

## The Global Importance of Illiberal Moderates

Amitai Etzioni<sup>1</sup>  
George Washington University

**Abstract** *In contrast to the claim that the most significant fault line in contemporary global affairs is between the civilisation of the West and all others, this essay argues that the schism between those who advance their values through violence and those who rely on persuasion, both of which are present in all civilisations, is the greatest source of conflict in the post-Cold-War era. Moderates come in many stripes: some are liberal, such as Reform Jews and Social Democrats, while most others are illiberal, including many Muslim religious leaders. All moderates, however, share in common a principled rejection of violence. Polls and reports from around the world bear out that a conviction of the value of persuasion over coercion does not depend on faith in democracy or secularism. The West should ally itself with such moderates, no matter how liberal or illiberal their orientation.*

### Introduction

The fault line that defines the clash of moral cultures and powers in the post-Cold-War era does not run between civilisations, but within them. It divides the beliefs of those who hold that they are justified in advancing their values and interests by the use of force (from here on 'violent beliefs') and the beliefs held by those who seek to rely on persuasion, education and leadership ('persuasive beliefs'). True, those who believe in persuasion as the source of legitimacy of their political actions recognise exceptional conditions under which force may be used (for example, in what they consider a just war). And those who believe in force as a major instrument of foreign (and domestic) policy do also use persuasion. However, we shall see that the differences between the two sets of beliefs and their followers are readily discernible and of much moral and political consequence. Above all, I will try to show that the schism between them is the most important fault line in the contemporary world: it is at the heart of the struggle over who will shape the international system and over how it ought to be shaped.

It is empirically wrong, morally faulty and strategically ill-advised to hold that the pre-eminent global confrontation of our time is between the civilisation of the West and all others, especially that of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslims—as Samuel Huntington has famously argued in his book *The Clash of*

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*Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.<sup>2</sup> I will shortly point to those who hold violent beliefs—whether they are called Crusaders, Jihadists or merely terrorists—in all major belief systems, both religious and secular, Eastern and Western. Moreover, I will show that in all these civilisations there are also those who disavow the use of violence to advance their beliefs and instead seek to rely as much as possible on appealing to the values and worldviews of those they seek to convert. In other words, I argue that the true fault line facing the world today runs *through* civilisations rather than *between* them, dividing *each* into two camps—those who see violence as a major and legitimate tool, and those who view the use of force as abhorrent and instead rely largely on normative appeals. In more colloquial terms, the fault line divides those of the sword from those of the word.

As someone who killed and saw many killed long before reaching the age of twenty, I may as well state up front from which camp I hail. I still pain for every life lost, whether it was one of ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’; I deeply regret every death I helped inflict, even though I was acting to defend those I loved from those who attacked us. Ever since I turned twenty, when I first sat at the feet of Martin Buber, I have been somewhat of a persuader.<sup>3</sup> I am not a pacifist but someone who holds that one is morally obligated to exhaust all other means possible before lifting one’s arms, and that force should be applied only when there is a true, imminent and severe danger. Above all, I maintain that making a compelling case for one’s cause is both morally right and much more effective in the long run than the violent alternatives.

Needless to say, I am hardly alone. In effect, it is a main thesis of this essay that those who hold persuasive beliefs currently outnumber those who hold violent beliefs in all major civilisations (some illustrative data follow below). Most importantly, we ought to recognise that the persuaders of the world are the natural allies of anyone who rises against the world of terror and, in effect, all other forms of violence. Though I cannot fully demonstrate this point in the confines of this essay, I suggest that those on the persuasive side of the fault line today include (as distinct from earlier historical periods) the *majority* of Muslims (especially in nations such as Indonesia, Morocco, Bangladesh and Turkey, despite some recent increases in radical Islam in these nations), as well as the majority of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, socialists and many other groups. They are all potential members of a ‘persuasive alliance’, a coalition of people who seek first and foremost to draw on normative power<sup>4</sup> rather than on force in forming a new global order and in sustaining domestic regimes.

### The Normative Importance of the Fault Line

All societies and groups, whether religious or secular, seek to sustain a measure of social order. However, forcing people to adopt whatever behaviour a given belief system extols is—morally speaking—by far the worst option for maintaining

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<sup>2</sup>The ‘us against them, friend versus foe’ characterisation of international relations is echoed in the work of the German political theorist Carl Schmitt, particularly in his essay *The Concept of the Political* (1932).

<sup>3</sup>For more discussion of my odyssey, see Etzioni (2003).

<sup>4</sup>On the concept of normative power, a sub-category of soft power, see Etzioni (1975).

order because it degrades their humanity more than any other measure of control. Coercion (the term is used here to mean the exercise of physical force) greatly curtails freedom of choice, if it does not obviate it completely, and thus deprives individuals of their autonomy. Respect for human dignity entails that the actor be free to render decisions, to follow his or her will. The essence of coercion is to nullify this freedom by forcing a course of action on the person at issue. Thus, coercion turns people from sovereign agents of their selves and their communities into automatons driven by those who wield force, or into objects controlled by their violators.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, coercion sharply curtails, if not destroys, the ability of individuals to exercise their individual rights and their ability to discharge their social responsibilities, to contribute to the common good, to love and be loved, to do good and to be virtuous.

