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ISLAM, DEMOCRACY & THE USA: THE AUDACITY OF A COMMON GROUND?



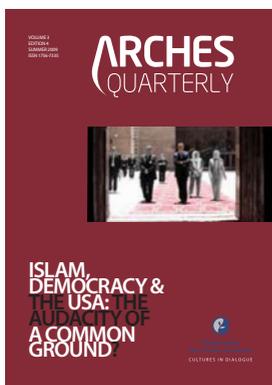
مؤسسة قرطبة

The Cordoba Foundation

CULTURES IN DIALOGUE

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FROM THE EDITOR

IN spite of it being both a perennial and a complex debate, *Arches Quarterly* re-examines from theological and practical grounds, the important debate about the relationship and compatibility between Islam and Democracy, as echoed in Barack Obama's agenda of hope and change. Whilst many celebrate Obama's ascendancy to the Oval Office as a national catharsis for the US, others remain less optimistic of a shift in ideology and approach in the international arena.

While much of the tension and distrust between the Muslim world and the USA can be attributed to the approach of promoting democracy, typically favoring dictatorships and puppet regimes that pay lip-service to democratic values and human rights, the aftershock of 9/11 has truly cemented the misgivings further through America's position on political Islam. It has created a wall of negativity as found by worldpublicopinion.org, according to which 67% of Egyptians believe that globally America is playing a "mainly negative" role.

America's response has thus been apt. By electing Obama, many around the world are pinning their hopes for developing a less belligerent, but fairer foreign policy towards the Muslim world. The test for Obama, as we discuss, is how America and her allies promote democracy. Will it be facilitating or imposing? Moreover, can it importantly be an honest broker in prolonged zones of conflicts?

Enlisting the expertise and insight of prolific scholars, academics, seasoned journalists and politicians, *Arches Quarterly* brings to light the relationship between Islam and Democracy and the role of America – as well as the changes brought about by Obama, in seeking the common ground.

Anas Altikriti, the CEO of The Cordoba Foundation provides the opening gambit to this discussion, where he reflects on the hopes and challenges that rests on Obama's

path. Following Altikriti, the former advisor to President Nixon, Dr Robert Crane offers a thorough analysis of the Islamic principle of the right to freedom. Anwar Ibrahim, former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, enriches the discussion with the practical realities of implementing democracy in Muslim dominant societies, namely, in Indonesia and Malaysia.

We also have Dr Shireen Hunter, of Georgetown University, USA, who explores Muslim countries lagging in democratisation and modernisation. This is complemented by terrorism writer, Dr Nafeez Ahmed's explanation of the crisis of post-modernity and the demise of democracy.

Dr Daud Abdullah (Director of Middle East Media Monitor), Alan Hart (former ITN and BBC Panorama correspondent; author of *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*) and Asem Sondas (Editor of Egypt's *Sawt Al Omma* weekly) concentrate on Obama and his role vis-à-vis democracy-promotion in the Muslim world, as well as US relations with Israel and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maldives, Ahmed Shaheed speculates on the future of Islam and Democracy; Cllr. Gerry Maclochlainn - a Sinn Féin member who endured four years in prison for Irish Republican activities and a campaigner for the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6, reflects on his recent trip to Gaza where he witnessed the impact of the brutality and injustice meted out against Palestinians; Dr Marie Breen-Smyth, Director of the Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Contemporary Political Violence discusses the challenges of critically researching political terror; Dr Khalid al-Mubarak, writer and playwright, discusses prospects of peace in Darfur; and finally journalist and human rights activist Ashur Shamis looks critically at the democratisation and politicisation of Muslims today.

We hope all this makes for a comprehensive reading and a source for reflection on issues that affect us all in a new dawn of hope.

Thank you.

Abdullah Faliq
MANAGING EDITOR



FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

WITH the advent of 2009, two opposite emotions were engulfing the world. The feeling of dread and utter despair inflicted on Gaza by Israel recently resulted in a human tragedy, accompanied a sense of hope previously absent for many years before with the arrival of US President Barack Obama. The former cemented the feeling of being still trapped in the cycle of violence and despair that had been brought by six decades of suffering in the Middle East, while the latter brought the promise of change not only in policy but also approach, methodology and mindset in Washington DC - offering the rare chance of new beginnings.

At the time of Arches Quarterly going to print, the sense of optimism and euphoria seems to have faded as despair still looms large in Palestine and the entire region. Certain pledges made during election campaigns had been shelved, while the delivery of other promises, were yet to transpire. However, we all live in hope that change is in the making.

Among the many difficult dossiers Obama has been handed down from his predecessor is the place of the United States in the world, and specifically its relationship with the Muslim World. Obama's Cairo address was important because of his acknowledgment of the priority of this issue, and those who were expecting a heavy and dense policy-laden rhetoric may have been hoping for far too much, far too soon.

However, with significant troubles still persistent throughout the region and the Muslim world as a whole, the President might not have as lengthy a honeymoon period as he was wishing for. While the US negotiates how firmly or otherwise it wishes to handle Israel and its plans for further expansion into Palestinian lands, the topic of discussion is presently the role of Islamic figures and parties within the democratic process and specifically their role, or lack thereof, in

elections throughout the region.

With Lebanon and Iran having already negotiated their own, the latter still under the spotlight and far from a settled matter, Palestine, Iraq and a flurry of other Arab and Muslim countries are approaching theirs in the coming months. It is possible that dramatic change and transformation in the shape of political realities will take place, but it remains that the question pertaining to the role, effect and potential of Islamic elements carrying a distinct Islamic ideology and approach in these elections, is the most pressing.

It is ironic however, that not so long ago the criticism levelled at these elements was that they rejected the idea of democracy and political plurality, yet now that mainstream Islamic parties have overcome those intellectual and ideological challenges, their very presence and participation has become problematic. One needn't go beyond the example of the outcome of the Palestinian elections in 2006 and the international reaction thereto, to realise the significance of this question.

Yet, with a clear and distinct political Islamic thought and approach to the democratic process in a plural and multi-dimensional world, which can be seen as largely pragmatic and realist, one remains hopeful that a common ground can be found in a world where a single super-power that dominates and exerts influence, is largely diminishing.

This issue of Arches poses the question of whether the courage, resilience and determination to pursue a common ground amongst the main protagonists of this question, are present. The world witnessed and continues to witness the tragic outcomes of the main parties to a conflict giving up on dialogue and on hope. We can ill afford to repeat the tragedies of the past, particularly when the world had the 'audacity' to have begun this year with so much hope, enthusiasm and optimism. To waste such an opportunity would be a tragic advent in itself.

Anas Altikriti
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Islamic Social Principle of the Right to Freedom (*Haqq al-Hurriyah*): An Analytical Approach

*DR ROBERT D. CRANE

THE first four of the most basic purposes of the *maqasid al shari'a* (ultimate objectives of Shari'a) address the human relationship with God. These four are awareness of God and of the transcendent nature of the human person, the human community, and the natural environment. These are the source of transcendent justice.

The next four basic purposes address the human responsibilities to translate this awareness into institutions, programs, and policies that facilitate the political, economic, gender, and intellectual components of social justice.

The first of the four is the responsibility to promote political self-determination of persons and communities. This *maqsud* is known as *haqq al hurriyah* or more popularly as political freedom.

The three major *hajjiyat* or secondary goals within this higher purpose are *khilafa*, *shura*, and *ijma* (consensus). The latter two call for institutions and policies to actualize and implement the first one. An additional *hajja*, which is merely assumed, is an independent judiciary to serve as a check on the first three.

The most universal issue raised by *khilafa* is whether global governance should be based on "might makes right" or "right makes might."

Each *hajja* of the three in *haqq al hurriyah* addresses universal issues or principles, as well as some of concern primarily only to Muslims.

The most universal issue raised by *khilafa* is whether global governance should be based on "might makes right" or "right makes might." The primary issue raised by *shura* is

whether the "state should take precedence over the "nation." The central issue of *ijma* is whether the transcendent values in a nation's culture are more important in the success of constitutional governance than those explicitly stated without reference to religion.

KHILAFAT

The concept of *khilafa* is perhaps the most contentious issue in Muslim history, because it means that both the leaders of a community and the followers are both equally responsible directly to God. The root *khilafa* means either to follow after, to substitute for, or to represent as a deputy. In Islamic thought every human being is a *khilifa* who carries the *amana* or trust to be a steward of creation as part of one's worship of our loving Creator. This means politically that the highest responsibility both of those who govern and those who are governed is directly to God.

These three *hajjiyat* in combination are designed to produce not freedom in the sense of self-worship or lack of values, but self-determination in the sense of freedom for persons and communities to become what they were created to be, which is the purpose of all the *maqasid al shari'a*.

This means not only that persons and communities should govern themselves but that people have a responsibility to cooperate in creating, maintaining, and operating institutions most appropriate in their own culture to assure that they are governed by people who are governed by God.

This dual responsibility introduces an inherent tension between freedom for persons to govern themselves as individuals and their responsibility to respect those who through such institutions have the right and duty to govern them. The art of maintaining a balance between these two responsibilities constitutes the art of governance by maintaining a balance between *shura*, which is the respon-

sibility of the government to respect the responsibilities and rights of the governed, and *ijma*, which is the duty of the governed to reach a civil consensus on their values and corresponding needs in order to guide the government in fulfilling its responsibilities to those it governs.

Unfortunately, in every society there is a tendency for self-proclaimed leaders to act as if they were substitutes for God. And there is a corresponding tendency for their followers to worship them even to the extent of denying all human responsibilities and human rights both for themselves and for others.

The simplest threat to political justice is dictatorship by a dictatorial oligarchy that seeks simple power without regard to what anybody thinks about them. The most complex threat, which is largely a product of the modern age, is the phenomenon of totalitarianism, which by definition requires mass thought control in order to eliminate even the possibility of opposition.

These two threats have posed the major political challenge both in theory and practice throughout much of Muslim history. The major issue has always been and still is today, first, how to understand the institution of the caliphate and, second, how to maintain it.

The two most quoted *ahadith* in this regard are the Prophet Muhammad's statement that Muslims should refer matters of dispute to him as the leader, and his statement, "Whoever accepts a tyrant is guilty of tyranny."

The most articulate and assiduous of the scholars on the meaning of the Islamic caliphate was Ibn Taymiya, who lived at the time of the Mongol invasion. Some Muslims, notably the Hanbalis, claim to honor Ibn Taymiya as their mentor, but they distort his most essential teachings. For example, many Muslims condemn Sufism as inherently un-Islamic, but they seem to be unaware that Ibn Taymiya was a Sufi who condemned the Sufi extremism that was spreading as a populist movement in his day. He also was an ardent supporter of the *khilafa* but not as an institution of military or even political governance.

Salafi extremists, among whom Osama bin Laden is the most famous, claim that Ibn

Taymiya supports their call for a one-world government under a single Caliph. In fact, Ibn Taymiya developed a sophisticated understanding about the Islamic doctrine of the *khilafat* that demolishes the extremists of his day and of ours. Ibn Taymiya was a political theorist who was imprisoned by the reigning Caliph and died in prison ten years later for opposing the extremism both of tyrants and of their opponents. He was in fact a model of those who both understand the sources of extremism and the means to counter it. His mission was to deconstruct extremist teachings doctrinally in order to marginalize their adherents.

One of his modern students, Naveed Shaykh, in his book *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy in a World of States*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2002, writes rather poetically that extremism comes when pan-Islamists "operationalize a unity of belief in a human community of monist monolithism rather than in a boundless love for all of God's creation in a transcendent Islamic cosmopolis." Extremism comes when people substitute a political institution for themselves as the highest instrument and agent of God in the world, when they call for a return of the Caliphate in its imperial form embodied in the Ottoman dispensation. It comes when they call for what Shah Wali Allah of India in the 18th century called the *khilafat zabira* or external and exoteric caliphate in place of the *khilafat batina* or esoteric caliphate formed by the spiritual heirs of the prophets, who are the sages, saints, and righteous scholars.

In the late Abbasid period of classical Islam, according to Naveed Sheikh, "The political scientists of the day delegitimized both institutional exclusivism and, critically, centralization of political power by disallowing the theophanic descent of celestial sovereignty into any human institution." In other words, they denied the ultimate sovereignty claimed by modern states since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which elevated states to the ultimate level of sovereignty, in place of the divine, thereby relegating religion to the periphery of public life or excluding it and with it morality altogether.

The late Abbasid scholars, faced with a

gradual process of creeping despotism, denied the divine right not only of kings but of every human institution, and they condemned the worship of power and privilege that had brought corruption upon the earth. For insisting on this foundation principle of Islam, as detailed by Khalid Abou el-Fadl in Chapter 59, “The Scholar’s Road,” of his *Confession of the Books: The Search for Beauty in Islam*, University Press of America, Lanham, Md., 2001, the greatest scholars throughout Muslim history were imprisoned, some for years and decades. This is precisely why Muslims traditionally have considered them to be great.

Ibn Taymiya completed the process of deconstructing the ontological fatalism of caliphatic thought by restricting the role of the caliphate to what perhaps the greatest Islamic thinker of all time, Abu Hamid al Ghazali, had called an *ummatic* umbrella functioning only to protect the functional integrity of Islamic thought rather than to govern politically. Ibn Taymiya asserted that the unity of the Muslim community depended not on any symbolism represented by the Caliph, much less on any caliphal political authority, but on “confessional solidarity of each autonomous entity within an Islamic whole.” In other words, the Muslim *umma* or global community is a body of purpose based on worship of God. By contending that the monopoly of coercion that resides in political governance is not philosophically constituted, Ibn Taymiya rendered political unification and the caliphate redundant.

The principal proponents of the esoteric caliphate, the *khilafat batina*, have been the Shi’a scholars, because they were the most oppressed of the oppressed under the most un-Islamic of the Muslim emperors. This may explain why they have always emphasized that purpose takes priority over practice, meaning that the legitimacy of practice must be determined by higher purpose.

The first of the six greatest Islamic jurisprudents universally recognized by Muslims, was Imam Jafar al Sadiq (d. 148 A.H.), who also happened to be the sixth of the Shi’a imams, as discussed above in Part One, Section IV. Building on his nomocentric conception of Islamic law, his followers developed the con-

cept of justice as part of a distinctive Shi’i creed, which was known as the *‘usul al din* or “roots of the faith.” Its five articles of faith are *tawheed*, *‘adl*, *nubuwwat*, *imamat*, and *ma’ad*. In these *‘usul al din*, justice or *‘adl*, known also as *‘adala*, is a basic paradigm of thought and action, preceded only by *tawheed*, which is recognition of the existence of God and of the universe as a coherent manifestation of God’s Being. Justice comes even before recognition of prophethood, the third governing principle, which teaches that divine love, mercy, and justice are manifested through human exemplars. Within the science of justice or *‘ilm al ‘adl*, a set of human rights developed which were known as the *maqasid al shari’a* or universal and essential purposes of Islamic jurisprudence.

The Shi’a have no formal doctrine of the Caliphate

Both the *‘usul al din* and the *maqasid al shari’a* were first systematized by Shaykh Muhammad ibn al Babawaih, known as Shaykh Saduq, who died in 381 A.H. According to Nasir Shamsi, who is one of the leading Shi’i scholars in America and twenty years ago translated Shaykh Saduq’s most important work, *I‘raqadia*, the Shaykh’s 300 books consolidated the doctrine of uninterrupted *ijtihad* or intellectual creativity, which never died out in the Jafari school of law even though it was occasionally politically eclipsed, just as it was everywhere else.

The Shi’a have no formal doctrine of the Caliphate because they consider that the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad inherited his leadership, at least in transcendent or spiritual matters. The issue of the Caliphate arises when an occasional ayatollah, like Imam Khomeini, claims the spiritual right to rule politically on the basis of his doctrine of *wilayat al faqih*, which in turn is an anomalous politicalization of an ancient concept that referred mystically to the *walaya* of the *insan al kamil* or “Perfect Man.”

The orthodox Shi’i concept of ultimate authority requires reliance on human reason, not in the sense of *qiyas* or analogy, which

is considered to be unnecessary, but on the induction of principles from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, especially those from Imam Ali, and their use in deducing guidance on specific issues. This process requires two tiers of scholarly interpretation. The first tier is known as the *ikhtilaf* generation of scholars who laid out the range of acceptable diversity of opinion. The second tier consists of the later jurists who summarize and restate the earlier scholarship with explanatory notes, somewhat like the Talmud and Midrash as successive levels of understanding the Torah.

The key to this process is how to “reveal the opinion of the Imam,” whether living as in earlier times or later “in occultation (*ghaybah*).” The task is to reach a constructed consensus (*ijma' murakab*) on possible answers to a legal problem, beyond which further answers are considered to be out of the ball park. The opinion of the Imam by definition supports this range of answers. If further scholarship and *ijtihad* or scholarly endeavor produce a consensus on one of these answers, this then reveals the opinion of the Imam.

In practice, this has been another means to assure that the Shi'i scholars of Islam will remain independent of the political rulers and can serve as a check on any abuse of authority, just as the scholars throughout the history of Sunni Islam have done, even though almost all of the great Sunni scholars throughout history have been imprisoned for attempting to carry out this responsibility.

SHURA

The second of the three *hajjiyat* in the *maqsud* of *haqq al hurriya* in the *maqasid al shari'a*, other than the independence of the scholars and of the judiciary, is known as *shura* or consensus.

The major issue in the doctrine of *shura* is whether this calls for direct democracy, in which the voters tell the rulers what to do, or representative democracy, in which the rulers take the concerns of the voters under advisement but are not bound blindly to represent them. This second or indirect form of democracy is practiced in what is known in Western thought as a republic. Those who support a republic, in fact, are the most ardent enemies of even the word “democracy.”

The task of the Islamic jurist is to address whether and how a balance of both approaches is possible.

Developing a balance is the task of a constitution. The first constitution in human history is said to be the Constitution of Madina, known as the *Sabifat al Madina* or the *Mithaq al Madina*. Many Muslims refer to this Islamic constitution as combining both the *Qur'an* as the Word of God and the Constitution of Madina as the Prophet Muhammad's understanding and practice of it.

When the various tribes living in Madina invited the Prophet Muhammad to become their leader as a means to overcome their inter-tribal rivalries and bring peace, prosperity, and freedom, there was no such thing as a state in the modern sense. In fact, such a modern concept was not invented until more than a thousand years later, even though there were empires, like the Persian, Chinese, and Incas, based on the modern concept of might makes right. In the Covenant of Madina the various autonomous tribes were incorporated in a single confederation with common rights and responsibilities. The Prophet called this confederation an *umma* or single community composed of different ethnic and religious *ummas* as sub-groups.

The wording included the following key provisions:

“In the name of God, the Most Compassionate in Being, and the Most Merciful in Action, this is a document drawn up by Muhammad, the Prophet, peace be upon him, for the believers and the Muslims from Quraysh and Yathrib, and whoever joins them and takes part in their struggle for their cause. They are one nation, distinguished from all other people. ...

“Believers are one another's ally against all others. Anyone from the Jews who joins us shall have our support and share equal rights with us, and shall suffer no oppression nor fear an alliance against them. ... The Jews shall bear their expenses and the Muslims shall bear theirs in wartime. They are required to render support against anyone who fights any party to this agreement. ...

“On whatever you may differ, the final verdict rests with God and with Muhammad, peace be upon him.”

There was also a common law based on the practice of the Prophet Muhammad and the traditional laws of each religious group. The Islamic shari'a as a body of law and jurisprudence, like all the other Islamic disciplines, developed over the course of the centuries. At the time of the Madina Covenant there was no state machinery to enforce the law, no police and no regular military, and not even an established judicial system. All social life was voluntary.

This changed when the Prophet died and especially when peoples in distant places embraced Islam, which led to the growth of power centers that eventually evolved into independent empires based on principles that were un-Islamic from the perspective of the original community of the Madina Covenant.

The perversions of basic Islamic principles modeled on this Covenant eventually reached the extent that some 20th-century Muslims invented the oxymoron of the "Islamic State" based on the principle that a rigid and narrow concept of the shari'a must be imposed even on non-Muslims. This went beyond even extremists of other religions who wanted to impose a "Jewish state" or a "Christian state" or a "Hindu state" on Muslims.

The spread of Islam fortunately brought the original concept of confederation to America almost 700 years ago, as explained in my lengthy article on the subject, entitled "Reviving the Classical Wisdom of Islam in the Cherokee Tradition, published in www.theamericanmuslim.org on October 3, 2004.

According to the Cherokee traditionalists in my own family, specifically in the Ani Waya clan, which the U.S. federal government officially outlawed in 1905, the Cherokee religion came in the form of a book that was brought in a great fleet of ships out of the east when the Cherokees lived on an island where it was never cold. After three generations, the bad people from the south killed almost everyone on all the islands and destroyed the book. The remainder of the Cherokees immigrated west to the Great Land.

Their mass migration from a tropical is-

land in the Caribbean to the Yucatan Peninsula in the late 1300s was verified by the leading Meso-American archeologist, T. B. Irving (Al Hajji Ta'alim Ali). He was the only person who had recorded the relevant inscriptions.

After some more generations the bad people attacked again. This time the Cherokees all migrated north and eastwards to find the lost book, because they knew that it came out of the east. This is the origin story according to the Ani Waya clan, which has now been corroborated by documents in Timbuktu.

In hidden libraries that have been found in Timbuktu on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in Mali, scholars have now found thorough documentation of a great expedition of *da'wa* that the Emir of Mali, Abu Bakr, sent across the Atlantic in 1310 A.C. after he met Chinese Muslims in the hajj. Scholars do not seem to be clear on whether he was hoping to bring Islam to China or to America, because there is evidence that at least two earlier Muslim expeditions had visited America, one in 1100 going westward from Africa and the other in 1178 eastward from China. When the first expedition did not return, Emir Abu Bakr sent a second expedition two years later in 1312, reportedly including Mandinga members from what is now Liberia. The detailed manifests of each of the Emir's ships are now of historical record.

The remarkable similarities between the Abrahamic religions and the traditional Cherokee religion precede and preclude any possibility of adoption from European influences. The Cherokee origin stories include Adam and Eve, the flood, the Tower of Babel, Abraham, the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses, the wandering in the wilderness, and the ark. The traditionalist Cherokees started every prayer with Ya Allah and prayed five times a day and fasted during Ramadhan. They even had recreated the hajj, but the details have always been kept highly secret from people who do not speak Cherokee as their native language. Professional anthropologists who write books on the Cherokee religion provoke hilarious laughter among the traditionalists.

The significance of this indigenous background of Islam in America is the fact that

the Cherokees are the only Native American nation with a history of a written language and that they brought with them from the Yucatan to what is now Georgia and the Carolinas a sophisticated political system that included government by confederation of autonomous groups, as well as an advanced system of law that prompted them to send their most able scholars to study law in England as soon as they encountered the Europeans in the early 1700s.

The Cherokee were so advanced, with towns numbering in the thousands and two-story brick buildings, that by the year 1500 they had established a vast trading empire and were adopted by the Iroquois in what is now New York state as a new tribe by the name of Tuscarora, which formed the basis of a new Iroquois confederation. This is significant because the transmission of the principles of the Madina Covenant were transmitted through the Cherokee and Iroquois as the founding principles of the Great American Experiment in the holistic symbiosis of order, justice, and liberty.

Jefferson said that he borrowed the American system of government from the Iroquois confederation. He was familiar with the Iroquois and maintained contact with the leaders of a great religious revival among the Iroquois from about 1800 to 1810. He spent some time with their greatest religious leader, known as Handsome Lake of the Seneca, and not only corresponded with him but invited him twice to the White House. The details are in *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* by Anthony F C Wallace, Vintage, 1972, 395 pages.

The origin of this religious rebirth, like that of the coeval rebirth among the Cherokee further south, lay in their response to the destruction of the native way of life by the white settlers, especially by the introduction of alcohol and gambling, and by the destruction of the nuclear family and of moral community. It was also a reaction against the missionary efforts of the Christians who wanted the Iroquois to assimilate into Western society and disappear. Handsome Lake was convinced that his people could not adopt Christianity without adopting everything bad about Western society along with

it. This origin of the Seneca rebirth was not known to Wallace, but he recounts in detail the revival of this religion and Jefferson's admiration of it.

The traditionalist Cherokee political system was based on governance from the bottom up, rather than from the top down as was common in Europe. This was expressed in the concept of multi-layered sovereignty known today as confederalism or the sovereignty of nations within a regional grouping or "state." The ultimate sovereign was Allah and he governed through the individual members of the Cherokee nation, each of whom carried the *amana* to be a representative of the divine on earth. The nation was composed of autonomous bands or clans, such as the Ani Waya. The members of each band chose their leaders through a system of indirect election of at least four communities. One community represented the warriors, one the religious leaders, and one the merchants. The fourth, as I remember it, was the judicial community. These four elected leaders in turn elected the head of the band, and the heads of the bands elected the leader of the nation. In the Iroquois confederation, the nations were joined in a single umma or community of nations.

The Iroquois adopted the best of the Cherokee religion, and this is what most impressed Jefferson in later years. The religion as revived by Handsome Lake opposed both cultural assimilation, which is suicide, and cultural nativism, which is the continuation of a culture based on worship of one's own ethnic group rather than on the enlightened understanding of divine revelation and natural law. According to Wallace's book, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, Handsome Lake's primary message consisted of four basic principles:

- 1) All people came from the same source, a transcendent God, and thus are equal in dignity.
- 2) All religions are legitimate paths to God. Therefore one should not blame the Christians for not accepting the divine revelation that he was reviving. They should follow their religion until they understand that the religion that he was reviving teaches a truer knowl-

- edge of God.
- 3) Violence results from ignorance of true religion. Therefore knowledge is the most powerful weapon against war, and war is almost never the best solution to conflict.
 - 4) More important than knowledge is love of the transcendent God, because love is the path to knowledge.

