collective apostasy, armed rebellion, denial of zakat by persons already bound to it, Kharijite insurrection, and breach of covenant (p. 156). India has never been Muslim and therefore cannot apostatize. It has never belonged to the Islamic state and cannot rebel against it. It owes no zakat and has broken no agreement. Punitive war is therefore unavailable.

The fifth category determines the result. Hamidullah calls it "idealistic" war. He reasons from the unity of God, the vicegerency of humanity, and the asserted duty that divine rule become supreme. He describes its mission as to "uproot godlessness and association with God" (p. 156). Polytheistic India falls directly within the theological condition described as association: it recognizes many divine forms and rejects Islamic monotheism.

Hamidullah cites Qur'an 9:33, 48:28, and 61:9 concerning the true religion prevailing over other religions, even when Associators resist (p. 157). His decisive distinction is between forced belief and compelled government. He cites freedom-of-conscience passages, yet states that "Islamic rule is to be established by all means" (p. 157). An individual Hindu may therefore retain Hindu belief after submission, but the Hindu state possesses no parallel unconditional right to retain sovereign independence.

The imagined India is not attacked because it injured Muslims. It is attacked because it remains an independent political embodiment of a theology that Hamidullah regards as false. Calling the war idealistic supplies a religious justification; it does not alter the fact that the peaceful Indian side did not initiate it.

Hamidullah specifies that the Islamic state must first be internally secure and possess enough strength to expect victory. Capacity matters: a divided or weak Muslim government is not directed to begin a hopeless campaign. Once sufficiently powerful, however, it is to invite neighbouring non-Muslim rulers to accept Islam (p. 158).

India refuses conversion. Because India lies outside the Arabian Peninsula, Hamidullah's formulation provides another alternative: payment of annual jizyah

in return for security from attack. India refuses because it understands the demand as political and religious subordination, not an ordinary reciprocal tax.

At that point Hamidullah calls war the "duty of the Muslim state" (p. 158). He says the struggle continues until conquest, receipt of jizyah, or acceptance of Islam (pp. 158-159). Peaceful coexistence between two fully independent states is missing from these alternatives. India may convert, submit while retaining its religion, or fight.

This is the central finding. India's refusal to convert is not alone the cause of war, because Hamidullah offers jizyah as an alternative outside Arabia. Nor is refusal of a normal tax the issue, because an independent foreign country ordinarily owes no tax to its neighbour. The cause is India's refusal to acknowledge the superior political claim embodied in jizyah.

Hamidullah says that people unfamiliar with Islam should receive an invitation before being attacked: Islam is offered first, followed where applicable by jizyah (p. 181). Once India receives, understands, and rejects the demands, the procedural condition is fulfilled. Hamidullah adds that renewed warning need not always be given to a people already familiar with Islam, particularly where an ultimatum would impede the objective (pp. 181-182).

The Islamic state would then declare war and invade. Indian soldiers defending Indian territory would become enemy belligerents. Their defensive resistance would not retroactively turn the initiating Islamic campaign into defensive war; it would simply activate Hamidullah's rules governing combat.

Hamidullah does not authorize unlimited violence. He prohibits torture, mutilation, treachery, unnecessary destruction of crops, excessive killing of animals, indiscriminate massacre, and intentional killing of ordinary noncombatants (pp. 195-199). Women, children, monks, hermits, the elderly, blind people, and persons incapable of fighting generally may not be deliberately killed. Peasants and servants who do not participate in hostilities also receive protection.

These restrictions mitigate warfare but do not protect India from conquest. Noncombatants can suffer siege, displacement, incidental injury, capture, taxation, or enslavement even when they are protected against intentional killing. Humanitarian restraints upon how a war is fought do not answer whether initiating that war against a peaceful country is just.

An Indian city could negotiate capitulation. Hamidullah insists that accepted terms must be honoured. Conditions could secure life, property, residence, temples, family unity, and freedom from enslavement. Negotiated surrender would therefore be far safer than capture by force.

Unconditional surrender produces a different result. Hamidullah explains that the population becomes prisoners and its property becomes booty (p. 200). Conquest transfers sovereignty to the victor; on p. 229 he explains that occupation gives the conqueror authority to tax, administer, and treat the territory as part of his dominions.

Independent India would cease to exist. Indians accepted as non-Muslim subjects could remain Hindu but would owe obedience and taxation to Islamic government. Hamidullah also allows inhabitants to be required to leave and notes that some may be expelled rather than accepted as subjects (p. 214). Religious survival is therefore compatible with political dispossession.

Hamidullah records more than one treatment of conquered land. It could theoretically be distributed, retained by the state, or left with its cultivators under taxation. He describes the debate after the conquest of Iraq and Syria, when soldiers sought cities, lands, crops, and inhabitants as booty. Caliph Umar left the cultivators in place and imposed continuing revenue obligations instead (pp. 232-235).

Applied to India, a prudent conqueror might leave farmers, artisans, and merchants in their occupations because their production and taxes would benefit the state. Such continuity would not preserve Indian sovereignty. It would transform former citizens into governed taxpayers within the new order.

Hamidullah gives the commander a choice among treatment of enemy prisoners: exceptional execution, enslavement, ransom, exchange, or release (pp. 208-213). He argues against killing prisoners merely for ordinary belligerent acts and reserves capital punishment for exceptional crimes or necessity (pp. 206-209).