In sharp contrast to coercion, persuasion leaves the final say to the actor (Cook 1972, 116). Persuaders appeal to people's values, motives or interests, but if at the end of the day those subject to persuasion still choose to follow a different course, they are left to do so, though there may be some cost, say in terms of social popularity, prestige, access to goods in short supply, and so on. Persuasion does not intrude on people's rights, and it thrives on what is considered one of the most important of these: freedom of speech. Nor does persuasion prevent anyone from discharging his or her responsibilities. In the process of persuasion, the persuader may even change his or her views, a point especially stressed by Martin Buber.

Persuaders may well seek to change people's conception of good and evil, and the target of their love, but they do not seek to prevent people from living up to whatever values they choose to follow. Persuasion, as a rule, respects people's humanity by appealing to their values, loyalties, affections and intellect—even when the contents of the appeal are misguided from the viewpoint of the persuader. Just as coercion reduces people to objects, persuasion respects their agency.

Granted, few, if any, choices are entirely free. There is, however, a continuum of restrictions on choice, from minimal to absolute. When these restrictions are limited, we can still speak of an ability of actors to follow their preferences and still largely be autonomous and treated with respect. In contrast, when restrictions are high, we hold that the freedom of the actors has been greatly curtailed if not eliminated, their autonomy destroyed. This level of restriction is, as a rule, achieved only when violence is employed, as when people are jailed or shot dead.

One may wonder whether my strongly negative view of coercion holds when violence is employed by the state to enforce the law or counteract violent groups. I grant that no social order can rely exclusively on persuasion; some exercise of coercion is found even in the most benign regimes. However, the differences between legal and social orders that are based largely on persuasion versus those that draw extensively on coercion are unmistakable and of enormous human consequence. Regimes that minimise the use of coercion in law enforcement are vastly more effective and legitimate than their opposites. Hence, law enforcement in Norway is superior to that of Singapore, and the current Chinese regime is preferable to that of Mao's—although it is still a long way from being highly persuasive.

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<sup>5</sup> See Joan McCord's definition of coercion in McCord (1995).

Legitimacy matters in both domestic and international affairs as never before. As education spreads and the development of communication technologies eases access to information, what people believe matters more now than it did in prior generations. It follows, therefore, that the side of the fault line on which a government, social movement or religious group falls, and thus the degree to which it is perceived as legitimate, is increasingly critical to its authority.

### **Not the Liberal/Extremist Fault Line**

I cannot stress enough that the fault line this essay points to divides the people of the world along a fundamentally different line than the one often drawn between liberals—in the political theory sense of the term—on the one hand (modern, rational, democratic and often secular), and extremists on the other (impassioned, radical, authoritarian and often fiercely religious). The division between liberals and extremists has been highlighted by those who argue that any form of Islam that is incompatible with liberal democratic values is necessarily oppressive and a grave threat to Western societies; they argue that Muslims must limit their faith to personal and otherworldly matters if they are to become good democratic citizens. This position was recently articulated by a group of writers and intellectuals, including Salman Rushdie and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who declared, ‘After having overcome fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, the world now faces a new global totalitarian threat: Islamism ... Islamism is a reactionary ideology that kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present’ (BBC News 2006).

As a part of this debate, attempts have been made to demonstrate that liberal, democratic Muslims do exist. Some prominent names that have been referenced include Irshad Manji, Reza Aslan, Muqtedar Khan and Asra Nomani. Most of those cited in this context are found among those who live in the West. Such liberal Muslim leaders and public intellectuals are also found elsewhere but are relatively few and far between.

Liberal Muslims are recognised and celebrated because they serve as a counterpoint to extremists (increasingly referred to as ‘Islamists’) and because they subscribe to liberal values such as mutual tolerance, human rights, free press and fair elections. In short, they are what liberals in the West consider good citizens, if not also good people. However, this liberal/extremist fault line is not the subject of this paper; it divides the world very differently than the division I see as all-important. For this reason, I also do not use the well-known terms ‘civility’ and ‘ideology’. Though I consider these terms to be valid, I find that they capture a fault line similar to the division between liberals and extremists. I hold that one should not assume, even by implication, that because a Muslim, or an adherent to any other belief system, is a ‘true’ or ‘strong’ believer, does not profess faith in liberal values and does not favour democratic polities or many of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he or she must therefore be an extremist, an advocate of violence. Millions of people across the world are moderates (those who do not believe that the use of force is justified under most conditions) without being liberals.