Much research remains to be done to connect Jefferson's then unique concept of federalism with Islamic concepts of religious and political pluralism. The efforts of both the Cherokees and Iroquois to conduct interfaith meetings with the Europeans as equals impressed the Christian missionaries, since such religious pluralism and interfaith outreach without any effort to convert others was almost unknown in the Christian world.

Jefferson tried to keep his personal relationship with God secret and largely succeeded, though recent research in his twenty volumes of hitherto secret personal correspondence should shed much light on this, including the influence of Islam.

Power of interfaith cooperation pervades all public life.

Perhaps his major message was the same as that taught by the Cherokee and Iroquois. No people, Jefferson said in his various writings, can remain free unless they are educated; education consists above all in knowledge of virtue; and no people can remain virtuous except within a religious framework, whether it be Christian or of some other faith tradition, and unless this framework of respect for the divine legitimacy of cultural and religious pluralism and for the power of interfaith cooperation pervades all public life.

This is the profound wisdom of the Great American Experiment, but we have just begun to explore its ancient roots.

IJMA

The third leg of the triad, other than *kh-ilafa* and *shura*, critical to the *maqsud of haqq*

al hurriyah is *ijma*. This is the responsibility of the individuals in society to portray a consensus on the values that they want their elected representatives to understand and apply.

Much is made of the statement by Thomas Jefferson in a letter advocating "separation of Church and State." Secular revisionists like to interpret this as a denial of any transcendent values in public life and especially of their source in divine revelation and natural law as the basis for any consensus in public life. American traditionalists give an opposite interpretation by emphasizing the background of this letter in Jefferson's insistence that freedom of religion requires freedom from state-sponsored religious dogmas, as well as freedom for the transcendent values that can emerge from the exploration of a natural law tradition that traces back to pre-Renaissance Europe.

The most acclaimed modern Islamist in Europe, Tariq Ramadan, perhaps without knowing it, is one of the most articulate representatives of classical American traditionalism. He was a student of his father, Sa'id Ramadan, who married the daughter of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hassan al Banna, and for many years was the imam of Geneva's central mosque in Switzerland. In his talk on April 10, 2007, at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs Tariq Ramadan addressed the issue of transcendent law and its derivative implications for political freedom. Unfortunately, he had to address his audience by video, because three years earlier the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under the new Patriot Act had branded him a "terrorist." "The issue," he said, "is not the relationship between church and state but the relationship between dogma and rationality."

He explained that this is just as much an issue among Muslims as among any Christians and Jews in America. He elaborated five principles that are basic to Islam and to democracy, namely, the rule of law, equal rights for all citizens, universal sufferage, accountability of government, and separation of powers. These may serve as the *tahsiniyyat* or programmatic principles and implementing

institutions of both *shura* and *ijma*, which are two of the *hajjiyat* of the *maqsud* known as *haqq al hurriya*.

America is a classic example of a nation founded on a consensus that truth and justice derive from a higher source than human dictate and that political justice includes all the specific requirements or *hajjiyat* that Professor Ramadhan enumerated. This acknowledgement in the American consensus, in fact, is why the Great American Experiment in self-governance succeeded reasonably well in translating the specifics of political justice eventually into practice.

Part of this acknowledgement is awareness that the principles and praxis of just governance are still threatened and always will be, regardless of any constitutional formulations. Acknowledgement of this vulnerability is the surest protection against pressures to sacrifice them, whether by the demos or people against the tyrant or by the tyrant against the demos or mob. George Washington wisely warned that he was bequeathing to future generations not a democracy but “a republic, if you can keep it.”

The central issue in the role of *ijma* or consensus as part of the three requirements of *haqq al hurriyah* or political freedom is whether it is sufficient to arrive at consensus formally in a political process or whether this consensus must already precede the formal process as part of the cultural background that produced the governing political system and its embodiment in a formal constitution.

If consensus is the product of majority vote, not as a technique of government but as an ultimate source of truth, then the result is “democracy,” which can become the worst form of government. If consensus on the nature of political freedom and of human responsibilities and human rights is the product of faith-based understanding, dialogue, and cooperation, and is rooted in the culture, then this is a “republic” and can be the best form of government.

All the founders of the Great American Experiment in self-government understood the distinction between the two. Over time, however, this bed-rock principle of American constitutional governance was overlooked in

the rush to spread “freedom and democracy” and “democratic capitalism” as America’s gift to the world, for whatever reason, and even at the point of a gun.

The issue is whether the transcendent values that define enlightened global governance (*khilafa*) and recognize the fundamental rights of the nation above those of the state (*shura*) should also be the primary determinants of a nation’s governing values and therefore of its unwritten consensus (*ijma*).

From the perspective of grand strategy, the issue is one of paradigm management. As explained in my 83-page position paper, *The Grand Strategy of Justice*, Islamic Institute for Strategic Studies, April 2000, the recent emergence of Islam as the most powerful alternative to American global hegemony has crystallized strategic thought into a choice between conflict management and conflict resolution. The first paradigm calls for the pursuit of stability through creative destruction based on military, economic, and political power. The second calls for the resolution and sublimation of conflict based on the vision of peace, prosperity, and freedom through justice rooted in an ecumenical and transcendent consensus on human purpose.

Both of these two paradigms are present in every civilization and among the followers of every religion. The challenge is to rehabilitate the role of religion in rejecting the first paradigm and encouraging the second as a key to developing civilizational renewal through a new global paradigm and praxis.

As newcomers to the art of paradigm management, Muslims can appreciate the contributions of Islamic wisdom or *hikma* to civilizational renewal by first studying the philosophical origins of traditional American thought, much of which came both directly and indirectly from the mutual civilizational enrichment among Muslims, Christians, and Jews during the flowering of ecumenical culture in Andalus almost a millennium ago.

The traditionalist origins of the American civilization can be traced back to the Scottish Renaissance and beyond this to the concepts of natural law developed by Roman Catholic scholars in conjunction with their Muslim peers. The conclusion of American traditionalists, which is shared by their coun-

terparts among Muslims, is that no written constitution can ever mean more than the unwritten constitution or underlying culture that produced it.

Similarly, the institutions, programs, and policies that flow naturally from a higher consensus among a community's members can not last long if the consensus itself falters or fails. The institutional superstructure may then be perverted or replaced to deny the original purpose of human community. This is why the transcendent and universal purposes of normative law must be respected as the source of the social purposes and these as the product of their higher purpose.

An entire library of great books on American traditionalism has appeared during the past half century, among which the most comprehensive are Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, Henry Regnery Company, 1953, 556 pages, and *The Roots of American Order*, 1974, 3rd ed, 1991, Regnery Gateway, 540 pages. Both of these carry forth Edmund Burke's revival of the Scottish Renaissance during the mid-1700s as leader of the minority party in the English Parliament, which was the exact opposite of the secular fundamentalist European Renaissance against which it served as a corrective.

The term "conservative" in this traditionalist library equates with what was understood as liberal two hundred years ago because it focuses on the transcendent nature of human responsibilities and rights. The term "order" is synonymous with that in classical Islam. "Order" as used in the American traditionalist lexicon, according to Kirk, means "a systematic and harmonious arrangement – whether in one's own character or in the commonwealth. Also 'order' signifies the performance of certain duties and the enjoyment of certain rights in a community." He distinguishes two kinds of roots: "We can distinguish two sorts of roots, intertwined: the roots of the moral order, of order in the soul; and the roots of the social order, of order in the republic. Old and intricate, these roots give life to us all."

In my book, *Metalaw: An Islamic Policy Paradigm*, Islamic Institute for Strategic Studies, May, 2000, the *maqasid al shari'a* are explained in some detail, and "metalaw" is

defined on page 49 as another term for the *maqasid*: "The future of humankind in the coming century may well depend on whether or not the extreme fundamentalists will retreat to the fringes in the face of a rising groundswell of awareness that immanence and transcendence, perhaps paradoxically, are two sides of the same coin, which we may call metalaw. ... The challenge is how to project this holistic and necessarily ecumenical vision through the traditionalist or classical wisdom that produces and sustains it. The immediate issue of meta-law is whether the traditionalist movement of classical America, which gave rise to the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution, can work together with the resurgent forces of classical Islam to renew civilization in a time of worldwide cultural decline."

Kirk writes in *Roots*: "It is not possible to live in peace with one another unless we recognise some principle of order by which to do justice. ... The higher kind of order, sheltering freedom and justice, declares the dignity of man. It affirms what G. K. Chesterton called 'the democracy of the dead' – that is it recognizes the judgments of men and women who have preceded us in time."

The basic paradigm of traditionalist thought both in classical America and classical Islam is that order, justice, and freedom are interdependent. When freedom is construed to be independent of justice, there can be no justice and the result will be anarchy. When order is thought to be possible without justice, there can be no order, because injustice is the principal cause of disorder. When justice is thought to be possible without order and freedom then the pursuit of order, justice, and freedom are snares of the ignorant.

The path of transformation begins in the individual soul. In Surah al Ra'd 13:11, the *Qur'an* reveals, "Verily, Allah does not change a people's condition until they change what is in their inner selves," *Ina Allaha la yughairu ma bi qaumin bata yughairuu ma bi anfusihim*. In other words, reliance alone on political and social panaceas of structural change in political, social, and economic institutions are ideological delusions. On the other hand, equally utopian is personal transformation

without community solidarity in the work of social justice, which consists not in charity but in perfecting defective institutions in order to broaden individual ownership of productive wealth and thereby secure responsive

Changes promote order only if they promote justice. Justice can have no meaning except as an expression of the law of God.

and responsible government. The founders of the Great American Experiment did not always practice what they preached, but they entrusted the destiny of the American people to proper education in this profound wisdom.

The consensus that gave rise to America is its revolutionary ethos, similar to that in Madina at the time of the world's first constitutional republic. The appearance of order can be obtained by superficially trying to maintain the status quo. But, the substance and reality of order can be achieved only by a strategy of dealing with the inevitable changes that occur in persons and societies. Changes promote order only if they promote justice. Justice can have no meaning except as an expression of the law of God, because secular and subjective concepts of justice always end up in the denial of dignity and freedom.

The balance worked out in the American system of government between order and liberty required many centuries of preparation, and it has survived despite two centuries of challenges from extremists. Totalitarian democrats have favored centralized government to serve the majoritarian mob. Libertarian anarchists have sought in practice to fight all government as an enemy of the individual.

These extremists have failed because the American system of government was created by the consensus and practice of the American colonists long before the adoption of the American constitution of 1789, and because the mores or customs of Americans, rather than the ideologies of utopian theo-

rists, have controlled the political process. Edmund Burke represented the American consensus and was much more influential than the contract theorists, like John Locke. Locke posited the source of moral authority in human beings, whose alleged highest goal is freedom

Americans traditionally have excelled in long-range vision and purpose, because they are deeply religious, perhaps more than any people on earth, and feel that their Creator has endowed them with a manifest destiny. This can easily be perverted to self-worship verging on the demonic, but when this happens the original consensus eventually provides the needed corrective, and God willing, will continue to do so in the future.

The traditionalist American consensus is properly suspicious of what Irving Babbitt called "idyllic imagination," often based on egocentric ambition, as opposed to "moral imagination," which operates modestly in the realm of the possible. Americans distrust ideologues, because the very concept and word "ideology" came from the horrors of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic aftermath. Americans have preferred the path of patience, practicality, and compromise, perhaps precisely because traditionally they have relied on God more than on themselves in the pursuit of the higher purposes that they share with other communities and civilizations and with all of humankind.

>SEGMENT FROM A FORTHCOMING BOOK ENTITLED REHABILITATING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD: LAYING A NEW FOUNDATION, BY DR ROBERT D. CRANE.

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Islam, Democracy and Secularism

*ANWAR IBRAHIM

INDONESIA'S transition to democracy is one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the Muslim world. The Indonesian people deserve much credit for emerging from thirty years of authoritarian rule and constructing a peaceful and stable democratic society, one that respects and champions constitutionalism and guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms for its people. Certainly there remains a great deal of work to do in resolving the socio-economic problems of corruption and poverty. But I believe that a democratic and consensual system has taken root, which makes it possible for Indonesian polity to tackle the most vexing challenges that a nation as large, plural and complex as Indonesia faces.

Indonesia's democratic transformation also has global significance and this I believe has yet to be fully realised. In my extensive travels throughout the Western and Muslim worlds speaking on the topic of Islam, Democracy and Secularism, I have often stated that the democratising mission that America has taken to the Muslim world would be well advised to pass through cities such as Jakarta. The Indonesians carry far more influence and can be far more effective in promoting democratic principles to other Muslim countries.

The discourse on Islam, Democracy and Secularism can be approached from three broad perspectives. There is firstly the theoretical construct which typically shows up the so-called hostility between Islam and Democracy, a position said to be generally advocated by the traditionalists or the puritans. They argue that there is an inherent incompatibility between the concepts of God's sovereignty and man's sovereignty.¹ Linked to this is the contention by certain *ulama* (scholars) that democracy is essentially a numbers game characterised

by a multi-party system. They say that it has a corrupting influence on government, promotes a false sense of loyalties, and causes disunity of the umma.

The modernists, on the other hand, argue that the basic flaw of the traditional argument is that it is founded on a fundamental misperception of the essence of democracy itself. Democracy is not just about elections or popularity of leaders. Democracy is about human rights, the rule of law and freedom. In other words, democracy is about constitutionalism. And we will see how democracy and freedom are moral imperatives of Islam.

The second perspective takes the form of a cultural and civilizational dimension in that there are many who believe that democracy is a construct of the West, moulded in response to the peculiar historical circumstances that shaped it. Others argue that freedom and democracy, while suitable in some parts of the world, are by no means universal goods. They say that other nations ought not to adopt the ways of freedom and democracy without due regard to their own political, cultural, and social traditions.

It is true that the founding principles of constitutional democracy, as we know it today, have their antecedents in the political philosophy of John Locke, which entered France through the writings of Voltaire and then deeply influenced the framers of the U.S. constitution. But the fact that these principles of political freedom and democracy were first articulated in the West does not preclude them from universal application, nor can it be asserted that they have not been expressed in other contexts.

It has been argued, for example, by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew that "Asian values" developed in clear opposition to democratic values. Confucian ethics is cited in this respect as stressing the importance of

filial piety, and, by extension, submission to authority of the state. But this argument completely ignores another central precept of Confucian ethics, which, as Tu Wei-Ming correctly asserts the primacy of the individual (self) and the importance of self-cultivation in realizing human potential and guarding against exploitation by the powers that be.

The experiences of South Korea and Taiwan, two states with a clearly Confucian ethical heritage, further lay waste to the notion that Western concepts of democracy are incompatible with Asian civilization. Thailand, a state with a largely Buddhist population, and Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population in the world, have also succeeded in building democracies.

Although autocrats and dictators remain entrenched in some countries, their influence over the masses is waning.

When contrasted with these examples, the false discourse of “Asian values” merely shows how far authoritarian rulers, along with their cronies and apologists, will go in order to justify and perpetuate their rule. Although autocrats and dictators remain entrenched in some countries, their influence over the masses is waning and it is undeniable that Asian peoples have demonstrated not only their desire to promote democratic principles, but also their ability to sustain democratic institutions and freedoms.

Harrowing theories have also been concocted to justify an inherent contradiction between Islam and democratic values, in an attempt to drive a wedge between two great civilizations. It is said, for example, that whereas liberal democracy places sovereignty in the hands of the individual, in Islam sovereignty belongs solely to God, thereby reducing the individual to a mere agent with little concern for the exercise of creativity and personal freedom. This view is a misreading of the sources of religion and represents a capitulation to extremist discourse.

The proper view is that freedom is the fundamental objective of the Divine Law. Islam has always expressed the primacy of *‘adl*, or justice, which is a close approximation of what the West defines as freedom. Justice entails ruling according to the dictates of Islamic law, which emphasise consultation, and condemn despotism and tyranny in any shape or form.

Notwithstanding the current malaise of authoritarianism plaguing the Muslim world, there can be no question that several crucial elements of constitutional democracy and civil society are embedded as moral imperatives in Islam—freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and the sanctity of life and property—as demonstrated very clearly by the Qu’ran, as well as the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, perhaps most succinctly and eloquently in his Farewell Address.

There is an ongoing debate over these issues in the Muslim world. The extremist view, by conflating the exercise of blatant state power with the sovereignty of God, confers on tyranny the mantle of legitimacy. On the other hand, the secular elite espouse a vision that purports to eliminate the role of religion within the public sphere. The current assertions about Islam’s hostility to democracy hold no more water as did the discredited Asian-values thesis.²

The final perspective looks at the issue of Islam, Democracy from the empirical angle. It is from this vantage point that it would show clearly that the threat to democracy is not Islam at all. Quite the contrary, it shows that Islam and Democracy are compatible, even though the terms employed in the respective domains differ somewhat. From this perspective we would see the likes of Indonesia and Turkey decisively choosing a democratic system that is pluralistic and at ease with their Muslim heritage and, rather than adopting a narrow interpretation of the traditional Shari’a system the approach has been to embrace and appropriate aspects of modernity. We believe that is because much of the confusion stems from the interpretation of the concept of Shari’a itself.

What we are witnessing is, in fact, a classic scenario of secular despots and dictators

raising the perceived Islamic threat as a bogey in order to subvert democracy and maintain their hold on power. By conjuring the spectre of radical Islam gaining power in the event of elections by popular vote, they attempt to rationalize their subversion of human rights and legitimize their dictatorial rule.

The idea here is to generate fear among democracies in the West and provide their leaders some moral justification why they should opt for the lesser of two evils. The refrain is predictable: we are told that if you allow Islamists to come to power, democracy and freedom will be hijacked. We are still reminded by the victories of Islamists such as FIS in Algeria and more recently Hamas in Palestine, which caused certain quarters to be alarmed about the fate of democracy. The gradual rise in support for the Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt only serves to reinforce their fears, in spite of their moderated position vis-à-vis participation in the political process. They say it means that the hijack thesis is a real and imminent possibility, and that having gained victory via the infamous neo-conservative jargon “one-man, one-vote, one time”, democracy and freedom will then be abandoned to authoritarianism of an Islamic kind.

We need not state the obvious. We already know that most Muslim nations are already ruled by secular regimes and are tyrannies and dictatorships of varying degrees, on the one hand, and sham democracies on the other. We do not need to look for the Islamist radicals as scapegoats. After all we can agree that people subjected to tyranny and abuses of one or another have a right and perhaps even a solemn obligation to break those shackles of oppression. It is, therefore, completely logical that in the Muslim world, where the heritage and the tradition of free-thinking and liberty runs deep throughout its illustrious history, that the language of reform and renewal be couched in an Islamic framework.

Historically, even the early pan-Islamists who advocated reform from the perspective of Islamic revivalism did not attack democracy *per se*.³ But when certain Muslim social scientists and philosophers started to preach

the wholesale abandonment of the Islamic *weltanschauung* in favour of one which placed Europe at the center, the backlash was to be expected having stoked the fire of radical fundamentalism.

On the other hand, in Southeast Asia, particularly for the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, radical fundamentalism never stood a chance. This was because modernity and moderation came hand in hand for the region. Muslim leaders and scholars felt and saw clearly the injustice of colonialism brought on by the marauding West but they did not throw away the baby with the bathwater.

Concepts of freedom, universal citizenship, human rights, and enlightenment ... [entered] into Indonesian political thought via democratic socialism and not market liberalism.

One clear piece of empirical evidence of compatibility can be seen in the experiment in 1950s with principles of democracy and constitutionalism. As expressed by the authors of a critically acclaimed book on Indonesia, during that period, “few spokesmen of any political tendency would have failed to declare themselves both democrats and socialists.”⁴ That is to say, the concepts of freedom, universal citizenship, human rights, and enlightenment made their way into Indonesian political thought via democratic socialism and not market liberalism.⁵

We have the likes of Muhammad Natsir, leader of Masjumi and 5th Indonesian Prime Minister, and Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), known for his magnum opus, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* who advocated, in their Islamic worldview, the love of knowledge, promotion of democratic values and inclusiveness. The writings of Indonesia’s foremost public intellectual, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, and Soedjatmoko among the most ardent advocates of Westernization were

also well received after separating the wheat from the chaff: ideas about modernizing the education system were accepted while outright adoption of Western ways was rejected.

It is this feature of Islam in Southeast Asia that has enabled Indonesia to take that giant step from dictatorship to democracy. Malaysia too during the formative period of independence and nation building placed great emphasis on constitutionalism with Islam being given its pride of place in the private realm. Recognising its multi-cultural and multi-religious society Malaysia's Muslim leaders were generally more inclusive. Unfortunately, unable to open up in the realm of governance, dominant Malaysian leaders have issued Islam as a means of political control and have ignored the universality of Islamic values and traditions. In the process, they have surrendered themselves to the dictates of race-based parochialism.

Malaysia could draw invaluable lessons from the rapid accommodation of Southeast Asian Islam to modernity, and perhaps appreciate better why fundamental radicalism is less successful in Southeast Asia. This is not to deny that radicalism may pose a serious challenge to the region but for radically different reasons, marginalization and repression being the chief causes - as we witness in southern Thailand and the southern Philippines.

Many critics against Islamists may be barking up the wrong tree in their contention that resistance to political change is their trade mark. We have already noted that rulers in some of the most autocratic regimes in the Islamic world are secular despots who do not believe in sharing power. And even in more visibly Islamic countries, the principles of the religion have been arbitrarily employed to bolster authoritarian rule.

Nevertheless, we have Turkey and Indonesia as the best two examples of democracy in action among the most populous Muslim nations. The prospective accession of Turkey into the European Union, notwithstanding the obstacles on its path, is also a clear statement of the level of democracy it has attained. On the other hand in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has advanced far beyond

her neighbours in putting into practice the principles of constitutionalism. So one should hesitate to dismiss the historical perspective as merely academic for indeed varying interpretations may be given to these events as well as valuable lessons to be drawn.

If democracy is about giving dignity to the human spirit, then freedom is the *sine qua non*.

With the exception of these two cases, the post-war experiments in Muslim countries with constitutionalism ended in unmitigated failure, returning to power instead corrupt regimes of tyranny and repression. Recently though, some very promising developments have taken place. In the Middle East, the spread of democracy has gone beyond mere academic debate. Unfortunately, the United States' policy of selective ambivalence, which supports autocrats in the Muslim world, on the one hand, and championing the cause of freedom and democracy on the other, has led to much resentment and disillusionment.

If democracy is about giving dignity to the human spirit, then freedom is the *sine qua non*. Within Islam, the great Andalusia jurist Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi⁵ in the fourteenth century, articulated a perspective on the *Maqasid al-Shari'a* (the higher objectives of the shari'a), demonstrating the central role of freedom as a higher objective of the divine law. The very same elements in a constitutional democracy are moral imperatives in Islam - freedom of conscience, freedom to speak out against tyranny, a call for reform and the right to property.

Many scholars have further explained that laws which contravene the *maqasid* must be revised or amended to bring them into line with the higher objectives and to ensure that they contribute to the safety and development of the individual and society.

I am convinced therefore that there are no foundational reasons as to why democracy should be opposed to Islam or vice versa. Islam is universal but if the notion of this

universalism is to mean anything, it would require that its values of justice, compassion and tolerance be practiced everywhere. Just as we cannot remain blind to the injustice perpetrated in non-Muslim countries, we must also relate to the suffering of other minorities in Muslim countries. The heart of the Islamic message is a message of love and understanding, of compassion and tolerance and of peace. It tells us to strive for justice, fight oppression and oppose tyranny. It is democracy in its truest sense.

Even traditional bastions of democracy such as America and Britain are not completely averse to turning their backs on freedom and democracy.

As for the 'hijack thesis', while there is no absolute guarantee against the renegeing of electoral promises that problem is not one that is only germane to Islamist parties in Iraq and Iran. As it has been demonstrated of late, even traditional bastions of democracy such as America and Britain are not completely averse to turning their backs on freedom and democracy, suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and of civil liberties and bills of rights. This therefore must represent a critique of democracy itself, not Islam, and highlight the critical role that the separation of powers represents in a democratic system.

There is no quick fix to this problem, no magic wand that can be employed to turn humankind into an eternal landscape of an ideal state. But short of that, I have been advocating a 'pledge of compact' formulation as the answer. In the move to democracy, Islamist, as well as other political parties, should be bound by a compact to respect and honour the values and principles of democracy and freedom, and not to renounce them upon gaining power. Established democratic nations in the West must also take a renewed pledge to honour these institutions and have the courage and vision to engage in an open discourse with those groups in the Muslim world who

represent the Muslim people, be they of varying degrees of religious persuasion.

All nations must then collectively and actively uphold these principles. Certainly for the Muslim world, there is a dire need to re-orientate the mindset that a more productive pursuit lies in finding how constitutionalism can resonate through Islam's public and private realms. With regard to the anti-West and anti-democracy proponents, engagement is crucial to get across the message that embracing democracy and freedom should carry no stigma.

