# I. Methodology and Theory

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# Some Methodological Remarks on Islamic Peace Ethics

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**Abstract**: This paper contains some methodological remarks on research into Islamic peace ethics. It can be interpreted also as a meta-ethics or analytical approach that tries to analyze and clarify the concepts and presuppositions of the topic. It discusses critical features of both mainstream research and the secondary literature in Islamic peace ethics:

I. First it reflects on 'peace' and 'ethics' in the phrase 'Islamic peace ethics' - using it as the title for this book - examining the problems that arise, because the literature in this area tends to concentrate more on the *law* of conduct in *war* (*fiqh al-jihad*) rather than *peace ethics* (*akhlaq al-salam*). 2. The second point reflects on *fiqh* as the almost exclusive normative discipline that the current literature on Islamic peace ethics uses, and asks whether *fiqh* is the only discipline in this regard or whether there are other normative fields in the Islamic knowledge tradition that discuss violence, peace and war issues. 3. The third point concerns the adjective 'Islamic' in the title and asks what does 'Islamic' mean in 'Islamic peace ethics'? Examining the Islamic, (the religious), and Islamicate, (the culture and civilization), it warns against confusing the two, risking reducing the Muslim world to a religious-theological dimension alone. This confusion can lead to neglecting non-religious normative resources in Islamic societies and the over-Islamization of Muslims. 4. The fourth point reflects on epistemological violence that results from locating Islam in a position of suspicion and relating violence to theology and religion when dealing with socio-economic-political phenomena (an over-theologization of violence). 5. The final remark warns about the danger of dealing with visible manifestations of violence and ignoring the ontological, anthropological and epidemiological aspects of the subject.



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## 1. Introduction

*Institut für Theologie und Frieden* (ithf), which conducts peace research from a Catholic-Christian perspective, had the intention of launching a research project about Islamic peace ethics. This research project was designed originally in order to 'acquire analytical knowledge about contemporary Islamic peace ethics'. The proposal stressed that 'besides finding and studying the main topics and positions in the Islamic world about peace-related issues, the focus will be on the reasons behind the positions. The methodologies and structures of the peace-related arguments in Islamic ethics will be studied in order to reconstruct the internal architecture of these positions.

Soon after the beginning of the research project, it became clear to the author that some methodological and conceptual presuppositions related to the research project should be noted and revised. One of the first difficulties that encouraged him to devote more time to the methodological dimension of the project, was choosing Muslim scholars, whose methodology and arguments on the peace/war issue needed to be studied. The question that suggested itself was what was meant by 'Muslim scholars'? To which normative discipline should they belong? Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology, Sufism or philosophy? These questions led in turn to a general question about the *normative system* and *normative fields* in Islam. What are the normative sources and disciplines in Islamic tradition? One question that required further investigation was in regard to Islamic *knowledge culture*. What are the main knowledge categories and methodologies in the Islamic tradition? What is the position of reason and scripture in Islamic knowledge culture? What are the relationships between normative fields, as well as their relation to non-normative Islamic sciences?

Another question that suggested itself was the religious and secular discourses on peace and war in Islamic countries. What do we mean by 'Muslim scholars'? Do we mean those scholars in Islamic countries who are religious and argue religiously, or do we mean those with an Islamic background, even without religious argumentation? The original proposal used the terms 'Islamic peace ethics' (*Islamische Friedensethik*) and 'Peace ethics in an Islamic shaped cultural sphere' (*Islamisch geprägten Kulturkreis*) alternatively. This usage of terms betrayed a confusion between Islam as religion and Islam as culture and civilization (Islamicate). This confusion can be the result of a reductionist approach, however unconscious, relating to the culture of Islamic countries. It was an approach



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that can hinder a comprehensive and objective understanding of the ongoing related debate.

Yet another conceptual question concerned the political-social dimensions and implications of this research project. Does this question presuppose the Islamic nature and background of some current conflicts? Is this research project politically correct? Does it not produce *epistemological violence* by putting Islam in a position of suspicion in the current cultural-political asymmetries?

This text discusses these and some other methodological and introductory points about the research project. It interrogates the basis of the research project, in order to reconsider some presuppositions. Indeed, this essay aims at developing a methodological introduction to Islamic peace studies.