Enslavement nevertheless remains legally available. Reviewing early precedents, he concedes that Islam "has not abolished" slavery (p. 210). Captured Indians could therefore be ransomed, exchanged, released, or enslaved. The commander need not enslave them, but the captives possess no absolute protection against that result.

Hamidullah reports limitations protecting certain productive classes and emphasizes manumission, humane maintenance, and the absence of compulsory conversion. Yet he also recognizes the proselytizing effect of slavery. Formal permission to retain Hindu belief would coexist with overwhelming dependency and pressure. Once captives were distributed, individual possessory claims would arise, and release could require consent or compensation (pp. 212-213).

Hamidullah's classification shows why the adjective just cannot be evaluated only from the attacking state's theology. He considers idealistic warfare lawful because he begins with the premise that Islamic political rule serves humanity. India begins with a different premise: that its own civilization is legitimate, peaceful, and entitled to govern itself. Nothing India has done supplies independent evidence of injury. The disagreement concerns who possesses authority before the first soldier crosses the frontier.

If the Islamic state's asserted authority is accepted in advance, India's refusal appears disobedient. If equal sovereignty is accepted, the demand itself appears coercive. Hamidullah resolves the dispute by privileging the Islamic claim rather than by identifying conduct that would be wrongful under a rule applying equally to both parties. His rule therefore functions as a confessional law of empire, even though he regards its motive as benevolent.

The absence of Muslims in India is crucial. It removes every possible argument based on persecution, religious disability, humanitarian rescue, or solidarity with an oppressed population. The absence of an Indian threat removes prevention. The absence of a treaty removes retaliation. What remains is theology alone, joined to military capability. The Islamic state acts when it can reasonably expect victory, which makes power a condition for enforcing the claimed duty.

India's peaceful offer of ordinary diplomacy cannot satisfy the doctrine because ordinary equality leaves Hindu sovereignty intact. Nor can India solve the conflict by promising tolerance: there are no Muslim inhabitants requiring protection, and the demand is directed at the character and independence of the state itself. Only conversion or recognized subordination averts war.

This also clarifies the word protection in Hamidullah's description of jizyah. India is not purchasing protection from some third aggressor; it is purchasing immunity from the state presenting the ultimatum. The payment may later finance administration and defence, but at the moment of demand it marks the

abandonment of equal sovereignty. A voluntary treaty payment negotiated among equals would be different. The stipulated jizyah follows a religious ultimatum backed by force.

Finally, the consequences cannot be assessed only by the conqueror's better precedents. Hamidullah supplies humane options, and a ruler might choose release rather than slavery, continuity rather than expulsion, and protected property rather than confiscation. Yet law must also be judged by its authorized worst outcomes. Where enslavement remains within lawful discretion, a peaceful Indian cannot claim freedom as a right; he can only hope the victorious commander chooses mercy. That difference between right and mercy is fundamental.

Maududi and the Revolutionary State

Maulana Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) was an Indian-born Muslim journalist, theologian and political ideologue who founded Jamaat-e-Islami in 1941 and became one of the twentieth century's most influential advocates of an Islamic state. Born in Aurangabad in the princely state of Hyderabad, he formed his ideas under British colonial rule, amid Western political dominance and the decline of traditional Muslim power. He later moved to Pakistan after Partition and died in Buffalo, New York, while receiving medical treatment. He began *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam*, commonly translated as *Jihad in Islam*, after the 1926 assassination of the Hindu leader Swami Shraddhanand by a Muslim. Maududi completed the work over approximately three years, and its first edition appeared in 1930. He argues that jihad cannot be reduced either to personal spiritual struggle or to conventional defensive warfare. For him it is a comprehensive struggle to remove political systems founded upon human sovereignty and replace them with an Islamic order founded upon the sovereignty of Allah. He denies that Islam seeks territorial conquest or forced conversion, yet his proposed liberation authorizes an organized Islamic power to defeat governments, impose Islamic supremacy and make non-Muslims subordinate to its law. Jihad in Islam is therefore a political defense of revolutionary warfare for an expanding Islamic state, expressed through the anti-colonial and ideological vocabulary of Maududi's century.[3]

This synthesis does not grant immunity to Marxism, positivism or capitalism. Marxist-Leninist states also empowered a vanguard party that claimed privileged knowledge of historical necessity and dismissed resistance as false consciousness. The theological vanguard speaks for Allah; the Leninist vanguard speaks for

History. Both can protect themselves from correction by redefining contrary evidence as proof of the population's error. My materialism therefore rejects historical prophecy and party infallibility. My standard is institutional corrigibility: contested elections, independent courts, free inquiry, a free press, voluntary exchange and the ability to remove rulers without bloodshed. A market is not free when state privilege, religious disability or conquest determines who may own and exchange.

Moreover, Allah does not appear in a legislature or courtroom. Human beings select texts, evaluate hadith, translate words and enforce conclusions. The long disagreements among Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, Shia and other jurists demonstrate that revelation has never administered itself. In practice, the sovereignty of Allah becomes the sovereignty of interpreters whose authority is harder to challenge precisely because they attribute it to God.