As it is currently being invoked in many Muslim countries, the threat of Islamic militancy can no longer be used as the rationale for delaying freedom and democracy. And even if Muslim radicals do surface from the loins of democracy, Muslim societies will know how to deal with them as in the case of Indonesia where the radicals were trounced in the elections and where terrorism is dealt with as a criminal act by the police force and not as an existential threat to the nation. In this regard, the supposition that all or most Muslims want an Islamic state or a radical agenda has been clearly proven to be unfounded. Indonesia is now the flag bearer of freedom and democracy wittingly or unwittingly for other Muslim countries. Likewise Turkey has shown that a government rooted in the nation's Muslim cultures and traditions can transcend the secular-religious divide and hold true to the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Coming back to the broad perspective of empirical evidence, the contention that democratic institutions failed in many Muslim societies because Islam is opposed to change is therefore untenable. The failure arises from the need for the perpetuation of power by dictators, tyrants and autocrats. They are the ones who oppose political change, particularly one that would fetter their powers and hold them accountable to the people. Good governance, transparency and respect for the rule of law are moral imperatives of Islam too.

Finally, democracy requires the blossoming of civil society which would effectively ensure that the balance of powers between state and society be observed. Without this, it would

be well nigh impossible to talk of what Alexis de Tocqueville calls “intermediate associations” and the “habits of heart,”⁷ the cultivation of which will naturally lead us to cherish freedom of conscience, freedom to speak out against tyranny, and to call for reform and the right to property.⁸ These very same elements in a constitutional democracy are without doubt moral imperatives in Islam as well.

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Anwar is the de facto leader of the Justice Party (Keadilan) of Malaysia and is leader of Malaysia’s parliamentary opposition, a coalition of parties that registered historic victories in the March 2008 elections. Since 2004 Anwar has held lecturing positions at Oxford University, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. In March 2006 he was named Honorary President of the London based think-tank AccountAbility and he is also a Board Member of the International Crisis Group.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The traditionalists contend that in Islam ultimate sovereignty belongs on to God and man has no right to legislate against the clear commands of God. They say that democracy involves doing just that: clear commands in the Qur’an will have to be disobeyed if principles of democracy are to be made into law.
- 2 Asian values came into vogue briefly in the 1990s to justify authoritarian regimes in Asia, predicated on the belief in the existence within Asian countries of a unique set of institutions and political ideologies which reflected the region’s culture and history. The concept should not be confused with “traditional values”.
- 3 This would include Mohamad ‘Abduh and Jalaluddin al-Afghani Cf. The notion of Mujtama’ Madani as advanced by ‘Abduh and Sheikh Taha Jabir al-Alwani’s madrasah al-ra’y of which I commented at some length in my book, *Gelombang Kebangkitan Asia (The Asian Renaissance)*, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1997
- 4 Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, *Indonesian Political Thinking, 1945-1965*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1970 p. 227, as quoted by Robert W. Hefner in *Civil Islam, Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, p. 72
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 72
- 6 His real name is Ibrahim bin Mosa bin Muhammad al-Shatibi al-Gharnati. One of his magnum opus is *Al-Muwafiqat fi Usul al-Shari’a*.
- 7 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, University of Chicago Press, Translated and introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield (co translator Delba Winthrop)
- 8 See Hefner, *Civil Islam*, pp. 211-5 for a similar exposition on this point.





Why Muslim Countries Lag in Modernisation and Democracy?

*DR SHIREEN HUNTER

SINCE the advent of modernity and the ensuing great economic, political and social transformations that it triggered in Europe, albeit to varying degrees and speed, why have some countries been more successful in this process than others? Why, for example, the Industrial Revolution first happened in England? Why the process of democratisation in England, the Netherlands and other north-European countries was less disruptive than was the case in France? Why have countries like Germany, Italy, Spain and other south and east-European countries lagged behind England in both physical and socio-political modernisation? In particular, why the latter countries were behind in developing democratic systems of government and full respect for human rights considered as essential components of modern societies?

As the ideas and ideals of modernity spread beyond Europe, and non-European countries tried to emulate the Europeans' experience, the question also arose why some countries were more successful in replicating the European experience while others were less so. In particular, it has often been asked why it has been difficult for non-European countries to achieve not only physical modernisation in the form of industrialisation etc., but also socio-political modernisation, namely the establishment of democratic systems of government and widespread respect for basic human rights.

Various theses have been advanced to explain this situation. Prominent among these has been the Culturalist perspective, which asserts that some cultures are more conducive to modernisation and democratisation than others.

This is because cultures to a great extent have historically developed on the basis of peoples' and societies' religious beliefs and values. The Culturalist perspective

attributes a significant role to religious beliefs in helping or hindering the process of modernisation, which to be complete must include democratisation.

According to Max Weber, a prominent Culturalist, for example, Catholicism is less conducive to modernisation than Protestantism. There is some evidence to this effect as the ideas of modernity emerged first in protestant countries which modernised first. By contrast, those European countries where Catholicism has been the dominant creed modernised quite late and democratised even later. Max Weber believes this difference between the modernisation experience of Catholic and Protestant countries derives from the fact Catholicism has an anti-materialistic outlook and ethos.¹ Weber has even harsher words for the so-called Asian religions: for these religions, the world is "a great enchanted garden", and "no path led from the magical religiosity of the non-intellectual classes of Asia to a rational, methodical control of life."² Islam is one of those Asian religions which Weber considers particularly inimical to modernisation.³

In regard to democratization, too, many thinkers have emphasised the centrality of culture as a determining variable. For example, according to Martin Seymour Lipset "Historically, there have been negative relationships between democracy, Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Confucianism; conversely, Protestantism and democracy have been positively correlated."⁴

During the 1950s, 1960s, and the 1970s, the Culturalist view lost some of its influence, although it did not completely disappear. Instead, various economic explanations for the question of modernisation became popular. These developmentalist theories had a more optimistic view of other cultures' ability to modernise. They also believed that

modernisation in the sense of industrialisation in due course will lead to democratisation, even if underdeveloped countries had first to go through an authoritarian phase in order to modernise.⁵ The success of some non-European countries, notably Japan which had developed economically in the 19th and early 20th centuries to also democratise contributed to the puncturing of the Culturalist perspective.

The early 1990s, however, witnessed a return of Culturalist absolutism. The most influential, if not the first, representative of the new wave of cultural determinism was Samuel Huntington, the originator of the thesis of the Clash of Civilisations.⁶

Clearly, the Culturalist thesis brings to fore some important and legitimate questions, including: why has the concept of modernity and everything else that ensued from it emerged in a particular corner of Europe and not in any other place? Even in Europe, why it developed in its north-Western corner rather than the South which historically had been the center of important European civilisations, such as those of ancient Greece and Rome and the birth place of the Renaissance? Why the Eastern parts of Europe modernised late and where democratisation took even longer to happen?

In short, the role of culture in helping or hindering modernisation and democratisation cannot be dismissed out of hand. However, accepting a culture's role in this regard does not mean falling into the trap of cultural determinism. In particular, it is vital that culture not be seen as immutable and incapable of change. Rather, to understand the reasons behind the gap in the levels of modernisation and democratisation of countries belonging to different cultural zones, including those in the Islamic world, the influence of other variables should also be kept in mind. The following are some of the most important of these variables, which have played significant roles in the slow pace of Muslim countries' modernisation and democratisation and their current deficit in both respects.

TIMING: IMPACT ON MODERNISATION & DEMOCRATISATION

Beyond a few countries in north-western

Europe, where the phenomenon of modernity was born and led to their modernisation and democratisation in gradual and organic fashion over several centuries, the process of modernisation in other parts of the world has been an imitative one and a matter of so-called "catching up".

This time lag is believed to have an important impact on the whole process of modernisation especially in its relation to democratisation.⁷ Historical experience tends to indicate that, in late modernising societies the actual process of physical modernisation hinders democratisation or at least delays it.⁸ This situation is partly due to the fact that late modernising countries have had to modernise at a faster speed. For example, Germany had to achieve in fifty years what England achieved in 200 years. Moreover, the level of backwardness of countries at the time of the start of the process of modernisation affects the character of their modernisation process, its agents and outcome. This is why, in late modernising countries with underdeveloped economic, industrial and other infrastructure the state plays a key role – at least in the early stages of the process. This fact increases the state's role in a society's economic life and hinders, or at least delays, the emergence of an independent entrepreneurial elite and a middle class which is economically independent of the state. The excessive role of the state in a society's economic life in turn often hinders democratisation, because a strong middle class independent of the state is necessary for a functioning and stable democracy. Yet, in countries, where the state plays an important economic role the middle class is mostly comprised of professional classes which are dependent on the state for their livelihood.

In Muslim countries, states and often so-called "modernising dictators" have been the main agent of modernisation. This factor, combined with the impact of time lag in the start of the process of modernisation, have contributed to the huge democratic deficit of the Muslim World.

MODERNIZATION & IMPERIALISM

The fact that non-European, including Muslim countries' encounter with modernity

was a consequence of European imperial and colonial expansion which has had significant consequences both for their modernisation and democratisation. First, it has given non-Europeans' modernisation a defensive character. What this means is that these countries, especially during the early stages of their modernisation efforts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, embraced modernisation as a way of improving their military position in order to defend themselves against predatory powers, rather than seeing the other qualities of modernity, notably its emancipatory dimensions. Second, because modernity was introduced into these countries via conquest, non-European states viewed it as a threat to their indigenous cultures. Many cultural authenticist movements in non-European countries, including Islamist movements, resulted from this aspect of the introduction of the modern beyond its birth place in Europe to other societies.

In the Muslim world, the rejection of democracy by many Islamists as being non-Islamic is to a great extent due to the aforementioned fact, and reflects an irrational authenticist impulse rather than being the result of a thorough examination and analysis.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Historical evidence shows that the external environment within which states have had to modernise has had a determining role in their success or failure, including their ability to establish democratic political systems.

The early modernising states of Europe enjoyed a relatively favorable, or at least neutral, environment. Later expansion of European countries beyond Europe's borders provided them with material wealth and outlet for their burgeoning populations. These factors helped reduce the disruptive impact of the process of modernisation on European societies, even if they did not totally escape socio-political disruptions and upheavals.

By contrast, European colonialism had a very negative consequence for non-European countries' process of modernisation. In some cases, notably that of Iran, colonial rivalries

hindered indigenous efforts at modernisation and democratisation. In addition, there was a transfer of wealth from the colonies to the mother countries.

The haphazard delineation of borders by colonial powers saw the seeds of long military conflicts within many colonised lands, including the Muslim world.

Moreover, the haphazard delineation of borders by colonial powers saw the seeds of long military conflicts within many colonised lands, including the Muslim world. Palestine and Kashmir are two examples of such colonial gerrymandering which has led to long-lasting conflict with tremendous costs in terms of Muslim peoples' prospects for modernisation and democratisation.

Additionally, anti-colonial struggles, such as that of Algeria, also have cost Muslim countries dearly in terms of their modernisation and democratisation. One particularly damaging consequence of these conflicts and struggles has been the militarisation of Muslim countries' politics and the establishment of the military as the final arbiter of politics. A sample of Muslim countries from Tunisia to Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and Syria shows the stranglehold of the military on these countries' economic and political life. The militarisation of politics has been a major barrier to the Muslim world's democratisation.

Even, in the post-colonial era, Muslim countries have been operating within an unfavorable external environment. For example, the Cold War era rivalries negatively affected the process of these countries' economic and political modernisation as the two rival camps tried to impose their own model of socio-economic and political development on them. Moreover, these countries have been subject of direct or

indirect intervention by external powers – a fact which has distorted their modernisation process and has deemed their chances of democratisation. The Anglo-American coup d'état against Mussadeq's regime in Iran, the Suez war, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and, of course the latest Afghan and Iraq wars, are some of the more dramatic and destructive examples of such interventions.

To these must be added the manipulation of Muslim countries' internal divisions. The latest example of this type of intervention is efforts to exacerbate sectarian cleavages in the Muslim world. In the past, ethnic cleavages have also been manipulated – not to forget the support authoritarian countries receive from outside.

The end result of this unfavorable external environment has been that often Muslim countries have lost the fruits of their modernisation efforts, and their fledgling moves toward democratisation are cut short.

It would be instructive if Muslim and other non-European experience were to be compared with that of late modernising and democratising European countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal. When military regimes were removed in these countries the European Union opened its arms to them and bolstered their modernisation with material and political support.

The above is not intended to either dismiss the importance of cultural factors in helping or hindering the processes of modernisation and democratisation, or to absolve Muslim countries of their own enormous responsibilities for their modernisation and democratisation deficits.

Cultures are not static and immutable.

Clearly, cultural factors have played a role in both processes as evidenced by historical records. However, historical evidence also proves that cultural factors are not the only variables helping or hindering modernisation and democratisation, partly because cultures are not static and immutable. Rather, they are subject to change and evolution. Otherwise, today there would not be modern

and democratic countries with Catholic or Orthodox cultural heritage. In short, the foregoing was intended merely to challenge the notion of cultural determinism and the idea that Muslim countries are doomed to remain underdeveloped and undemocratic because of their religion.

It was also to remind the interested audience of the negative consequences of the external environment within which Muslim states have been forced to operate for nearly two centuries.

Having said that, it is important to stress the fact that Muslims are ultimately responsible for their own fate. This is so, because even within the limits imposed by external factors, there is much that Muslim peoples and governments can do to enhance their chances of modernisation and democratisation. Muslims should look to their own history with a new eye in order to discover that the seeds of these phenomena are present in their own cultural heritage, and then try to sow these seeds into saplings and eventually robust trees.

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ENDNOTES

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- 2 Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, pp.256-66
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Martin Seymour Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited" *American Sociological Review*, vol.59., no.1., February 1995, p.5
- 5 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernization in the Middle East, Glencoe, IL*, Free Press, 1958
- 6 The first person to use the term clash of civilizations was Bernard Lewis in his *The Roots of the Muslim Rage*.
- 7 On the importance of timing see, Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962
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The Crisis of (Post) Modernity The De-Sacralisation of the Social, the Death of Democracy, and the Reclamation of Islamic Tradition

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IN early 2007, then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, described the 'War on Terror' as a continuation of "the age-old battle between progress and reaction, between those who embrace the modern world and those who reject its existence... In the era of globalisation, the outcome of this clash between extremism and progress will determine our future... We can no more opt out of this struggle than we can opt out of the climate changing around us... This is, ultimately, a battle about modernity... That is what this battle is about, within Islam and outside of it; it is a battle of values and progress; and therefore it is one we must win."¹

From this perspective, Islamist extremism – exemplified in al-Qaeda's brand of violent puritanism – represents a rejection of modernity and thus, opposition to the Western model of civilisation based on technological progress, liberal democracy and scientific reason. Yet this understanding of the 'War on Terror' as a defence of modernity against reactionary extremists who would fundamentally challenge its legitimate achievements is deeply problematic, raising probing questions about our contemporary predicament as a global civilisation. Is Islamist extremism really a virulent strain of violent anti-modernism? Is a violent defence of modernity the right answer? And, while we may easily reject the legitimacy of anti-modernism, should we accept the superiority and desirability of modernity as a given?

Modernity radically transformed the world of the Middle Ages, a feudal society built upon the stilts of a Christian worldview.

ORIGINS OF MODERNITY

Modernity radically transformed the world of the Middle Ages, a feudal society built upon the stilts of a Christian worldview. The birth of agrarian capitalism, and later joined by industrial capitalism in England in the eighteenth century, coincided with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, precipitating a drastic re-structuring of social relations. Industrial capitalism generated a new dynamic for accumulation of wealth by technological innovation, requiring increasing inputs of natural resources and raw materials, introducing divisions of labour centred on machines, and markets for the sale of new goods and commodities. This increasingly drove pressures to rationalise humanity's conquest of nature through perpetual scientific progress to underpin an unlimited wealth generation.²

In England, the democratisation of Parliament was a key lever by which increasingly powerful capitalist land-owners undermined the hold of both Crown and Church on government. They pushed toward new legislation by effectively protecting capitalist interests against the old social forces, creating a private-property regime that would both stipulate the rights of capitalist landlords and regulate the new-found freedoms of former peasants dispossessed from the land, now potential wage workers in capitalist metropolises.³

The rise of the secular, democratic sovereign-state was thus uniquely enabled by the consolidation of industrial capitalism. Unlike pre-capitalist tributary societies, capitalism depended for its reproduction not on the direct use of force to extract peasants' surplus, but from the dispossession of peasants from their natural means of subsistence, compelling them to sell their labour to survive. The exercise of political violence in

the public sphere was not necessary to sustain private enterprises, receding instead to the role of policing the regulatory framework of private property rights and civil liberties required for capitalism to function. Thus, arose modernity's formal differentiation of public and private, Church and State, imperial military force and democratic civil society.⁴

Culturally, modernity posited scientific reason, as against revelation or tradition, as the sole basis of knowledge about life and nature; growing materialism as the normative criterion of well-being; technological breakthroughs for wealth generation; individual material freedom as an end in itself; and the dereliction of religion from the governance of social life.

Thus, industrialisation, rationalisation, urbanisation, bureaucracy, individualism, secularism, and democratisation were intimately, if not fundamentally, interwoven into the fabric modernity. The new competitive dynamic converted English society into the 'workshop of the world', quickly forcing its European rivals to catch up. This triggered uneven transformations of social relations across the Western hemisphere, culminating in the emergence of an Anglo-centric "Lockean heartland", at the centre of the emerging global political economy.⁵

'CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS' OR A 'CRISIS OF CIVILISATION'?

Yet the promise of modernity has been contradictory, while being immensely creative and highly destructive, in its impact on the evolution of global civilisation. No clearer evidence of this can be found than in climate change, which as Blair's quote claimed earlier, compares to the 'War on Terror' in that we cannot "opt out" of it. Tony Blair in effect normalised the military violence of Western states in predominantly Muslim peripheries, as well as the largely Western environmental violence that is eroding the earth's ecological balance. Both, he suggests, are an integral function of modernity's legitimate self-defence against the reactionary external forces, exemplified in Muslim extremism, that threaten its demise. Yet the truth is that

the force rushing toward modernity's demise is not from Islamism, but rather within modernity's own internal socio-political, ethical, and ideological structures.

As regards to Blair's own example, human-induced CO₂ emissions are accelerating global warming toward increasingly dangerous, abrupt climate change. According to the UN Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, the worst case scenario is that by the end of this century global average temperature could rise by six degrees, making the planet literally uninhabitable. Since then, a torrent of new data suggests this is most likely a conservative prediction, and that actual rates of emissions are higher than even the IPCC's worst-case scenario.⁶

In 2007, the Energy Watch Group, an international network of Parliamentarians and scientists based in Berlin, published a detailed report concluding world oil production had already peaked in 2006, and will decline by half by 2030.⁷ A further report to the Department of Trade & Industry by the UK Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy, a network of eight leading companies, warned that peak oil would create an oil supply crunch by 2013.⁸ Even with urgent mitigating actions, which has thus far been lacking, this would have a drastic impact on the ability of modern societies to function, leading to the breakdown of transport infrastructure, international agriculture, national electricity grids, and industrial production.

The 2008 global banking crisis and subsequent recession has further brought home the failures of neo-liberalism, with its enforcement of financial deregulation and liberalisation, and particularly the creation of profit through the systemisation of debt. From 2000–2008, leading economists and financial institutions issued warnings of an impending global financial crisis that would begin with the collapse of housing markets. Governments not only ignored these warnings, they encouraged speculators' predatory and risk-accumulating strategies. The spate of defaults that became known as the sub-prime mortgage crisis triggered the bubble burst of bad debt which once was the engine of economic growth. The neo-liberal Washington Consensus proved not only

powerless to prevent the crisis, but was in fact a principal cause of the risk-generation and debt-proliferation behind the crisis.⁹

Apart from the recession, the structure of the global political economy is additionally built on the inexorable generation of massive North-South global inequality, prosperity for the few at the expense of the majority. Such were the devastating conclusions of an authoritative study published by the UN Department of Economics & Social Affairs, finding that the very golden age of neo-liberal capitalism over the last quarter century has witnessed “a sharp decline in the rate of growth for the vast majority of low and middle-income countries. Accompanying this decline has been reduced progress for almost all the social indicators that are available to measure health and educational outcomes.”¹⁰

While international terrorism is not exempt, like climate change and peak oil, the globalisation of Islamist terrorism is a direct consequence of Western states’ industrial over-dependence on petroleum. Al-Qaeda terrorist cells have been, and continue to be, covertly sponsored by several key states in the Middle East and Central Asia, such as Saudi Arabia and some Gulf states, Pakistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, among others. Yet these regimes, which thus constitute the locus of al-Qaeda’s operational capabilities, are financially and militarily sponsored by the West, largely due to their function as major energy-exporters.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states for example, with the world’s largest oil and gas reserves, are pivotal client-states of the US, UK, Western Europe and Japan. The US and UK have failed to shut down the financial arteries of international terrorism in the Gulf states primarily due to their central geo-strategic significance with respect to Western energy security. Thus, to ensure the free-flow of ‘black gold’ to the North, our governments turn a blind eye as Gulf-sponsored al-Qaeda terrorist networks continue to proliferate across the globe. In this sense, international terrorism is a consequence of a specific structural feature of the global political economy, its over-dependence on hydrocarbon resources, and the resultant

financial and geo-strategic entanglement of Western interests and investments with client-regimes in the Middle East and Central Asia.¹¹

Western state responses to this convergence of global crises remain premised on protecting the unequal structures of the global political economy. Abroad, the pattern of the ‘War on Terror’ has projected Anglo-American power into the world’s most strategic energy reserves across Muslim-majority areas of the South. At the same time, it has brought pervasive regimes of comprehensive state-surveillance into the domestic arena, legitimising massive discriminatory policing of Muslim and minority communities within the West. The result is an increasingly draconian and interventionist security paradigm concerned overwhelmingly with the task of domestic and foreign population control, empowering right-wing politics, and permanently eroding democratic checks and balances.¹²

Each of these crises, on its own terms, fundamentally threatens the survival of the global political economy, millions of lives, and the continuity of modern civilization. Together, their cumulative impact over the coming decades would be unimaginably catastrophic. Indeed, these are not separate crises, rather a single Crisis of Civilisation with many faces. Yet so far, there has been little or no meaningful and effective collective action, particularly by the metropolitan centres of modern progress, to prevent or even mitigate this crisis.

THE CRISIS OF (POST) MODERNITY

Global ecological, economic and energy crises expose a core contradiction at the heart of modernity – that the material progress delivered by scientific reason in the service of unlimited economic growth – is destroying the very social and environmental conditions of modernity’s very existence. Put bluntly, progress, as currently conceived, is its own worst enemy. Growth and destruction are two sides of the same coin of modernity, at the centre of which is a deep-seated irrationality, incapable of reconciling the pressure for continual material growth with the destruction of the very basis of our

material existence on Earth.

“Crisis of modernity” is ultimately an extension of a deeper epistemological crisis in our perception and interpretation of the social world.

Post-modernism, in this context, represents both a theoretical diagnosis and social symptom, of what is not simply a Crisis of Civilisation, but simultaneously a “crisis of modernity.” For some post-modernist social theorists, the “crisis of modernity” is ultimately an extension of a deeper epistemological crisis in our perception and interpretation of the social world. The Enlightenment is questioned as merely one “language game” among others, while the meta-narrative in general – a comprehensive theory or philosophy of the world ordering historical experience and knowledge¹³ – is associated with “myriad [of] stories and fables.”¹⁴ The dominant meta-narrative of modernity is the story of progress through universal human reason, the triumph of the Logos over Mythos. By declaring the deaths of the meta-narrative, post-modernists posit instead that there is no universal or absolute truth; or at least that even if there is, human knowledge can only ever approximate it. The upshot is an unmitigated celebration of diversity and relativism. Society and social analysis “dissolve into multiple realities, diverse forms of life, private language games – separate discourses – each with their own ontology, epistemology and methodology.”¹⁵

Yet most post-modernist social theorists are inclined to ignore the concrete historical, socio-political and economic conditions of which the post-modern condition itself is constituted. Of most significance is the post-Fordist shift from manufacturing industry to ‘financialisation’, leading to the outsourcing of industrial production to the South, and the emergence of ‘post-industrial’ service sector economies in the North. This has generated massive changes in class, gender and status patterns, leaning toward an increased

emphasis on individualised consumption.¹⁶

Indeed, for Frederic Jameson, post-modernism is merely a euphemism for an increasingly commodity culture of late capitalism. Culture itself – images, styles, representations, information – has become integrated into commodity production, propelling the eclectic proliferation of incommensurate liberal individualist ideologies in Western democracies. As corporate lobbies push for increasingly flexible systems of regulation compliant with the requirements of trans-national capital, there is intensifying pressure to unravel the post-war welfare state, deregulating society, and ripping open markets to the speculation exploits of private finance.¹⁷

To some extent, the post-modern critique of modernity is vindicated by the Crisis of Civilisation, proving beyond doubt that humanity is at a loss to understand itself, the world, and consequently its place in the world.

Yet post-modernism itself is merely a reactionary extreme self-generated by modernity’s own internal contradictions – a nihilistic, binary and self-referentially incoherent counter-narrative. While challenging the universality of reason and the totality of meta-narratives, post-modernism self-negatingly mobilises reason to prove the meta-narrative that there are no meta-narratives, and to demonstrate the absolute truth that truth is relative. Post-modernism, then, itself constitutes the maelstrom at the heart of the “crisis of modernity,” the culmination of modernity’s intensifying dislocation of humanity from itself, and from nature.¹⁸ Rather than diagnosing the crisis of modernity, post-modernism constitutes modernity’s response to its own incoherence, and thus exacerbates the effects of this crisis by inadvertently legitimising relativism and hence, all forms of extremism and identity politics. Indeed it is here that post-modernism implicitly legitimises Islamist extremism as merely another localised “language game” among others, which, having already dismembered the totalising ethical and philosophical discourses of modernity, can no longer be critiqued or questioned without an overarching framework of moral reference.¹⁹

Both modernity and post-modernism project humanity as an unaccountable overlord uprooted from nature – either through rationalist narratives of progress by technological domination over nature; or through anti-rational localised narratives of pluralist nihilism presuming the personalised social construction of reality. In either case, the individual is placed at the centre of a reality which s/he at once dominates, and yet ultimately cannot control, generating an inexorable dialectic between progress and destruction.