Similarly, there is a world of difference between believing in some other form of government than democracy—say, tribal councils or adhering to the rulings of muftis or rabbis—and advocating violence. One can be a strict believer, even a

fundamentalist, who reads literally the Bible, the Koran or some other revered text, closely follows numerous religious or secular injunctions, such as praying five times a day, and vehemently opposes modernisation, democracy and capitalism, and still not believe in imposing one's values on others by the use of force. I readily grant that such true believers (whether religious or secular) are, statistically speaking, *more likely* than those of little or no faith (religious or secular) to favour violence; *some* of them are so confident they have seen the light that they are willing to shove it down the throats of non-believers. Nevertheless, there are many millions of strict believers who do not favour coercion.

For example, there are about 55 million evangelicals in the United States but very few of them favour using force to impose their beliefs on others. There are over one billion Catholics worldwide, but only a very small number justify murdering those who perform abortions. In addition, there are hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Jews, but only a minority of them favours the use of force to foster compliance with what they consider the Lord's laws. Among socialists there have been quite a few who have held that if one wants to make an omelette one must crack eggs (translation: to make a revolution one must inflict violence), especially in Stalin's and Mao's days, but over the last decades more and more socialists have professed faith in the power of ideas and persuasion, not force. To push the point, someone may think homosexuality is a sin, believe with all their heart that God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh, and hold that women should 'graciously submit to their husbands', and still not favour forcing others to hold these beliefs or adhere to the behaviour they call for. In short, there are millions upon millions who disavow the use of violence in matters of belief and rely on persuasion to advance their ideals, but who simultaneously do not support the values of a modern, liberal polity.

This has been readily apparent among Muslims during the recent Danish cartoon controversy. While many extremist clerics exhorted their followers to violently retaliate against Western targets, others strongly condemned the cartoons and the free speech that allowed them to be published but were also adamant in their opposition to trashing embassies, threatening Westerners and committing other acts of violence. For instance, Din Syamsuddin, the conservative head of Indonesia's 30-million-strong Muhammadiyah Muslim association, urged his followers 'not to overreact and act in a violent and anarchist way [in protesting the cartoons] because those things are completely against Islamic teachings' (quoted in Raslan 2006). The hard-line mufti Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi declared, 'We call on Muslims to show their fury in a logical and controlled manner ... We didn't ask people to burn embassies as some have done in Damascus and Beirut. We don't sanction destruction and torching because this is not in line with morality or Muslim behaviour' (*IslamOnline* 2006).

Public opinion polls provide further evidence that, though many Muslims do not profess faith in the values of a secular democracy, they also oppose the use of violence. For example, large majorities in Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco and Indonesia welcome a greater role for Islam in their nations' politics, according to the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes survey; the same is true for a smaller majority in Lebanon (Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2005). Another poll found that a majority of respondents in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (55 per cent) and a plurality in Morocco (49 per cent), Lebanon (44 per cent), Saudi Arabia (49 per cent) and Egypt (45 per cent) believe the clergy play too little a role in their

nation's public life and politics, while most others responded that their role is just.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in nearly all the Muslim nations surveyed, a belief in secular government is not dominant.

When it comes to the use of violence in defence of Islam, the Pew survey shows that among the 140 million Muslims in Indonesia, the 69.5 million in Turkey, and the 32.3 million in Morocco, 15 per cent or fewer support suicide bombers. Support for suicide bombers has dropped sharply in Pakistan, from 41 per cent in March 2004 to 25 per cent in May 2005.<sup>7</sup> Other reports have indicated little support for terrorism among Muslims in India, Malaysia and Bangladesh. In a 2005 poll of Afghans, 81 per cent expressed a negative view of al-Qaeda and 82 per cent supported the overthrow of the Taliban.<sup>8</sup> And among Palestinians in 2006, 73 per cent favour a peaceful solution to the conflict with Israel and 62 per cent believe Hamas should change its position on the destruction of the Israeli state.<sup>9</sup>

Nowhere have I found the violence–persuasion fault line more clearly delineated than when I was a guest in 2002 of the reformers in Iran, at an institution that was aptly called the International Center for the Dialogue of Civilizations. Many of the reformers who strongly opposed the mullahs' theocracy were also not seeking to build a secular civil society. They favoured a society in 'which people will want to pray (as well as observe many of the other tenets of Islam) but nobody will be coerced to do so'. Why should people of such faith not be included on the persuasive side of the civilisation fault line? Just because they are illiberal?

### **Illustrative Evidence in Five Belief Systems**

Some highly selective examples from four religious and one secular belief system help highlight the all-important fault line between violent and persuasive beliefs that is found in all major civilisations. In providing these examples, I draw on moral arguments made in different historical periods and articulated in different sources (such as religious texts, major books and statements by leaders) because, for the purpose at hand, it matters little who said what, or when, but whether or not the statements are considered authoritative by large camps of followers. To illustrate this methodological point, it matters little for the issue at hand whether 'an eye for an eye' was recorded 5,000 or 2,000 years ago, or what the reasons are for non-coercive interpretations of this passage becoming more dominant during some periods or circumstances. What matters is that past, current or future extremists have and can use such passages—because they see them as having the authority of the Bible or of a Pope or some other such source—to justify their

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<sup>6</sup> Poll jointly conducted in May 2004 by the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland and Zogby International, <<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/SADAT/pub/Arab%20Attitudes%20Towards%20Political%20and%20Social%20Issues,%20Foreign%20Policy%20and%20the%20Media.htm>> , accessed 18 April 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Survey (2005).