To challenge the nature of the research project is understandable, if we take into account that there have been an increasing number of works addressing the topic in recent decades in Western scholarship. However, this scholarship is usually, as Ahmad Al-Dawoody, the author of The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations, shows,[1] accused of misunderstanding, oversimplification and manipulation. If Islam is, as Reuven Firestone holds, 'perhaps the most misunderstood religion to the West, and many stereotypes still hinder clarity about its tenets and practices',[2] then *jihad* is according to James Turner Johnson the most misunderstood topic. Johnson writes, 'between Western and Islamic culture there is possibly no other single issue at the same time as divisive or as poorly understood as that of *jihad*.'[3] Onder Bakircioglu, the author of a new book on the subject Islam and Warfare writes in a similar vein, 'The question of how Islamic law regulates the notions of just recourse to and just conduct in war has long been the topic of heated controversy, and is often subject to oversimplification in scholarship and journalism'.[4]

In order to avoid yet another book contributing to this misunderstanding in the field, it may be helpful to continue to question the approach of the

1 Al-Dawoody, Ahmad. The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations. New York, 2011, p. 2.
2 Firestone, Reuven. Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam. New York, 1999, p. 13.
3 Johnson, James Turner. The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions. Philadelphia, 1997, p. 19.
4 Bakircioglu, Onder. Islam and Warfare: Context and Compatibility with International Law. New York, 2014.



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research project, and try to provide a sound methodological groundwork for the research. Therefore, before talking about peace and violence potentialities in Islamic thought, or investigating the methodologies and approaches of contemporary Muslim scholars towards violence and peace, a *methodological suspension* of the research will be undertaken. This methodological suspension may help to detect the possible *blind spots* of the dominant paradigm and discourse about the topic, and develop new approaches and insights into this problem. Some introductory remarks that are briefly described in this text as methodological challenges for the research project are: intercultural and (cultural) translation challenges; the over-jurifidication of the Islamic normative system; the over-Islamization of Muslim societies; and the over-theologization of social-political problems.

## 2. *What does 'peace' mean in 'Islamic peace ethics'? Peace ethics or fiqh al-jihad (law of war)? An inter-cultural and translation challenge*

There is a widespread view in secondary literature about the Islamic ethics of war, that the classic Islamic tradition has focused on *jus ad bellum* and that it has reflected very little on *jus in bello*. Ahmad Al-Dawoody writes in this regard:

> Despite the vast extent of the literature written on jihad since the first century of Islam [...] much disagreement and misunderstanding still exist about the subject, mainly regarding the Islamic justifications for going to war. This is partly attributed to the fact that classical Muslim jurists give scant attention to the justifications for going to war compared with their extensive treatment of the rules regulating the conduct of Muslims during war. It is ironic that, contrary to the classical Muslim jurists, Western scholars have focused mainly on the justifications for jihad and almost disregarded the Islamic regulations for the conduct of war.[5]

If this is the case, one might suggest that we cannot talk about 'Islamic peace ethics' but just 'Islamic *jus in bello*' or *fiqh fi jihad* (law in war). However, the situation has it seems changed in post-classical Islamic

5 Al-Dawoody, Ahmad. The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations. New York, 2011, p. 4; see also Hashmi Sohail. 'Saving and Taking Life in War: Three Modern Muslim Views'. In: Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia, Jonathan E. Brockopp (Ed.) Columbia SC, 2003, pp. 129-154, here p. 129. Originally in: *The Muslim World*, April 1999, LXXXIX, 2, pp. 158-180.



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scholarship. Ahmad Al-Dawoody holds that a kind of Islamic *jus ad bellum* emerged in the 13th century with Ibn Taymayyah, 'In fact, it took classical Muslim jurists about seven centuries until a manuscript devoted to the treatment of the justifications for war was written by the encyclopedic Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328)'.[6] Sohail Hashmi, professor of international relations at Mount Holyoke College, US, and author of several works on the Islamic ethics of peace and war, dates this change to the modern era and believes that modern Muslim scholars wrote, in contrast to classical Muslim scholars, mostly on *jus ad bellum*. He starts his article 'Saving and Taking Life in War: Three Modern Muslim Views' as follows:

> A curious invention of foci is evident in modern Islamic discussions of war when compared with the medieval literature. The majority of medieval writers began with a consensus on the grounds for war (*jus ad bellum*), which held *jihad* to be both a war of defense as well as for the expansion of a *pax Islamica*. They focused in their writings much more on concerns of legitimate means in warfare (*jus in bello*). Modern writers, on the other hand, concentrate heavily on *jus ad bellum* while devoting very little attention to *jus in bello*.'[7]

Questions such as why Islamic tradition and Islamic law (*fiqh*) focused in the pre-modern era on *jus in bello* and why and how the shift to *jus ad bellum* happened in the 13th century or the modern era can be answered in different ways, and deserve an investigation at later stages of the research project, but it is not the concern of this text.[8] The main point here is that Islamic tradition has reflected more, according to the secondary literature,

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6 Al-Dawoody, Ahmad. The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations, p. 78.