ISLAM AND CIVILISATION

The empirical evidence of the Crisis of Civilisation proves that this dialectic is fundamentally out of harmony with life and nature. This suggests that part of the solution lies in an axiomatic re-orientation of humanity's conceptualisation of itself, the world, and its place in the world, through a rational re-sacralisation of the social viewed as the nexus of our relationship with nature. This should be based on the recognition that the values of love, compassion and justice respected by both modern societies and the universal core of all religious traditions are in fact far more in tune with life and nature than the doctrine of unlimited, individualistic material avarice – a conclusion thoroughly vindicated by the disharmonious consequences of this doctrine in terms of the potentially all-encompassing destruction of life and nature.

Although widely misperceived as a primary cause of our contemporary predicament, Islam may well contain the seeds of a new, inclusive vision of civilisation which can overcome the self-destructive binary complex of (post)modernity. If explored in dialogue with other cultural, philosophical and spiritual traditions, this may facilitate the dramatic shift in consciousness required to avert the Crisis of Civilisation.

For Islam, justice is precisely the primary purpose of religious tradition: "We sent aforetime Our Messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in Justice." (Qur'an 57:25) This pivotal function of social justice manifests

consistently in a variety of principles across areas of governance, community cohesion, civil defence, economic development, among many other areas.

For instance, Islam proposes unique complimentary economic principles, one concerning public ownership of community resources, and another a labour-oriented theory of private ownership. Natural resources like running water, lakes, oil, sources of minerals, sources of raw materials, forests, or similar resources, cannot be monopolised by any individual, nor even owned by the State. Rather, all citizens are entitled to derive equal benefit from these primary sources of wealth, thus requiring mutual consultation and representation.²⁰ Conversely, Islam proposes that one cannot lay claim to land unless one cultivates it oneself, de-legitimising private ownership of land which is not self-cultivated. By emphasising ownership itself as a function of labour, Islam envisages a dynamic role for the worker as an entrepreneur who not only uses his tools of production to earn wages, but who may also innovative in how tools and technologies are used and developed, being entitled to a share in the profits resulting there from. Simultaneously, it is the financier, not the entrepreneur, who is responsible for covering any losses, justifying the financier's return in the form of a share in any profits the commercial venture generates. Thus, the relationship between labour and finance is more equalised and made interdependent, facilitating the distributed decentralisation of production.²¹

Caliph Ali emphasised that political rule should never be top-heavy, but required continual consultation (shura) with the public, particularly the most disenfranchised classes

Other relevant principles can be derived from the famous treatise on government

drawn up by the fourth Caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib, in the form of written instructions to the newly-appointed Governor of Egypt. Caliph Ali emphasised that political rule should never be top-heavy, but required continual consultation (*shura*) with the public, particularly the most disenfranchised classes, for the purpose of addressing their needs: “Meet the oppressed and the lowly periodically in an open conference and, conscious of the Divine presence there, have a heart-to-heart talk with them, and let none from your armed guard or civil officers or members of the police or the Intelligence Department be by your side, so that the representatives of the poor might state their grievances fearlessly and without reserve... Whatever you can give to them, give it ungrudgingly.”²²

Ali’s rule also clarified the axiomatic significance of political freedom, that is, freedom of speech and association, even if dissenting against the government. During his caliphate, a notorious dissident group known as the Kharijites, religious puritans who interpreted scripture literally, were completely free to express their opposition to Ali’s government. They would heckle the Caliph, disrupt his public addresses, repeatedly accuse him of corruption and, worst of all from the Islamic perspective, openly describe him as a *kafir*,²³ to which Ali not only never stopped them from doing so, but on the contrary engaged with them in open debates during which he publicly refuted their arguments. Only when the Kharijites began using violence to terrorise citizens did Ali counter with force.²⁴

Indeed, another common misconception is the concept of *jihad*. Sufficient for our purposes here is to recognise that Islam is not only compatible with modern laws of war such as the Geneva Conventions in the limiting of the use of force to self-defence, but further that Islamic laws of just war delegitimise *all* indiscriminate killing of civilian populations. The *Qur’an* is absolutely clear that if the other party genuinely seeks a peaceful resolution, then force is proscribed: “If they seek peace, then you seek peace. And trust in God for He is the One that hears and knows all things.” (8:61) “If they withdraw

from you and fight you not, but (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then God alloweth no way for you (to war against them).” (4:90)

Furthermore, numerous Prophetic injunctions clarify that civilians and civilian infrastructure are never legitimate targets of war: “Do not kill any old person, any child, or any woman”; “Do not kill the monks in monasteries; do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship”; “Do not attack a wounded person. No prisoner should be put to the sword”; “Do not destroy the villages and towns, do not spoil the cultivated fields and gardens, and do not slaughter the cattle.” These traditions implicitly prohibit most of the practices of modern industrialised warfare, including the use of all weapons of mass destruction.²⁵

Reason and tradition need not be seen as mutually incompatible, but rather as potentially mutually reinforcing.

The conclusion of this all too brief survey is that reason and tradition need not be seen as mutually incompatible, but rather as potentially mutually reinforcing, in a way that can motivate us to reconceptualise ourselves not as separate units in a meaningless physical world, but as interconnected beings embedded in a natural order in which the ‘balance’ of justice is integral. A starting point for addressing the secular erosion of democracy that is part of the contemporary Crisis of Civilisation is a rational re-engagement with the very force – Islam – so often misrepresented as a post-modern antithesis to civilisation. Islamic traditions, with their preoccupation with social justice and ethical politics, may well provide the cultural, spiritual and philosophical resources to help revitalise and transfigure our perceptions of the role of the social as a sphere of ethical collective action, by which to harmonise our relationship with one another, and nature.

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Reading Between the Lines: Translating Obama's Cairo Rhetoric into Reality

*DR DAUD ABDULLAH

THE media hype and coverage of President Barack Obama's speech was extraordinary. Analysts will continue to read and analyse its lines to grasp every meaning, hidden and obvious. To every constituency, Obama's speech conveyed a special and different meaning. While his Egyptian hosts saw it as an affirmation of support for their country and its pivotal role in the Arab and Islamic worlds, Muslims from Nouakchott to Jakarta were preoccupied with one question. Will he translate the rhetoric into action?

Barack Obama came to power with a huge mandate for change; not only in American domestic affairs but also concerning its foreign policy. Unlike his predecessor, he rightly acknowledges the direct link between US foreign policy and the state of the US economy. On the eve of his visit, Leslie Gelb, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations wrote, 'the United States is declining as a nation and a world power.'¹ Obama, like the author, though recognising the gravity of the situation clearly believes it is reversible, if 'Americans are clear-eyed about the causes and courageous about implementing the cures.'

The decline of the US, Gelb noted, stems from a weakening of the fundamental pillars of American power: its economy; infrastructure; public schools and political system. The federal deficit is projected at \$1.75 trillion for the fiscal year 2009. The federal debt is above \$10 trillion.² Amid these circumstances the imperial hubris which was a hallmark of American foreign policy discourse throughout much of the last

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decade has now been taken over by a sense of realism and humility. That a US president should come to the Middle East and say let's start afresh is itself a great stride in the right direction.

A NEW BEGINNING

Though many questioned the choice of Cairo because of its stalled democracy and poor human rights record, it was not surprising that the president decided to address the Muslim world from an Arab country. Should he succeed in managing the challenges of global stability, energy security and nuclear proliferation, he must assist in managing the march of events in this strategically important part of the world.

Evidently, the wars of attrition in Afghanistan and Iraq have had a devastating toll on the US economy and its national image. Although Obama campaigned on the theme of increased troops in Afghanistan there is a growing realisation in Washington that no amount of 'surge' in troop levels would deliver the required results. Deaths of foreign troops across Afghanistan increased by 78% in the first three months of 2009 compared with the same period in the previous year. As Ronald Reagan had rallied Muslim '*mujahideen*' to oust the Soviets in the 1980s, so too Obama needs the support of the Muslim world to help America extricate itself from the quagmire of Afghanistan with some measure of honor. There are of course obvious risks judging from the post Soviet conflict. For one thing, that encounter left a reservoir of seasoned fighters and a culture of *klashnikov* in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The current Afghan enterprise was always premised on the hope that troops volunteered by Muslim countries would somehow be decisive in defeating the Taliban. This has not happened. Contrary to US expectations,

the invasion has fuelled a spirit of jihad and nationalism not only in that country but across the region. Worse still, to the chagrin of the US led NATO operation, the spiraling numbers of civilian casualties have sapped whatever little public support there was for the mission.

Isolated and despised abroad, America's national psyche has clearly taken a battering. The swagger and confidence of being the sole surviving superpower, after the demise of the Soviet Union, has been replaced by grotesque symbols of aggression and militarism. In the Muslim world the obscene images from Abu Ghuraib, the bitter legacy of Guantanamo and the dangerous slide into anarchy in Pakistan have all been laid at the doors of the US.

Obama's speech was actually about setting an alternative strategy.

Against this backdrop it was necessary for Obama to call for a new beginning with the Muslim world. The Cairo address however had one notable exception. Whereas Obama appeared to have left the doors open to Hamas, not referring to it as a terrorist organisation, this was certainly not the case with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The military defeat of the latter remains a US foreign policy priority and arguably has been elevated to a national dogma. The incumbent president like his predecessor believes the latter two are committed to killing the largest number of Americans possible and for this reason the objective of defeating them should be pursued. How possible is this? Gelb notes, 'the underlying realities are that the Western-backed government in Kabul is corrupt and cannot run a country, much less a war, and that the Taliban still have a substantial following and know how to fight.'³

These are the realities that informed the Obama address. Though hailed as a 'historic' overture 'reaching out' to the world's Muslims, Obama's speech was actually about setting an alternative strategy. It is not about Islam and respect for its history and culture. The truth is Americans could not care less. A

poll conducted on the eve of the speech by Aljazeera on American views towards Muslims showed that almost half of Americans have a negative opinion about Muslim countries. The 46 per cent of respondents who held an unfavorable view of Islamic nations was up five per cent from 2002, while just 20 per cent said they held a positive opinion.⁴

Of course such antipathy was fuelled by the successive wars launched by the US and its regional protégé, Israel, against Muslim countries. The antipathy is therefore manifested both ways. There are many in the Muslim world who similarly deeply despise American policy and mistrust their leaders. After all, it was America that spawned the culture of *kalashnikovs* in Pakistan. In fact, the collapse of the recent Swat valley agreement between Islamabad and the Islamists in the North West frontier region would probably have survived, had it not been for the clumsy meddling and opposition of the Obama administration.

PAST BURDENS, PRESENT CHALLENGES

Given past and recent policies, one noticeable view that has gained currency since the speech is that Muslims should not help the Obama administration regain the prestige and hegemony of the US. For when it was in such a position of primacy it abused that status by waging wars of aggression, supporting despotic regimes, subverting democracy and obstructing reforms in the Islamic lands. Surely there was nothing tangible in the speech which suggested this would change in the near future.

The urgency in Washington is all the more acute not just because of the economic recession but also the relentless march of the emerging BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) block and their possible role in the Middle East and Muslim world. Obama's speech must be seen in the context of not being out maneuvered by these, the world's fastest growing industrial countries in a strategically vital part of the world where America once enjoyed prominence and unchallenged hegemony.

Does he know what to do? Yes he does. But like most democrats in the US he is torn

between beliefs and politics. He believes in the justice of the Palestinian cause but the cut and thrust of politics on Capitol Hill dictates that Israel cannot be reigned in. Simply stating the obvious is not enough. In light of Israel's ongoing attacks on the Palestinian people, their religious sanctuaries and the siege of Gaza, what was expected from Obama were specific steps to end the racist colonialist policies of its ally. Each one of his predecessors from Lyndon Johnson (1967) to George W. Bush (2008) all affirmed unease with the building of settlements in the territories occupied in 1967. George H. Bush was the only one prepared to walk the walk when he brought the recalcitrant Yitshak Shamir to Madrid Conference in 1991 'kicking and screaming' by withholding a \$10 billion loan guarantee after the Israelis failed to freeze their settlement activity in the West Bank. Not only did this bring down the errant Shamir government, it moreover paved the way for the election of Yitzhak Rabin who campaigned on a platform of acceptance of the 'land for peace formula.'⁵

There are no signs that there would be any seismic changes towards Israel.

Can Obama follow in the footsteps of Bush [snr] or, will he continue to maintain the decrepit status quo of Bush [jnr]? Notwithstanding the brilliance of the Cairo address there are no signs that there would be any seismic changes towards Israel. Obama, it must be noted, failed to support the candidacy of Charles Freeman, a distinguished career diplomat, former ambassador and former Assistant Secretary of Defense, to be chair of the National Intelligence Council after his appointment was blocked by Steve Rosen, a former official of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) who only recently had charges of espionage as an Israeli spy dropped against him.⁶ Rosen along with Keith Weissman, were both charged under the Espionage Act, accused of providing journalists and Israeli diplomats with sensitive information they acquired from

discussions with American policy makers. If nothing else this episode shows that if Obama and his democratic team could not appoint their preferred chairman of the National Intelligence Council despite their massive electoral victory, how would they be able to stop the building and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian West Bank?

In as much as he wanted to see the backs of the Neo-cons, Obama still has to deal with them, not least in the person of Israel's incumbent Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In 1996 the Washington and Jerusalem based Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies' prepared the infamous 'Clean Break' report for Netanyahu.⁷ Titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," the report recommended that Israel repudiate the Oslo accords and seek permanent annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Significantly, the document revealed the extent to which the authors identified with Israel and espoused fanatic beliefs about Israel's divine "right to the land" and legitimacy of its settlements in the Occupied Territories.

True, Obama in Cairo distanced himself from the bellicose rhetoric of the Neo-cons. The simplistic ideologically driven discourse of 'us' and 'them', 'good' and 'evil', 'crusades' and 'war on terror' are all now relics of a bygone era. Nevertheless, the sentiment in the region is that it would take much more than rhetoric to change popular attitudes and perceptions toward America.

Everyone knows the history of Islam and the virtues of the *Qur'an*. Though applauded vigorously by his Cairo audience the wider Muslim world still remembers how often Tony Blair used to say he read the *Qur'an*. He then went on to lead a war on Iraq that left in its wake millions of refugees and civilian deaths. Obama could have apologised as a gesture of good will and show of change. But this was not to be and is not likely to happen. America never apologises.

The message from Cairo was that America is not at war with Islam but rather with the violent extremist Muslims bent on attacking American citizens, its interests and allies. Such innocent claims make perfect public

relations sense, though for the victims of America's wars, covert and overt, it changes nothing. As Obama spoke in Cairo, US drones were plying their trade over the skies of Afghanistan, rendering increasing numbers of orphans and widows. Meanwhile in Palestine, the same obtained. The Palestinian Authority (PA) forces responsible to US General Keith Dayton were hounding Hamas members and supporters. Why? One may ask. Is it because of suicide bombings or Qassam rockets that have so infuriated Western officials? Much of the evidence suggests that the campaign was instigated because of their opposition to the rule of Mahmud Abbas whose elected term has long expired but has still managed to cling on to power through American and Israeli patronage.

Try as he may Obama has great difficulty marrying US democratic values and its global interests. In Cairo, he urged the Muslim world to *fear Allah and speak the noble word of truth*.⁷ This certainly chimes well with every Muslim as it comes from the fountainhead of their faith – the *Qur'an*. However for the purposes of American interests and *realpolitik*, Washington continues to support the PA whose records of financial impropriety and mal-governance are notorious. Yet the US continues to dish out major contracts to Mahmud Abbas inc. to rehabilitate roads and boost America's image in the Occupied Territories. Not surprisingly, his speech coincided with a spate of articles about the vast wealth accrued by Abbas's sons.⁸

Significantly, the catastrophe in Gaza merited just one mention in Obama's two-hour speech; "the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security", he said. One day before the speech a seven-month-old baby died in the intensive care unit of the European Gaza Hospital in the Gaza Strip. His name was Zein Ad-Din Mohammed Zu'rob; he was suffering from a lung infection which was treatable. The president may not have heard of this specific case but surely he must know that hundreds more are threatened with a similar fate if Egypt maintains the closure of its Rafah Crossing. In Cairo, Obama had the perfect platform and opportunity to unequivocally call for an end to this siege. He chose instead

to speak of the consequence and ignore the cause.

WHAT NEXT?

Obama's address was made against the backdrop of a new common sense approach to the Muslim world. It is evidently not one rooted in dogma, hubris or an inflated conception of American military power. The new approach is expected to rely more on diplomatic and economic power while maintaining all military cards always on the table.

As he had made clear time and again, the invasion of Iraq was a mistaken war of choice. His ability to successfully close this dark chapter will require the goodwill if not active support, of key regional players, foremost of which is Iran. This would allow his administration to concentrate on Afghanistan, which he believes is a war of necessity. So far Obama remains unconvinced that Iran poses a serious threat to the US or Israel, despite claims by Netanyahu and his erstwhile collaborators in the war industry.

What about the Palestinians? For all their division and weakness they still hold the key to peace in the Middle East.⁹ Palestine therefore will remain the litmus test of Obama's commitment to change and a fresh start. Surely it is one thing for him to give a message of hope, but it is quite a different matter to agree on the specifics. In this regard, Netanyahu's proposed demilitarised state with no sovereign power over its borders, sea and air space and without Jerusalem as its capital, constitutes a veritable challenge to Obama as much as for the Palestinians.

Here the president will have to decide whether he wants to maintain the failed Israel-centric approach to peace or he wants to bring the Palestinian rights and aspirations into the equation. "A peace agreement that does not address central Palestinian concerns will lack the legitimacy in Palestinian public opinion that is necessary to make peace real...Unless the Palestinians get enough of what they want from the settlement, the Israelis will not get enough of the security they seek."¹⁰

Toward this end, Obama must end the old ideologically driven hostility toward

Hamas. Instead of relying on methods of repression and exclusion he must ensure that they are brought into the political process if only because of their popular appeal and established record of public service free of corruption. Of course, there will be no shortage of advisors lining up to assert that Hamas poses an "existential threat" to Israel? One school of thought that argues such threats should be dealt with before they mature rather than after. If the president buys into the former one may assume that the free reign given to Dayton and Abbas in the West Bank may be a part of this push. In other words the current campaign of arrests, detentions and extra-judicial killing may be that final attempt to eradicate the Islamic Movement before they become empowered in the West Bank.

Given the fact that the younger Bush administration had so recklessly squandered all the international goodwill there was for America after September 2001, Obama remains in dire need of a new legitimacy to carry forth his 'reformist' agenda. Still, it would take much more than rhetoric to gain the support and trust of the Muslim world. To set the ball rolling he should urgently oversee a process of rehabilitating the major international institutions such as the UN, the International Criminal Court and the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA). In 2007 Obama told the Chicago Council on Global Affairs it was America which built the institutions that took the world through the Cold War. Today, he observed, its foremost institution, the UN, is disparaged. "Reform of those bodies is urgently needed if they are to keep pace with the fast-moving threats we face." Since the US cannot overcome its global challenges on its own it would certainly be in its best interests to help reform and strengthen these institutions. He must, therefore, begin by ending America's long-standing abuse of the Security Council's veto in favor of its allies and ensuring a more effective, impartial and a truly global IAEA that exempts none from scrutiny.

In Cairo, Obama was the quintessential diplomat perhaps too much so as some saw the act as extremely patronising. He was

also the salesman, offering opportunities for economic cooperation, investment and training. In the months ahead he must conscientiously translate all the rhetoric into effective policies.

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Dr Daud Abdullah chairs the Gaza Coalition, which has been spearheading demonstrations, campaigns and public awareness about Israel's recent criminal onslaught in the Gaza Strip.

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Will Obama be Allowed to Deliver?

*ALAN HART

WHEN any American President has to make a decision about whether or not to try to advance the Middle East peace process, he asks himself a question: "Who should I be most afraid of - the Israelis and their lobby or the Arabs?"

My speculation is that President "Yes, we can" Obama was not too sure about the answer when he decided with words not yet deeds to take on Israeli Prime Minister "No, we won't" Netanyahu.

The good news about Obama is that he is, I believe, the first American President to fully understand the real dynamics of the making and sustaining of the conflict in and over Palestine that became the ZIONIST state of Israel.¹

The main reason why I am convinced that Obama really does understand who must do what and why for justice and peace in the Middle East is his friendship with a New York born, Palestinian-American historian Rashid Khalidi, who is also professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University and director of the Middle East Institute of Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. Rashid Khalidi and Barack Obama were good, close and dear friends. From time to time they dined with each other. It's more than reasonable to assume that during their private conversations over the years, Obama was fully informed about the Palestinian side of the story, including the fact - unknown to almost all Americans - that the Palestinians have been ready to accept a two-state solution for more than a quarter of a century.

One good indication of how troubled Zionism was by Khalidi's influence on Obama is in this fact. During Obama's run for the White House, the Zionist lobby and other supporters of Israel right or wrong tried to make his friendship with Khalidi a campaign issue. That friendship, Zionism asserted, was proof that a President Obama

would not pursue a pro-Israel policy.

But it wasn't only Obama who came under fire for his friendship with Khalidi. John McCain, the Republican front runner, was also attacked because, in the 1990's, he had served as the chairman of the International Republican Institute. What was so bad about that from the Zionism's point of view? Under McCain's chairmanship the institute provided grants of half a million dollars to the Centre for Palestinian Research Studies, to facilitate its work polling the views of the Palestinian people. The problem? Rashid Khalidi was a co-founder of the Centre.

To give an idea of how difficult to impossible it is for any American president to have a friendship or even a conversation with anybody Zionism regards as an enemy, and all the more so if the perceived enemy is a Jew, I'll relate a story from my book, *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*.

First I'll give you a name - that of Dr. Nahum Goldmann. He was one of the founding fathers of the Zionist lobby. After the obscenity of the Nazi holocaust, no individual worked harder and to better effect than Goldmann to unite world Jewry and secure American support for Zionism. When he died in 1982 he was given a state funeral in Israel because he was one of the five former presidents of the WZO - the World Zionist Organisation.

Behind closed doors the *same* Nahum Goldmann was disgusted by Zionism's collaboration with the Nazis and the WZO's policy of not even trying to resist Hitler. He also tried and failed to persuade Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, not to go ahead with a unilateral declaration of independence when the occupying British left Palestine. Goldmann said that such a decision by Israel's provisional government-in-waiting would amount to a declaration of war on the Arabs. At the time Goldmann

believed, and I think he was more right than wrong, that negotiations, which the Americans favoured and were seeking to advance, might well have resulted in Arab agreement to the establishment of a Jewish entity in Palestine, not a sovereign state but an entity which could evolve into a sovereign state if Zionism demonstrated that it posed no threat to the Arabs.

In the 1974 November-December edition of the *New Outlook* magazine published in Jerusalem, Goldmann wrote the following:

“If we had invested in the Arab problem a tenth of the energy, the passion, the ingenuity, the resourcefulness which we developed to gain the support of Britain, France, the US and Weimar Germany, our destiny in the development of Israel may have been quite different... We were not ready for compromises; we did not regard it (the majority Arab presence) as a major problem... We did not make sufficient efforts to get, if not the full agreement of the Arabs, at least their acquiescence to a Jewish state, which I think would have been possible. THAT WAS THE ORIGINAL SIN.”

On the one occasion I met and talked with Nahum Goldmann I was moved close to tears by the way he was trying to handle the guilt he felt on account of the injustice done Palestinians and the enormity of Zionism's crime. It was obvious that he was shocked to the core of his being by the way in which, for daring to speak the unspeakable, he had been vilified by the defenders of Zionism right or wrong. By hardcore Zionists he was never to be forgiven for refusing to suppress for all time his own moral sense of what was right and wrong. That he fought and won the battle with his own conscience made him, in my view, a man worthy of respect without limit by people of goodwill everywhere.

Nothing better illustrates the contempt Zionism's zealots had for Goldmann's goodness than Prime Minister Begin's response to his death. Begin could not avoid giving permission for a state funeral and Goldmann's burial on Mount Herzl; but he did refuse to attend the funeral. In his place Deputy Prime Minister Simcha Ehrlich said: “We regret that a man of so many virtues and abilities went the wrong way.” There could

not have been a more callous epitaph for the man who was owed so much by Israel and all Israelis.

Goldmann advocated the need for the creation of a Palestinian state.

But so far as Zionism's zealots were concerned, there was much more to Goldmann's “wrong way” than daring to suggest that Arab acquiescence to the creation of a Jewish entity in Palestine could have been secured in time without resort to war.

In his advancing years Goldmann advocated the need for the creation of a Palestinian state. He became the leading and most influential Jewish critic of Israel's continuing occupation of Arab land taken in 1967 and the illegal settlement of it. He utterly rejected the claim of Zionist bigots who insisted that Jews had to make the Greater Israel project a reality because God had promised them the land. Goldmann called this thesis “a profanation.”

Now to the real point, one of two, of this story.

There was a moment during Begin's first term as prime minister when Goldmann advised President Carter to “break the back” of the Zionist lobby in America. The President had to do that, Goldmann said, if he was to have the freedom to be serious about peace-making in the Middle East.

At the same time Goldmann's message to American Jewry was this: “By misusing its political influence, by giving the Begin administration the impression that the Jews are strong enough to force the American administration and Congress to follow every Israeli desire, they lead Israel on a ruinous path.”

