

IIQS

BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

International Institute of Qur'anic Studies Strategic Plan

“The International Institute of Qur'anic Studies seeks to facilitate an intellectual, cultural, social, political, legal and spiritual transformation of the Muslim world, by meticulously researching and systematically disseminating the pre-dogmatic original message of Islam as a true blessing for all creation, in which reason and faith in Holy Scriptures peacefully coexist in a state of Divine Illumination.”

~ IIQS: Birth of a Movement

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES:
BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES:
BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

Chief Editor

C. Holland Taylor

Editorial Team

Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd, Kyai Haji Hodri Arief,
Dr. Ravi Krishnamurthy, Dr. Ratno Lukito and Dr. Ali Mabrook

المعهد الدولي للدراسات القرآنية

*Al-Ma'had al-Dawali
lil-Dirasaat al-Qur'aniyya*

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES



LIBFORALL
FOUNDATION

JAKARTA • CAIRO • WINSTON-SALEM • LEIDEN • MAGELANG

LibForAll Foundation Press publishes works that further LibForAll's mission to promote a pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual understanding of Islam, at peace with itself and the modern world.

The International Institute of Qur'anic Studies (IIQS) is a branch of LibForAll that seeks to help lay the foundation for a renaissance of Islamic pluralism, tolerance and critical thinking. Its Arabic name (*Al-Ma'had al-Dawali lil-Dirasaat al-Qur'aniyya*) means "The International Center for Mutual Support and Faithful Commitment to Qur'anic Studies." Its Arabic acronym, MDQ, is pronounced "medaq" and signifies a trail through the desert.

The IIQS endeavors to provide a secure path for humanity to traverse the desert of spiritual ignorance (*jahiliyya*) and attain a self-transcendent state of awareness in which the individual ego poses no barrier to apprehension of, and surrender to, God's will. This state of divine illumination (*tanwir*), characterized by the abandonment of selfish calculation (*isqat al-tadbir*), is more commonly known as *islam*.

International Institute of Qur'anic Studies: Birth of a Movement

Edited by C. Holland Taylor, with Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd, Kyai Haji Hodri Arief, Dr. Ravi Krishnamurthy, Dr. Ratno Lukito and Dr. Ali Mabrook

Copyright © 2013 LibForAll Foundation. All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN 978-0-615-44206-8

1. Qur'an - Studies. 2. Sunnah - Life of the Prophet Muhammad. 3. Shari'a. 4. Islam - Spirituality. 5. Islamic Thought - Reform and Renaissance.

المعهد الدولي للدراسات القرآنية

*Al-Ma'had al-Dawali
lil-Dirasaat al-Qur'aniyya*

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES



LIBFORALL
FOUNDATION

JAKARTA • CAIRO • WINSTON-SALEM • LEIDEN • MAGELANG

www.iiqs.org • www.libforall.org

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ، غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَلَا
الضَّالِّينَ

The Opening
(First Book of the Qur'an)

In the name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate!
Praise be to God, the Lord of all creation,
The Merciful, the Compassionate,
Lord of Judgment Day!
Thee alone we worship, and to Thee alone
we pray for help.
Guide us on the straight path,
The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed
Thy Grace,
Not of those who have incurred Thy wrath,
Nor of those who go astray.

Dedicated to the memory of H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid,
Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd and Sir John M. Templeton,
whose vision of a world transformed through spiritual awakening
is embodied in this work,

and to their love for all humanity.

This publication was made possible through the support of
a grant from the John Templeton Foundation,
which acts as a philanthropic catalyst for research and discoveries
relating to the Big Questions of human purpose
and ultimate reality. The views expressed in this publication
are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of
the John Templeton Foundation.

LibForAll Foundation also wishes to acknowledge the generous
support of the John Wesley and Anna Hodgkin Hanes Foundation,
the James G. Hanes Foundation,
and the Lynn and Foster Friess family,
who have supported the International Institute of Qur'anic Studies
from its inception.

Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
2	International Institute of Qur’anic Studies: Vision and Mission.....	17
3	Guiding Principles: Faith, Self-Transcendence and Humility.....	27
4	Terminology.....	35
5	Strategic Objectives.....	45
6	Operational Methodology	47
6.1	Critique by Academic Scholars	49
6.2	Reinterpretation by Spiritual Ulama (Muslim Religious Scholars).....	49
6.3	Mobilizing Support from Powerful Patrons, Opinion Leaders and Governments, and Creating Secure Bases of Operations	55
6.4	Widely Disseminate Narratives through Old and New Media.....	55
6.5	Global Coordination and Logistics.....	56
7	IIQS Organization and Program Areas	59
7.1	Academic Division.....	60
7.1.1	Main Campus.....	60
7.1.2	Online Institute and Learning Programs.....	61
7.1.3	Model B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in Qur’anic Studies.....	62
7.1.4	Curriculum and Course Materials for Primary and Secondary School Education	64
7.1.5	Internships at IIQS-Affiliated Madrasahs	65
7.1.6	Academic Scholars/Teachers Networking and Development Program	66
7.1.7	Qur’anic Commentary (<i>Tafsir/Ta’wil</i>).....	67
7.1.8	Translation & Publications.....	68
7.1.9	Online Library.....	69
7.1.10	Endowed Chairs.....	70