7 Hashmi, Sohail. Saving and Taking Life in War: Three Modern Muslim Views. In: Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Ed.). Columbia, SC 2003, pp. 129-154. Originally in: *The Muslim World*. LXXXIX, 2. April 1999, pp. 158-180

8 One may relate this shift to Islamic theology, as God has in Islam both merciful and aggressive attributes and similarly Mohammad was both peace initiator and war commander. Hashmi holds that due to this theological - ontological difference Thomas Aquinas's question about war was not proposed in Islamic tradition. He writes, 'The use of force by the Muslim community is, therefore, sanctioned by God as a necessary response to the existence of evil in the world.' (Hashmi, 2002, p. 198) Similar to Hashmi, but in a different articulation, Jackson concludes that 'a prevailing "state of war", rather than difference of religion, was the *raison d'être* of jihad and that this "state of war" has given way in modern times to a global "state



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on the law and rules of *war* '*fiqh* in *jihad*/ *jus in bello*' (in the classical period) and '*fiqh* of *jihad*/ *jus ad bellum*' (in the modern era) and not on Islamic peace ethics. Talking about Islamic peace ethics is indeed, one may hold, an unjustifiable translation from the Catholic tradition to the Islamic tradition. Using the term peace ethics for Islamic *jus in bello* can be interpreted, as it lacks the necessary theoretical foundation, suggesting an 'artificial' peace ethics that is unlikely to serve a real and sustainable peace building process. In addition, producing such peace ethics may hinder the development of a native and authentic peace ethics. The literature on 'imported' Islamic peace ethics risk causing a kind of fake sufficiency. Yet, the search for a possible Islamic peace ethics may still be justifiable as an intercultural study, even though the contextual differences should be taken into account in order to prevent misunderstanding.

### 3. *What does 'ethics' mean in Islamic peace ethics? An over-juridification of Islamic normative system?*

The claim that classical Islamic *jurists* focused on *jus in bello*, but modern Muslim scholars focused on *jus ad bellum*, may be correct. However, it seems that the almost exclusive focus of secondary literature on the normative discussion of peace/war in Islam is directed towards *fiqh*/law. It is said in Islamic studies that Islamic culture is a law-based tradition.[9] This opinion has been criticized in recent years as a colonialist-orientalist approach that concentrated on a part of Islamic tradition that was reformed for colonial purposes.[10] In addition, is it still legitimate to ask if Muslim

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of peace" that rejects the unwarranted violation of the territorial sovereignty of all nations.' Jackson, Sherman. Jihad and the Modern World. In: *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*. 2002, 7 /1, p. 25.

9 Joseph Schacht, famous German orientalist, writes in this regard, 'Islamic law is the epitome of Islamic thought, the most typical manifestation of the Islamic way of life, the core and kernel of Islam itself.' Schacht, Joseph. An Introduction to Islamic Law. Oxford, 1964, p.1.

10 Wael Halalq writes in this regard: "Without a full, or even adequate, understanding of theology, mysticism or Arabic philosophy, the colonialist enterprise could have still been carried on, but without intimate familiarity with the law of Islam, this enterprise, or at least its ultimate success, might have been called into question'. Hallaq, Wael B. 'The Quest for Origins or Doctrine-Islamic Legal Studies as Colonialist Discourse." In: *UCLA J. Islamic & Near EL 2*. 2002, pp. 1-31, here pp. 1-2.



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philosophers, theologians, mystics, and politicians discussed war, peace and violence from a normative perspective? Is there any non-legal normative field in the Islamic tradition and knowledge culture that has discussed war and peace? Sohail Hashmi's text implies a negative answer to this question. Referring to this challenge in his article 'Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace,' he writes:

> Much of the controversy surrounding the concept of jihad among Muslims today emerges from the tension between its legal and ethical dimensions. This tension arises because it is the juristic, and not the philosophical or ethical, literature that has historically defined Muslim discourse on war and peace. With the rise of the legalistic tradition, ethical inquiry became a narrow and secondary concern in Islamic scholarship. What we find from the medieval period are legal treatises propounding the rules of jihad and discussing related issues, but few ethical works outlining a framework of principles derived from the Qur'an and sunna upon which these rules could be based.[11]

Hashmi's answer, however, needs further investigation. One of the main points of conflict between the two theological schools in classical Islam, Ash'ari and Mu'tazila, was the normative and ethical approach. They discussed the nature and ontology of values: whether a value, for example justice, is good in itself and by nature, or because of the intention and will of God. In addition, Hashmi talks about the situation following 'the rise of the legalistic tradition'. One might ask what the situation was before the emergence of a legalistic tradition? What has been the less dominant non-legal normative tradition beside the dominant legalistic tradition? Can we reconstruct a non-legalistic normative approach to war in the Islamic tradition?[12] Therefore, the question of violence in Islamic tradition should first elaborate on the general normative system in Islam. Is *fiqh* equal to law in the Western tradition? Focusing on *fiqh*/law, when it comes to normative questions in Islam, does not seem a very convincing position, and might be called an 'over-juridification' of the Islamic normative system. As mentioned above, there were intensive theological debates about the nature and ontology of values and norms among Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite schools in the classical Islamic tradition. It should be asked what the current theological-normative discourses are, and what the interaction be-

11 Hashmi, Sohail H. "Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace". In: Sohail H. Hashmi, Jack Miles (Eds.). Islamic Political Ethics Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict. Princeton, 2002, p. 195.