Real point number two is this. When Goldmann realised that the Zionist lobby was breaking Carter's back, he requested another meeting with the President. Up to this moment, and because of his stature, all Goldmann had to do to get a meeting with the President, any president, was to pick up the phone and call the White House. But

this time, for the first time ever, he was not connected to the President and his call was not returned. Goldmann then asked somebody else who was about to meet with President to tell him that he, Goldmann, was requesting a meeting. When the message was delivered, Carter shook his head and said, sadly and with genuine regret: "I'm under enormous pressure from the Zionists. I can't meet with Dr. Goldmann again. It's impossible."

Near the end of his life, deeply troubled by the fact that the Zionist lobby had broken President Carter's back, Goldmann gave this warning: "It (the Zionist lobby) is slowly becoming a negative factor. Not only does it distort the expectations and political calculations of Israel, but the time may not be far off when American public opinion will be sick and tired of the demands of Israel and the aggressiveness of American Jewry."

President-elect Obama maintained a shameful silence during Israel's war on the Gaza Strip

Now let's fast forward to today. There are signs that a small but growing number of Americans, including some in Congress, are not only sick and tired of Israel's demands, but are understanding that support for Israel right or wrong is not in America's own best interests. If this shift in American public opinion develops and hardens, it will obviously assist President Obama *if* his commitment to work for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state is real.

Is it? Is Obama prepared to have a real fight with Netanyahu and all he represents and, if necessary, deliver a knock-out blow, or is he, Obama, only shadow boxing in the hope that such a play, together with his appealing rhetoric, will be enough to improve America's image in the Arab and wider Muslim world?

When Obama entered the White House I was not optimistic about the prospects for real change in America's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My initial thinking on what could really be expected from him with regard to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict was conditioned in part by Rashid Khalidi's

assessment. In the closing months of the race for the White House, his reading of his friend led him to say in private that we should "not expect anything of significance from President Obama in his first term." I recalled those words when President-elect Obama maintained a shameful silence during Israel's war on the Gaza Strip. In my view that offensive was a most shocking and awesome demonstration of Israeli state terrorism, war crimes and all.

Soon after Obama had settled into the White House, there were indications that he was intending to change America's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to do so without too much delay.

The first indication was his appointment of George Mitchell as his special envoy to the Middle East.² The second indication was, of course, Obama's demand that Israel stop all new settlement construction on the occupied West Bank, including what the Israelis disingenuously call "natural growth".

Now... if Rashid Khalidi's assessment of what could be expected of President Obama was correct at the time it made it, something changed to cause the new president to risk an early confrontation with Zionism. What could that something have been?

My guess is that in-coming President Obama took former President Carter's advice. Why? Shortly after Jimmy Carter ceased to be president, I was invited to meet with him at The Carter Center in Atlanta. The message from his intermediary invited me to bring my wife because Jimmy and Rosalind worked as a team. Jimmy was aware that I had been the linkman in a secret, exploratory dialogue between PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres, then the leader of Israel's main opposition Labour Party and who was hoping to win Israel's next election and deny Begin a second term as prime minister. Carter wanted me to brief him on my mission and, more generally, to add to his knowledge of reality on the Palestinian side.³

One of the many revelations in my book is that every American President has to put up with the presence in his White House inner circle of a Zionist minder. The minder's job is to keep the Zionist lobby informed of any policy initiatives the president might be

planning which would not be to Zionism's liking. That gives the lobby the necessary lead time to organise its stooges in Congress to block the president, or at least to make life very, very difficult for him.

On arrival at The Carter Center with my wife I discovered that Zionism's presidential minder system was still in place. Even out of office, Carter had to be watched and monitored. It was, in fact, Zionism's Carter Center minder who received my wife and I. He assumed that he was going to sit in on our conversation with the former president, but as the minder was closing the door on the five of us, Carter waved him away and said with good humor: "Your presence is not necessary, Ken. We can handle this alone." That was not, however, the last we saw of Ken. After we said goodbye to Jimmy and Rosalind, he insisted on taking us for an early dinner. His purpose was to pump me for information about what Carter had said. (*One implication was that Carter's office was not bugged*).

During our conversation with the former president and first lady, Carter said that any American president had only two windows of opportunity for confronting the Zionist lobby - the first nine months of his first term and the last year of his second term, if he had one.

Why only in the first nine months of the first term? The short answer - I knew it, Carter didn't have to spell it out - is that from about Month 10 the fund raising for the mid-term elections starts. That's the beginning of the period when many of those running for a seat in Congress must speak from Zionism's script and do Zionism's bidding if they want to guarantee the funds for their election victory and/or the delivery of organised Jewish votes in close election races... And soon after the mid-term elections are over, the fund raising for the next set of elections including the race for the White House begins.

That said I want to emphasize in passing that I do *not* blame the Zionist lobby for playing the game the way it does - using its virtually unlimited funds to buy American politicians and, when necessary, putting its awesomely effective machine to work to deliver Jewish votes. I put it this way in my

book:

It is the case that at critical moments the Zionist lobby was, and is, more the maker of U.S. policy for the Middle East than American Presidents and their administrations. But that is not the main point. It is that American politicians, including their Presidents, always had a choice. *They did not have to do the bidding of the Zionist lobby.* They chose to do it to serve their own short-term interests.

Zionist lobby had hijacked what passes for democracy.

Put another way, The Zionists are only playing the game, ruthlessly to be sure, by The System's own rules. I blame most of all an American decision-making process which, because of the way election campaigns are funded and conducted, was, and still is, so open to abuse and manipulation by powerful vested interests as to be in some very important respects undemocratic.

During lecture and debating tours across America, I found myself saying on public platforms that the Zionist lobby had hijacked what passes for democracy; but I always added that it could not have happened without the connivance and complicity of America's pork-barrel politicians, Democrats especially.

Back to Obama.... I am in no doubt that Carter did advise him that if he was to have even a chance of starting and advancing a real peace process, he had got to make some opening moves quickly.

As I see it, Obama's demand for a complete stop to all Israeli settlement construction on the occupied West Bank is evidence that he not only took Carter's advice, but that he *is* serious in his commitment to work for the creation of a viable Palestinian state. As I see it, the big question is not therefore whether Obama is shadow boxing or engaged in a real contest with Netanyahu. The big question is: Will Obama be allowed to win the fight, or, will he be obliged by Congress to throw in the towel even if he is ahead on points?

The problem of the moment is, of course,

that Netanyahu has said “No!” to Obama on the matter of ending all new settlement construction. That not only blocks any possibility of starting a real peace process, it puts Obama’s credibility with the Palestinians and the whole Arab and wider Muslim world on the line. If Netanyahu sticks to his “No”, Obama will have the choice of backing down (as almost all of his predecessors have almost always done at crunch times) or bringing real pressure to bear on Israel.

How Netanyahu will play his hand from here on is not difficult to imagine. Netanyahu will seek to avoid a major confrontation with Obama by dragging out settlement construction discussions for another three or four months. In doing that he’ll be acting on the assumption that if he can get to September or October without real pressure from Obama, the start of the fund raising for America’s next mid-term elections will put the Zionist lobby firmly in the driving seat, firmly enough to prevent Obama putting real pressure on Israel.

On the face of it, and if American politics follow their traditional course, Obama has only a few more months of his first term to put real pressure on Israel if that is what he wants to do.

If he [Obama] is to have more influence on Congress than the Zionist lobby at crunch times, he’s got to create a constituency of understanding.

That’s a reasonable assessment but it assumes that in September and October and thereafter, the Zionist lobby will still be as awesomely powerful as it has been for many years past. Will that necessarily be so? It is possible to make a case for saying *perhaps not*.

President Obama is not only the first American President to fully understand the real dynamics of the making and sustaining of this conflict, and to be sensitive to the real concerns and needs of both Jews and

Arabs (and other Muslims). He also knows that if he is to have more influence on Congress than the Zionist lobby at crunch times, he’s got to create a constituency of understanding – meaning more Americans are informed about who must do what and why for justice and peace in the Middle East. Put another way, Obama knows that the more Americans are informed, the less their elected representatives will be able to do Zionism’s bidding when doing it is not in American’s own best interests.

There was one particular passage in Obama’s Cairo speech that was intended to be a wake-up call to all of his fellow Americans, a presidential plea for them to open their eyes to what is really happening on the ground in Israel/Palestine. It was the passage in which he spoke, powerfully and with feeling, about the “humiliations” the Palestinians suffer on a daily basis as the consequence of “occupation”. Arabs and other Muslims everywhere didn’t need to be told that. But for many and probably most Americans, the notion of the Palestinians being under Israeli occupation would have been something of a revelation. (*I ought to be exaggerating to make a point, but I’m not. Many Americans have no idea about what has happened in Palestine.*)

With the mainstream American media still preferring to peddle Zionism’s propaganda assertions without challenge, there are obviously limits to how far Obama himself can go in opening the eyes of his fellow Americans to who must do what and why if hope for peace on terms virtually all Palestinians and most Arabs and Muslims everywhere could accept is not to be abandoned. But there are no limits to what others could do.

In my view one of the tragedies of the present is that the Arab regimes are not doing what they so easily could do to help create in America the constituency of understanding that would greatly improve Obama’s prospects of having more influence on Congress than the Zionist lobby at crunch time.

As some of us but sadly not many Americans know, there is a Saudi-inspired Arab peace plan on the table. It has been there since March 2002 when it was approved by the

Council of Arab States at a summit meeting in Beirut.

In return for a full Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territory occupied in the war of 1967, and Israel's acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem its capital, *Israel is offered a comprehensive and full and final peace and the complete normalisation of relations with the Arab world.* As the text of the peace plan puts it, the Arab countries would "consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended".

In fairness it has to be said that without clarification there is one point in the text of the Arab peace plan that makes it unacceptable to most Israelis and possibly/probably many other Jews. It's the paragraph that reads as follows:

"Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194."

That resolution, passed on 11 December 1948, called for the Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes provided they were prepared to live in peace with their neighbours, or be compensated for the loss of and/or damage to their homes if they chose not to return. Leaving aside the fact that Zionism's ethnic cleansing policy included the demolition of Palestinian homes to ensure that the refugees had no homes to return to, the problem for Israel with the letter and the spirit of Resolution 194 is this..... If all the Palestinian refugees wishing to return to their land did return, and if Israel inside its pre-1967 borders remained a democracy, there could come a time when Israel would be voted out of existence by its Arab majority.

On the face of it that alone is reason enough for Israel not to be interested in the Arab peace plan, but..... If Israel's leaders were seriously interested in peace on terms almost all Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims everywhere could accept, they, Israel's leaders, could have sought and obtained clarifications about how pragmatic

the Arabs are prepared to be in final, good faith negotiations. Israel's leaders could have discovered, and still could discover, that the pragmatic Arabs are prepared to accept that the return of the refugees will be limited to the territory of the Palestinian state. In other words: The matter of the return of the refugees does not have to be an obstacle to peace *unless Zionism wants it to be.*

If they were seriously interested in peace, Israel's leaders could also seek and obtain clarification of how pragmatic the Arabs are prepared to be in final negotiations on the status of Jerusalem. Yes, the Arab peace plan calls for East Jerusalem to be the capital of the Palestinian state but..... The Arabs are completely open to the idea of an undivided and united Jerusalem as the capital of two states. So the status of Jerusalem does not have to be an obstacle to peace *unless Zionism wants it to be.*

In reality, and as Israel's leaders could easily discover for themselves if they were seriously interested in peace, the Saudi-inspired Arab peace plan of March 2002 - actually no different from what Arafat was prepared to accept many years ago - offers a full and final peace on terms which any rational government and people in Israel would accept with relief.

Now a question: If Americans in sufficient numbers could be made aware of that reality, would President Obama's prospects for successfully confronting Netanyahu and the Zionist lobby be greatly improved? I think the answer is *yes*, and not least because AIPAC, the cutting edge of the Zionist lobby in America, actually speaks for not much more than one quarter of Jewish Americans. It's also worth noting that according to the latest poll by Real Clear Politics, Congress's approval rating is down to 36% and its disapproval rating up to 53.7%.

So another question: What could and should the Arab regimes do to help create a constituency of understanding in America that would enable President Obama to do what Nahum Goldmann advised President Carter to do - break the Zionist lobby's stranglehold on Congress?

The short answer is that they could throw money - tens and if necessary hundreds of

millions of dollars - at promoting their peace plan and understanding of it. Zionism buys American politicians. The Arab regimes (or agencies for them) could buy television, radio, newspaper and magazine advertising space.

The Arab regimes could even... do a Rupert Murdoch

Just imagine, for example, a whole page advertisement in the *New York Times*. It could include, top left, a picture of President Obama, and, top right, a picture of Arab leaders at the March 2002 summit in Beirut. The lead text could be something like "President Obama called for a two-state solution in June 2009. Arab leaders offered that to Israel in March 2002. Etcetera, etcetera."

The Arab regimes (or their respective agencies) could even buy television stations and newspapers - do a Rupert Murdoch. (*Right now, for example, CNN is in real financial trouble, as are very many of America's media institutions*).

Simply stated, there is no reason why most Americans should remain ignorant of the fact that so far as virtually all Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims everywhere are concerned, *Peace and Security for all is there for the taking* - if Israel stops behaving, or can be stopped from behaving, as a criminal state and complies with the requirements of international law, and ends its defiance of the will of the international community as expressed in UN resolutions.

Though Zionism does not want the world to know it, the reality I've just summarised includes the fact that Hamas is firmly on the record as saying that it could and would live with the two-state solution of the Saudi-inspired Arab peace plan. This is Hamas's real position because its leaders are not stupid. They don't like the two-state solution because it doesn't go far enough to right the wrong done to the Palestinians by Zionism. But Hamas's leaders know they would have no choice if Israel agreed to the creation of sovereign, independent Palestinian state in

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with either East Jerusalem as its capital or an undivided and united Jerusalem the capital of two states. Why would Hamas's leaders have no choice? Because the two-state solution is still what the vast majority of Palestinians are prepared to settle for. (*However for how much longer that will remain the case is a good question*).

The real positions of Hizbollah and Iran are also not what Zionism asserts them to be. In reality both Hizbollah and Iran are prepared to accept whatever the Palestinians accept.

I am sometimes asked why I think Netanyahu is giving propaganda and political priority to asserting that Iran is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons to destroy Israel. My answer is in two parts.

In order to justify its crimes - past, present and future - Zionism must have enemies it can present as representing a threat to Israel's existence. As I demonstrate in documented detail in my book, Israel's existence was never, ever, in danger from any combination of Arab military force. Not in 1948. Not in 1956. Not in 1967. And not even in 1973. Zionism's assertion to the contrary was the cover that allowed Israel to get away where it mattered most, in America and Western Europe, with presenting its aggression as self-defence, and itself as the victim when, actually, it was and is the oppressor. The more people become aware of this truth of history, the more Zionism needs, must have, a new enemy. It is Iran.

For the sake of argument, let's assume that Iran did possess a nuclear bomb or two or several. Would it then launch a FIRST STRIKE on Israel? Of course not! If it did the whole of Iran would be wiped off the face of the earth. No Iranian leadership will ever be that stupid. If Netanyahu and others of his kind really believe the nonsense they talk, they are deluded to the point of clinical madness.

The other reason why Netanyahu is playing up the alleged Iranian threat is to divert Obama's attention away from Israel/Palestine.

In conclusion, one should not take anything I have said to be an indication that I believe the Zionist lobby's stranglehold on Congress

will be broken. I am saying only that it *could* be broken *if* President Obama is assisted to create a constituency of understanding in America - understanding of the fact that support for Israel right or wrong is not in America's best interests; and understanding of the fact that the Zionist state Israel, not the Arabs or other Muslims, is the obstacle to peace.

>A PRESENTATION BY ALAN HART, DELIVERED IN LONDON ON 27 JUNE 2009 AND ORGANISED BY THE ISLAMIC FORUM OF EUROPE.

*Alan Hart is a former ITN and BBC Panorama correspondent and the author of *Arafat, Terrorist or Peacemaker?* (published in America as *ARAFAT*) and his pioneering *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*. In his reporting days for the ITN's *News at Ten*, Alan was credited by Maurice Wiggan of *The Sunday Times* with having pioneered a style of reporting that "takes viewers out of their armchairs" and "involves them in the real world".

ENDNOTES

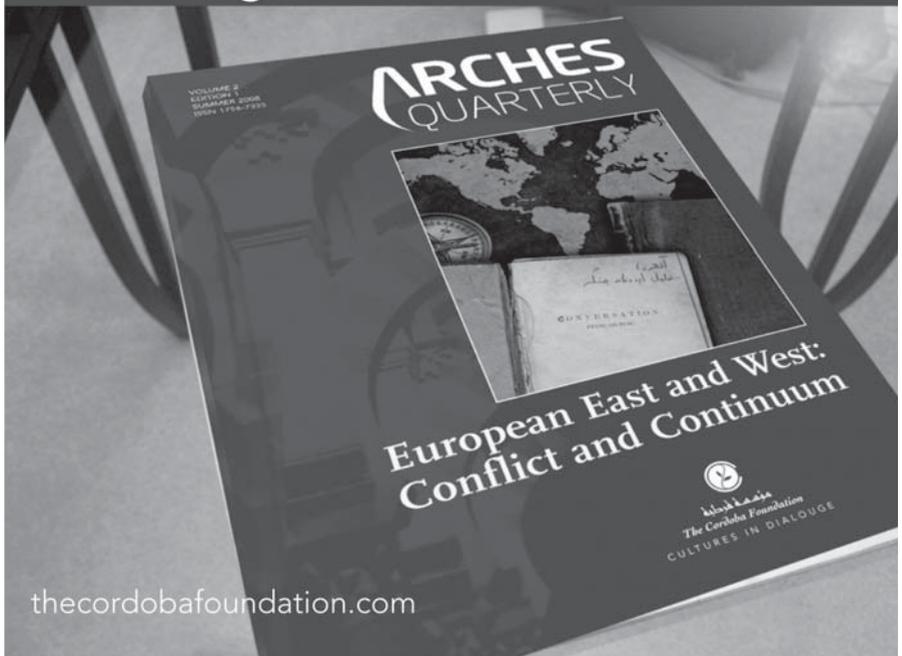
1 The word ZIONIST is emphasized here because Israel is Zionist not a Jewish state. If it was a Jewish state - by definition one which acted in accordance with the moral values and ethical principles of Judaism, it could not have behaved in the criminal way it has done since its creation, mainly by Zionist terrorism and ethnic cleansing, in 1948.

2 I took that appointment to mean that President Obama was not confident that he could rely on inputs from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton because she might be too much under the influence of the Zionist lobby. I now think Hillary had a sense of Obama's concerns, and that explains why, to date, she has reinforced Obama's positions which are not to the liking of Zionism's hawks in Israel and their lobby in America. And that in turn explains why Hillary is now being attacked, verbally, by the lobby

3 Incidentally, the full, inside story of my shuttle between Arafat and Peres is told in *The Blood Oath*, Chapter 35 of Volume Two of the UK hardback edition of my book, *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*.

Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews
by Alan Hart - see page 52 for further details.

Analysis of issues and developments in the arena of dialogue and civilizations





The Muslim Brotherhood and American Democracy: Could Obama Usher in New Hopes for Islamist Politics?

*SONDOS ASEM

IN his historical speech¹ to the Muslim World in June 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama pledged “to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear,” stereotypes that were largely fuelled due to the failed foreign policy of the previous administration led by the Republican President George W. Bush.

One of the key problems with the Bush administration’s approach towards the Middle East was the so-called freedom agenda, with its lofty rhetoric about U.S. commitment to democracy promotion in the region as an essential component of its War on Terror – and its lack of tangible steps that would indicate this agenda was not “a self-interested crusade”² as was eventually proved. This policy was scheduled to entertain two main pillars, as one report points out:³ *first*, establishing a model democracy in Iraq supported by the American military occupation of the country, and *second*, applying, at least for a time, pressure on some friendly authoritarian regimes to democratise, or at least take meaningful measures to open up their political systems.

“The so-called freedom agenda was a failure of both conceptualization and implementation”, says Brian Kautlis in his latest Century Foundation report, “an overly militarised approach to promoting democratic reform and an effort that failed to match the lofty rhetoric of President Bush with actions on the ground that reflected democratic values. As a result, the region has not become more democratic because of U.S. actions than it was in the previous decade.”⁴

Most opponents of the Bush administration’s foreign policy vehemently criticised its unconditional support to authoritarian regimes in the region, particularly the Egyptian regime, in the face of pro-democracy and popular forces calling for genuine reforms. Although the

U.S. initially exerted some pressure on the Egyptian regime in the year 2005 leading to the so-called Arab spring where the political life in Egypt experienced tentative opening, the situation soon regressed to an even more despotic atmosphere as U.S. calls for reform significantly toned down by the year 2006. The crackdown did not exclude anyone, but the government’s chief target was the Muslim Brotherhood – Egypt’s largest opposition group.

America is in dire need to restore the credibility it has lost during the Bush era. Engaging the Muslim Brotherhood would be an important first step

The lesson therefore would be that Obama’s rhetoric about promoting democracy must be accompanied with actions on the ground that would reassure the Egyptian and Arab public about the truthfulness of America’s endorsement of democratic values. America is in dire need to restore the credibility it has lost during the Bush era. Engaging the Muslim Brotherhood would be an important first step in that direction.

A recent poll conducted by worldpublicopinion.org⁵, published one day before Obama’s speech, revealed that 75 percent of the 600 Egyptians surveyed agree that the Muslim Brotherhood believes that democracy is the best type of political system, 56 percent saw that as the Muslim Brotherhood has participated in elections it has found an acceptable way to blend Islamism and democracy, while 60 percent thought that the government in Egypt should be based on a form of democracy that is unique for Islamic countries.

While Obama devoted the fourth issue in his speech to addressing democracy in the Muslim world, there has been no direct mention of moderate Islamists as one important pillar of democratic reform, as the above survey suggests. However, Obama's remark that "each nation gives life to [the principle of democracy] in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people" is greatly compatible with what moderate Islamists are calling for, namely overall reform based on Islamic traditions and principles as the major source of Muslim nations' cultures.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Founded in Egypt, The Muslim Brotherhood (also referred to as the Brotherhood) is considered to be the world's largest, most popular and most influential Islamic movement. It adopts a moderate understanding of Islam and embraces values of freedom, democracy, and human rights, considering them fundamental principles of Islam. Most of the terrorist acts in the past several decades, including 9-11, have been condemned by the Brotherhood as criminal practices contrary to the peaceful nature of Islam. The use of violence to reach power is rejected by Brotherhood literature, while peaceful and gradual change is viewed as the only acceptable way of reform in Muslim-majority countries.

Imam Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood founder, sought to find solutions to the chronic problems facing the Muslim nation at the outset of the twentieth century through the revival of Islamic principles and values. Many Muslim countries at the time, including Egypt, were subject to colonial rule, which was seen as the major reason for weakening these countries and exploiting their wealth. Al-Banna felt that this "Islamic awakening" should be reached by three main organisational functions: *Tarbiyya* (education), *Dā'wa* (outreach or invitation to Islam), and politics. The educational function refers to the moral, religious, and administrative upbringing and training that is obligatory to all members of the organisation. The second important function is the *Dā'wa* that is not exclusive to members of the

movement. It prepares the Muslim individual to be able to disseminate the "comprehensive understanding of Islam" among all members of the society, and also spread this ideology on regional and international levels through dialogue. This second function involves calls for reforming the society through spreading positive values and raising the awareness of people to the fact that the national interest must be placed above all other interests, thus establishing a coherent and unified public opinion that would eventually be able to address any challenges facing the country, and perform the third function, namely political participation.

The political function is concerned with public policy issues as well as international affairs. It reflects the Brotherhood's involvement with national and international concerns through constitutional and legal channels. A division of power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government is necessary, as well as respect for plurality, freedom of speech, and transparency of elections as prerequisites for an effective democracy. Rotation of power (*tadawul al-sulta*) and the principle that the people are the source of authority (*al umma masdar al sulutat*) are two essential pillars of Brotherhood's political thinking.

The three functions are complementary and interdependent. According to Mohamed Habib, the Brotherhood deputy leader, "the Brotherhood will not be qualified to compete on power without a vibrant and well-informed public opinion that would be able to impose its free will and take part in determining the future of the country."⁶ Such public opinion, he added, would be aware of its political and civil rights, and thus could grant victory to any political faction through the ballot box and could later hold politicians into account should they deviate from their promises upon which they were elected.

At present, the Muslim Brotherhood is the largest opposition group in Egypt with 20 percent of the seats in Parliament, which could have been more if not for widespread electoral fraud and voter intimidation in the last two rounds of voting in the 2005 legislative elections. Its members are

routinely arrested and harassed by security services and detained without trial. Several of its leaders are behind bars, including its chief strategist and Deputy General Guide Khairat El Shatir⁷, on charges widely acknowledged to be politically motivated and aimed at suppressing the government's most ardent opponents. Technically, the movement remains banned, but its members run for parliamentary elections as independents, though voters are usually aware of their Islamist background.

The Brotherhood is particularly popular because of its Islamic rhetoric⁸ and the wide array of social and charity services they offer to less privileged Egyptians. Muslim Brotherhood MPs have been the most outspoken critics of corruption and authoritarianism in the Egyptian Parliament and much of their agenda has been devoted to stressing the need for good governance, accountability, rule of law, equality, and development. Inside the parliament, divisive religious or cultural discourse has been evaded in favour of general interest issues such as unemployment, housing, wages, and criticising the government's handling of threats such as avian and swine flues, as well as its responsibility for the ferry disaster and the more recent Doweiga rockslide with all their respective repercussions.