Maududi begins from a genuine moral problem. Human life deserves respect, yet societies sometimes permit killing in defense of life and public order. He distinguishes rightful from wrongful killing, treats certain evils as collective rather than merely individual, and argues that war may become a social and moral obligation. Jihad in the way of Allah is, in his account, war for a right cause rather than private gain. Its purpose is to oppose cruelty, mischief and oppression and to establish justice and law. This enables him to present jihad as a civilizing instrument rather than an appetite for blood.

The weakness lies in the identity of the judge. Words such as justice, oppression, mischief and truth do not interpret themselves. Maududi assigns their final meaning to Allah and then relies upon Islamic revelation to tell us what Allah means. The argument becomes: Allah defines justice; the Quran records Allah's definition; therefore warfare commanded by the Quran is just. The conclusion repeats the premise. A Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, atheist or dissenting Muslim receives no independent reason to accept it.

Maududi also treats purity of intention as evidence of moral legitimacy. Fighters seeking Allah's approval rather than booty supposedly differ from imperial conquerors. Intention matters, but sincere conviction does not establish truth. Crusaders, revolutionaries and totalitarian movements have also sacrificed wealth and life for causes they regarded as righteous. An empirical investigation must examine what an army does, whom it attacks, what government it installs, what

property it takes and what status it assigns to the defeated. Early Muslim expansion also occurred after prolonged Byzantine-Sasanian warfare had weakened both empires, and it offered land, tribute and booty within an existing world of tribal and imperial competition. These material conditions do not prove that belief was insincere. They show why religious purpose cannot serve as a complete historical explanation.

Popper's question is decisive: what evidence would persuade Maududi that a war called jihad was unjust? If victory proves divine favor, defeat becomes a test of faith, criticism becomes hostility to truth, and every outcome preserves the doctrine. A theory immunized in this way cannot guide impartial moral judgment. Secular humanism begins instead with persons who can suffer. Lethal force requires an imminent and demonstrable necessity, a proportionate response, protection of noncombatants and public accountability. No army acquires a special moral exemption by placing God's name above its command.[5]

Chapter Two expands defense far beyond repelling an armed invasion. Maududi includes response to aggression, defense of truth, punishment of broken agreements, suppression of internal enemies, defense of peace and assistance to the oppressed. Some of these categories appear in modern just-war reasoning. A population may defend itself, allies may respond to attack, and persecuted people may require protection. Yet Maududi's categories become elastic because obstruction of the path of Allah can include preventing acceptance of Islam, pressuring converts to leave it, or making Islamic life difficult. Force may remove such obstacles.

This converts a limited right of defense into a license for ideological intervention. A government that attacks Muslims is an aggressor in the ordinary meaning of the word. A government that permits Islam but refuses Islamic sovereignty is not thereby committing aggression. Maududi equivocates on the word defense: he moves from defending persons against attack to defending an alleged divine entitlement to rule. Almost any non-Islamic state may then be described as structurally hostile, even when it has not crossed a border or raised an army. Under that definition an Islamic invasion can scarcely count as aggression, because aggression has been defined out of existence before the facts are examined.

The category of the covert internal enemy presents a similar danger. Every state may act against espionage and planned violence, but an open society requires

evidence of a specific offense. It does not criminalize dissent, unbelief or peaceful organization by calling these hidden threats. Maududi's framework begins with the religious identity of the correct order and may therefore interpret opposition to Islamization as opposition to justice itself. The accused is condemned by definition before his conduct is examined.

A falsifiable doctrine of defensive war requires observable thresholds: an attack has occurred or is imminent; the party accused can answer public evidence; force is necessary; and the response is proportionate. Maududi's theological defense has no stable boundary because the supreme injury is resistance to Allah's order. Once divine sovereignty becomes the object being defended, defense can occur anywhere that divine sovereignty has not yet been established. The language remains defensive while the geographical and political possibilities become offensive.

Chapter Three contains the political center of the book. Maududi argues that humanity has a collective duty to establish virtue and prohibit evil. Private preaching is insufficient because entrenched institutions reproduce corruption. Fitnah and fasad, commonly translated as strife, persecution, disorder or corruption, must be suppressed. Since government possesses the power to enforce social conditions, a government founded on divine injunctions is necessary. Armed resistance may therefore remove regimes that obstruct the establishment of virtue. Conquest is redescribed as reform.

Maududi is correct that institutions shape conduct. Poverty, bribery, predatory lending, arbitrary government and organized violence cannot always be corrected through private advice. The materialist agrees that morality is embedded in social relations. The disagreement concerns how reform is discovered and authorized. In Maududi's system, the content of virtue is settled by revelation before public inquiry begins. In an empirical system, proposals remain hypotheses. We compare institutions, measure consequences, correct errors and allow citizens to remove governments without bloodshed.

The phrase "prohibiting evil" contains a fatal political ambiguity. An observable injury such as assault can be prohibited under a law applying equally to everyone. A theological offense such as rejecting Islamic authority injures no demonstrable victim. When both are placed in the same moral category, government obtains power over conscience. Maududi gives the believer's classification of good and evil

the force of public law while describing that transfer of power as universal liberation.