7.2	Ulama (Theology) Division	70
7.2.1	Main Campus/Madrasah.....	71
7.2.2	Build Global Network of Spiritual Ulama Who Advise, and Work Closely with, the IIQS.....	73
7.2.3	Academicians-Ulama Partnership Program to Closely Align Critique and Reinterpretation Narratives Generated by IIQS.....	73
7.2.4	Develop a Network of Partner Madrasahs	75
7.2.5	Support IIQS-affiliated Ulama in Producing Transformative Narratives for Distribution to Key Sectors of Society, to Achieve Grassroots Penetration	75
7.2.6	Madrasah Outreach Program, to Mold Future Generations of Ulama.....	76
7.2.7	Spiritual Illumination (<i>Irfan</i>) Program	77
7.3	Public Policy Division	79
7.3.1	The Center for Contemporary Islam (CCI)	80
7.3.2	Develop and Implement a Geopolitical Strategy to Help Ensure the Global Triumph of a Pluralistic, Tolerant and Spiritual Understanding of Islam	85
7.4	Women’s Division	87
7.4.1	Women Qur’anic Scholars Program	88
7.4.2	Training of Women’s Rights NGOs and Activists.....	89
7.4.3	Outreach to Women’s Groups within Muslim Mass Organizations	89
7.5	National Programs Division	89
7.5.1	Establish Primary Bases of Operation for the IIQS and Embed with Deep-Rooted Local Power Structures to Ensure Sustainability.....	90
7.5.2	Indonesia	91
7.5.3	Egypt	91
7.5.4	India	92
7.5.5	Senegal/Nigeria/Sahel	92
7.5.6	European Union/United States	92

7.6	Media Division	93
7.6.1	Media Center	94
7.6.2	IIQS Multilingual Website	95
7.6.3	Websites for Individual Qur’anic Scholars and Top Muslim Leaders.....	96
7.6.4	Online Institute Popular Outreach.....	96
7.6.5	Creating Virtual Communities.....	96
7.6.6	Stimulating Viral Dissemination of IIQS Ideas through the Internet/Social Media.....	97
7.6.7	Television, Video and Radio Outreach.....	98
7.6.8	Video and Audio Broadcasting on the Internet	99
7.6.9	Satellite Network	99
7.6.10	Worldwide Public Relations Outreach for IIQS.....	100
7.7	Global Coordination and Logistics	100
7.7.1	Governance	100
7.7.2	Management and Organizational Build-Out	102
7.7.3	Resource Mobilization Board.....	103
7.7.4	Networks of Partners and Advisors	103
7.7.5	Vetting	104
7.7.6	Ensuring Legitimacy, Efficiency and Continuity...	104
7.7.7	Overcoming Language Barriers	106
7.7.8	Physical Facilities	106
8	Mobilizing Resources.....	109
9	Initial Strategic Projects	115
10	Risks and Mitigation Strategies	119
11	Conclusion	125

1 Executive Summary

1.1 So What?

“**T**he goal of the International Institute of Qur’anic Studies is to help stimulate a renaissance of Islamic pluralism, tolerance and critical thinking—enabling Muslims to embrace the universal and cosmopolitan principles that characterized Islamic civilization at its height, while adapting peacefully to the modern world.”

~ LibForAll/IIQS Co-Founder Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid
(1940 - 2009), Former President of Indonesia and
Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama

The International Institute of Qur’anic Studies: Birth of a Movement is intended to provide a blueprint for an intellectual, cultural, social, political, legal and spiritual renaissance in the Muslim world, by meticulously researching—and systematically disseminating—the pre-dogmatic original message of Islam as a true blessing for all creation, in which reason and faith in Holy Scriptures (*‘aql* and *naql*) peacefully coexist in a state of Divine Illumination (*‘irfan* and/or *ishraq*).

The primary audience for this strategic plan is a cross-functional network of Muslim and non-Muslim leaders from around the world who participated in its creation, and/or will provide the support required for its successful execution. A secondary audience is

people of goodwill of every faith and nation, who recognize that the future of our interconnected world depends upon reconciling the material and spiritual realms—i.e., the domains of science and religion—without compromising the truth or integrity of either.

LibForAll Foundation launched its International Institute of Qur’anic Studies (IIQS) in March of 2008 under the patronage of former Indonesian president Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid and Dr. Syafii Maarif, the former heads of the world’s two largest Muslim organizations, respectively (the 50-million member Nahdlatul Ulama and the 30-million member Muhammadiyah).