Critics of the Muslim Brotherhood mainly questioned their commitment to democracy, and whether it is for them a "one man, one vote, one time" process that is endorsed solely to reach power. The position towards Copts and women is viewed by some as illiberal, while many fail to differentiate between them and violent extremists such as al-Qaeda. Further, many Western intellectuals and policy makers have doubts about the Brotherhood's stance towards the West, and whether they view the Western civilisation as fundamentally at odds with Islam and therefore must be considered an enemy.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE UNITED STATES

Unlike radical extremists, the Muslim Brotherhood has always denounced anti-Americanism while strenuously opposing U.S. policies towards the Muslim world.

The West... has lumped all Islamist movements in one box, thus failing to make a fair distinction...

These sentiments have been manifested in several Brotherhood documents⁹ promoting a differentiation between how Muslims feel towards the U.S. administration, and how they should deal with the American people on basis of mutual understanding and respect. An internal Brotherhood initiative titled "Re-Introducing the Muslim Brotherhood to the West"¹⁰ was drafted in the year 2004 for the purpose of identifying mutual misconceptions between Islamists and the West and how they can be overcome. According to the document, both the Muslim Brotherhood and the West are in dire need for dialogue so as to remove these misconceptions. The West, the document says, particularly after 9-11, has lumped all Islamist movements in one box, thus failing to make a fair distinction between radical extremists who claim to be Islamists; al-Qaeda is one of them, and political Islam activists like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other non-violent Islamic organisations in the world who endorse democracy and peaceful reform as the means for change, and who are precisely pro-dialogue and engagement of "the other", including the West. On the other hand, Islamists need to confront stereotypes about the West among Muslims, and themselves avoid policies or statements that reflect these stereotypes or enhance them.

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION:

It is a fact that U.S. democracy-promotion efforts in the Middle East have been greatly hindered by what Shadi Hamid¹¹ terms the "Islamist dilemma"; a fear that any democratic opening will only benefit Islamist-leaning parties, whose interests are opposed to those of the U.S. or the democratic world. At the same time, the United States has been actively supporting authoritarian regimes in the region -- not least the Egyptian regime, affording them what can only be described as a *carte blanche*

for their constant suppression of opposition groups with Islamic background such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In “the worst period of anti-Brotherhood repression since the 1960s,” according to Hamid, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice waived a \$100 million congressionally mandated reduction of military aid to Egypt. This came after a brief period of democratic opening that started with the year 2005. For the first time, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak agreed to hold multi-candidate presidential elections instead of the uncontested referendums that always garnered him an almost 100% of the votes. Although marred by enormous irregularities and vote rigging, these elections as well as the 2005 parliamentary elections, were considered by many, including Washington, as a notable improvement in the Egyptian political life. However, the success of the Muslim Brotherhood (followed by the election of Hamas in Palestine) ostensibly sent shockwaves through U.S. policy making circles, urging a retreat from democratisation calls that left Arab and Muslim public opinion distrustful of U.S intentions.

67 percent of Egyptians believe that America is playing a “mainly negative” role in the world, while 48 percent believe that “to weaken and divide the Islamic world”

Muslim Brotherhood leaders¹² voiced their concern that the modest opening of the year 2005 was no more than a game played by the Egyptian regime to demonstrate to Washington and the West that the democracy they are calling for will ultimately lead to the victory of Islamists. “We reject any attempt by the Egyptian government to use the Muslim Brotherhood as a bogymen,” Habib told the author, “and we also reject the U.S. administration’s unconditional moral and material support to autocratic regimes.” This perception—that the United

States is aligned with authoritarian regimes at the expense of the people’s interests has resulted in an unprecedented erosion of U.S. credibility in the region, to the extent that the aforementioned worldpublicopinion.org survey showed that 67 percent of Egyptians believe that America is playing a “mainly negative” role in the world, while 48 percent believe that “to weaken and divide the Islamic world” is “definitely” among the goals of America. This requires serious efforts from all sides to repair the situation, since it only nourishes radical extremists and threatens the interests of all parties involved.

The first most important step for the U.S. in its democracy promotion efforts is to be realistic. Reaching out to secular liberals alone, as the only hope for advancing democracy in Egypt and other Muslim countries, is no longer feasible. American policy makers and pro-democracy activists are aware that these forces currently hold out little hope for any meaningful reform, with the broad-based support enjoyed by Islamist parties throughout the region. Part of the solution could be to refrain from exclusive support to one faction over another. One analyst¹³ advised the Obama administration not to “personalise” the democratisation effort: “the outsized attention to (the two cases of Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Ayman Nour) highlights the neglect of thousands of other cases. Such narrow focus on a few high profile cases risks fuelling the perception that U.S. priorities are based on the specific personalities involved, rather than a principled and comprehensive stand against the policy of jailing and torture of political dissidents.”

Further, democracy assistance programs, administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), should not be exclusive to members of parliament affiliated with the ruling party (NDP), but should also include Brotherhood and other non-NDP members of parliament, to foster U.S. credibility.

DIALOGUE

Engaging in constructive dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood is probably the most effective strategy to resolve “the

Islamist Dilemma.” When asked about the potential of dialogue with the U.S., many Brotherhood leaders answer both with caution and scepticism. Mohamed Habib argued that the Muslim Brotherhood is not against dialogue, although he insisted that should such a dialogue exist, it must be through official channels. This means that dialogue with Brotherhood parliamentarians is the only available solution.

But why is engagement a necessity in the first place? Improving credibility would be one simple answer. However, dialogue is important to restore mutual understanding as well. The United States might have some concerns because of the ideological background of the Muslim Brotherhood or its positions towards minorities and women for example, or its genuine adherence to democracy. Given the U.S. respect to pluralism and democracy, this is not a sensible reason for exclusion. On the contrary, it should be a reason for a more constructive dialogue that would clarify all these issues. Also, it makes strategic sense for the U.S. to engage the Brotherhood as non-violent Islamists in its fight against the extremists Obama referred to in his Cairo speech. There has to be a clear-cut distinction between moderate Islamists like the Brotherhood and those groups which indulge in killing innocent civilians in the name of religion. It should also be noted that the more Islamists are engaged, the more they moderate their stances and shift more towards openness and acceptance of the other.¹⁴ On the other hand, there is obviously a commitment on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood to engage in dialogue as many of their statements¹⁵ indicate.

But when asked about what the Muslim Brotherhood believes the U.S. can effectively do to activate its democracy promotion agenda, the Brotherhood Deputy Leader said “what we want Washington to do is to simply refrain from its moral support to the Egyptian regime, and be neutral and fair. We want nothing more.”

ENDNOTES

1 To read the full speech, see this link http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/

2 Brian Kautlis, “Democracy Promotion in the Middle East and

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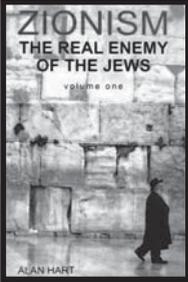
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Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews by Alan Hart

Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews is a journey through the propaganda lies and truth of history.

When the citizens of nations know the difference between Zionism's propaganda lies and the documented facts and truth of history, they will be empowered, if they care, to demand that their governments act to end Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. And that's why Alan Hart devoted more than five years of his life to researching and writing this book - to empower citizens to play their necessary part in stopping the countdown to catastrophe for all.

Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews is a complete re-writing of the history of the making and sustaining of the conflict, replacing Zionist mythology with events as they actually happened. The events are given global context to enable all readers to see how all the pieces of the most complex and complicated jig-saw puzzle fit together.

The insight Alan brings to the pages of this book is assisted by revelations from private conversations he had over the years with leaders on both sides of the conflict, including the two greatest opposites in all of human history - Golda Meir, Mother Israel, and Yasser Arafat, Father Palestine.

Written in his down-to-earth, television reporting and conversational style, the book reads more like a novel than a conventional history. It will keep you turning the pages wanting to know more.

It has two central themes.

One is why Western support of Israel right-or-wrong has made the whole Arab and wider Muslim world an explosion of anger and humiliation waiting for its time to happen.

The other is how Israel, the child of Zionism, became its own worst enemy and a threat not only to the peace of the region and the world, but also to the best interests of Jews everywhere and the moral integrity of Judaism itself.

The key to understanding, the author writes, is knowledge of the difference between Judaism and Zionism. He explains: "Judaism is the religion of Jews, not 'the' Jews because not all Jews are religious. Like Christianity and Islam, Judaism has at its core a set of moral values and ethical principles. Zionism is Jewish nationalism in the form of a sectarian, colonial enterprise which, in the process of creating and then expanding in the Arab heartland a state for some Jews, made a mockery of Judaism's moral values and ethical principles and demonstrated contempt for international law and the human and political rights of the Palestinians. That's why, for example, Nazi holocaust survivor Dr. Hajo Meyer titled his latest book *An Ethical Tradition Betrayed, The End of Judaism.*"

The author adds: "Supporters of Israel right or wrong conflate Judaism and Zionism because the assertion that they are one and the same enables them to claim that criticism of the Zionist state of Israel is a manifestation of anti-Semitism. Often, almost always these days, the accusation that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitism is false. And this false charge is the blackmail card played to silence criticism of, and suppress informed and honest debate about, the Zionist state and its policies. The reality is that Judaism and political Zionism are total opposites, and knowledge of the difference is the key to understanding two things. One is why it is perfectly possible to be passionately anti-Zionist - opposed to Zionism's colonial enterprise - without being in any way, shape or form anti-Semitic (anti-Jew). The other is why it is wrong to blame all Jews everywhere for the crimes of the hard core Zionist few in Palestine that became Israel."

Author's Appeal...

"The Zionist lobby in all of its manifestations is putting shocking and awesome effort into limiting distribution of this book and suppressing the informed and honest debate it was written to promote. The less this attempt to keep the truth of history hidden is successful, the more likely it will be that peace can have a last chance."

Consider not only buying this book for yourself but as a gift for others, to assist the mobilisation of people power (democracy in action) for justice and peace.

Available in good bookshops



Future Prospects for Islam and Democracy: A View from the Maldives

*DR AHMED SHAHEED - MALDIVES MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMPATIBILITY OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

How one views the title of this presentation, future prospects for Islam and democracy, depends, in part, on the timeframe that one is referring to. Viewed in the long-term, in the light of attempts to reform and modernise Islamic societies over the past 200 years, one could say that the prospects are good. However, looking at more recent history, I cannot deny that I harbour serious concerns. Here, I refer in particular to the events unfolding along the notorious arc of crisis extending from The Sudan through Somalia to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and perhaps beyond.

However there have also been a few bright spots, here and there, which are a source of hope, such as Indonesia, Morocco, Turkey, and perhaps my own country, the Maldives.

I do not wish to delve too much today into theoretical and philosophical debates on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. As John L. Esposito and John O. Voll point out, the relationship between Islam and democracy is a complex one, with a very broad range of views.¹ There are those, both in the West and in the Islamic world, that reject outright any notion of compatibility between Islam and democracy. In fact, some of them view Islam and democracy as diametrically opposed to each other, and many of them see or seek a colossal confrontation between the West and Islam. I might add that sadly there are many in my own country who subscribe to this view.

Others hold views directly opposed to the above - that Islam is fundamentally opposed to autocracy and dictatorship and, moreover, that Islam requires a democratic political order.

By and large, most people fall somewhere in between - yearning, above all, for peace, progress, prosperity and human security. To

many, the concepts of shoorā, ijma, and ijti-had, as well as the Charter of Madina, offer a sound and sufficient basis to embrace liberal democracy. Indeed, democracy and the belief in the importance of human rights are not the sole realm of one civilisation or belief system. Human rights are universal. The right to lead one's own life, to fulfil one's own potential, to make one's own choices - including the right to choose one's own government: these are not values that are restricted to one religion and unattainable to others. They are values and hopes that exist in all of us, irrespective of where we were born or which faith we belong to.

Notwithstanding such views, democracy has so far not put down extensive roots in the Muslim world. More often than not, where democratic stirrings have materialised, hostility towards Western values have only become amplified, producing what was termed by Geneive Abdo as "the Islamist dilemma".² This generates fears that Islamist parties embrace democracy as a tactical instrument to gain power and barricade themselves into office.

Political Islam... [viewed as] "one-man-one-vote-one-time" is quite widespread

Clearly, the fear that what political Islam seeks is "one-man-one-vote-one-time" is quite widespread. This fear is in part related to that fact that although modern Islamic political philosophy embraces democratic concepts, democracy is still not entrenched in modern Islamic political thought and practice. So the challenge, even in those countries where Islamist parties have participated and achieved success in democratic engagement, is to ensure that pluralism, rule of law and

respect for human rights are sustained and safeguarded.

The issue nonetheless, is not only with the ideological viewpoints of radical Islam. There are other significant reasons why in so many parts of the Islamic world, democracy is seemingly beyond reach. Of course there are many popular answers: from colonial experiences to resource endowment to levels of economic and societal development. In my view, the resurgence of political Islam and responses to it, prolonged conflicts, terrorism and rising tensions and the geopolitical backdrop have clearly affected the stirrings for freedom and democracy in the Muslim world.

Against this background, the fresh perspective that the new US administration brings will clearly impact on the prospects for democracy and development in the Muslim world. It would be fair to say that after eight years of the rather aggressive promotion of democracy by the US, the world now has a chance to take a different route — one that listens rather than dictates, one that offers respect rather than self-righteousness.

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE MALDIVES

A vital question before us now is what kind international engagement works best? Under what conditions does democracy promotion result in a democratic transition? Such transitions are very few and far between in the Muslim world, but one such example is the Maldives. Let me draw some insights from the Maldives experience, and at the same time look at the prospects for democratic consolidation. In other words, what are the future prospects for democracy in the Maldives? How can we avoid atrophying to one-man-one-vote-one-time? As in the broader global context, there are some very positive trends in the Maldives and there are also very disturbing trends, especially with regard to democratic stability and the spectre of Jihadism.

Let us first look at how the Maldives achieved a democratic transition last year, focussing on the interplay between domestic and international stakeholders, and then highlight the areas in which further effort

is necessary to consolidate democracy. In 2008, I made a presentation to a conference, drawing the audience's attention to the heroic efforts being made in the Maldives to achieve a democratic transition.³ I warned of the consequences of failure - the further radicalisation of Islamists. As you would be aware, a combination of factors pushed the reform process forward, and a peaceful regime change was secured. However I was wrong about a probable Islamist dilemma: the Islamist parties performed very poorly in the elections.

THE LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM

Five years ago, in late 2003 to early 2004, the Republic of Maldives, a small island nation of approximately 300,000 Sunni Muslims, sat at an historic crossroads, with the first stirrings of a home-grown pro-democracy movement. Behind us were centuries of unchallenged authoritarian rule, coexisting with Islamic practices that were moderate and tinged with Sufi traditions. Religion was not part of the political discourse. However, since 1978, with a new government in office, Salafist Islam began to creep into the political agenda, replacing the old Sufi traditions, and was deployed as a political tool to entrench a new ruling elite and discredit old and new rivals.

In late 2008, the Maldives achieved a peaceful and smooth transition to full democracy

By 2004, the regime had been in office for twenty-six unbroken years. Power was concentrated within a small circle of family-members, friends and long-term associates of the leadership who controlled the economic and political life of the country, ruthlessly crushing any nascent signs of non-conformist thinking, dissent or popular opposition.⁴ Islam was used as a vehicle to deny the separation of powers, to suppress dissent and reject pluralism, and curtail the freedom of expression. However, it was clear that all these were political expedients, not the result of an ideo-

logical commitment to an anti-Western programme, as the regime nursed and nurtured a lucrative tourism industry which is today among the most successful in the world.

Today, half a decade after the first stirrings of people power, a remarkable transformation has taken place. In late 2008, the Maldives achieved a peaceful and smooth transition to full democracy following the country's first-ever multiparty elections. And it has not been a simple regime change. The transition has been part of a wider reform programme with an express commitment to liberal democracy.⁵ The International Bill of Rights is now fully reflected in our new liberal democratic Constitution, adopted last year and which also guarantees an effective separation of powers and established a range of independent oversight bodies, including a national human rights commission. In 2003, political parties were considered incompatible with the law; the courts were under the control of the Executive; there were no independent media; freedoms of speech and association were strictly curtailed; and civil society was virtually non-existent. Today, there are several fully functioning political parties, an independent judiciary with a new Supreme Court at its apex, a free and vibrant press with a wide-array of private newspapers, magazines, television stations and radio networks, and finally an emerging NGO community covering issues as diverse as children's rights, government corruption and environmental protection.⁶

HOW WAS THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION ACHIEVED?

The Maldives was able to achieve this remarkable transformation due to a number of factors. One of the most important was the conversion of the incumbent leadership, by a series of pull and push factors, to the view that self-preservation and regime sustenance would be better served by moving from an autocratic to a democratic system. In other words, the regime saw incentives in re-branding itself by moving towards liberalisation and democratisation.

There can be no doubt that the international community, usually led by the United Nations, European Union, the UK, and

the US played a key role in the Maldives' democratic transition. At crucial moments, it provided much-needed political leverage, encouragement, technical advice and financial support. Cooperation was extended to all aspects of the reform programme, from the drafting of the new Constitution, to the development of key secondary legislation, to the establishment of independent oversight bodies, to the evolution of a free press and an active civil society, as well as supporting dissidents being persecuted by the government.

Looking at why international cooperation was effective and successful in the case of the Maldives is vital not only for students of Maldivian politics and history, but also for the wider international community as it looks at ways to promote democratic values and individual rights around the world – including in the Islamic world. The West and the Islamic world often appear to be talking past each other on questions of democracy, with many expressing a mutual commitment to civil and political rights while stressing that Islam and democracy are fully compatible, but at the same time seemingly unable to translate this common worldview into anything resembling a common agenda for action. The Maldives case perhaps offers some useful lessons. How did a 100% Muslim country, acting in tandem with the international community, able to peacefully turn centuries of autocratic rule into something resembling a functioning liberal democracy?

Lessons learnt from the Maldives experience can be roughly divided into those pertinent to the reforming country, and those applicable to the international community (especially, in this case, the West).

In terms of the former, a first lesson is that there must be a strong domestic constituency for reform — a home-grown pro-democracy movement, spanning both government and non-government sectors. In the Maldives, the impetus for change stemmed from an interplay between popular agitation for reform outside the government, and a committed core of reformists within it. Both were mutually-dependent. Without a pro-democracy movement to provide a focus for and amplify popular discontent, it is unlikely that reformists within the system would have been

brought to centre stage by the ageing leadership. Similarly, without energetic and committed advocates within the Government, it is likely that the President would have been persuaded by conservatives to bide his time and then revert to politics-as-usual. Besides, the one-point agenda of direct regime change advocated by the pro-democracy movement contrasted sharply with the more nuanced approach of the reformists, who provided a holistic agenda of openly embracing international human rights safeguards and a fast-track pursuit of domestic legal and political development.⁷

A second lesson is that, for the above-mentioned interplay to be effective, the ultimate arbiter of power in the country – in this case President Gayoom – must have reason to be amenable to the pressures and advice emanating from reformists. In the case of the Maldives, this amenability stemmed both from personal and environmental factors. At a personal level, it seems clear that President Gayoom's Islamic worldview, unlike that of many of his close associates and colleagues, did not provide any deep-seated philosophical antipathy to democracy or human rights.

Rather, the lack of any tangible progress in these fields during his presidency were, perhaps, the result of practical considerations or crude *realpolitik* – namely a preference for the retention of power over and above a wish to pursue politically-risky reform, allied with a sense (on his part) or self-fulfilling prophecy that there was no serious desire for reform on the part of the society-at-large.⁸ With respect to the environmental factors, what is apparent from the Maldives case is that, for reform to occur, the arbiter of power must both be pushed into a corner (by popular discontent allied to international pressure) and simultaneously be offered a way out of that corner (by trusted advisors) with the possibility not only of saving face but of actually or potentially strengthening his power base and securing a long-term legacy.

LESSONS FOR DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

What lessons can we extract for the international community, namely the West? In my opinion, the first lesson is that Western

governments and international organisations must be willing to accept the possibility that governments in the Islamic world *can* develop a genuine commitment to change. Just because a government has ruled autocratically for a period of time does not automatically mean that it is irrevocably opposed to democracy. Rather, it could, at least in some instances, mean that the conditions previously were not ripe for change to take root and flourish.

A government... ruled autocratically for a period of time does not automatically mean that it is irrevocably opposed to democracy

In the two years following the 2004 riots, for example, the European Commission and the European Parliament, together with a number of Member States, consistently refused to believe that the reforms being promoted by the Maldives Government were anything other than a smokescreen or delaying tactic. In this regard, the individuals responsible for relations with the Maldives in these institutions were clearly affected by media and NGO stereotypes about governance in Muslim countries and in small developing nations. This lack of trust or belief in the reality of change is extremely important as, if left unchecked it can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Second, and linked to the first lesson, is the importance of Western governments and NGOs disavowing their tendency to view a country through a monochrome lens that neatly divides domestic constituencies into right or wrong, good or bad. According to this worldview, Western stakeholders clearly, throughout the four-year Reform Agenda, saw the Maldives Government as a single uniform entity which had been forced into change by unrelenting domestic and international pressure and would, as soon as possible, revert to type. On the other hand, the opposition movement was seen as unreservedly praiseworthy, as brave human rights de-

fenders who wanted nothing more than to assert the democratic and human rights of the people. The Maldives case clearly shows that both these assumptions were overly simplistic and moreover, intrinsically unhelpful.

If we look at the Government – especially the President and his Cabinet - it is clear that like any political entity, it was not a coherent and uniform whole, rather a collection of different and competing individuals and alliances with specific interests, agendas and beliefs. This was especially the case after the 2005 Cabinet reshuffle which, for the first time in President Gayoom's term in Office, saw a significant shift from older conservatives to younger liberal reformists. From this time, the Government might best be described as two fairly evenly matched sides competing for influence with a President who sensed that reform was necessary but was still open to persuasion from either group. What was unique to the past four years was that reformists within the establishment systematically dismantled the structures of repression, shifted the political paradigm while enlisting international support and emboldening the pro-democracy activists. They, more than anybody else, sought that reform went hand in hand with regime change, often manoeuvring between hardliners in the government as well as hardliners in the Opposition.

Turning to the unofficial opposition, especially the Maldives Democratic Party, it is clear that while they were collectively driven by a determination to promote individual rights, including civil and political rights, this collective face masked major differences of emphasis within the movement itself. There were those who opposed the regime for ideological reasons and wanted political reforms; others harboured grievances against the government for a variety of personal reasons. In short, while some worked in the common interest, others clearly operated in self-interest. The significance of this was that the former wanted change, irrespective of where the momentum for change emanated (e.g. irrespective of whether people inside or outside the Government were seen as the main drivers); the latter viewed the reform programme as an impediment to their quest for personal redress and saw reform as block-

ing opportunity for regime change.

And yet, for much of the time between 2004 and 2008, the West, by and large, remained largely or wholly ignorant of these crucial nuances – a fact undoubtedly exacerbated by the lack of any Western embassy or mission in the Maldives itself. In the view of key governments and NGOs from the West, the Government was the problem and the opposition the solution; the Government was a barrier to change and the opposition the agent of change; the Government was an autocracy and the opposition a freedom movement; the opposition was a group with whom they could work, the Government was a body with whom they could not.

The West's failure to understand the dynamics at play between and within political groups in the Maldives undermined the democracy movement on two counts. Firstly, the Maldives government manifested itself to weaken reformers in the Cabinet, by failing to acknowledge important policy shifts engendered by those reformers at personal political risk; while at the same time strengthening conservatives whose obstructionism was seized on by the West as evidence of the Government's insincerity, and who were then able to use those negative comments as ammunition to convince the President that he was fighting a pointless and ultimately a losing battle against world opinion.

Secondly, with regard to the opposition, the West's myopia reduced the need for the opposition at crucial moments in the reform programme, to switch from solely an activist organisation to something resembling a coherent political movement that could effectively support change emanating from within the Government, and be well-placed to offer a realistic alternative to the Government in the future. It also meant that those in the opposition who actively obstructed or at least failed to cooperate within reformists within the Government, rarely, if ever, felt any real pressure from the international community to develop a national agenda other than regime change.

The failure to promote a responsible and mature opposition nearly resulted in the West coming to terms with the *ancien régime*, once it became clear that the opposition could not

achieve unity and that the old guard was seen to be delivering the reform agenda. In short, Western interlocutors appeared resigned to accepting the devil they knew over the devil they did not, leading to the failure, through the fragmentation of the opposition, to dislodge the *ancien regime*.

A third lesson for the international community relates to the importance of shifting, in a timely manner, from a posture of criticism and advocacy, to one of engagement and support. It is clear in the Maldives case that international outcry and, in some cases, threats did play an important role in shifting the balance of power in the Government towards reform. However, the international community was then very slow to understand their success and to build on it by offering support and, linked to this, by increasing engagement with the Maldives (as a way of better understanding the above-mentioned nuances in the country and as a better way of leveraging its influence). The EU's stance was particularly notable in this regard – a reality that flowed from a core group of European policy-makers, especially in the Commission and the Parliament, who refused to accept the sincerity of the Government's reformist commitment. On numerous occasions, momentum was lost and, in the final analysis, European influence was only maintained because the reformists in the Government continued to insist on cooperation even when that cooperation seemed to be one-sided.

The final lesson for the international community is that it must aim to play the role of facilitator rather than imposer. Indeed, throughout the Reform Agenda, the international community showed itself to be uniquely well-placed to act as an “honest broker” in the often violent disagreements within the Maldives body politic. For example, at a crucial stage in the reform process in 2006 – when progress was stalling due to a combination of Government intransigence⁹ the British Government stepped in to sponsor the Westminster House talks in Colombo, which led to the release of key opposition figures from detention, avoidance of domestic confrontation, and better understanding between sides.