His treatment of jizya exposes the hierarchy beneath the language of reform. Maududi presents the tax as a contribution to protection and as evidence that conversion is not compelled. Yet he also states that the conquered accept Muslim sovereignty. The absence of forced conversion does not create political equality. A person may retain his religion while living under a constitution he did not choose, paying a status-specific levy and lacking equal authority to determine the state. Historically, rules governing protected non-Muslims varied across dynasties and periods, but could include political disabilities, unequal evidentiary standing and restrictions on public religious life. This was sometimes preferable to expulsion or massacre. It was still protection conditioned upon subordination, not equal citizenship.

Maududi denies that Islamic conquest is imperialism because, in his account, Muslims fight for a moral system rather than nation, race, territory or wealth. This definition excuses empire whenever conquerors announce an elevated purpose. Imperialism concerns relations of power as well as motives. If an external movement defeats a population, replaces its laws, collects revenue and subordinates the conquered to its political doctrine, the material structure is imperial even when its agents believe themselves benevolent. British imperialists also claimed to bring law and civilization. Their self-description cannot decide the issue, and neither can Maududi's.

Maududi argues that Islam rejects coercion in matters of personal belief. Faith produced by compulsion would not be genuine faith. Yet he refuses the apologetic claim that the sword had no part in Islam's expansion. Preaching plants the seed, he says in a revealing metaphor, while the sword softens the ground so that the seed can grow. Force removes political and social obstacles; individuals may then accept or reject Islam within an Islamic order.

This is indirect coercion. Imagine a movement defeating a country, abolishing its political order, privileging its own law, collecting taxes from the defeated community and then declaring every individual free to choose. The absence of a sword at the instant of conversion does not erase the coercive environment produced by the sword. People respond to incentives, disabilities, security, employment, marriage, education and access to power. Conversion under unequal

conditions cannot automatically be called free merely because a soldier did not dictate the creed word by word.

The empirical question is not whether every conversion was forced. Clearly historical conversion had many causes and unfolded differently across regions and centuries. The proper questions are whether military conquest altered religious incentives, whether subjects enjoyed equal rights, whether dissent carried penalties and whether conquered peoples could restore their former political order by peaceful choice. Maududi's admission concerning the sword makes the central issue unavoidable: his freedom of conscience exists inside a political structure that conscience was never free to reject.

Chapter Five is the longest and most historically ambitious part of the work. Maududi contrasts pre-Islamic Arabian warfare, along with Roman and Persian practices, with reforms attributed to Islam. He condemns vengeance, mutilation, treachery, mistreatment of envoys, indiscriminate destruction and abuse of prisoners. He discusses allegiance to commanders, observance of treaties, neutral parties, declarations of war, prisoners, slavery, spoils, truces, asylum and the status of conquered populations. These subjects cannot be dismissed. Rules restraining combatants are morally preferable to unlimited violence, and some Islamic rules of war did impose meaningful restraints in their historical setting.

Historical improvement, however, is not eternal perfection. A seventh-century rule may be better than an earlier practice and still fail a universal human standard. Maududi repeatedly compares an idealized Islamic law with the worst conduct of its opponents and then treats relative improvement as proof of divine origin. That method is invalid. Ideals must be compared with ideals and conduct with conduct. Human societies often discover partial restraints through experience. To prove revelation, Maududi would need evidence that cannot be explained by human moral development, borrowing, political necessity or retrospective idealization.

Slavery is the clearest test. Maududi acknowledges the permissibility of enslaving prisoners of war and retaining women from conquered peoples, then argues that Islam regulated an existing institution, encouraged emancipation and provided humane treatment. Regulation may reduce cruelty, but ownership of a human being remains incompatible with equal dignity. A universal and final moral revelation could have prohibited enslavement explicitly. The claim that immediate abolition was historically difficult may explain gradual policy; it cannot transform

permission into moral perfection. If slavery is wrong because no person may own another, it was wrong when practiced by Muslims as well as by everyone else.

Spoils create another conflict between declared intention and material structure. Maududi insists that jihad is not fought for booty, but a legal system for distributing captured property gives combatants and the state a material interest in victory. One need not claim that every fighter acted from greed. The empirical point is that conquest transferred wealth, land and persons. A theory that examines only professed motives while minimizing these transfers is incomplete. Dialectical materialism directs attention to the relation between ideas and interests: sacred language may sincerely motivate action while also legitimizing the acquisition of power and resources.

The status of conquered peoples further qualifies Maududi's claim of liberation. Protection, limited communal autonomy and security may compare favorably with massacre or expulsion. They do not amount to equal citizenship when Muslims possess the sovereign role and non-Muslims occupy protected but subordinate categories. Rules concerning distinctive dress, tribute or political disability mark hierarchy in public life. A secular state improves upon both persecution and protected inferiority by making citizenship independent of creed.

Maududi also defends controversial episodes associated with Muhammad, including Banu Qurayza, Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, Khaybar and Najran. The historical sources for the prophetic period are not all equally early or independent, so responsible criticism must distinguish the Quran from later biography and hadith and admit uncertainty where it exists. Yet Maududi himself accepts the tradition as morally authoritative. He cannot use these events as precedents and simultaneously avoid examination of their moral content.