Those involved in the IIQS are under no illusion as to the difficulty of achieving our desired end state (“the global triumph of a pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual understanding of Islam, at peace with itself and the modern world), and the enormous obstacles that stand in the way of achieving this goal. Yet we regard the liberation of religion from narrow-minded dogma and state control as one of the most vital issues confronting humanity in the 21st century, and are convinced this can only be accomplished by restoring the profound ethical and spiritual values of Islam to primacy.

Similarly, we are convinced that any attempt to “reform” Islam that is overtly or covertly hostile to religion is not only misguided, but doomed to failure. Rather, the world-renowned Muslim leaders associated with LibForAll/IIQS believe that the only realistic hope of liberating Islam from the prison of dogma and politics lies in producing a broad-based spiritual revitalization of Islam itself, and thereby transforming Muslims’ understanding of their religion and its mandates, including Islam’s relationship with other faiths.

In developing an effective strategy to transform Muslims’ understanding of their faith, it is important to recognize that Islamic teachings are not, and have never been, monolithic in nature. In addition to the widely-recognized Sunni-Shi‘ite schism, a fundamentalist/spiritual divide has also existed within Islam, from the time of its early followers. This fundamentalist/spiritual divide has been on display throughout Muslim history, and was generally the determining factor whether any given Muslim community embraced the principles of religious pluralism and tolerance, or disdained the religious insights of other groups, including Muslims who did not share their own perspective. Spiritual Islam is generally

referred to as *tasawwuf*, or Sufism, and may assume the form of membership in actual Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqa*), or a more diffuse alignment with a Sufi or mystical worldview.

According to numerous experts on Islam, a majority of the world's Muslim population practice forms of religious piety directly or indirectly derived from Sufism. This includes not only Indonesia, where Sufism (in the broader sense) was and remains directly responsible for that nation's traditions of religious tolerance, but also South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), the Persian and Turkish cultural basins (Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Anatolia and the Balkans); Mesopotamia and the Levant; Egypt; the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia); the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The renowned Muslim theologians affiliated with LibForAll/IIQS, like many Muslim clerics grounded in the spiritual traditions of Islam, distinguish between a “muslim” (i.e., one who is truly surrendered to the Divine, in a state of complete self-transcendence) and a “Muslim” (one who professes the formal religion of Islam, but who may or may not have realized, and lived, its essence). Similarly, President Wahid and Muslims like him throughout the world distinguish between “islam” (the actual state of ego annihilation and moment-by-moment awareness of, and surrender to, Divine Will) and the formal religion known as Islam. According to this definition, muslims who practice islam may or may not actually profess the formal religion of Islam, for not all are followers of the Prophet Muhammad (cf. Qur'an 2:132, 2:133, 3:52 and 5:111).

Significantly, in the opinion of many top Qur'anic scholars and Muslim theologians, the Qur'an itself uses the terms “muslim” and “islam” primarily in this spiritual sense, rather than to refer specifically to the followers of Muhammad, or the formal religion of Islam—connotations that became dominant after the death of Muhammad (saw.),¹ with the formalization of religion in the context of expanding Arab military and political power.

From the perspective of Sufism, this distinction between “muslim” and “nominal Muslim” (and between “islam” and

1. When Muslims say or write the name of Muhammad, they usually follow his name with the phrase *sall Allahu `alayhi wa sallam*, which means, “May God bless him and grant him peace.” This is often abbreviated as “SAW.” or “saw.”

“nominal Islam”) is neither academic nor of minor import for an individual, or society at large. Rather, it is the distinction between true and artificial faith, or as the Spanish-born Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi (1165 – 1240)—commonly hailed as Shaykh al-Akbar, or the Greatest Master—wrote, “My heart has become capable of every form; it is a pasture for gazelles and a cloister for Christian monks, and a temple for idols, and the pilgrim’s Ka’ba, and the tables of the Torah and the book of the Qur’an. I follow the religion of Love, whichever way his camels take. My religion and my faith is the true religion.” Or as the Persian Sufi poet Shabistari (1288 – 1340) explained, “The journey of the pilgrims is two steps and no more: one is the passing out of selfhood, and one towards mystical Union with the Friend.... By counting beads, repeating prayers and reading the Qur’an, the infidel does not become a muslim. The man to whom true infidelity is revealed becomes disgusted with pretended faith.”

In his essay “God Needs No Defense,” President Wahid describes how

In its original Qur’anic sense, the word *shari’a* refers to “the way,” the path to God, and not to formally codified Islamic law, which only emerged in the centuries following Muhammad’s death. In examining the issue of blasphemy and apostasy laws, it is thus vital that we differentiate between the Qur’an—from which much of the raw material for producing Islamic law is derived—and the law itself. For while its revelatory inspiration is divine, Islamic law is man-made and thus subject to human interpretation and revision.

For example, punishment for apostasy is merely the legacy of historical circumstances and political calculations stretching back to the early days of Islam, when apostasy generally coincided with desertion from the Caliph’s army and/or rejection of his authority, and thus constituted treason or rebellion. The embedding (i.e., codification) of harsh punishments for apostasy into Islamic law must be recognized as an historical and political by-product of these circumstances framed in accordance with human

calculations and expediency, rather than assuming that Islam, and *shari'a*, must forever dictate punishment for changing one's religion.