12 See for a non-legal approach to peace and Islam. Kalin, Ibrahim. Islam and Peace. Amman, 2012.



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tween contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and theological ethics is? In addition to theological ethics (the Ash'arite-Mu'tazilite debate) there has been a philosophical ethics tradition in Islamic knowledge culture that was mainly drawn from ancient Greek ethics. Was there any peace/war related debate in these philosophical ethics? How did they interact with Islamic jurisprudence and other normative fields? Does this ethical tradition still have authority in Islamic societies?[13]

So, one methodological question this research project needs to address is the nature of the general normative system in the Islamic tradition. What are the normative disciplines in Islamic knowledge culture? What are their internal interactions? Are there any non-law normative fields such as philosophical ethics, theological ethics, mystical ethics, political practical ethics (*Fürstenspiegel*) and scripturalist ethics, etc.?

This quest for alternative normative and intellectual resources in Islamic tradition is important because one might argue that the Islamic law tradition (*fiqh*) has methodological shortcomings to overcome the modern socio-political challenges, including religiously motivated violence. This is what several contemporary Muslim thinkers have reflected and written about. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1936, Muslim India), Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988, Pakistan), Muhammad Arkoun (1928-2010, Algeria), Muhammad 'Abed al-Jabri (1936-2010, Morocco), Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010, Egypt), and Abdolkarim Soroush (1945- Iran), are some of the representatives of this critical approach.[14] A Malaysian academic makes this point explicitly in his comment on the open letter of Muslim

13 Currently there is a related research project in Göttingen University under the title of 'The Islamic moral philosopher and historian Miskawayh (d. 1030) inbetween reception and transformation'. This research project analyses how Miskawayh, the Muslim ethicist from 10th century "received, modified and reconstructed the ethical and educational ideas of ancient pagans as well as later Jewish, Christian, and Muslim authorities in the light of his own images of God, human, and the world". http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/521153.html (access: 10.02.2017).

14 See for primary literature:
Iqbal, Mohammad. Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam. London, 1934; Rahman, Fazlur. Revival and Reform in Islam. Oxford, 1999; Abed al-Jabri, Muhammed. *Kritik der arabischen Vernunft. Die Einführung.*Berlin, 2009; Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid. Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Analysis. Amsterdam, 2006; Arkoun, Mohammed. The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought. London, 2002; Soroush, Abdolkarim. The Expansion of Prophetic Experience: Essays on Historicity: Contingency and Plurality in Religion. Nilou



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scholars to Abubakr al-Baghdadi,[15] the leader of IS, in which 128 Muslim scholars argued using classical Islamic methodology against the IS interpretation of Islam. He argues that traditional Sunnism has, despite many differences, also many commonalities with IS when it comes to methodology. Therefore, he believes that Muslim intellectuals should consider whether they can deal with such problems in addition to traditional Sunnism. He writes:

> While IS is outside traditional Sunnism when it comes to the treatment of non-Muslims (although even here the lines are blurred at times - e.g. the issue of the fate of captives of war, offensive jihad in Shafi'i madhahb) it is undeniable that the IS approach to religious texts shares many crucial assumptions with traditional Sunnism (and sh'ism for that matter) - most faithfully the *ahl-hadith manhaj* - such as on gender issues or literal application of the *hudud* laws including death for apostasy. This is what the learned author [of the letter to IS] failed to mention. [...] To my mind, if anything, the rise of IS has highlighted the many problematic elements of traditional Islam (based on their outdated worldview and outdated interpretational approaches) that have never been resolved. And I think that this is the time for us, Muslims, take a hard, critical and constructive look at our tradition, and ONCE AND FOR ALL confront these issues with intellectual honesty and develop an alternative worldview and more adequate hermeneutics which would reflect more faithfully the spirit of the islamic message as captured by contemporary human rights based ethics which do not discriminate on the basis of faith, gender or social class.[16]

This methodological remark demands a reappraisal of a dominant law-oriented approach in Islam-peace scholarship and pleads for the inclusion of the alternative normative resources within Islamic tradition to deal with

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Mobasser (Ed., Trans.). Analytical Introduction by Forough Jahanbakhsh. Leiden, 2009.