<sup>8</sup> Survey for WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted by D3 Systems and Afghan Center for Social and Opinion Research from 27 November to 4 December 2005, <[http://65.109.167.118/pipa/pdf/jan06/Afghanistan\\_Jan06\\_quaire.pdf](http://65.109.167.118/pipa/pdf/jan06/Afghanistan_Jan06_quaire.pdf)> , accessed 18 April 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Poll conducted by the Near East Consulting Group in February 2006, <<http://www.near-eastconsulting.com/ppp/p02.html>> , accessed 18 April 2006.

violent acts. Historians, anthropologists, area studies scholars and others will be concerned quite correctly about the fact that statements characterising beliefs are taken out of context. However, it is not the author but the agents under study who engage in such use of texts.

One last word by way of introduction to the following examples: space limitations mandate that I use merely a few illustrative examples from each belief system here examined. There are scores of other examples that could be cited, and many other differences between beliefs that could be explored. The focus here is narrowly limited to illustrate the fault line, which runs through history and belief systems and which is especially prominent in the post-Cold-War era.

### *Christianity*

Christian beliefs that are understood to legitimate violence under various conditions, or for particular purposes, draw on passages from the Old Testament such as those commanding that the community stone to death anyone who blasphemes (Leviticus 24:14) and from the New Testament that depict a forceful and angry Jesus. For example, Jesus declares, 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.'<sup>10</sup> Jesus is portrayed as having a 'sharp, two-edged sword' (Revelation 1:16) emerging from his mouth with which he strikes down sinners. And Jesus evicts the money changers from the temple: 'Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple ... He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables' (John 2:15).

When Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), a much-celebrated theologian of early Christianity, was faced with the breakaway Christian sect known as Donatism, he advised that they be brought back to the Church through 'the stripes of temporal scourging' (Schaff 1886, 816). He references as a scriptural justification Proverbs 23:14, which says of children that 'If you beat them with a rod, you will save their lives from Sheol [here understood as hell].'

During the early period of the Papal Inquisition (established in 1231 CE), Saint Thomas Aquinas, a much-revered Catholic theologian, drew on the letters of Paul to justify executing heretics (*Summa Theologiae* II:II, 11:3).<sup>11</sup> Among the early Protestant leaders, John Calvin was adamant in his support of the death penalty for unrepentant heretics, blasphemers and adulterers (Bainton 1953, 170). In the case of the proper punishment for adultery, he declared, 'The law of God commands adulterers to be stoned' (Höpfl 1982, 183).

In recent centuries, condemnation of religious coercion has become increasingly widespread among Catholics and Protestants. This has coincided in part with the separation of ecclesiastical dictates from secular law and in shifts in how scripture is interpreted. Those who have persisted in justifying violence in religious terms, such as abortion clinic bombers, have been denounced and shunned by mainstream Christians.

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<sup>10</sup> All biblical passages are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas defined heresy as 'a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas'. *Summa Theologiae* II–II:11:1.

In contrast to violent Christian beliefs, persuasive Christianity favours education to combat heresy and peaceful evangelisation to spread Jesus' message. Use of violence to prevent or punish misdeeds such as heresy, adultery or blasphemy would deprive the offender of an opportunity to freely repent and require humans to judge what only God can determine. Especially telling is a passage from 2 Timothy, in which the Apostle Paul writes, 'The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness' (2 Timothy, 2:24–25).

During the period of the early Crusades, the influential Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) promoted persuasion over coercion in the case of heretics and preached against the persecution of Jews. He stated in his famous sermon on the Song of Songs, 'Heretics are to be caught rather than driven away. They are to be caught . . . not by force of arms but by arguments by which their errors may be refuted' (Clairvaux 1979, 175). According to Edward Peters of the University of Pennsylvania, the century and a half before the Papal Inquisition (1231) was a time when the Church focused primarily on 'persuading dissidents to return to obedience, and launched a great pastoral effort designed to teach religion effectively' (Peters 1980, 165). In the contemporary period, *Dignitatis Humanae*, a document released by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, captures the central elements of persuasive Christianity:

No one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs . . . For He [Jesus] bore witness to the truth, but He refused to impose the truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by force of blows does His rule assert its claims. It is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth.<sup>12</sup>

### *Islam*

From the earliest jurists to today's violent extremists, Muslims seeking to justify the use of force have looked to verses in the Koran such as 'Slay the idolaters wheresoever you find them, and take them captive or besiege them' (9:5) and 'Fight them till sedition comes to end and the law of God [prevails]' (2:193). Such passages have been widely interpreted as commanding Muslims to battle polytheists until they are killed or converted to Islam. This position has been supported by select hadith, the sayings of the Prophet, such as 'I have been commanded to fight against people so long as they do not declare that there is no god but Allah' (Muslim 1.9.30). Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (c 839–923 CE), an influential Persian theologian, argued that even if polytheists surrender militarily, Muslims must continue to fight them until they submit to Islam (Friedmann 2003, 98). Although many scholars have not extended this 'convert or die' rule to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), Hassan al-Banna, a founder of the Muslim Brotherhood argues in his book, *On Jihad*, that 'there is a clear indication [in the hadith] of the obligation to fight the People of the Book . . . *Jihad* is not against polytheists alone, but against all who do not embrace Islam' (al-Banna 1978, 142).