The reported execution of the adult males of Banu Qurayza after surrender, the enslavement of women and children, and the distribution of captives present a severe problem for any claim of timeless moral perfection. Invoking treason or wartime judgment may supply historical context, but collective punishment and enslavement still require moral defense. The killing of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf likewise raises questions about assassination, political criticism and due process. A secular standard asks for evidence of an actual violent offense, an impartial tribunal and individual responsibility. It does not treat hostility toward a prophet as a category beyond ordinary law.

Maududi's rules should therefore be separated into two groups. Prohibitions against treachery, mutilation and attacks upon noncombatants can be defended through reciprocal human interests without revelation. Slavery, religious hierarchy and conquest cannot be rescued by their location inside a sacred legal system. Where Islamic law protects persons, secular humanism can affirm the protection. Where it subordinates them, secular humanism must reject the rule. This is examination, not prejudice: the same test applies to Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, nationalist and atheist states.

There is also a difference between describing a legal ideal and demonstrating historical compliance. Maududi often moves from a reported command to a conclusion about Islamic civilization. An empirical history must examine state records, chronicles, taxation, demographic change, revolts and the testimony of conquered communities. Muslim rulers differed across dynasties and regions, as did the treatment of their subjects. Evidence of tolerance in one period cannot excuse persecution in another; evidence of brutality by rival empires cannot establish Islamic innocence. The relevant comparison is not between a sacred ideal and an opponent's worst conduct. It is between conduct and conduct, institution and institution, under the same standard.

The final chapter turns to modern warfare and international law. Maududi criticizes European powers for separating legality from moral purpose while practicing colonial conquest and industrialized destruction. His indictment has force. European empires often preached civilization while exploiting subject peoples, and modern war greatly enlarged the ability of states to kill civilians. International rules can restrain conduct without settling every moral question about why a war began.

But Western hypocrisy does not verify Islamic revelation. This is the fallacy of answering one wrong with another. If colonial powers violated their own principles, the proper conclusion is that those powers should be judged and restrained. It does not follow that an Islamic state acquires authority to wage wars of reform. Maududi's criticism of nationalism and material interest may identify real causes of war, yet religious certainty can also mobilize armies, suppress negotiation and turn political conflict into an absolute contest between truth and falsehood.

Modern public reason offers a more reliable standard because it does not require agreement about God. Aggression can be identified through borders, armed attacks and threats. War crimes can be examined through evidence concerning targets, orders and consequences. Treaties can be negotiated among peoples who hold incompatible metaphysical beliefs. The system remains imperfect and powerful states often evade it, but its rules are in principle revisable and reciprocal. Maududi's standard is not reciprocal because its legitimacy depends upon accepting Islam's truth before the dispute begins.

His argument ultimately contains a revealing inversion. He condemns imperial powers for presenting domination as civilization, but presents Islamic domination as liberation. He condemns war for national interest, but permits war for a religious order. He rejects forced conversion, but accepts force to create the political conditions most favorable to Islam. The name and motive change; the conquered population still loses sovereignty.

Maududi's entire argument depends upon Muhammad being a reliable messenger and exemplary moral guide. Historical importance cannot prove either proposition. A person may found a durable community, win wars and transform civilization without receiving a message from beyond nature. The title "final prophet" is especially resistant to evidence. It closes the category by doctrinal decree. No observation available to an investigator can establish that no future claimant could ever possess a revelation, and no failed prediction appears capable of falsifying Muhammad's finality.

Muhammad's morality must therefore be examined by the same standards applied to other leaders. Did the conduct attributed to him protect freedom of belief? Did it recognize equal standing across religions? Did it reject slavery and sexual access conditioned by ownership? Did it distinguish criticism from violence? Did it require individual responsibility and impartial judgment? Did it limit power by rules independent of the ruler's own revelation? These questions do not demand that a seventh-century Arabian leader behave like a twenty-first-century citizen. They arise because Maududi presents Muhammad's example as final, universal and permanently binding.

Some reports about Muhammad are historically uncertain, and criticism must not pretend otherwise. The strongest argument relies on norms and episodes that Maududi himself affirms. If Maududi defends enslavement, unequal political status

and coercive conquest through the prophetic model, then the model fails secular humanist scrutiny on Maududi's own evidence. Historical context can explain a practice without making it eternally right. A final moral authority should transcend the central injustices of his time, not regulate them for continued use.

The problem is institutional as much as personal. Maududi recasts a seventh-century religious and political leader as the permanent model of a modern revolutionary state. This is anachronistic as history and dangerous as government. A ruler who claims revelation merges political command with an authority that subjects cannot independently examine. Disobedience becomes more than disagreement with government; it becomes rebellion against God. Popper's open society depends upon the opposite principle: every ruler may be mistaken, every law may be criticized, and governments must be removable without declaring their opponents enemies of ultimate truth.

Second, colonial and secular states committed enormous violence. Maududi wrote under an empire that preached liberty while denying self-government. This exposes Western hypocrisy but does not establish Allah's sovereignty. The same rule must judge British conquest, Islamic conquest and revolutionary dictatorship: compare institutions with institutions and conduct with conduct, never one side's ideal with the other's crimes.

Third, Jamaat-e-Islami later participated in electoral politics, showing that Maududi could employ persuasion and constitutional activity. That history deserves recognition, but it does not dissolve the argument of Jihad in Islam. Electoral participation is corrigible only when citizens may reject the Islamic program and retain equal rights. If votes remain legitimate only when they conform to a prior divine law, sovereignty still belongs to its interpreters rather than the electorate.