The historical development and use of the term *shari'a* to refer to Islamic law often leads those unfamiliar with this history to conflate man-made law with its revelatory inspiration, and to thereby elevate the products of human understanding—which are necessarily conditioned by space and time—to the status of Divine.

Shari'a, properly understood, expresses and embodies perennial values. Islamic law, on the other hand, is the product of *ijtihad* (interpretation) which depends on circumstances (*al-hukm yadur ma'a al-'illah wujudan wa 'adaman*) and needs to be continuously reviewed in accordance with ever-changing circumstances, to prevent Islamic law from becoming out of date, rigid and non-correlative—not only with Muslims' contemporary lives and conditions, but also with the underlying perennial values of *shari'a* itself.

Throughout Islamic history, many of the greatest *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) scholars have also been deeply grounded in the traditions of *tasawwuf*, or Islamic mysticism, and recognized the need to balance the letter with the spirit of the law.... The profoundly humanistic and spiritual nature of Sufi Islam facilitated the accommodation of different social and cultural practices as Islam spread from its birthplace in the Arabian Peninsula.... Indeed, the greatness of classical Islamic civilization—which incorporated a humane and cosmopolitan universalism—stemmed largely from the intellectual and spiritual maturity that grew from the amalgamation of Arab, Greek, Jewish, Christian and Persian influences....

Among the various factors that have contributed to the long decline of Arab and Muslim civilizations in general, and greatly hindered their participation in the development of the modern world, was the triumph of normative religious constraints, which ultimately defeated the classical tradition of Islamic humanism. Absorption of “alien” influences—

particularly in the realm of speculative thought, and the creation of individual, rational and independent sciences not constrained by religious scholasticism—was defeated by internal control mechanisms exercised by religious and governmental authorities, thus paralyzing Muslim societies.²

President Wahid refers here to the ossifying of orthodox Muslim theology, which has “narrow[ed] the bounds of acceptable discourse in the Islamic world, and prevent[ed] most Muslims from thinking ‘outside the box’ not only about religion, but about vast spheres of life, literature, science and culture in general.”

The history of Islam is characterized by recurrent periods—such as that of the great Mughal Emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, in the 16th and 17th centuries—in which rulers allowed their subjects freedom of conscience and expression, motivated by a Sufi perception of reality. Unfortunately, except for Java, the forces of reaction have always set in, to wash away such gains in the name of Islamic “purity.” For example, Shah Jahan’s son Aurangzeb imprisoned his father and murdered his elder brother—crown prince Dara Shikoh, who was a devoted Sufi—after accusing him of apostasy. Backed by fundamentalist *ulama*, Aurangzeb seized power and proceeded to implement a harsh, violent and supremacist interpretation of Islam, the repercussions of which actions continue to resonate in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to this day.³

The work of the IIQS is thus unfolding against an historical background—and within a contemporary environment—that severely constrains freedom of thought, expression, and conscience. In this context, public accusations of heresy, blasphemy and apostasy are not intended to be mere “words,” but rather, preludes to actual violence, whether state-sponsored or committed by individuals

2. Abdurrahman Wahid, “God Needs No Defense” (© LibForAll Foundation), forward to *Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide*, Paul Marshall and Nina Shea (Oxford University Press: 2011), pp. xviii - xix.

3. “India was at a crossroads in the mid-seventeenth century; it had the potential of moving forward with Dara, or of turning back to medievalism with Aurangzeb.” Abraham Early, *The Mughal Throne: The Saga of India’s Great Emperors* (London: Phoenix. 2004), p. 336.

acting on the incitement of others to defend their narrow and rigid interpretation of Islam.

It is thus essential that the IIQS secure a safe base of operations for its global effort (*cf.* Sections 6.3 and 7.5); develop a network of top Qur’anic scholars who refuse to be silenced or intimidated (*cf.* Sections 6.1 and 7.1); obtain the blessing and support of leading *ulama*, or Muslim clerics, who agree with the IIQS’s strategy and objectives (*cf.* Sections 6.2 and 7.2); and deftly utilize the media (including audio, video, telecommunications and the internet) to disseminate a theologically-sound rationale for freedom of thought and expression as widely as possible throughout the Muslim world (*cf.* Sections 6.4 and 7.6).

From this it is clear that efforts to promote freedom of thought in the Muslim world cannot be confined to purely academic or scholarly work alone. Political, theological, and popular support are essential, in order for reformist scholars to meet or act with security. This is why LibForAll/IIQS has focused on securing a safe base of operations in Indonesia, and is deliberately building a global network of top Muslim leaders in the fields of religion, education, pop culture, government, business and the mass media. By creating “interlocking fields of fire,” with committed allies in each of the above disciplines, LibForAll is systematically executing a strategy to develop, disseminate and defend “theologically- and spiritually-based freedom of conscience” narratives throughout the Muslim world. In this context, new media—such as video and the internet—have the potential to play a critical role in the reform of Muslim societies today.