<sup>12</sup> < [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html) > , accessed 1 April 2006.

Some of the harshest words and strongest punishments in Islamic law have been reserved for apostasy. The Koran states, 'Those who turn back on their faith and die disbelieving will have wasted their deeds in this world and the next. They are inmates of Hell and shall abide there forever' (2:217). A hadith records the Prophet as saying, 'Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him.'<sup>13</sup> In the 14th century, Ibn-Taymiya, a theologian whose thought has inspired Islamic extremists such as Osama bin Laden, wrote, 'The apostate is more crude in his infidelity than an original unbeliever' (quoted in Friedmann 2003, 123). Bin Laden himself often invokes the stigma of apostasy when singling out Muslim nations or individuals who conspire with the US.

In contrast, many Muslim scholars have found texts that, beginning with the Koran itself, condemn coercion and favour religious tolerance. An important passage from the Koran states, 'There is no compulsion in matter of faith' (2:256). It is said that when Umar, a companion of the Prophet and second caliph of Islam, asked his slave to convert to Islam and the slave refused, he cited 2:256 and did not persist (noted in Friedmann 2003, 101). The futility of coercion in matters of faith is expanded upon in Koran 10:99–100: 'If your Lord had willed, all the people on the earth would have come to believe, one and all. Are you going to compel the people to believe except by God's dispensation?' No human can force a change of heart over which God alone has control.

The Koran also contains clear affirmations of religious diversity and tolerance: 'To each of you We have given a law and a way and a pattern of life. If God had pleased He surely could have made you one people (professing one faith)' (5:48) and 'O you unbelievers, I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship who I worship . . . To you your way and to me mine' (109:1–6). These verses do not mean that Muslims should not attempt to convert those of other faiths. The Koran exhorts all Muslims, 'Call them [unbelievers] to the path of your Lord with wisdom and words of good advice; and reason with them in the best way possible.' Some may never respond to the call, but force must not be brought to bear against them; when Muhammad exclaims, 'Oh Lord, these are certainly a people who do not believe,' Allah responds to him, 'Turn away from them and say: "Peace"' (Koran 43:88–89).

Since the beginning of Islam many have asked, 'How can these condemnations of religious coercion be reconciled with the passages of the Koran and hadith that seem to favour the opposite?' While many classical jurists believe Koran 9:5, the so-called 'verse of the sword', supersedes declarations against religious coercion such as 2:256, other scholars disagree. These latter commentators have not found jihad and religious freedom to be inherently contradictory. Some interpret jihad in a strict military sense, whereby 'religious freedom could be granted to the non-Muslims after their defeat' (Friedmann 2003, 103). Other commentators interpret the violent verses to specifically concern the period of Muhammad's conquests in the Arabian Peninsula and therefore to not have applicability today.<sup>14</sup> Many set violent passages from the Koran alongside those that state, 'Permission is granted those

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<sup>13</sup> Bukhari 9.84.57.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see the work of Sheikh Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur (1879–1979 CE), cited in Friedmann (2003, 103).

[to take up arms] who fight because they are oppressed' (22:39) and 'Fight those in the way of God who fight you but do not be aggressive: God does not like aggressors.' (2:190). This interpretation of jihad as solely defensive is particularly common among modern commentators. Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, Grand Imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque and one of the most authoritative voices in Sunni Islam, declared in 2003, 'Extremism is the enemy of Islam ... jihad is allowed in Islam to defend one's land, to help the oppressed' (BBC News 2003).

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the influential conservative mufti, captures the overall nature of non-coercive Islam:

Moderation, or balance, is not only a general characteristic of Islam, it is a fundamental landmark. The Qur'an says: 'Thus have we made of you an *umma* [community] justly balanced, that you might be witness over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. (2:143)' As such, the Muslim *umma* is a nation of justice and moderation ... Islamic texts call upon Muslims to exercise moderation and to reject and oppose all kinds of extremism. (al-Qaradawi 1981, 21)<sup>15</sup>

### Judaism

Both violent and persuasive sub-systems of belief are reflected in the Old Testament. Legitimizing violence can be found in the decrees that anyone who violates the Sabbath or blasphemes be executed (Exodus 31:14–17; Numbers 15:35–36; Leviticus 24:14). Moreover, justifications for expelling non-Jews from the land of Israel have been drawn from passages such as 'As for the towns of these people that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You must annihilate them' (Deuteronomy 20:16–18). Rabbis have been troubled for many generations by these and other such passages and defanged them, for instance by interpreting the vengeful passage calling for 'an eye for an eye' (Exodus 21:24) as referring to monetary compensation.<sup>16</sup>

In other passages in the Old Testament, the Prophets call on the people to do what is right—because God has so commanded. Some of these passages involve threats to those who defy the Lord. The persuasive ones, however, call for doing what ought to be done because the Jews are a holy people (for example, Deuteronomy 14:2; 14:21). Still others call for special obligations because, as Moses declared to the people of Israel, 'the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the people on earth to be his people' (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Reform Jews do not believe in the use of coercion to enforce Jewish law or impose their beliefs on other Jews. Moreover, they have even been reluctant to try

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Kurzman (1998, 196).