The Reciprocity Principle

A defensible international rule should survive reversal. Self-defence survives: both Hindu and Muslim states may repel attack. Treaty enforcement survives if obligations were freely accepted. Protection of persecuted populations can survive when applied cautiously and universally. Prohibitions on massacre, torture, and treachery survive because they protect human beings without conferring privilege on one creed.

Idealistic conquest does not survive. Its acceptability depends entirely upon assuming beforehand that one theology possesses a unique right to rule those who reject it. Once the same entitlement is granted to a rival religion, perpetual conflict follows. Each state may call the other false and peaceful refusal becomes a cause for war.

Reciprocity exposes the difference between a universal moral rule and a sectarian privilege. A universal rule applies equally to oneself and one's opponents. A sectarian privilege authorizes one's own community to perform acts that would be condemned as oppression if performed by another.

The reversal also clarifies the nature of jizyah in this hypothetical use. A normal tax is imposed by a government upon people already within its jurisdiction. India does not owe taxation to a neighbouring state merely because that state is Muslim. Likewise, Pakistan would owe no Hindu tribute to India merely because it is monotheistic.

When tribute is demanded from an independent peaceful country under threat of invasion, it operates as a sign of submission. Calling it protection does not solve the problem because the threatened harm comes from the state offering protection. In the reversed case Muslims would immediately see that they were being asked to purchase safety from the power threatening to attack them.

The same reasoning must be available to Hindus in the original case.

Both versions distinguish inner belief from political order. The conqueror says that defeated people may retain religion, but the conqueror's theology governs the state. This is a limited toleration rather than equality.

Likewise, permission for Hindus to worship after Islamic conquest does not restore India's sovereignty. The decisive issue is not merely whether individuals are compelled to utter a creed. It is whether theological disagreement itself permits one state to destroy another state's independence.

Hamidullah and Maududi Read Together

Hamidullah and Maududi approached the subject differently, but their works can be read together.

Hamidullah explains the legal structure governing relations between Islamic and non-Islamic political communities. He discusses jihad, treaties, submission, jizyah, prisoners and the consequences of war.

Maududi states the political destination: Islam seeks not merely one country or several countries, but the whole planet.

Hamidullah supplies the jurisprudential framework. Maududi declares the universal objective.

The sequence matters: Hindu practices may be classified as shirk; jurisprudence transforms scriptural categories into claims about jihad, taxation, and political authority; the peaceful refusal of conversion or tribute can then become a ground for war under the doctrines examined; defeat can subject captives to the classical law of war. Maududi gives that sequence a worldwide political destination. This conclusion concerns the arguments of the two authors; it must be assessed through their own texts and their interpretation by later movements.

Under Hamidullah's idealistic category, peacefulness alone does not ensure that an independent polytheistic India retains sovereignty after it refuses conversion and jizyah. Under Maududi's revolutionary argument, a non-Islamic political order can remain a target even when it has not attacked a Muslim state. These are conclusions about the political consequences of arguments made in their texts. They demand direct examination of the sources and historical record.

Neither Hamidullah's international legal framework nor Maududi's revolutionary theory permits permanent, equal, independent sovereignty to a non-Islamic state. [1][3] Hamidullah's conditional treaty or tolerated autonomy does not amount to an unconditional right of equal sovereignty; Maududi's proposed political transformation denies the permanence of a non-Islamic order. This is the shared political implication of the two frameworks examined here.

Maududi's Comparison of Other Religions

Maududi compares Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity in order to position Islam as the balanced alternative. He places Hinduism and Judaism among traditions that permit war, while describing Buddhism and Christianity as tending toward nonviolence or withdrawal. He then argues that absolute pacifism cannot confront oppression, whereas traditions that permit war may lack Islam's supposedly complete moral regulation.

Maududi grants Buddhism a serious commitment to avoiding harm but portrays it as world-denying, politically passive and unable to resist cruel government. This confuses an ethical restraint with a single inevitable political program. Buddhist societies have displayed pacifism, statecraft, warfare and imperial patronage in different combinations. More importantly, rejection of violence does not logically require surrender to injustice. Nonviolent organization, civil disobedience, institution building and defensive restraint are empirical strategies whose effectiveness varies with conditions. Maududi selects the failures of pacifism while treating the failures of holy war as failures of implementation.

His discussions of Judaism and Christianity likewise compress diverse histories into types useful to his conclusion. Christianity's teachings of love and renunciation did not prevent Christian states from developing laws, armies and theories of just war. Judaism cannot be understood solely through ancient warfare without considering later rabbinic life under changing political conditions. A fair comparison would apply the same historical method to all traditions, distinguish scripture from later practice and refuse to let any community define its violence as justice in advance. Maududi instead arranges the comparison so that Islam occupies the desired midpoint: strong enough to fight and moral enough to govern. The conclusion is built into the classification.

The Strongest Objection to This Method

A serious criticism must answer Maududi's best defenses. First, logical empiricism and secular humanism do not produce ethics from laboratory observations alone. Equal dignity and human welfare are moral commitments, and a theological believer may reject them. My answer is not that secular ethics fell from the sky. It is that public coercion requires reasons accessible to those coerced, while suffering, disability and exclusion can be observed without accepting one community's revelation.