For secondary literature:

Kurzman, Charles (Ed.). Liberal Islam: a Sourcebook. New York, 1998; von Kügelgen, Anke. *Averroes und die arabische Moderne: Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam*. Leiden, 1994; Dahlén, Ashk. Islamic Law, Epistemology, and Modernity: Legal Philosophy in Contemporary Iran. New York, 2003; Hildebrandt, Thomas. *Neo-Mutazilismus? Intention und Kontext im modernen arabischen Umgang mit dem rationalistischen Erbe des Islam*. Leiden, 2007; Troll, Christian. *Progressives Denken im zeitgenössischen Islam, Vortrag bei der Tagung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung und der Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*. 2005, 09, pp 22-24.

15 The text is available in different languages including English and German in the following link: http://lettertobaghdadi.com (access: 12.01.2017)

16 The email of the scholar to the 'Sociology of Islam' mailing group. 08.11.2014.



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the question of violence. Accordingly, there should always be a clear mention in any study on Islam and peace regarding the specific type of the normative field of study. Talking or writing about Islam and war in general, and then merely referring to the law tradition, can imply a factual limitation and lead to misunderstanding. There are some scholars that have addressed this methodological problematic and called for going beyond *sharia* in Islamic war-peace ethics discourse. Prof. Abdul Aziz Said and his team at Chair for Islamic Peace at American University is one of rare, if not unique, research centers in this regard. However, their main goal seems to be promoting peace in Islamic discourse through focusing on Sufi tradition.[17] Dr. Qamar al-Huda in the United States Institute of Peace who has published *Crescent and dove: peace and conflict resolution in Islam*[18] expresses also explicitly this methodological problem. Qamar al-Huda points to this methodological problem in his interview about the purpose of their research project on Islamic peace at USIP and the book: "[The purpose was to ask] How to reframe the current debate on violence and Islam, and nonviolence? How to move beyond jihad conversation? Most scholars started with legal rules of engagement to put limitations to the violence. Others contested that the legal interpretation [of the subject] is overemphasized in Islam. Many perspectives outside the legal world: philosophy, theology, sociology etc."[19]

### 4. *What does 'Islam' mean in Islamic peace ethics? Islamic/ Islamicate. An over-Islamization of Muslims?*

The question of the ontology of Islam is one of the main concepts under consideration in this research. In the ontology of Islam the singularity-plu-

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17 See: Abdul Aziz Said, Nathan C. Funk, and Ayse S. Kadayifci (eds.). *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: Precept and Practice*. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2001; Mohammed Abu-Nimer. *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice*. Gainesville, Fl.: University of Florida Press, 2003; Nathan C. Funk and Abdul Aziz Said. *Islam and Peacemaking in the Middle East*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2008.

18 Qamar al-Huda, (ed.). *Crescent and dove: peace and conflict resolution in Islam,* United States Institute of Peace, 2010.

19 Qamar al-Huda, Interview with Dr. Ayse Kadayifci at Rumi Forum: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJT-EMfs_rw (Minute: 3, uploaded: 01.07.2011, access: 05.02.2017).



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rality, fluidity-solidity, sacrality-secularity of Islam, its ontological borders with culture, civilization and other religions etc., should be discussed. What do we mean by Islam when we ask about 'Islamic peace ethics'? Is it Islamic dogma and theology or is it Islamic culture and civilization? What distinguishes the sacral and secular in an Islamic society?

Islam is now often associated in the West with war and violence. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. 'For the West, Islam has been for centuries a source of fear and suspicion.'[20] The long conflict history between pre-modern Islamic and Christian political powers, the so-called crusades, can be interpreted as a prototype of these conflicts. Orientalists, as well as pre-modern polemic theological scholarship on Islam in the West, have depicted the religion and culture of Islam as an inferior Other to the religion and culture of the West.[21] However, what is not clear in this scholarship, is Islam itself. One aspect of this ambiguity is the singularity and plurality of Islam. Which Islam do we mean when we ask about Islamic peace ethics? In addition to the traditional confessional (Sunni-) theological (Mu'tazila, Ash'ari) and jurisprudential (Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi'i, Hanafi, Ja'fari), there are the cultural/ethnic (Arabic, Iranian, Turkish, Indian, Indonesian, etc.) and ideological/intellectual (traditionalist, liberal, fundamentalist, etc.) diverse categories in the Islamic cultural sphere. Therefore, the specific type of Islam should be specified, in order to avoid generalization.

Another aspect of this ambiguity is using the term Islam as a religion and at the same time as a culture-civilization. Do we mean by Islam in contemporary Islamic peace ethics, what contemporary Muslim scholars think about war? Or do we mean what the 'religious' contemporary Muslim scholars argue, regarding peace/war issues based on Islamic sources?[22] A problem searching for Islamic peace ethics is the over-theologization of Muslim societies, or the over-Islamization of Muslims. It limits the Muslim society to its religious resources alone, and deprives it of its other normative-cultural resources. This impoverishment can get in the way of de-

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20 Al-Dawoody, Ahmad. The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations, p. 2.