<sup>16</sup> The Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 83 b: 'Does the Divine Law not say "Eye for eye"? Why not take this literally to mean [putting out] the eye [of the offender]?—Let not this enter your mind, since it has been taught: You might think that where he put out his eye, the offender's eye should be put out, or where he cut off his arm, the offender's arm should be cut off, or again where he broke his leg, the offender's leg should be broken. [Not so, for] it is laid down, "He that smiteth any man..." "And he that smiteth a beast..." just as in the case of smiting a beast compensation is to be paid, so also in the case of smiting a man compensation is to be paid' (emphasis added).

to persuade non-Jews in mixed marriages to convert to Judaism.<sup>17</sup> Reform Jews have played an active part in various peace and justice movements, including protests against the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, but only in those that have not condoned violence or actively engaged in violent acts. A 1937 document entitled 'Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism' captures their basic position:

Judaism ... advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice ... Judaism, from the days of the prophets, has proclaimed to mankind the ideal of universal peace. The spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its essential teachings. It abhors all violence and relies upon moral education, love, and sympathy to secure human progress. (Quoted in Meyer 1998, 390)

The leaders of American Reform Jews have actively supported all of the major initiatives for peace with the Palestinians, from the Camp David accords to the Road Map.<sup>18</sup> These positions do not mean that Reform Jews are pacifistic; they strongly support the right of Israel to protect itself from terrorism and to retaliate against its enemies. However, as is the case for persuaders in other traditions, they would only condone the use of violence under exceptional circumstances, and for a narrow set of reasons. It is because of the Reform Jews' reliance on persuasion over coercion, and not their liberal religious and political views, that they fall on the persuasive side of the fault line; illiberal Jewish groups that share a similar aversion to violence and adherence to persuasion fall on the same side of the fault line.

I use the term 'extreme religious nationalists' because the names of the groups falling within this category and their positions have often changed over the years. One example of such an extremist group was Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful), whose members tended to take literally God's promise to the people of Israel in Exodus 21:31: 'I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines [the Mediterranean], and from the desert to the River [the Euphrates].' Hence its members often favoured and fought for 'Greater Israel', the inclusion of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights as permanent parts of the Israeli state.

James Hunter found that 'Within Gush Emunim, war is a central component to the purgative process that will bring about messianic times. Some within the movement quite literally view Arabs (including women and children civilians) as Amalekites or Canaanites that contemporary Jews, in the tradition of Joshua from biblical times, have a duty to destroy' (Hunter 1993, 33).

Even more prone to violence was Rabbi Meir Kahane, and his handful of followers, who stated, 'Jewish violence to protect Jewish interests is *never* bad' (quoted in Sprinzak 1991, 53). In 1971 he moved to Israel from the US and advocated the complete eviction of Arabs from the land of Israel. Kahane warned that there would be great catastrophes and horrors before the age of redemption if

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<sup>17</sup> Certain figures within Reform Judaism have recently sought to change this tradition: Luo (2006).

<sup>18</sup> Union for Reform Jews: Board of Trustees (2004) 'Resolution on Unilateral Withdrawals, Security Barriers, and Home Demolitions: Striving for Security and Peace for Israel and the Middle East'.

Jews did not reclaim Greater Israel and drive the Arab 'cancer' from the land (Sprinzak 1991, 53). In his books and speeches, he developed a philosophy of sacred violence that justified slaughtering Arabs as an expression of God's will (Sprinzak 1998, 120).

There have also been extensive drives to use the political power of ultra-orthodox Jews (a minority in Israel and often different from religious nationalists such as Gush Emunim and Kahane) to impose their values on Israeli society. These include banning public transportation on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, closing businesses and entertainment establishments on these occasions, prohibiting the sale of pork, determining who can marry whom (including prohibition on gay marriages), outlawing abortions, regulating who can be buried where, and much else.