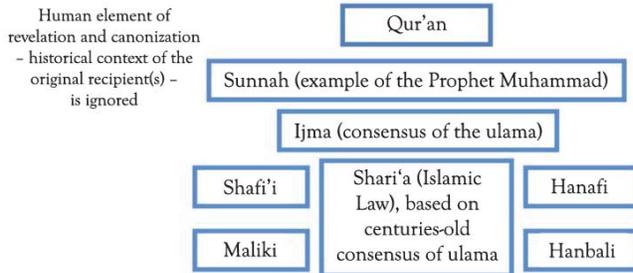
As President Wahid described in his essay, “God Needs No Defense,” fundamentalists and political opportunists have deified a human understanding of the Qur’an, the Sunnah (the example of the Prophet Muhammad) and *ijma* (consensus of the *ulama*, as reflected in the various schools of Islamic law, whose rules are often referred to as *shari’a*, and conflated with Divine Law). A nearly impregnable fortress of social convention—zealously guarded by fundamentalist *ulama*, government officials and society at large—has successfully defended this falsely divinized human understanding of the Qur’an, Sunnah and *shari’a* for well over a thousand years. Any who seek to breach the fortress walls and publicly question

this social convention are promptly accused of blasphemy, heresy and/or apostasy, and threatened with death—a penalty which has been executed often enough in the long history of Islam to inhibit most Muslims from ever questioning the conventional wisdom that surrounds their sacred texts, and Islamic law itself.

And yet, no reform of Islam is remotely possible, so long as Muslims are not free to question, and/or bypass, the institutionalized dogmas that restrict discussion of the Qur’an, Sunnah and *shari’a*, and thereby prevent Muslims from reconceptualizing, and reframing, their understanding of Islam itself.

LibForAll/IIQS’s strategy for “opening the doors of *ijtihad* (interpretation)” and reforming Islam is based on developing and widely disseminating a compelling narrative, which demonstrates that the fundamentalist interpretation of the Qur’an, Sunnah and *shari’a* is not only mistaken, but represents a perverse deviation from revelation and the true *islam*, prompted by political self-interest and narrow-minded fanaticism.

Mechanisms that Constrain Freedom of Thought and Expression in the Muslim World



Aura of divine perfection misappropriated and applied to human constructs. This false divinization of human understanding has caused the path (*shari'a*) to obscure the goal (Divine illumination), by equating submission to God with following man-made “Islamic law,” rather than emphasizing spiritual self-transcendence

SOCIETY (GOVERNMENT, RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES & MASSES) IMPOSES SANCTIONS UPON THOSE WHO QUESTION THIS FALSE DIVINIZATION

SANCTIONS RANGE FROM SOCIAL CONDEMNATION TO IMPRISONMENT & DEATH

Contemporary Muslims intimidated into silence

1.2 Where Are We Going?

“**T**he *shari‘a* we know today is the result of *ijtihad*, or centuries-old human reasoning, and thus time-bound. As a result, a huge project such as creating an Islamic system of governance [as desired by many contemporary Muslims] is extremely difficult, if not impossible, without rethinking the very basis of our ideas about *shari‘a*.

“Small, narrow minds cannot provide a solution to the problems facing Muslim societies today. We need big, broad minds to understand the fundamental message of the Qur’an as *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*—a source of love and compassion for all humanity—and how to bring this message down to earth.”

~ IIQS Co-Founder and Patron Dr. Syafii Maarif
Former Chairman, Muhammadiyah (1998 - 2005)

The purpose of the IIQS is to help restore Islam to the pristine beauty and truth of its original message, as revealed by the Qur’an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and in the lives of great spiritual masters who have, in every generation, uncovered the hidden diamond of *islam* within their divinely illumined hearts and minds... in the Qur’an and Sunnah... and each others’ writings. The International Institute of Qur’anic Studies seeks to accomplish this objective by inspiring humanity to rise from a narrow, dogmatic understanding of Islam to the “Ocean of Knowledge and Truth.”

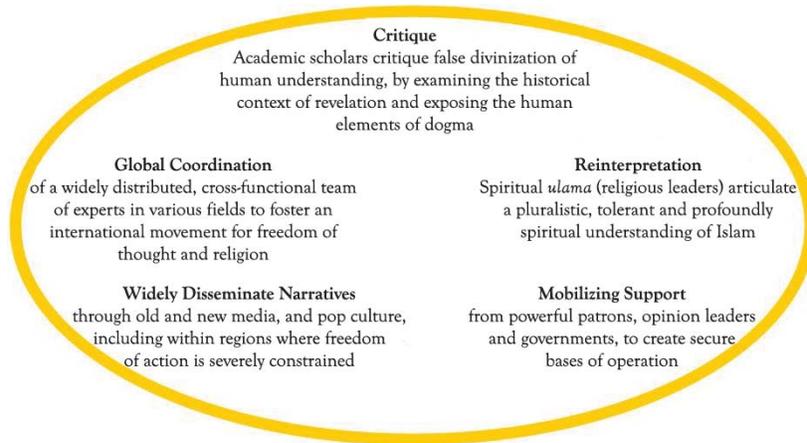
Muslim fundamentalists and extremists often voice a concern that objective study of the Qur’an and Sunnah—popularly referred to as “hermeneutics”—will shatter Muslims’ faith, and deliver them into the hands of Western atheists and secularists. The founding director of IIQS’s Academic Division, Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd (1943 - 2010), was the target of such accusations (and death threats, including from Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri), which forced him to abandon his home and career in Egypt, and move to Leiden University in the Netherlands, in 1995.