These lessons cannot of course, be applied

uniformly across the Muslim world. Each country is unique and must be addressed as such. However in every country there are important constituencies for change, the international community can and must play a central role in supporting those constituencies, and change must be facilitated rather than imposed, are transferable.

CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

The Maldives story, of course has only just begun. What lies ahead is the important and challenging task of democratic consolidation. What therefore are the future prospects of the Maldivian democracy. In particular, the following points are important in this respect:

Firstly, the manner in which the regime change was secured necessarily has implications for the task of consolidating democracy.

a) Although extensive reforms were pursued by President Gayoom, at the end, to use Samuel Huntington's typology, the transformation model of democratic transition failed in the Maldives and what occurred ultimately was replacement.¹⁰ As a consequence, regime change has occurred without the completion of the liberalisation agenda — the new penal code has not been passed, defamation still remains a criminal offence, state media has not been made independent, and the independent institutions have not yet become fully functional or credible.¹¹

b) The transition was achieved through a grand coalition of parties that had bitterly fought the first round of elections. Clash of personalities and programmes persist and there is no shared perspective on the future amongst a disparate grouping ranging from secular liberals to Salafist Islamists.

c) The fact that the single most popular personality and party are the opposition, this creates concerns about the stability of the government. There is a strong likelihood that in the upcoming parliamentary elections, the opposition might win an outright majority, particularly as the coalition partners are competing

against each other.

Secondly, unrelenting economic woes, widespread social problems and the continued encroachment of Islamic radicalism pose severe challenges to making democracy work. Populism has exacerbated some of the problems as promises being made by the government are raising public expectations of economic betterment to very high-levels. Meanwhile, the global economic downturn and the inherited fiscal difficulties severely constrain the government's ability to fulfil the recent election pledges.

Thirdly, the lack of democratic precedent and the absence of a culture of democracy create, amongst the general public, anxiety about the present and uncertainty about the future. These are compounded by the traditional culture of authoritarian rule, the persistence of authoritarian practices, and the weakness of civil society. As Larry Diamond points out, democracy-building requires pioneering leaders to be of a liberal temperament, exercising self-restraint, promoting the spirit of accommodation, demonstrating statesmanship, seeking coalitions, and placing the national interest ahead of partisan interests¹². One of the coalition partners, Gaume Party (DQP), in a scathing account of the first 100 days of the new regime,¹³ warned that the Maldives is in danger of becoming what has been termed a "predatory state"¹⁴, with disregard for constitutionalism, compromise or respect for law.

Finally, Islamist groups are disappearing off the political radar and are therefore likely to turn violent. The Adalaath Party destroyed itself during the presidential elections last year by their controversial choice of presidential candidate, and have increasingly conceded ground to fringe Islamist groups. If democracy is to survive and thrive in the Maldives, Islamist groups must join the political process in a credible, transparent and accountable manner, rather than operate in the fringe.

THE WAY FORWARD

How do we protect against a resurgence of reactionary forces and a relapse to old habits? Democracy is obviously more than holding regular elections. The answer therefore lies in

strengthening the rule of law and developing independent institutions to give credence to the foundations of democracy. An independent judiciary is new to the Maldives, however, it must take root if democratic consolidation is to be a reality.

Democracy is an iterated positive-sum game

Even under the best of circumstances, a country moving from closed, authoritarian rule to an open democratic system, as is the case with the Maldives, necessarily goes through a period of turmoil, the dip in the J-curve, in the philosophy of Ian Bremmer.¹⁵

For the Maldives to keep moving forward and not fall off the curve entirely, or to avoid a relapse to autocratic reflexes, it would be crucial for the international community to recognise the vital contribution they made – and are still required to make -- to democratisation in the Maldives. As Diamond warns, "if democracies do not more effectively contain crime and corruption, generate economic growth, relieve economic inequality, and secure freedom and the rule of law, people will eventually lose faith and turn to authoritarian alternatives."¹⁶ Equally, the reformists must recognise that old or new pro-democracy coalitions are required to consolidate democracy. Without such responses, the experiences of the Third Wave democracies offered by Samuel Huntington¹⁷ could easily become the script for the events that will unfold in the Maldives in the time to come. To succeed, we need to constantly bear in mind that democracy is an iterated positive-sum game.

*Since joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1982, His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Shaheed has risen through the Foreign Service ranks, heading a number of departments including the Bilateral Relations Division, the SAARC Division, and the Multilateral Affairs Department. From 1999 to 2004, he held the position of Permanent Secretary. After leaving the Ministry in 2004 to become the Maldives' first Chief Government Spokesperson at the President's Office (at the rank of Deputy Minister), Minister Shaheed returned in July 2005 when he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post he held until he resigned in August 2007. Dr Shaheed's commitment to liberal democratic principles and human rights, led him to become one of the principle architects of the Maldives' Democratic and Human Rights Reform Agenda, which cul-

minated in late 2008 with the country's smooth democratic transition under a new 21st Century Constitution. In September 2008, he became the running mate of presidential candidate Dr. Hassan Saeed in the country's first multiparty Presidential Election.

H.E. Dr. Ahmed Shaheed graduated from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth with a Bachelor's degree in International Politics and Strategic Studies, and obtained his PhD in 1995 from the University of Queensland, Brisbane, in the field of International Relations. In recognition for his advocacy for democratic change, Minister Shaheed was awarded the "Democrat of the Year" in May 2009 by Center for the Study of Democracy annual conference in New York.

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lenges: A Micro-State Case Study," Paper presented to International Conference on the Role of Foreign Ministries: Adaptation to a Changing World, Bangkok, 14-15 June 2007, <http://www.diplomacy.edu/Conferences/MFA2007/papers/shaheed.pdf>

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14 See Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1993. See also, Larry Diamond, "Civic Communities and Predatory Societies," Paper delivered to the Conference, "Culture Matters: A Forum for Business, Education and Training Professionals," Intercultural Management Institute, American University, Washington DC, 10 May 2001. <http://www.stanford.edu/~ldiamond/papers/papers/civicPredatory.pdf>

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Gaza Siege: Reflections on Justice, Democracy and Freedom for Palestinians

*CLLR. GERRY MACLOCHLAINN

IT was a great privilege for me to be asked by my party, Sinn Féin¹, to be our representative with the Convoy of Hope, organised by the European Campaign to End the Siege in Gaza (ECESG). The Palestinian people's struggle is one that cuts into the consciousness and hearts of many people in Ireland and to be invited to join with the convoy, to bring some aid to the suffering people of Gaza. Importantly, it was an honour to meet with my brothers in sisters in Palestine that I grasped with both hands.

Palestinian people's struggle is one that cuts into the consciousness and hearts of many people in Ireland

So it was that, on Saturday morning the 23rd May, after some delay and tricky negotiations in Cairo and even more in Port Said, the Hope for Gaza Convoy finally left for the Rafah border crossing into Gaza. Initially a hundred and fifty strong, the night before more than 100 participants from many European countries including, Ireland, Britain, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, the Basque Country, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands met together in their final general meeting before departure from Port Said.

The convoy co-ordinator updated everyone on the latest issues and explained the likely scenario the next day when participants would go to the port to collect the 49 trucks, ambulances and vans that will make up this convoy of essential medical supplies and medicines. The meeting ended with detailed plans being made to ensure that all the convoy vehicles were fuelled up and carried water etc for the gruelling three and half

hour drive across the Sinai desert.

People's excitement was audible but present in everyone's minds was the news from the day before that Israeli rockets had attacked border areas in the last few days including Rafah where we were driving to the next day. No-one was deterred but it was an important reality check as we pondered what it must be like for the innocents of Gaza who live under this constant threat of bombardment every day by a regime that as little shame as it has mercy.

Convoy coordinator Dr Arafat Shukri, declared as the meeting broke up - "Tomorrow we will be in Gaza - InshaAllah". But sadly it would be another number of days yet before we would reach Gaza and even then a number of those who had travelled so far with their hard collected aid would be denied passage into Gaza by the Egyptian authorities.

This was one of the most difficult aspects of the trip as we had to select a sample of those who had travelled and no-one had any more right to a place than any other. The delegation leaders eventually settled on a list of 20 people and 80 people were excluded. It was a major test of patience and understanding on the part of those who could not enter Gaza. Despite having had their passports stamped for passage the permissions were revoked by the Egyptian Authorities and they had to leave the checkpoint. However it was felt that it was important to deliver the aid and to get as many people across as possible so we accepted the restrictions.

Once in Gaza the next four days were both exhilarating and devastating as we struggled with the conflicting emotions of relief at getting the medical aid in to horror at the scale of destruction and ongoing suffering being endured by men women and children in what has to be described as the world's largest prison.

Despite the fact that it was very late at

night we were greeted by crowds of cheering people lining the roads from Rafah to Gaza City. But we had no idea yet of the scale of desperate need that we would be confronted with or the cruelty of those who inflict this blockade on innocent men, women and children using access to medical treatment as a weapon.

Our first morning started with a visit to Al-Shifah Hospital, the largest in Gaza. Here doctors were eager to get their hands on the ambulances, drugs, disposables, wheelchairs and dialysis machine that we had brought from so many countries in Europe. As deputy leader of the convoy I joined convoy leader Fernando Rossi, an Italian Senator, at a press conference in the hospital grounds. Hundreds of people pressed around us and it was clear that the aid was only a drop in the ocean to what was required. However the fact that Europeans cared enough to collect this aid and that we had come to Gaza was a boost to morale as local people faced the reality of two and a half years of a siege that denies them even the very cement required to rebuild their homes, hospitals and schools destroyed during the Israeli invasion.

From Al-Shifah Hospital we travelled to the remains of the Parliament building. Here we were greeted by a number of MP's, in a tent dedicated to a minister who was assassinated during the invasion. They told us of the numbers of MP's, including the Speaker of the Parliament, who were rounded up and taken to Israeli jails. It was clear that the invasion was directed at the political and social structures of Gaza to make the area ungovernable in order to overthrow what was a legitimate and democratically elected government.

“You can understand them destroying a building but why did they bomb the same buildings over and over again completely obliterating them?”

This was further illustrated in the next few

hours as we were escorted through the scenes of destruction in the north of Gaza and saw the sheer scale of the punitive blitzkrieg launched by Israel. Here we saw homes, government buildings, mosques and schools – all destroyed in wave after wave of Israeli air raids and rocket attacks. The numbers of women and children killed in these attacks became almost unreal as we heard of 70 killed here and 30 killed there and so on. It was shocking – one of the Palestinians accompanying us said to me that he could not understand the scale of the destruction. “You can understand them destroying a building but why did they bomb the same buildings over and over again completely obliterating them? There is almost something psychotic about that behaviour” he said.

That evening our group was invited to meet the cabinet and we were joined by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah. He welcomed us on behalf of the Gazan people and expressed his hope that we would attest to what we had seen and heard and intervene with our governments to get them to support the removal of the blockade.

Haniyah explained his movement's desire for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Palestine and that he had made it clear that his government would honour treaties and was committed to a realistic settlement. He was committed to achieving Palestinian reconciliation and was approaching the ongoing talks with Fatah with a serious commitment to achieving a positive outcome.

Wednesday 26th and we were taken to a very emotional meeting with the relatives of prisoners held in Israeli jails. The stories we heard were very hard to listen to – families who were not allowed to see their sons because the blockade bans them from travelling out of Gaza to the Israeli jails. Some families had not seen their sons, fathers or brothers for many years. Inside the jails the accounts of appalling abuse of prisoners reminded me of the worst days of the English jail experiences or the Blanket protest.

One prisoner had just been released after some 14 years in jail – he had been “released” into Gaza even though he had no family there and was from the West Bank. Here he

was dumped into Gaza and unable to leave a place he did not even know. He had merely been transferred to a bigger prison.

We next visited, Khan Younis, where we visited the main hospital for the south of Gaza Strip to deliver more medical materials. Here we saw advanced medical equipment that cannot be used because the Israelis will not allow spare parts in to bring them back online. We saw patients receiving dialysis who could only get two hours sessions at a time which was not enough to clean their systems and so they never felt well and did not benefit as they should. The doctor said to me “it is the best we can do we have to share the access but we need to give them four hour sessions at least – we are only slowing the poison”.

The mammography machines are inoperative because parts have failed and replacements are not allowed in by the Israeli blockade. The CT scanner’s tube is operating at twice its recommended life and they are hoping and praying every time they use that it will last a little bit longer. When it fails – there will be no scanner unless the Israeli siege is lifted.

Later we met with the Commission collecting evidence of Israeli war crimes during the recent invasion. We spoke to the Samouni children who had survived an appalling attack that had killed some 29 members of their families and wounded another 70 plus. They were driven from their homes by Israeli troops and then rounded up in a house that was shelled. One little girl Mouna told us of losing six members of her immediate family. As they huddled in the house, she explained, the family thought it was raining as water began to run into the house but then they discovered the Israeli troops had shot all the water barrels on the roof. Then the Israelis fired three missiles into the house, “They exploded my mother’s brain” said Mouna, the little girl.

The next morning we had a meeting with UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) and delivered some £40,000 worth of software to their school for the visually impaired. The staff at this school explained how this software will allow blind people to use computers

and help children with visual impairment attend school and possibly even transfer into mainstream schools and go on to live as complete lives as possible.

Our final visit before heading back to the Rafah crossing was the most horrific for me as I saw both sides of humanity in the starkest contrast. Just 200 metres from the Israeli border we visited the main rehabilitation hospital which seeks to treat patients suffering from coma or disabling conditions.

I saw patients with incredible courage facing almost impossible conditions, doctors and nurses struggling to treat patients without the most basic materials in appalling circumstances.

But the other side of humanity was jumping out of the faces of everyone I saw and the very buildings we walked in. This hospital, just 200 metres from the Israeli border was itself shelled by Israeli troops despite being clearly marked and under constant Israeli surveillance. They shelled the newly completed wing that was due to open in January of this year – destroying it before a single patient could avail of its facilities. One of the wards I stood in – a huge hole in the external wall and above the bed where were a patient was lying. A rocket had been fired directly into an occupied ward in an operational hospital.

Then I met a young boy of about 10 years. He had been dragged comatose from the rubble of his home where all his family had been killed. He had come out of the coma to some extent but still had chest and body injuries. The hospital did not have the materials to treat him and he was not allowed out of Gaza for treatment elsewhere. The doctor said to me as I stroked his face – “We cannot do anymore – he is waiting to die”.

This blockade is a crime against humanity and the world cannot stand by and allow this to go on. We have to send as much medical aid as we can to Gaza, and Egypt must co-operate with the aid convoys in order to alleviate the suffering there. But more than that we have to force the Israeli’s to lift the blockade and allow the people of Gaza to import its needs and allow it people to travel in out of their homeland. The Hope for Gaza convoy delivered that hope but people need

more than hope.

It is vital that the world assumes its responsibility for this affront to humanity that is being tolerated in full view of us all. Peace is a human right and the people of Palestine have the same inalienable right to peace, justice and freedom as anyone else on Earth. It is time we upheld that right and enforced UN decisions that condemn Israeli expansion and colonisation of Palestinian land.

Everyone I spoke to in Gaza including political leaders from Hamas made it clear that they wanted peace, that they realised that would require compromise. They made it clear that they needed to resolve the divisions within the Palestinian nation so that a single national position can be advanced in the negotiations with the Israelis that any peace process will entail.

Peace cannot be built, and unity cannot be based, on exclusion

I can only applaud that view and appeal to the representatives of the Palestinian nation that they continue to meet. They must resolve to reach a common position to advance the cause of their nation and avoid the old imperialist game of divide and conquer. This will require compromise and flexibility but it will also require the recognition of democratic mandates and inclusion. Peace cannot be built, and unity can not be based, on exclusion.

International law must be enforced and Israel's defiance of UN resolutions has to stop. In the context of a peace process with the stopping of all violence and attacks and the end to all Israeli expansion a basis could be laid for sustainable cease-fires that would give the space to explore a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

The USA, with President Obama, has an opportunity to change this world for the better in a way that we could scarcely believe a year or two ago. President Obama's speech in Cairo spelt out a possible way forward based on recognition of a viable Palestinian state and mutual accommodation and respect

for the peoples in the Middle East. The appointment of George Mitchell, as special envoy, has clear resonance with the role he played in Ireland. This could augur well – there is an abundance of hope but it requires action before that hope is squandered.

Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, has just published a report on his recent visit to Palestine and Israel.² In this he calls on the International Community to face up to its responsibilities and concludes by writing:

“The Sinn Féin peace strategy helped create the conditions for the Irish peace process which has transformed political conditions in Ireland.

While no two conflicts are the same there are nonetheless broad principles which can be helpful in all conflict resolution processes. Sinn Féin, within our limited resources, is willing to offer our experience to others if it can help.

Despite all of the difficulties I remain hopeful. I believe there is a widespread desire to achieve a peace settlement. But it will require political leadership and a willingness to take risks.”

We must all join with Gerry Adams in providing support in any way we can for those who wish to turn that hope into a reality for the people of Palestine.

*Councillor Gerry MacLochlainn was the Sinn Féin representative to Britain before returning to his native Derry in 1997, where he was elected to Derry City Council.

A member of Sinn Féin since 1970s, he endured 4 years in prison for Irish Republican activities in 1980. An active campaigner on human rights Cllr. MacLochlainn campaigned to free the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 as well as supporting the Palestine liberation struggle. During the recent invasion of Gaza he successfully proposed a motion to Derry City Council, deploring the invasion, calling withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories, and an inclusive peace process. Cllr. MacLochlainn helped lead a European medical convoy into Gaza earlier this year.

ENDNOTES

1 Sinn Féin is the oldest political party in Ireland and is dedicated to the establishment of an independent and democratic socialist republic of Ireland. Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin is Joint First Minister in the North of Ireland.

2 Of a Visit to Israel, The Gaza Strip and The West Bank, 6 – 11th April 2009, <http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/16689>



The Challenge of Researching Political Terror Critically

*DR MARIE BREEN-SMYTH

THE proliferation of literature on 'terrorism' since the advent of the War on Terror (WOT) has a number of troublesome features. First, it is ahistorical, presuming that 'terrorism' began on September 11, 2001, and ignoring previous experience and the already burgeoning literature on 'terrorism' published prior to 2001. Second, it exceptionalises the experience of the United States and Al Qaeda, positing it as a 'new type of terrorism [that] threatens the world'¹

The emphasis on scale of the atrocity at the World Trade Centre in 2001, which is its distinguishing feature, has led to a failure to look for parallels with other attacks or campaigns. Lines had already been drawn in the 1990s between 'old' and 'new' terrorism² and now a further, deeper line was carved out, with pre and post September 11 as the major demarcation. For example, Hoffman claims:

On 9/11, of course, Bin Laden wiped the slate clean of the conventional wisdom on terrorists and terrorism, and, by doing so, ushered in a new era of conflict – as well as a new discourse about it.³

Research tends towards state-centrism, with the 'terrorist' defined as the security problem.

The tendency to 'wipe the slate clean' when 'terrorism' embraces new technologies of terror, betrays a focus on method at the expense of motivation and political context.

Third, research tends towards state-centrism, with the 'terrorist' defined as the (security) problem, and the inquiry restricted to the assembling of information that would solve or eradicate the 'problem' as the state defines it. This ignores the roots of terrorism,

and the contribution of states to conditions which might trigger 'terrorist' responses. Where 'terrorist' motivation is considered, it is seen as a pathological state, related to problematic conditions such as alienation, or perceptions of deprivation that warp the personality, in contrast to the rational citizen or actor. An illustration of this is Jerrold Post's (1990) assertion that:

'political terrorists are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequence of psychological forces ... their special psycho-logic is constructed to rationalize acts they are psychologically compelled to commit. Thus ... individuals are drawn to the path of terrorism in order to commit acts of violence...'⁴

The search for the 'terrorist personality' (which J. Horgan, 2005, has found to be futile⁵) is a similar attempt to pick out the deviant, evil or sick 'terrorist' from the population of normal people. There is then no need to understand, explain or analyse the motivations of those who use terror, and the threat is rendered inexplicable, unknowable and overwhelming. Yet, understanding is critical, as Townshend (2002) argues:

...without such analysis, combating terrorism seems a baffling contest against an indefinite threat. Although terrorism can sometimes look rational, more often it seems to go straight off the chart of 'common sense' – to be not only unjustifiable, but atrocious, mad or 'mindless'.⁶

Fourth, the literature on 'terrorism' has an aura of moral certainty. Although 'terrorism' has consistently been seen in moral terms (see Wilkinson, 1977) the tendency to pose 'terrorists' as 'evil' has been exacerbated by the discourses of WOT, as Jackson (2005) points out⁷. This discourse of 'evil' is antithetical to

scientific inquiry and to produce nuanced explanations is to risk being cast as an apologist for 'terrorism'. There is a dearth of 'other-centric' research, which examines the phenomenon of terrorism from points of view other than that state⁸. Yet understanding 'terrorism' is essential. Vincent Cannistraro spelled this out to the House Committee on International Relations in October, 2001:

'...It is essential that the agencies of our government involved in law enforcement and intelligence become intimately familiar with the culture of religious zealots whether of foreign or domestic origin. We must understand the nature of the threat before we can successfully confront it... Comprehending the danger and the mindset of these groups is a first step to deterring the violence executed by the Osama Bin Ladens of this world. Unless we know what drives these religious extremists... we will see days like September 11, 2001 repeated, perhaps with even greater casualties.'⁹

Whilst the intelligence community has been castigated for its failures, scholars have largely avoided such censure. Hoffman has remarked:

Much attention has been focused on the intelligence failures that led to the tragic events of 11th September, 2001. Surprisingly little attention, however, has been devoted to the academic failures. Although these were patently less consequential, they were no less significant: calling into question the relevance of much of the scholarship on terrorism in the years leading up to 9/11.¹⁰

However, some within the field have identified its shortcomings. Ilardi (2004) points out:

'The strong prescriptive focus of terrorism research over the years, however, has for the most part failed to deliver the goods... The prescriptive focus of terrorism researchers has also diverted attention from other critical matters, not the least of which is the development of a sound theoretical understanding of the dynamics of terrorism. One can add to this a continued tendency to produce

research whose methods are questionable, no doubt largely due to the perceived need to produce 'policy-relevant' material in a timely fashion; and perhaps for the same reason, a widespread inability to identify and exploit original information sources'¹¹

The intelligence community continues to regard with great interest those scholars who conduct research on militant groups, and this poses a greater dilemma for some scholars than others. Academic integrity requires scholars to be wary of compromising their independence and for researchers conducting fieldwork with armed groups, association with the intelligence or security community would spell a breach of trust with their informants and the jeopardising of their own safety. Historically, although there are embedded anthropologists in Iraq and Afghanistan, for most scholars it has been crucial to establish and maintain their independence. There are distinct roles for the academic and the intelligence communities, and the responsibility of scholars is to maintain ethical standards and academic independence.

The declaration of a War on Terror (WOT) largely redefined the ideological context in which scholars, policy makers and practitioners operate. The increasingly hegemonic discourse of this 'war' created a context in which a number of governments including the British government, have justified the introduction of legislation and 'security' practices that have eroded civil liberties and contributed to the demonization of Muslim communities¹². This dominant discourse and paradigm generated by the WOT, defines the space in which scholars research, think and write. The critical question must be to what extent scholarship has contributed to the reproduction of that dominant discourse, in which the WOT itself was justified and normalised, and levels of public fear managed¹³.

By late 2006, Republicans lost control of the House of Representatives and the Senate in the mid-term elections in the United States signalling increased public awareness of the crisis in Iraq. President Bush consequently lost his *carte blanche* on foreign policy and a more critical public discourse on

the WOT was beginning to be evident. The Iraq Study Group, published in December 2006, noted:

'Many Americans are dissatisfied, not just with the situation in Iraq but with the state of our political debate regarding Iraq... Our country deserves a debate that prizes substance over rhetoric...'¹⁴

The Democrats' victory in 2009 brought the promise of revised US foreign policy and counter-terrorism strategy. It is, then, timely to consider what a more critical approach to the study of political terror might adopt as its principles and see as its research agenda.

Robert Cox delineated two main approaches to the study of politics. The 'problem-solving' approach is one which "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action"¹⁵. The 'critical' approach, on the other hand involves "not tak[ing] institutions and social and power relations for granted but call[ing] them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing"¹⁶. J. Gunning¹⁷ has pointed to the predominance of the 'problem-solving' approach amongst scholars of 'terrorism'. However, the two approaches are not entirely distinct. Like scholars adopting a problem-solving approach, critical scholars recognise that the use of terror is antithetical to human security and wellbeing. Any scholarship should ultimately contribute to developing new understandings so that the felt need to resort to methods of political terror is undermined and eradicated. However, this is not a straightforward 'test' because of the complex relationship between political terror, efforts by state parties to eradicate it and its escalation.

If we define emancipation rather narrowly, as freedom from the fear and threat of terrorism and counter-terrorism, then a critical scholarship could embrace an emancipatory aspect. Traditional scholars, too, see their work as contributing to the demise of 'terrorism' but critical scholarship, sees that demise as achieved by methods other than violence and repression, which

risk escalating rather than solving the original problem that led to the use of terror in the first place. Thus, a critical approach not only has an emancipatory vision, but it seeks to elucidate how that vision can be realised through non-violent, egalitarian and transformational processes. The critical scholar would extend an emancipatory dimension into the research methods and approaches, and seeks to ameliorate some of the power imbalances between researcher and 'subject' inherent in the research process¹⁸.