Maududi also compares Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity to present Islam as a political alternative. Each comparison must be checked against the history and internal diversity of the tradition described; a critique of another religion cannot establish the divine authority of his own. The test of sovereignty and equal rights remains the same regardless of which religion he is discussing.

Notes to This Essay

1. Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State*, printed pages cited in the text. The peaceful India example is a philosophical test. See especially printed pp. 153–159 on grounds for war, pp. 195–214 on conquest and prisoners, and pp. 232–235 on conquered land.
2. Ayub Khan, “Greatest living Islamic scholar Dr. Hamidullah passes away,” *The Milli Gazette*, December 20, 2002; A. R. Momin, “Dr Muhammad Hamidullah 1909–2002,” *Renaissance*, 2003. The cited obituary title gives 1909, while the biographical paragraph and other biographies give 1908; the conflicting birth-year reports require further archival verification.
3. Abul A’la Maududi, *Al Jihad Fil Islam*, English translation by Syed Rafatullah Shah, edited by Syed Firasat Shah, as cited in *The Counter-Jihad of the Free*. Full text of the English translation: <https://www.islamicstudies.info/literature/Jihad-in-Islam.pdf>. This book is distinct from the 1939 address cited in Essay One.
4. Quran 4:48, 98:6, 9:5, 8:12, 47:4, 2:191, 9:123 and 9:29; the historical settings and differences of interpretation discussed in the text are essential to assessing each passage.
5. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945); *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963).

PART 5

A United Front of Victims of Jihad

Reason Rights and an End to Sacred Privilege

The proposed united front follows from the right to refuse. It is a coalition of people harmed by coercion, dispossession, discriminatory law, or violence defended in the name of jihad. It can bring together Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, former Muslims, and secular people. Their experiences differ, but the right to examine the doctrines used to justify such acts belongs to all of them.

Islam has been a political as well as a devotional tradition: Muhammad led a community and a polity, and classical jurisprudence addressed law, governance, war, and the status of non-Muslims.[5] A political doctrine that claims authority over nonadherents must be examined as a political doctrine. What has it authorized, how has it been enforced, and what future does it propose for people who reject its claims?

The previous essays establish the question, the method, and two doctrinal tests. The proposed united front turns that inquiry into sustained public work: collecting evidence, publishing careful readings, and defending the freedom to challenge every political claim made in the name of revelation. It uses dialectical materialism, logical empiricism, secular humanism, free minds, and free markets as defined earlier. Its aim is to protect the individual rights of people subjected to political theology, including their right to dissent and leave.

This front is an intellectual undertaking. It collects testimony, reads foundational texts, compares interpretations, tests historical claims, and publishes conclusions open to challenge. It follows the path from doctrine to institution to consequence. It asks what an apostate, a critic of Muhammad, or a non-Muslim community can expect under laws justified by particular interpretations of Islam.[5] Its instruments are evidence and argument, never physical confrontation.

Maududi sees a real world of exploitation, tyranny and war, but he offers an imaginary certainty as its cure. He cannot demonstrate Allah's political sovereignty, authenticate revelation through evidence independent of revelation, or provide a falsifiable test of Islam's exclusive truth. He calls conquest reform, subordination

protection and an imposed religious order liberation.[4] The vocabulary changes the appearance of power without changing its material operation.

Public Rights and a Secular Settlement

Traditional Hindu Muslim dialogue often begins with assurances that both religions teach peace or worship the same ultimate reality. Such statements may create goodwill, but they evade disagreement. Many Muslims do not accept Hindu gods as valid approaches to the divine, and many Hindus do not accept Muhammad as a prophet. Honest dialogue must permit these rejections without converting them into civil hostility.

The first principle should be mutual freedom from theological jurisdiction. A Muslim has no obligation to worship Hindu deities. A Hindu has no obligation to recognize Muhammad. Neither refusal should reduce citizenship or invite violence. [8]

The second principle should be reciprocal criticism. Muslims may criticize Hindu scripture, idolatry, nationalism, or metaphysics. Hindus may criticize Quran, Hadith, jihad, Sharia, and prophetic authority. Criticism must be answered with argument, not threats, censorship, or collective retaliation.[7]

The third principle should be freedom of conversion and deconversion. Adults may change religion, adopt several traditions, or abandon religion. No family, community, or state owns a person's conscience. Conversion obtained through coercion or material dependency should be scrutinized, but voluntary intellectual change must remain protected.[1]

The fourth principle should be one civil law grounded in equal rights, with room for voluntary cultural practice that does not violate individual liberty. Personal law cannot become a shield for inequality. Reform must protect the individual inside the community, especially women, children, dissenters, and sexual minorities.[8]

The fifth principle should be shared education in critical reasoning. Students should learn what major religions claim, how texts formed, how interpretations differ, and how to evaluate evidence. Education should neither indoctrinate nor conceal. A mature citizen should be able to understand a religion without believing it and criticize it without hating its adherents.

These principles do not require agreement about God. They require agreement that no answer about God determines who deserves equal rights.