Yet as the founders of the IIQS knew, from their intimate discussions and friendship with Dr. Abu-Zayd, the words he proclaimed to *al-Ahram* (one of the oldest and most widely-circulated newspapers in the Arab world) were sincere and heart-felt: “I would like to tell the Muslim nation that I was born, raised and lived as a Muslim and, God willing, I will die as a Muslim. My worst fear is that people in Europe will consider and treat me as a critic of Islam. I’m not.... I’m critical of old and modern Islamic thought.”

Far from wishing or encouraging the loss of faith, the IIQS seeks to integrate the various dimensions of religion (*din*)—including but not limited to theology (*kalam*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), philosophy (*falsafa*) and mysticism (*tasawwuf*)—into a holistic understanding and experience of *islam*, rooted in the principles of faith (*iman*), self-transcendence (*ikhlas*) and humility (*tawadlu*). (For more detail, cf. Chapter 3, “Guiding Principles.”)

Thus equipped with a firm theological foundation, grounded in the enlightened classical traditions of Islam, the IIQS strategy is built on a comprehensive, five-fold methodology (cf. Chapter 6) designed to overcome the interlocking forces of resistance to change within the Muslim world, as illustrated by the following diagram. Specifically, this five-pronged methodology is designed to identify and mobilize the critical success factors required to precipitate a renaissance of Islamic pluralism, tolerance and critical thinking—viz., a network of dedicated reformers, powerful patrons and new media to rapidly propagate ideas—and apply these to secure freedom of thought, expression and conscience throughout the Muslim world:

Critical Success Factors



The Academic and Theology Divisions of the IIQS (*cf.* Sections 7.1 and 7.2) are designed to work in tandem, like twin engines drilling a well, to uncover the truth of this world (e.g., the history of Islamic thought and practice) and the next, by helping people attain to the spiritual stations known, in Arabic, as *haqiqa* (Reality/Truth) and *ma'rifa* (Knowledge/Gnosis).

Their purpose is not to destroy faith, but to expose and transcend falsely divinized human understanding that masquerades as ultimate Truth, and remove such artificial barriers that obstruct humanity from approaching God, and obtaining the true peace of *islam*. In other words, this methodology is designed to free religion from the prison of authoritarian dogma and return it to believers, who are the intended recipients of the Divine Message of the Qur'an.

The Academic and Theology Divisions of the IIQS will be augmented by a Public Policy Division (*cf.* Section 7.3), a Women's Division (*cf.* Section 7.4), a National Programs Division (*cf.* Section 7.5), and a Media Division (*cf.* Section 7.6), each designed to complement the others, and thereby heighten their cumulative impact upon Muslim societies worldwide.

Execution of this strategic plan will require that LibForAll/IIQS make a quantum leap, from a relatively small entrepreneurial organization dependent on a handful of key figures, to an institution capable of realizing the vision of its founders, by

developing, disseminating and ultimately bequeathing their ideas—in fully realized form—to subsequent generations.

Accomplishing this task requires assembling a team of highly skilled, experienced and motivated professionals, from a variety of disciplines, who embrace the Institute’s guiding principles and are capable of working in a spirit of harmonious cooperation to achieve its far-reaching goals.

Substantial funds will be required to execute this strategic plan, and ensure the long-term viability and success of the International Institute of Qur’anic Studies. As described in Chapter 8 (“Mobilizing Resources”), LibForAll/IIQS will seek to raise U.S. \$250 million in an initial round of fundraising. Although an educational endeavor of this magnitude will ultimately require far greater resources, this initial round will establish a solid financial base for the Institute; enable land acquisition, design and construction of essential buildings on its main campus; and provide the mid-term stability necessary for the IIQS to hire key staff and systematically build out its various program divisions, beginning with its Academic, Theology and Media Divisions, followed thereafter by the Public Policy, Women’s and National Programs Divisions.

A list of initial strategic projects is provided in Chapter 9, while Chapter 10 outlines a number of major risk factors, and corresponding mitigation strategies.

“ I do not long for a return to Muslim domination of the world, or the establishment of an Islamic state or kingdom. No. The ‘Islamic triumph’ of which I dream, is one in which Muslim intellectuals and scholars spread the true values of *islam*: the values of mutual love and respect (for all humanity). That is the form of Islamic power, the *triumph of islam*, of which I dream.”