21 Johnson, James Turner. The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions. Philadelphia, 1997, p. 21.

22 This question has many dimensions. One may ask further about the very religious-secular binary. What are the sacred and secular elements in the normative system in an Islamic society? How is their relationship and how they interact?



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veloping a comprehensive and functional normative attitude in these societies towards any one topic, for example war.

Marshal Hodgson, an American historian, introduced the concept of *Islamicate* in his book *The Venture of Islam*, in order to distinguish Islam as religion (Islamic), from Islam as a culture and civilization (Islamicate).[23] This distinction can be helpful in avoiding this reductionist approach. Taking this distinction into account, we can ask, regarding this research project, if we mean by Islamic in 'Islamic peace ethics' either Islamic or Islamicate? After reviewing Hodgson's book on its 40th anniversary of publication, and warning about giving the Muslims the role of 'the bad other' in the West, Bruce B. Lawrence writes, 'Hodgson is both so necessary and so perilous as a catalyst for our 21st century engagement with Islam'.[24] It is of course plausible to study the attitude of religious tradition alone in Islamicate societies, but the distinction needs to be explicitly made, or there can be limiting and exclusionary implications that lead to misunderstanding. Talking about the religious discourse of peace in Islamic societies, and not mentioning this distinction, implicitly reduces Islamic societies to their religious dimension.

After his critique on the lack of adequate scholarship about Islam and war in the West, James Johnson remarks in his book *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* that 'there exist no general histories treating the understanding of normative tradition on religion, statecraft, and war in Islamic societies or in Islamic religious thought. Many significant subjects remain unexplored for lack of researchers with the necessary training and language skills.'[25] The lack of a comprehensive account of peace in Islam in the West can be explained partly because of the reductionist approach towards Islam in orientalism, in imperialistic scholarship. The reductionist approach is usually an aspect of the mechanism where the

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23 Hodgson, M.G.S. The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. 1–3. Chicago, 1974. See also: Arnason, J.P. Marshall Hodgson's civilizational analysis of Islam: theoretical and comparative perspectives. 2006. In: J.P. Arnason, A. Salvatore, G. Stauth (Eds.). *Sociology of Islam* (Yearbook n. 7): Islam in Process. New Brunswick, 2006.

24 Lawrence, Bruce B. "Genius Denied and Reclaimed: A 40-Year Retrospect on Marshall G.S. Hodgson's 'The Venture of Islam'". http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/retrospect-hodgson-venture-islam/ (access: 11.11. 2016).

25 Johnson, James Turner. The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions. Philadelphia, 1997, p. 23. Cited in Al-Dawoody, Ahmad. The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations, p. 2.



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centre deals with the periphery. This reductionism is partly responsible for the current situation in the Middle East that seems to be 'incapable to regenerate itself'.[26] For a regeneration and renaissance, the Islamic world should redefine itself, its intellectual history - a decolonized self and history. As Asma Afsaruddin reminds us, 'The diversity of voices and opinions that continue to characterize Muslim-majority societies, as well as the rich spiritual and intellectual resources available within the Islamic tradition (both as a religion and civilization)'[27] should be taken into account.

Another limiting consequence of the Islamization of Muslims and certain regions is depriving a region of its pre-Islamic cultural heritage. One might hold that in dealing with topics such as peace and war in Islamic societies we should regard Islam in its larger cultural context, and study its exchanges and mutual influences in relation to its historical or contemporary neighbouring cultures and religions, such as Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Iranian, Judaism, Pre-Islamic Arab culture, Christianity etc. These studies can help to understand the normative patterns in societies better, as well as hinder one-sided and ahistorical essentialist approaches to the problem. The comparative investigation of concepts such as violence, war, peace, martyrdom, defense, missionary action, expansion etc. in these different cultures can provide helpful insights. As the Ancient Greek and Roman sources of the Christian-Western tradition generally, specifically in peace ethics, show, the study of the sources of Islamic tradition and peace ethics, including that of Mesopotamia and ancient manifestations of the civilization in the region, can help to explain and understand the normative system of Islamic tradition and societies. The current attitude toward violence in this cultural sphere may be rooted in the mythological and archetypical attitudes of these peoples towards life, death, body, humanity, the Other etc. The (inter)cultural-historical studies of this research topic can help firstly to avoid dichotomous and essentialist results, as well as gaining deep and analytical knowledge through exploring the general and specific archetypes, such as individual-collective contraction-expansions, security-threat conceptions and the self-other etc.

A helpful approach might be a comparative study of Jewish and Islamic peace ethics, because there is an obvious similarity in the normative order

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26 Afsaruddin, Asma. "Contemporary Muslims and the Challenge of Modernity". Oxford, 17.07.2015: https://blog.oup.com/2015/07/contemporary-misconceptions-islam/ (access: 11.11. 2016).

