

‘Ziya Meral challenges our assumptions about religious violence, drawing from a broad range of scholarship and grounding it all on a deep analysis of case studies in Nigeria and Egypt. The result is a fascinating reminder of how narratives promoted particularly in the West impact local conflicts and narrow our understanding of the relationship between religion and violence in human history.’

Reza Aslan, author of *Zealot and God: A Human History*

‘Ziya Meral has written an eye-opening study that explains how religion and violence interact in conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. It challenges the reader to think beyond common arguments that either make religion the cause of violence or brush away the role played by religion in violent conflicts. It is a must-read for anyone who seeks a deeper understanding of this complex topic.’

**Hassan Hassan, co-author of *New York Times* bestseller
*ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror***

‘A fascinating book which highlights the need for the West to recognize the critical relevance of religion in the 21st-century world. Ziya argues that religion permeates and resonates with profound significance across the world view of billions of people, shapes our understanding of an uncertain world, with alternately constructive and highly destructive narratives. We should never be surprised by the human capacity to tend towards violence. It is in our fallen human nature. But the true beauty of this book lies in the account that, through networks and the communities of the faithful, extraordinary stories of forgiveness, truth and reconciliation can be found, yielding the very foundations for re-building broken lives.’

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

‘In *How Violence Shapes Religion*, Ziya Meral turns conventional assumptions about the relationship between religion and militancy on their head. His careful and thorough case studies demonstrate that the question – indeed, the very direction – of causality between faith and violence is anything but straightforward. This is a must-read for anyone – scholars, students, policymakers – wishing to understand the complex sociology of religion and violence in the contemporary world.’

Peter Mandaville, George Mason University



How Violence Shapes Religion

Is there an inevitable global violent clash unfolding between the world's largest religions: Islam and Christianity? Do religions cause violent conflicts, or are there other factors at play? How can we make sense of increasing reports of violence between Christian and Muslim ethnic communities around the world? By seeking to answer such questions about the relationship between religion and violence in today's world, Ziya Meral challenges popular theories and offers an alternative explanation, based on insights inferred from real cases of ethno-religious violence in Africa and the Middle East. The relationship between religion and violence runs deep, and both are intrinsic to the human story. Violence leads to and shapes religion, while religion acts to enable violence as well as providing responses that contain and prevent it. However, with religious violence being one of the most serious challenges facing the modern world, Meral shows that we need to de-globalise our analysis and focus on individual conflicts, instead of attempting to provide single answers to complex questions.

Dr Ziya Meral is a senior resident fellow at the British Army's Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research, based at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He is also the director of the Centre on Religion and Global Affairs. He frequently gives television and radio interviews for British and international media outlets, and he has been cited by leading newspapers, including *The Financial Times* and *The New York Times*. He has given expert testimonies before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as lectures at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, US State Department, NATO Defence College and the European Commission. He holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge in political science, a MSc in sociology from the London School of Economics, a Masters of Divinity from the International School of Theology Asia in Manila, Philippines and a 1st Class BA from Brunel University. He has also taken short-term courses around the world, including classes on genocides and prevention in Canada and introduction to Chinese language and culture in China.

How Violence Shapes Religion

Belief and Conflict in the Middle East
and Africa

ZIYA MERAL



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To Dylan:
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