### *Hinduism*

Nathuram Godse, the man who assassinated Mohandas Gandhi, condemned Gandhi's faith in non-violence.<sup>19</sup> Godse contended that if Hindus followed Gandhi they would become weak and vulnerable in the face of 'aggressive' Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Godse was a champion of a coercive form of Hindu nationalism, a religio-political movement that believes India has always been the home of the Hindu people and therefore Muslims and Christians living there should be subordinate to them or leave. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, a prominent Hindu nationalist leader, offered a solution for the Muslim and Christian 'problem':

[Nazi] Germany has . . . shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hinduism to learn and profit by. (Quoted in Raychaudhuri 1995, 145)

When extremist Hindu nationalists have translated their view of non-Hindus into action, it has often meant mass killings of Muslims and the destruction of mosques.<sup>21</sup> They have also engaged in forcible re-conversion of Hindu converts to Christianity and Islam.<sup>22</sup> Militant Hindu leaders justify violence against non-Hindus in terms of 'national honour,' 'punishment' and 'revenge.'<sup>23</sup> They claim that conniving Christian priests and missionaries have 'forcibly converted' the lower castes and that Muslim rulers brutally oppressed the Hindus for centuries. Hindu men must therefore now avenge these wrongs and reassert their pride. The writings and speeches of the militant leaders draw heavily on Hindu symbols and

<sup>19</sup> Godse said during a speech at his trial, '[In the *Ramayana*] Rama killed Ravana in a tumultuous fight and relieved Sita. [In the *Mahabharata*], Krishna killed Kansa to end his wickedness; and Arjuna had to fight and slay quite a number of his friends and relations . . . It is my firm belief that in dubbing Rama, Krishna and Arjuna as guilty of violence, the Mahatma betrayed a total ignorance of the springs of human action.' For details on Godse's trial see Ghosh (1975).

<sup>20</sup> For more on the relationship between Godse and Gandhi, see Nandy (1980).

<sup>21</sup> The two largest outbreaks of such violence in recent years were the destruction of the Babri Mosque in December 1992 and the anti-Muslim riots in the state of Gujarat in March 2002. Nandy et al (2002) and Human Rights Watch (2002).

<sup>22</sup> See Human Rights Watch (1999).

<sup>23</sup> See Nandy et al (2002, 53).

deities that support a violent and aggressive ideal of masculinity.<sup>24</sup> The spiritual and moral aspects of Hinduism are eclipsed in Hindu nationalist discourse by the call to reassert Hindu pride and violently reclaim the nation.

In stark contrast, Gandhi's conception of Hinduism focused overwhelmingly on the spiritual elements of the tradition. The scriptural stories of cosmic battles and heroic warriors who fight to restore the order of the universe represented to Gandhi the inner battlefield, where good and evil struggle to gain control over the mind.<sup>25</sup> Gandhi's spiritually oriented religious outlook did not mean, however, that he believed Hinduism was meant only to be a private faith with no political or social expression, and thus no capacity for persuasion.<sup>26</sup> Non-violence in his view was the means through which religious values could be applied in political and social struggles. At the essence of Gandhi's conception of non-violence is the notion that persuasion is always superior to coercion. The oppressed have a duty to persuade the perpetrator to atone by refusing to obey or cooperate, not by resorting to violence.<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi derived this position from Hinduism, as he believed it to be 'a faith based on the broadest possible toleration', which 'enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all other religions, but also to admire and assimilate whatever is good in them' (Gandhi 1969, 255, 166). That is, he believed there are values in all traditions that we can support, and to which we can appeal.

### *The Beliefs of the Civil Rights Movement*

Among the major leaders and organisations of the American civil rights movement, some held that the use of violence to advance social justice was justified. These included leaders such as Malcolm X, Robert Williams and Huey P Newton and organisations including the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam. On the other side of the divide were men such as Martin Luther King, Jr, James Farmer and James Lawson, and organisations that included the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). As in the other cases examined here, it is not suggested that those who favoured the persuasive approach never considered striking out in anger, nor that those who held violent beliefs did not also support persuasion. The fundamental differences between the two are, however, clear, even dramatic. As in other cases, we are seeking to illustrate these differences by focusing on a few, select figures from each camp.

Malcolm X's famous phrase—'by any means necessary'—provides an initial cue (Breitman 1965, 165). By this he meant that if non-violent means were

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<sup>24</sup> For instance, Hindu nationalists popularly portray Lord Ram with weapons in hand, poised for battle. Their transformation of Ram is examined in Kapur (1993).

<sup>25</sup> For example, Gandhi wrote, '[the *Bhagavad Gita*] is not a historical work, it is a great religious book, summing up the teachings of all religions. The poet has seized the occasion of the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas . . . for drawing attention to the war going on in our bodies between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil'. Quoted in Jordens (1998, 130).

<sup>26</sup> On Gandhi's religious beliefs see Jordens (1998) and Chatterjee (1983).