27 Afsaruddin. Contemporary Muslims. Oxford. 17.07.2015.



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of the knowledge cultures in both religions. Jewish religious scholarship is divided into two main categories: *halakhah* and *aggadah*. *Halakhah* is the practical and legal part and *aggadah* is the belief and dogma part. '*Halakhah* is comprehensive and has the sentence of every detailed act of a Jew. *Halakhah* means a 'going' a 'change' and denotes the way prescribed by the Jewish religion from cradle to grave'.[28] This is very similar to the Islamic case, as the practical part of Islamic scholarship is called *Shari'ah* and it also means 'path'. Marchal Breger, the Professor of law at the American Catholic University, writes in his short essay about this similarity:

> Similarities between Judaism and Islam are easy to see. [...] In both, law is central, and personal and social existence is governed by a divinely ordained legal system. There are also many obvious parallels between Judaism's legal system, known as *Halachah*, and the Islamic legal order of Shari'ah. Both purport to instruct us in how to attend to every aspect of one's life: one's getting up and one's going out, one's sexual practice and one's business practices. For some adherents of each, religious law also dictates political life, such as for whom to vote.[29]

It is indeed no surprise that Islam owes a debt to Judaism for its dogma, rituals, and historiography. This has been acknowledged in the Qur'an and other Islamic primary sources. This demands a rethinking of the concept of Islam in Islamic peace ethics, and pleads for a more inclusive approach to normative sources of Islami*cate* societies.

## 5. *Religion and violence: the over-theologization of socio-political problems?*

Another methodological question about the research project is the relation between the normative and social-political aspects of violence and peace. Asking about a normative approach to violence and peace, as this research project does, can be misleading about the real and false root causes of violence and peace. This research question presupposes and implies the reli-

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28 von Stuckrad, Kocku (Ed.). *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, "Judaism". Leiden, 2006, p. 1083.

29 Breger, Marchall. "Why Jews Can't Criticize Shari'a Law". In: *Moment: Jewish Politics, culture, and religion*. January-February 2012. http://www.momentmag.com/why-jews-cant-criticize-sharia-law/ (access: 11.11. 2016).



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gious or normative nature (at least normative dimension) of current violent acts by some Muslim groups. This may, however, be problematized as the o*ver-theologization* of socio-political problems.[30] Taking into account that different world religions or ideologies have had both violative and tolerative phases in their history, it is plausible to ask what the determining factor is in such socio-political phenomena? What is the role of religion in the approach of a given society towards peace and war? What is the relation between religious and non-religious factors? Is it the holy text and dogma of these religions and ideologies, or the secular factors that cause violence or peace? Do some cases of high tolerance in Islamic history, for example in the 15th-16th century when Sephardi Jews were allowed to emigrate from Christendom to Islamdom - the so-called *Alhambra Decree* - mean an Islamic theological-religious consensus, or were socio-political factors playing a determining role? Is the current opposite reaction and intolerance towards the Other in Islamdom because of their violence fostering theology and poor normative peace tradition, or the result of regional and global non-theological factors, including becoming marginalized in the modern world and being subject to poverty and injustice? Does the colonial history of Islamic countries play any role in Islamic radicalism? Some Islamic countries were colonized in 19th and 20th centuries. The region was left with a longstanding legacy: artificial borders and national identities causing ongoing conflicts, with local military elites allied to the colonizers and world powers. Context as well as methodologies can play a significant role in the position of contemporary Muslim scholars towards peace and war. In this regard, the question of Islamic peace ethics needs to take into consideration the socio-political context.

It seems that the question of Islamic peace ethics assumes that there is an operating ethical or theological position. If, as some theories of international relations such as *dependency theory* holds, the 'failed modernization' in peripheral countries, including Islamic countries, is a constitutive part of the *world system* but is not due to their local conditions, one must ask whether the violence in such peripheral countries, including some Islamic countries, is a result of the world system, or a consequence of their local culture or social system. There are some scholars, for example Olivièr Roy, who reject any relation between Islam as religion and the re-

30 Bayat, Asef. "Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?", Amsterdam University Press, ISIM Paper 8, 2007.