India and Pakistan inherit Partition, war, terrorism, disputed borders, nuclear weapons, military institutions, displaced populations, and incompatible national narratives. Theology is not the only cause, but religious identity intensifies the conflict by transforming negotiable interests into sacred duties.

A materialist settlement begins with actual human needs: security, water, trade, mobility, education, health, environment, and freedom from violence. These problems can be measured. Policies can be compared. Agreements can be revised when they fail. Revelation supplies no comparable procedure.

Pakistan need not become Hindu, and India need not become Muslim. Both must become more fully constitutional. A Pakistani citizen who becomes an empiricist and secular humanist does not cease to possess culture or history. He ceases to require religious supremacy for security. An Indian who suspends metaphysical nationalism does not betray civilization. He makes equal citizenship possible.

Peace will not emerge merely because intellectuals reject theology. States pursue interests, armies preserve power, and populations remember trauma. But removing sacred certainty changes the quality of dispute. Territory can be negotiated; God's command cannot. Policy can be revised; final revelation cannot. Human interests permit compromise; cosmic missions resist it.

The Burden Remains with the Claimant

Dialectical materialism supplies an ontology grounded in nature and history. Logical empiricism supplies an epistemology of evidence and testability.[6] Secular humanism supplies an ethic of equal dignity. Free minds protect inquiry. Constitutionally bounded free markets permit voluntary cooperation without theological agreement. None is sufficient alone; together they offer a common civic foundation.

The elimination of metaphysics therefore means neither destruction of religion nor compulsory atheism. It means the removal of unverifiable supernatural claims from coercive public authority. It requires every law to be justified to citizens as citizens, not as prospective converts. It protects worship and disbelief equally. It permits criticism without persecution and memory without inherited vengeance.

Citizens of different religions and civilizations cannot begin genuine dialogue while one participant claims a divine title over the other. They can begin only when every participant renounces the right to rule through revelation. Then the Jew, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, atheist, and humanist meet without a supernatural hierarchy between them.

The first question in such a dialogue is not which revelation will prevail. It is what can be known, demonstrated, and justified among free and equal human beings. The first political principle is not submission to a prophet, scripture, civilization, or state. It is reciprocal liberty. The first ethical obligation is not defense of God's reputation. It is prevention of human suffering.

For that reason, the elimination of metaphysical privilege is not the conclusion reached after interreligious dialogue. It is the condition that makes dialogue possible. Only after revelation has surrendered its claim to compulsory rule can citizens of different religions and civilizations speak to one another as equals.

One final material fact should be clear to advocates of Islamic political dominion and to non-Muslims alike. In 2025, the United States, China, Russia, Germany, and India together accounted for 58 percent of global military expenditure.[2] None is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which has 57 member states. [3] Those five non-OIC countries alone therefore spent more than all OIC countries combined could have spent, since every other country together accounted for the remaining 42 percent. The combined military resources of non-OIC states are substantially greater by this measure. Expenditure does not by itself measure readiness or predict the outcome of any conflict. I offer the comparison as material self-awareness, while the front's work remains inquiry, criticism, and the defense of freedom of conscience.

No quotation from a rival holy book can settle a claim to rule those who do not accept it. The final test is whether each person can believe, reject, criticize, and leave without fear.[1] No sacred claim establishes its own public authority merely by being declared sacred. We should examine the historical consequences of such claims with relentless reason and publicly testable evidence, changing our conclusions when evidence defeats them.

The United Front of Victims of Jihad should turn this method into a lasting public practice. Its members can document coercion, test doctrinal and historical claims, defend those threatened for changing or criticizing a religion, and argue for laws that protect every citizen equally. No participant must adopt another participant's theology. Every participant must accept that the same freedoms apply to opponents as to allies. Its purpose is universal freedom of conscience, equal citizenship, and the right to refuse coercion.[8]

Our philosophical tools remain open to revision when better ones emerge. Our commitment to free inquiry and human rights does not depend on proving any revelation false. It depends on refusing to make unverifiable claims a license to govern other people's lives. That is the work of free minds acting together. When blood may be spilled, empiricism is required.

Notes to This Essay

1. United Nations Human Rights Office, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.
2. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025 (April 2026), pp. 1–2, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/2604_milex_2025.pdf. The five named countries account for 58 percent of world expenditure.
3. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Member States, <https://www.oic-oci.org/en/members>. The OIC has 57 member states; none of the five named countries is a member.
4. Abul A’la Maududi, *Al Jihad Fil Islam*, English translation by Syed Rafatullah Shah, edited by Syed Firasat Shah, digital ed. (2017), first Urdu edition 1930, especially chapters 2–5. The characterization in the text is the author’s critical reading of Maududi.
5. Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State*, sections on the law of war and relations with non-Muslim states; Sahih al-Bukhari 6922, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/88>; Sahih Muslim 1676c, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/28/36>. These are historical and juristic sources; their interpretation and present-day legal force vary.
6. Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (English ed., 1959), on testability and falsification; *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963), on criticism and correction. The pairing with logical empiricism is the author’s methodological proposal.
7. United Nations Human Rights Office, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19 (freedom of expression), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

8. United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Articles 2, 7, 18, and 19 (nondiscrimination, equal protection, freedom of conscience, and expression),
<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
The institutional proposal in the essay is the author's own.