~ LibForAll/IIQS Associate Kyai Haji Muhammad Yusuf Chudlori
Head of Asrama Pendidikan Islam (Madrasah) and

Vice Chairman, Rabithath al-Ma'ahid al-Islamiyah NU⁴
 IIQS: *Birth of a Movement*, Part 2, Scene 4, “Conclusion”⁵

1.3 Who Cares?

In drafting this strategic plan, the authors conducted extensive research of prior intellectual, political, social and religious movements, whose effectiveness—as demonstrated by their transformative impact upon society (whether for good or ill)—qualify them to serve as “operational models” for this enormous undertaking.

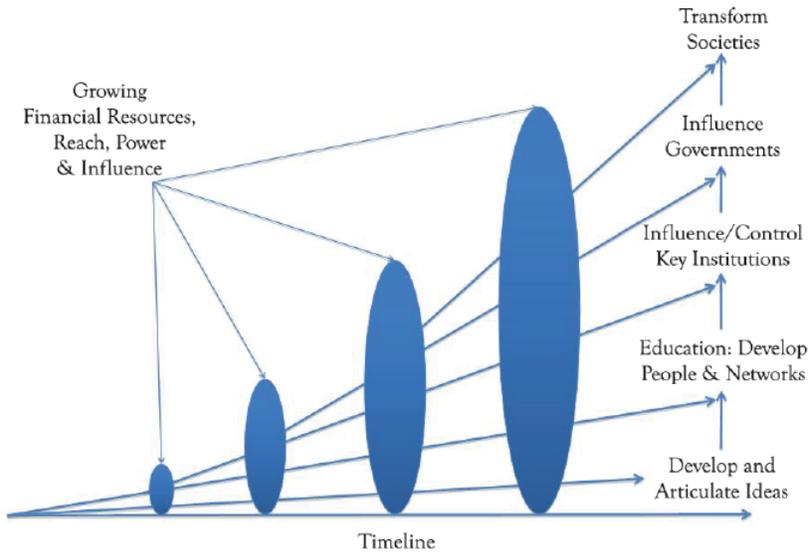
The movements studied include: the life of the Prophet Muhammad (saw.), and his mission to establish the practice of *islam* amid the barbarism of 7th century Arabia; the Reformation and Enlightenment movements in Europe, and their subsequent manifestation in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights; the progressive education movement in the United States; the complex historic, cultural, intellectual and theological processes that led the Roman Catholic Church to affirm the separation of state and religion at Vatican II; contemporary Wahhabi/Muslim Brotherhood efforts to transform Muslims’ understanding of Islam; and the 16th century Javanese movement to defeat Islamic radicalism, which established religious tolerance as the rule of law, and guaranteed freedom of conscience to all Javanese.

Based on this research, the IIQS developed a chart to illustrate the synergistic relationship between a movement’s financial resources, reach, power and influence, and its ability to transform society, including the key steps necessary to do so:

4. Rabithath al-Ma'ahid al-Islamiyah Nahdlatul Ulama coordinates the interests of approximately 14,000 NU-affiliated *pesantren* (madrasahs).

5. *IIQS: Birth of a Movement* is a 2-part, 3 1/2 hour film produced in conjunction with this book, which examines the vision, mission, historical background, methodology and organizational structure of the IIQS.

Growth Stages of a Transformative Movement



The International Institute of Qur'anic Studies represents a high risk/high reward endeavor to precipitate far-reaching intellectual, theological, social, legal, political and cultural reform within the Muslim world. If successful, the IIQS will help Muslim populations adjust to the modern world of freedom, democracy and human rights, and live in peaceful coexistence with those whose cultures and belief systems differ from their own.

The prospect of such change will undoubtedly galvanize virulent opposition from entrenched groups whose economic or political interests, and/or beliefs, are threatened by the IIQS and its agenda. This requires that we anticipate a wide range of difficulties, and develop effective mitigation strategies to address these and other systemic risks (*cf.* Chapter 10). It also requires that IIQS operations be characterized by a high degree of flexibility, to anticipate and respond to such risks, and exploit any and all opportunities that arise. As with all major endeavors, no one can anticipate the exact path that must be followed, during the course of pursuing a worthy but distant goal.