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cent Islamist-militant movements. Roy explains these movements as the result of secularism and imperialism and being removed from Islamic tradition. He says:

> I think that the current struggle is a continuation of the old confrontation between anti-imperialist movements based in the Third World with the West and specifically the US. [...] Al-Qaida is obviously a generational movement, it is made up of young people who have distanced themselves from their families and their social surroundings and who are not even interested in their country of origin. Al-Qaida has an astonishing number of converts among its members, a fact which is recognized but has not received sufficient attention. The converts are rebels without a cause who, thirty years ago, would have joined the Red Army Faction (RAF) or the Red Brigades, but who now opt for the most successful movement on the anti-imperialist market. [...] The new movements are profoundly skeptical about building an ideal society, which explains the suicidal dimension also present in the RAF.[31]

This remark is highly relevant because our interpretation of conflicts affect also the solutions and strategies we adopt to manage them. If this research project leads to a misleading account of the root causes of the conflicts, through focusing on religious-normative aspects rather than its socio-political roots, it could also contribute to a failure of conflict management.

### *5.1. Research on 'Islamic peace ethics' as epistemological violence from the centre?*

The sceptical view of the normative approach toward Islam-related violent phenomena is more complicated if we take the concept of *epistemological violence* into account. Epistemological violence is exerting force and reproducing hierarchy through research design, data collection, analysis, and communication of the findings. Any phase of a research process entails 'violent' acts, by making exclusions and inclusions. A research project on Islamic peace ethics can become, due to the research asymmetry, an instrument that the centre in the world system uses, in order to burden the shoulders of the victim and exculpate itself from any responsibility, for problems that are the result of the centre's colonialist-imperialist history,

31 "Holy Secularism: Oliviér Roy talked to Eren Gvercin". In: *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 27/3. Summer 2010. http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2010_summer/21_roy.html (access: 11.11. 2016).



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and the current unjust world system. A research project on Islamic peace ethics may serve the centre firstly by putting the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the victim, secondly by calling the victim's resistance 'violent' and thirdly by ascribing socio-political problems as inherent parts of their culture and religion, and as irrational characteristics of the victim. Thus, conducting a *theological* research into Islamic peace ethics, when the determining factor of peace and war is socio-political, not only fails to explain much about the problem and confuses the real socio-political causes (previously remarked upon) but it also frees the real perpitrator from blame and gets in the way of the victim resisting. Therefore, this research project should be wary of the question of epistemological violence and be cautious in regard to any presuppositions concerning this aspect of the research.

## *6. Philosophical foundations of the question*

If the violence we witness today in the name of Islam is a socio-political phenomenon, and a reaction and resistance to a wider violence practiced by the global centre and the consequence of an unjust world order, the question that suggests itself is, can the centre's violence be overcome or is the centre-periphery model inherent in the world? One may hold that violence is inherent even though type and role-player changes. This question can be better understood if we take into consideration the fact that today's periphery was yesterday's centre, and it practiced more or less the same imperialist violence and Othering. Islam's expansion, for example, in late antiquity through Islamization and in some cases Arabization of the region, was not without violence, either physical or epistemological. This insight requires investigating the question of violence at a deeper level and asking further questions about the ontology and anthropology of violence. Is violence an essential and irremovable component of the Being and human, and therefore there was and always will be conflict in the world, or is it an accidental element in the world that can be overcome? What is the logic of its existence, if there is any? The importance and necessity of these philosophical elaborations on peace can be better understood if we take into account that, in spite of all efforts, there has been violence throughout human history and there has hardly been any progress. Charles Webel writes in this regard in his article 'Toward a philosophy and metapsychology of peace':



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> If peace [...] is both a normative ideal [...] as well as a psychological need [...] then why are violence and war (the apparent contraries of social, or outer, peace), as well as unhappiness and misery (the expressions of a lack of inner peace), so prevalent, not just in our time but for virtually all of recorded human history? Given the facts of history and the ever-progressing understanding of our genetic and hormonal nature, is peace even conceivable, much less possible?[32]

If violence cannot be overcome, but it just shifts deterministically from one space and geography to another (at an international level), then asking about its relation to one factor, for example Islamic or Christian tradition, becomes a question that presupposes a kind of causality, which may be a false question that confuses correlation as causality, due to a neglect of the more fundamental (ontological) dimensions of the phenomena.

The philosophical foundations of the question also include, in addition to the ontological and anthropological, the epistemological aspects of asking about the relationship between religion/Islam and peace/violence, how our perception of knowledge and the limitations of the human cognitive faculty influences the proposition, formulation and researching of the questions for this research project. How objective is our evaluation of an act or an idea as either violent or peaceful? Are such evaluations and interpretations not historical and contextual? What implications have the historicity and contextuality of the episteme for Islamic peace studies? How should we deal with the historicity and contextuality of our episteme in applied normative fields, such as peace/conflict studies? The social-political conditions of knowledge should be considered here too. How do power asymmetries influence our perception of the offensive and defensive characteristics of a violent act? How can we be sure not to confuse the position of offender and offender, victim and criminal?

32 Webel, Charles. 'Toward a Philosophy and Metapsychology of Peace.' In: Charles Webel, J. Galtung (Eds.). Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies. New York, 2001, pp. 3-13.



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