<sup>27</sup> On Gandhi's technique of nonviolent resistance, see Bondurant (1988) and Juergensmeyer (1984).

unsuccessful in gaining greater freedom for blacks, then any other means, including violence, could be legitimately employed. More explicitly, he declared, 'If the black man doesn't get the ballot, then you're going to be faced with another man who forgets the ballot and starts using the bullet' (Breitman 1965, 57). X invoked the Koran and the Bible to support his positions:

There is nothing in our book, the Koran, that teaches us to suffer peacefully ... That's a good religion. In fact, that's the old-time religion. That's the one that Ma and Pa used to talk about: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, a head for a head, and a life for a life. That's a good religion. (Breitman 1965, 12)<sup>28</sup>

In a 1963 speech in Detroit, he argued against those who believed that a revolution in US race relations could be undertaken through non-violent action:

You don't have a peaceful revolution. You don't have turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There is no such thing as a nonviolent revolution ... Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything that gets in its way. (Breitman 1965, 9)

Civil rights movement leaders who championed persuasion argued that violence would increase the hatred, hostility and bitterness between whites and blacks rather than build solidarity. Leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr envisioned their movement as leading to greater integration between the races and full recognition of the rights of African Americans. King, for example, writes in *Stride Toward Freedom* that he 'does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding ... The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness' (King 1958, 90).

James Lawson, in a speech before the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, stated, 'The Christian favours the breaking down of racial barriers because the redeemed community of which he is already a citizen recognises no barriers dividing humanity. The Kingdom of God, as in heaven so on earth, is the distant goal of the Christian' (Lawson 1965, 278). Many of the civil rights movement's leaders and organisations provided religious justifications for their faith in non-violence. In biblical passages such as the Sermon on the Mount and the sayings of the Hebrew prophets, they found inspiration for their message of suffering non-violently to transform the hearts of their opponents. The SNCC's 1962 Statement of Purpose exemplifies the religious character of the non-violent civil rights struggle:

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from the Judeo-Christian tradition seeks a social order of justice permeated by love ... Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate ... By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities. (Lynd 1966, 399)

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<sup>28</sup> X's views of Islam and race underwent significant changes after he returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

In addition to religious and moral justifications for non-violence, persuasive civil rights leaders also argued that non-violence was highly effective. The students who initiated the first lunch counter sit-in discovered that non-violent direct action could be highly persuasive: 'We knew that probably the most powerful and potent weapon that people have literally no defence for is love, kindness. That is, whip the enemy with something that he doesn't understand.' While strongly preaching the message of love and community, civil rights leaders maintained that they would hold fast to the goal of social change and employ non-violent direct action as forcefully as necessary to attain social change (Raines 1983, 79).

### **Conclusion**

If we are seeking to engage those who hold beliefs other than our own in a normative dialogue, we had best cease treating all people of a given faith, these days especially Muslims, as if they were all of one kind, that is, all extremists (as Samuel Huntington effectively does when he writes, 'Some Westerners, including Bill Clinton, have argued that the West does not have a problem with Islam but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise' [Huntington 1996, 209].) In the same vein it is also a mistake to view the whole of Islam—or any other belief system—as supportive of peace (as George W Bush has done when claiming, 'Islam is Peace'<sup>29</sup>). The preceding examples illustrate that those who draw on one belief system or another to justify their violence have not 'hijacked' their faith, as the former Norwegian prime minister Kjell Magne Bondevik put it.<sup>30</sup> Those who subscribe to violent beliefs do not need to distort the belief systems on which they draw to justify their acts to themselves and to others; they can find in all major systems texts and widely held interpretations that favour violence just as others can draw on the same texts to extol the merit of relying as much as possible on persuasion. Indeed, there is a struggle in all major civilisations between those who adhere to violence and those who hold persuasive beliefs. Hence, the importance of all those who are on one side of the fault line, the persuasive one, to coalesce.

One reason the fault line that separates those who believe in the value of force from those who seek to rely on persuasion is often overlooked is that there are a fair number of contemporary liberals who are suspicious of all religions, and in effect of all strong beliefs, whose adherents are called 'true believers'. This aversion now blinds many liberals to the opportunities that are to be found in forming alliances with those who hold strong beliefs, many of whom are religious conservatives in the 21st century, but are opposed to violence. This approach leaves hundreds of millions of people on the wrong side of a line that separates us (and our allies) from those we must vie with; it leaves out all the true believers who favour persuasion over violence, those with whom we should ally ourselves in the 'war against terrorism' and all other forms of violence—whether or not they favour liberal democracy, at least for now. (I join here with those who note that

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<sup>29</sup> Remarks by President George W Bush at the Islamic Center of Washington, DC, 17 September 2001, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917-11.html>>, accessed 5 March 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Speech at the conference 'Europe: A Beautiful Idea?', The Hague, 7 September 2004.

non-democratic states can live in peace with other states and not support terrorism—Singapore, for example.)

My main thesis—that there are many millions of moderate people (albeit many illiberal) in all civilisations, just as there are extremists—has far-reaching implications for the normative foundations of the post-Cold-War global order. The argument clashes with the view that Western civilisation has a monopoly on legitimate beliefs (especially in its commitment to human rights, democracy and free markets) and that all other civilisations lack such values, or at least values that undergird political regimes and civil society. Indeed select beliefs found in all major civilisations, East and West, have a place in the amalgam of beliefs that will serve as the source of legitimacy for a new world order.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For more on legitimacy and a new world order, see Etzioni (2004).

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