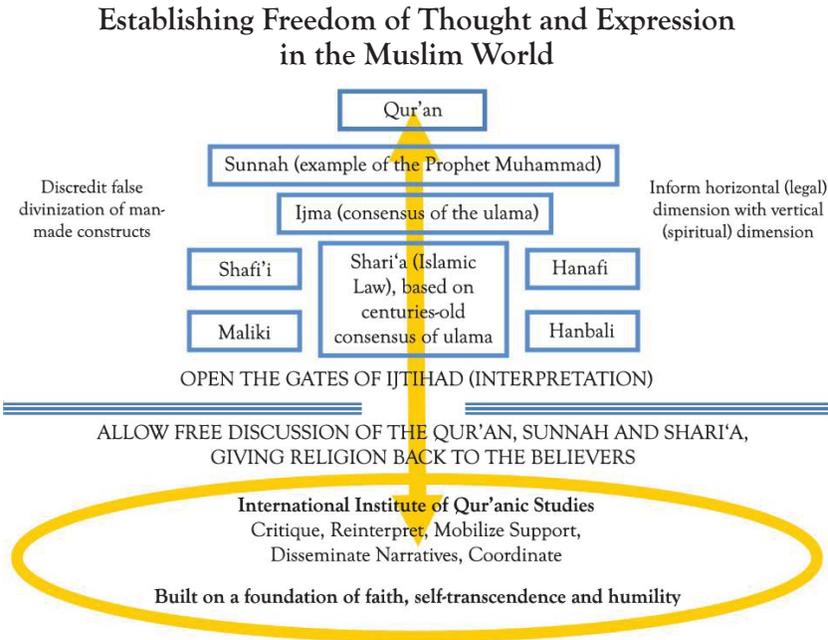
Thus, although the IIQS strategic plan identifies a number of key initial projects and broad program areas that will constitute its major focus over the near- to mid-term (5 - 10 years), its strategy

is designed to be highly flexible, and responsive to input from a variety of trusted sources (*cf.* Section 7.7.5, “Vetting”). The goal of the IIQS is not to remain wedded to a specific course of action. Rather, its leadership will strive to constantly innovate and adapt, as necessary, to produce a long-term, transformative effect within the Muslim world—viz., “a renaissance of pluralism, tolerance and critical thinking,” accompanied by a return to the pre-dogmatic original message of Islam as a true blessing for all creation—which will redound to the benefit of humanity for generations to come.

“ If we were to use the analogy of illness, the Muslim community is experiencing multiple complications, which require comprehensive treatment. We need to rush Muslims to the hospital, and place them in an Intensive Care Unit. An ordinary hospital room will not suffice. It must be an ICU, with intensive treatment. Comprehensive therapy—from the perspective of economics, mental health, (Muslims’ approach to) knowledge, and every other field—is required, because the situation is already critical.

“People can take refuge in the notion that ‘All this is happening because we’re approaching Judgment Day,’ but that’s just the talk of pessimists. But as for us... if we wish to overcome these problems, we must truly and seriously ascertain how to engage every field of human endeavor in contributing to the solution, and invite everyone who shares our worldview, and our concern, to join in this effort. For if there’s no one but us (working to resolve this massive problem), we’ll be overwhelmed and defeated by the complex array of diseases we’re facing.”

~ LibForAll/IIQS Senior Advisor Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri
Deputy Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council
IIQS: Birth of a Movement, Part 2, Scene 4, “Conclusion”



“Those whose hearts are filled with sincerity and goodwill, and who strongly embrace efforts to achieve peace, freedom and tolerance, are, in a cultural sense, members of LibForAll Foundation’s global family. To accomplish its mission, LibForAll employs a spiritual approach, to raise individual and social consciousness and thereby transform individuals and society for the better. This approach is predicated upon the fact that the innate struggle between the spiritual (higher) and animalistic (base) natures of humanity exerts a major impact upon the external world...

“Base instincts are a powerful force which always harbor a destructive potential, rendering individuals discontented and incapable of experiencing peace. Islamic scholars often compare this lust (for power, wealth, pleasure, etc.) to a wild beast. Whoever succeeds in taming his carnal nature achieves inner peace, and can employ his

vital energies to achieve far-reaching, lofty and noble goals. On the other hand, whoever is still dominated by egotism and lust is in a state of constant, restless anxiety/desire, and is a danger to himself and others....

“People who are convinced that they know more than anyone else about Islam, and yet are full of hatred towards any of God’s creatures who do not travel the same path as they; and those who claim to be in possession of the absolute truth, and for that reason entitled to act as God’s vice-regents on earth (caliphs) and to dictate how everyone else must live—clearly, their words and behavior will not lead us into the presence of God. Their dream of an Islamic state is merely an illusion, for the true islamic state is not to be found in the structure of any government, but rather, in hearts which are open to God and all His creatures.”

~ LibForAll/IIQS Co-founder Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid
The Illusion of an Islamic State (© 2009 LibForAll Foundation)

ميلاد حركة

المعهد الدولي للدراسات القرآنية

مَدَق

الخطة الإستراتيجية

لا تقدر العقول الضيقة الصغيرة على تقديم الحلول للمشكلات التي تواجهها المجتمعات الإسلامية اليوم. ولهذا فإننا في حاجة إلى عقول كبيرة تستوعب الرسالة الجوهرية الحقة للإسلام، وتحققها واقعاً على الأرض.

د. شافعي معايف، المؤسس المشارك والراعي للمعهد الدولي للدراسات القرآنية، والرئيس السابق لجماعة المحمدية (1998-2005)