A critical approach sees its mission as advancing universal human security, not merely the security of the state; the interests served by a critical approach are those of establishing human security in the broader sense of 'security', as defined by Booth¹⁹ to include all threats and obstacles to human actualisation and wellbeing, not merely those posed by political violence and terror.

On the one hand, critical scholars must avoid allying themselves with the state, thereby implicating itself in existing power relations, whilst simultaneously securing funding, and an audience in the corridors of power. On the other, whilst securing non-state sponsorship for its work is central to the independence of this project, developing the ability to work with state policy makers and practitioners, speaking truth to power, is equally if not more important in terms of the impact of the work and its prospects for effecting change. Furthermore, if critical scholarship is to maintain a dialogue with all parties including the state, critical scholars have to maintain a critical perspective in the face of policy makers' and practitioners' pressing demands for concrete answers to problems that they assess to be urgent and life threatening.

The reliability and validity of data is a further challenge. Much of the information available to scholars has been filtered either through interested parties such as the intelligence services or the 'terrorists' themselves. As Silke²⁰ has pointed out, much of the data is secondary, and there is a lack of fresh primary data in the field. Whilst there are undoubted challenges presented by collecting primary data²¹ these must be negotiated and overcome if the credibility of

research is to be established and maintained.

Researchers who would investigate terrorism and political violence face considerable challenges: the ethics of and access to funding; definitional confusion and competing discourses on terror; the effect of researcher identity/affiliation on access to and safety in the field; the reliability and validity of sources; access to and protection of sources; physical and psychological safety; methodological challenges; and the struggle to maintain academic freedom and independence in the face of strong hegemonic pressures to conform to dominant discourses. To begin with, critical scholarship could begin by making a number of commitments, which are set out below.

Certain field conditions in 'terrorism' studies, such as difficulties in appraising data, could be more directly engaged with. A critical scholarship could assess and more comprehensively document the impact of secrecy and resultant difficulties in access to sources and data. The impact of this on research design, data collection and results could also be more transparently represented. Any scholar in the field of 'terrorism' studies must remain conscious of the clandestine nature of the activities of some actors in this field, that some in the field occupy dual roles, and be alert for the dangers of co-optation and manipulation of their work and themselves by both state and non-state parties.

It is proposed that a critical scholarship be based on several main epistemological pillars.

First, such scholarship should avoid totalising analysis of power relations, which allocate all the blame or responsibility to state - or non-state - actors. A critical scholarship would reflect all the complexity of power relations at both state and non-state levels, and the ubiquitous existence of the abuse of power and breaches of human rights amongst all those who use political violence and terror.

Secondly, critical scholarship must be contextualised in an analysis of power relations both at local and global levels, and this analysis must be incorporated into framing research, data collection, analysis and research outputs. Third, a critical approach

seeks to avoid ahistoricity, and is based on the recognition that the political use of terror is a consistent historical pattern, that there is much to be learned from the history of the use of terror.

Political use of terror is a common human experience.

Furthermore, critical approaches to 'terrorism' recognise that the experience of the political use of terror is a common human experience, and therefore avoid exceptionalising the experience of any society, historical period or set of events.

Existing scholarship is spread over a wide range of fields, sociology, anthropology, peace studies, economics, history and well as political science and international studies. A broad epistemological base that facilitates multidisciplinary work is essential. Mutual respect across disciplinary boundaries, together with a multi-disciplinary collaborative ethos will best serve critical scholarship.

Studies of 'terrorism' are carried out within an increasingly restrictive legal environment where the right to silence and withholding information from the police is a crime, and in which legislation has been passed outlaws the 'glorification' of terrorism. A critical scholarship recognises its duty to defend as far as possible the ethical and intellectual integrity of its work, whilst honouring its commitments to its informants. The legal environment can pose specific challenges to the conduct of research, and a critical scholarship realistically appraises the risks and manages these responsibly.

Additionally, critical 'terrorism' studies recognises the gendered nature of political violence and terror, and is committed to the incorporation of gender analysis including issues such as masculinity into its work, in the light of the relative neglect of this dimension to date.

Finally, a critical approach requires a heightened consciousness of the fact that the field is not merely a matter of academic interest but is for some matters of life and

death. Critical scholarship, therefore, must engage not only with the diversity of literature and other scholars, but also with the communities of interest such as policy makers, security practitioners, and 'suspect'²² communities. A critical approach recognises that all of these parties are stakeholders in this field and will be the end-users of our work. Critical scholars are particularly at pains to include the 'suspect' communities, who are often unrecognised as key stakeholders in the study and analysis of 'terrorism'.

Three particular ethical commitments seem appropriate. First, to orient and set the parameters of critical research so that it dissipates rather than intensifies the fog of rhetoric and myth about political terror that is generated by both state and non-state actors involved in 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism'. This rhetoric is implicated in the management of levels of public fear, which is not always related to realistic appraisals of risk. Nor is there any appraisal of some of the risks posed by counter-terrorism, one of which was dramatically and tragically illustrated by the killing of an innocent man, Juan Charles de Menendez in a London tube station. The prevalence of counter-terrorism discourses, the increased tendencies towards securitisation and the debates on issues such as the wearing of the Hijab and Nikab by Muslim women are some of the elements that compose this fog that surrounds the issue.

Second, a critical scholarship strives to demplyify the popular sense of threat associated with the use of political terror by non-state parties, and refuses to be complicit in threat exaggeration, the politics of fear and the resultant manipulation of public policies. A critical scholarship realistically appraises the level of risk, independent of those who may have a political interest in amplifying or minimising that sense of risk.

Third, critical scholarship would contribute to the eradication of the use of political terror, through striving to challenge, by the use of evidence and argument those state and non-state actors who hold that political terror is the only or the most effective way of achieving their goals, and physical force and securitisation is the only way to counter its use.

Fourth, critical scholars ensure insofar as is possible that research and writing on 'terrorism' 'does no harm' to either the researchers or their informants, or at least that any risk is recognised, assessed and willingly undertaken by those exposed to it.

Fifth, critical scholarship resists the divisions that currently demarcate the world of political violence and terror, which are, themselves, produced and maintained by violence. These divisions lie between 'terrorist' and defender of freedom, between state and non-state parties, and between traditional and critical studies of political terror, and between scholars and 'suspect' communities. Critical scholars undertake to manage their own fear and undertake reasonable calculated risks, in the interests of resisting the reproduction of divisions in the field, and thus the reproduction of violence itself.

Sixth, the work of critical scholarship would recognise the privileges associated with the role of scholar, and willingly undertake the responsibility associated with such privileges. Chief amongst these is the responsibility to ground its work in and engage with the challenges faced not only by marginalised voices and demonised communities, but also by those charged with responsibility for ensuring public security and safety. A critical scholarship would speak clearly and intelligibly to all those most affected by such challenges, in a language that is intelligible to them.

To conclude, critical scholarship might adopt methodological principles that serve to produce a more transparent and grounded scholarship. Critical scholars could place subjectivity at the core of their work in three main ways:

- 1) By naming themselves, their positions, whether they are 'insiders' or 'outsiders'²³ and declaring their position, they allow the reader to interpret their work in the light of their declared subjectivity;
- 2) By seeking methods such as the use of co-researchers and inter-subjective analysis to interrogate their own subjectivity more effectively;
- 3) By recognising the powerful

emotional forces surrounding the issue of political violence, critical scholarship would consciously resist the centrifugal polarising forces of violence which pull towards bifurcation, exclusion and simplicity and eschew these in favour of synthesis, inclusion and complexity.

In these ways, more critical approaches can contribute to a more robust, honest and effective understanding of the use of political terror by states and sub-state actors alike.

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Her books include *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (ed with Richard Jackson and Jeroen Gunning) Routledge 2009; *Truth and Justice After Violent Conflict: Managing Violent Pasts* (Routledge 2007); *Researching Conflict in Africa* (2005, with Gillian Robinson) *Researchers and Their 'Subjects': Ethics, Power, Knowledge and Consent*. (2004; Policy Press with Emma Williamson); *Northern Ireland After the Good Friday Agreement* (2003) (with Mike Morrissey) and *Researching Violently Divided Societies* (with Gillian Robinson, London: Pluto, 2003) and *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs* (1999, with Mike Morrissey). Dr Marie is currently editing the Ashgate Research Companion on Political Violence (forthcoming 2010)

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- 4 Post, Jerrold. 'Terrorist psycho-logic: Terrorist behavior as a product of psychological forces' in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins Of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States Of Mind*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p 27.
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 - 12 Guelke, A. *Terrorism and Global Disorder: Political Violence in the Contemporary World* (I B Tauris & Co Ltd. 2006)
 - 13 See Jackson, 2005.
 - 14 The Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, December 2006) available at: http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf (Accessed January 17, 2007) p 4
 - 15 Cox, Robert (1981), 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10 (2), 126-55. p 128.
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 - 21 See Smyth, M. 'Using Participative Action Research with War Affected Populations: Lessons from research in Northern Ireland and South Africa.' In Marie Smyth and Emma Williamson (eds) (2004) *Researchers and their 'Subjects': Ethics, power knowledge and consent*. (Bristol: Policy Press, 2004). (pp 137-156)
 - 22 The term 'suspect community' is taken from the work of Paddy Hillyard (1993) (*Suspect Community* London: Pluto, 1993) who studied the impact of the Prevention of Terrorism Act on the Irish community in Britain. I have redefined the suspect community as 'an imaginary community created by the securitised imagination' (see Breen-Smyth, M. (2009) 'Critical 'Terrorism' Studies, Terrorism and Counter-terrorism: 'Suspect' Communities and the paradoxical role of detention and rendition as prophylaxis or consolidation.' *Symposium on Detention and Rendition in the "War on Terror"* London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of International Relations). It is used here to denote the subjective experience of communities that are suspected, not to validate any suspicion of them.
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Prospects of Peace and Stability in Darfur

*DR KHALID AL-MUBARAK

THE election of Barack Obama as president of the United States came as a momentous development. It proved that in a great democracy, the dreams of pioneers like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King could eventually be realised. Obama, himself, is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, his father, a *lou*, belonged to a branch of the tribe which emigrated to Kenya from the Wau area of Sudan. Consequently, the government of Southern Sudan declared a holiday attributed to Obama's election victory.

Furthermore; his campaign slogan, calling for "change", promised hope for a world seriously disrupted by neo-conservative brinkmanship and open contempt of "the other", their "crusade" bred confrontation, military adventures and wars. Uncritical support for Israel's intransigence and a defiance of UN resolutions isolated moderates and reformers in the Arab and Muslim majority countries.

Southern Sudan declared a holiday attributed to Obama's election victory

Notwithstanding scores of thinktanks, teams of career diplomats and academic experts on Sudan, the US's policy surrounding Sudan remained flawed. Ambivalence and contradiction were inbuilt elements. On the one hand with its main allies, the US played a decisive role in brokering the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement – 9 January 2005). Similarly it played a leading role in the mediation which led to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA)¹. In the aftermath of the DPA, I said to an American diplomat during a reception in Khartoum; "Your government got things wrong everywhere, except in Sudan!" That social after dinner comment conveniently overlooked several inherent

contradictions. Sanctions were still in place, preventing US companies from conducting business in Sudan. Sudan was still on the list of terror sponsors, since inclusion in 1993. The US ambassador who had left Sudan in 1998 was never replaced. In a bizarre reversal of the "stick and carrot" principle declared during the Abuja negotiations that led to the DPA, the US administration decided to penalise the party which accepted the deal and signed (that is, the government of Sudan) imposing increasingly more sanctions in May 2007! The rebels who refused to sign got the "stick" of sanctuary in major Western capitals. New and old radio stations and web-sites were financed in order to embolden them and make them more recalcitrant.

Equally harmful was the fact that the \$4 billion promised by the donors' conference in Oslo in 2005, in order to bolster the CPA, was nothing other than a mirage. It was originally intended to help reconstruction in the Southern Sudan, in order to make the unity of Sudan attractive and provide a peace dividend for the long suffering population. I was one of the writers who attended that Donors' Conference and was there when Dr. John Garang (SPLM leader) who signed the CPA pleaded with donors not to link their generosity with the Darfur Crisis. The donors neither fulfilled their promises, nor helped in Darfur, which they used as a pretext to renege. The EU starved the African Union peace keepers of funds needed for officers' salaries and the helicopters needed by the UN-African Union force which took over, were never delivered. Eric Reeves, the most blinkered of Sudan's critics has written the following: "The unprecedented UN/AU "hybrid" mission for Darfur – UNAMID has been badly hurt by the refusal of militarily capable nations to provide the two dozen helicopters required at least for operations in Darfur. No NATO country has offered at

least one helicopter.”²

An Arabic proverb reads: “A mere hint is enough for the cute”. The rebels understood (and misunderstood) the hint! They became increasingly stubborn and escalated attacks on targets in Darfur. Most stayed away from the Peace Talk in Sert (Libya) in October 2007 and then began to splinter and attack each other. In barely veiled impatience or even criticism, General Martin Luther Agwai, leader of the hybrid AU/UN force in Darfur, told the UN News Service³: “Let’s not put too much searchlight on one party. Let’s also put sufficient searchlight on the other party.” He went on to describe the position of the rebel groups who refused to sign the peace deal stating that their number had reached 30 “nearly all of them without cohesive command or control.” Far from projecting searchlight on them, they are condoned – and never called “terrorists”.

The world woke up to the result of emboldening the rebels when the most aggressive among them, the JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) which is based in Chad, crossed the border and attacked Sudan’s second largest city, Omdurman on May 10, 2008. Their adventure lasted two hours during which they killed tens of civilians and destroyed several buildings.

The adventure was both tragic and absurd. It was tragic because the leader escaped abandoning many of his child soldiers who were caught looking for food to buy (and pardoned by the President). It was absurd because the JEM is formed on a tribal ethnic basis, drawing membership from the Zaghawa who are a tiny minority in Darfur but a powerful and numerous clan in Chad. This dimension is best illustrated by the fact that the JEM actually fought in the capital of Chad Ndjamena in March of the same year to save the rule of President Debi, who belongs to their tribe. Tribal loyalty for them resides over national loyalty. Non-Sudanese, especially journalists who make transit visits, often do not realise that there is a cultural dichotomy between Darfuris like the JEM leadership and Central Sudanese citizens. It was only in 1916 that Darfur became a part of Sudan. Turco-Egyptian rule (1820–1885) and Anglo-Egyptian rule (1885–1956) brought about condi-

tions in central Sudan. Conditions in which population movements opened the door for intermarriage and a weakening of tribal systems. As a result, political parties, trades unions, sports and artistic initiatives, from theatre to fine arts associations, were formed on a national non-tribal basis. The “freezer effect” in Darfur kept tribalism almost intact and enabled an aberration like the JEM to strike root among one of the smallest groups that existed in Darfur.

SAVE DARFUR COALITION

The Sudanese government never denied the existence of a crisis in Darfur. In fact, its own fact finding mission arrived at the conclusion that atrocities were committed by all sides in Darfur. The conflict, however, is local: Darfuri. The central government involvement came about when the rebels attacked airports, government buildings and installations. Counter-insurgency is legitimate. We all know how the US and its allies reacted after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Even the most cherished values of civil liberties and fairness were thrown overboard. Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and the anti-terror laws bear testament to that. The lies about the Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2003 further bear witness to that. Why, one may ask, is Sudan expected to offer bouquets of flowers to Darfur rebels, who are backed by Chad where they treat their wounded according to Anthony Lloyd of The Times who visited them, met their leader and offered military advice about the timing of future adventures?⁴

The answer is in the influence of the Save Darfur Coalition, a well-financed and well-organised offshoot of the formidable Israel lobby in the USA. The Israeli Jerusalem Post has inadvertently exposed the roots and aims of the SD Coalition. It began exclusively by the American Jewish community against Sudan and the Arab League on 27 April 2006. It recruited celebrities like George Clooney and Mia Farrow, collected millions of dollars, of which not a single cent was sent to the suffering in Darfur.

The money was spent on full-page anti-Sudanese adverts and campaigns. Unluckily for the SD Coalition they seemed to have approached the talented British playwright

Tom Stoppard (most probably through their British counterpart the Aegis Trust). He did

Darfur is directly linked to the desire of wanting to “bury” what is happening in Iraq, Gaza and Afghanistan

write an anti-Sudanese article about Darfur, but his artistic integrity shone through when he also said: “geopolitically the scenarios include, naturally, the one about the West’s real interest being control of the region and its oil.”⁵

Thus, Darfur is not only an obscure remote region in Sudan. Darfur is directly linked to the desire of wanting to “bury” what is happening in Iraq, Gaza and Afghanistan. It is also seen with a view-finder of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The erroneous portrayal of a conflict between nomads and pastoralists (which was aggravated by desertification) as a conflict between Arabs and black Africans is deviously intended to feed on anti-Arab prejudice, which has a long history in US media.

THE NUMBERS GAME AND GENOCIDE

The Save Darfur Coalition is not about the people of Darfur, it is about “Regime change” in Sudan. Allied with it are activists of “The International Crisis Group” and “Enough” who opposed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Unelected and undemocratic, they have helped to prolong the crisis in Darfur which could have ended in 2006 with the DPA.

The most lethal weapon in the armour of Sudan’s enemies was and to some extent still is, the word “genocide”. Reverend John Danforth, an honest former envoy to Sudan told The Independent that the word was used by Colin Powell to please the Christian Right before the 2004 presidential elections.⁶ The UN has not used it; the AU has not used it. Even the politicised ICC has not accepted it in its 4th March statement.

After milking the numbers game for years,

J. Prendergast of the International Crisis Group and Enough has said in a university discussion with Professor Mahmood Mamdani: “Most of these figures are wild estimates. They’re simply crazily wild estimates”.⁷

Quoting the US government Accountability Office, Professor Mamdani has shown the inadequacy of numbers published by both N. Kristof and E. Reeves. The official US document discredits both writers’ wild unsubstantiated estimates of casualties in Darfur.⁸

In a lecture at Georgetown University, Andrews Natsios (a former special envoy to Sudan) said on 30 March 2009 that most casualties occurred as a result of malnutrition and illness brought about by displacement.

The chorus shouting “genocide” is still loud-headed by the SLM (Sudan Liberation Movement) whose leader has an office in Tell Aviv. He has written an article in which he advocated the cutting of Sudan’s Arab and Islamic links.

The anti-Sudanese campaign looked ahead to the new Obama administration. According to the New York Times⁹ the outgoing administration has prepared options which will soon be on the new president’s desk. These include jamming Sudan’s communications, besieging its ports to stop the export of oil and destroying its air force. War in the name of peace and in the name of saving Darfur.

Obama has assumed power at a time in which, as H.D. Greenwalay put it “...the US has badly mismanaged its stewardship of the world economy.”¹⁰

In an article, titled “Obama and the World,” Henry Kissinger said that the new President and his administration have come into office at a moment of unique opportunity. “The economic crisis absorbs the energies of all the major powers whatever their differences, all need a respite from international confrontations.”¹¹ The voting record of Obama shows that he had voted against the invasion of Iraq.

His seminal speech to Muslims recently in Cairo called for mutual respect and a new beginning based on common interests. He advocated a two-state solution (as suggested by the Arab League since 2002) and openly

referred to Israeli “occupation”.

The new President made a good start on Sudan. He appointed a full-time envoy, who was born in Africa. Scott Gratian visited Sudan on 2 April 2009 and declared “The objective of this trip is to look, listen and learn” He added: “The US and Sudan want to be partners and so we are looking for opportunities for us to build a stronger bilateral relationship”.

John Kerry (Head of the Foreign Relations Committee) made it clear that the ICC has “complicated” matters and that “the humanitarian issue and the issue of governments working together transcends whatever external factors there may be.”¹²

In other words “diplomacy stands a chance in Sudan” as his article for the Boston Herald stated¹³. Regime change through the ICC stratagem is no longer on the table.

Sudan responded well, and welcomed the push given by Gratian to the Qatari Peace Talks. In June 2009, Scott Gratian hosted a high profile Forum in support of the CPA, in Washington DC. It came one month after a meeting in Qatar between envoys of the five permanent members of the Security Council and the EU to Sudan.

US policy towards Sudan is at last moving in the right direction.

In the background is the new situation in Darfur. The UN/AU special representative briefed the Security Council stating: “The situation has changed from the period of intense hostilities in 2003-2004, where tens of thousands of people were killed. Today, in purely numerical items, it is a low intensity conflict”.¹⁴

The former US envoy to Sudan A. Natsios has written about “disputes within the Obama administration”. He asked “How do you mediate a peace agreement if you can’t speak to one side’s leader?”

He criticised the insistence on the word “genocide.”¹⁵ The “Dispute” between Gratian’s olive branch and the speech of James S. Steinberg at the Washington Forum was clear; but it did not derail the Forum. In

the final statement, there is full support of Sudan’s route towards elections and a referendum in 2011. Leaders of the Sudanese participants (NCP and SPLM) were upbeat about the result of the Forum.

US policy towards Sudan is at last moving in the right direction. At stake is peace in Darfur and the whole country. Sudan has won the first round in the “ICC’s regime change strategy”. Not everybody is rejoicing. Will the US remove Sudan from the list of terror sponsors and lift the sanctions which stand in the way of free trade and partnership? Will a US ambassador be sent to Khartoum? This will not happen without resistance from the “spoilers” who opposed peace in Sudan all along. If the weight of the political forces which helped Sudan win the first round against the enemies of peace and stability is properly mobilised, the goodwill shown by President Obama in his historic speech will find the needed support to thwart the machinations of spoilers and ensure a balanced, rational and pragmatic policy towards Sudan.

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Dr Al-Mubarak writes for leading Arabic newspapers internationally and contributes to obituaries of Middle Eastern personalities for The Guardian. A prominent playwright with the BBC and Deutsche Welle, in 2004, he was honoured in Cairo’s International Festival of Experimental theatre.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Darfur Peace Agreement established 5 May 2006
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Democratisation and Politicisation: A Critical Look at the Muslim World

*ASHUR SHAMIS

‘ISLAMIC politics’ and ‘Islamic government’ are topics most frequently talked about and debated in the Muslim world today. Academics, politicians, playwrights, and taxi drivers all have an opinion on the subject, and can often articulate it in a few words.

Many in the West are, by and large, agreed on the threat an Islamic, let alone a religious, government or state poses to the democratic, liberal and secular way of life predominantly present in the West. Witness the attitude of Western media and public opinion to countries like Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, while governments of countries like Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Saudi Arabia, with a lip-service to Islam and outright totalitarian or autocratic regimes, are taken as friends.

Since the 1970s, the situation has not been helped by the rise of militant Islamic groups, who misunderstand the concept and meaning of *Jihad* and rely on simplistic interpretations of *Qur’anic* expressions, more often than not, taken out of context.

Politics in the West presupposes a clear-cut separation of the religious and the political. It privatises religion. It suppresses its public role and renders it to a secondary, inferior, position in society. There is no historic or cultural reason why this should be the same in the Muslim world. Islam is not just a religion; equivalent to the word *‘deen’* in Arabic, but a wider and more comprehensive system. There is nothing in the affairs of the individual or society that can be said to fall outside the brief of Islam, including the ‘secular’ aspect of life.

This condescending attitude, when applied to societies in the Middle East, or the Muslim world generally, provokes anger and resentment. They detest being told to go against the grain of their social and political life and the very essence of their moral existence.

Islam has a profound sense of justice, which

is an ideal central to the Islamic system. It has a fundamental view of *shura*, or public consultation at the ruling or government levels, emphasising pluralism and interaction of opinion, dialogue, debate and ideas. Islam totally rejects one-man rule and precursors of totalitarianism and dictatorship.

It talks about individual as well as collective responsibility and public accountability. It condemns oppression in any form and promises its perpetrators dire consequences. Equality among all citizens of the state is paramount, as well as equality between them and people of other faiths, ethnic groups and national identity. Prophet Mohammed said: *“You, people, are all descendents of one father (Adam). No Arab is superior to a non-Arab; nor a non-Arab superior, in any way, to an Arab... in any way other than in fear of God...”*

Muslims are probably the most politicised people on earth

Freedom of religion and freedom of expression are sacrosanct. The West prides itself on being the champion of ‘freedom of expression’, while Islam goes beyond this; Islam does not stop at guaranteeing individuals the freedom to say what they think but makes it a duty incumbent upon every citizen to express his or her opinion, clearly and openly. A person holding back his views or manipulating or affecting the truth is accusing of being “a mute devil”. Dialogue and dynamic debate are encouraged whenever a matter of difference of opinion arises. This is very closely tied up with the fundamental question of public consultation, i.e. *shura*.

The Muslim world has always had a rich political culture, and Muslims are probably the most politicised people on earth. They have a history of over 1400 years to witness

to that fact. In recent times, from Algeria to Afghanistan and from Iraq to Sudan, Western colonialism has never seen such fierce resistance. The very idea of *Jihad*, whether in self-defence or otherwise, is steeped in politics. The call for *Jihad* is raised in order to emphasise self-determination and to resist occupation and subjugation. It is a liberating call the Muslims revert to whenever and wherever they are attacked or victimised.

The concept of *ummah*, or nation, has come with Islam from its very inception. It is a nation of universal, all-embracing kind, which takes man from the narrow, racist allegiance of the tribe to the membership of the 'family of man'.

But what does an 'Islamic state' or 'Islamic government' mean? Can it really function positively in today's world of liberal democracy? Can it interpret all of the Islamic principles and ideals into reality?

As recently as the second half of the twentieth century Muslim thinking went off in tangent pursuing and frantically seeking a model of an "Islamic State". It wasted decades chasing a rainbow but was brought crashing down to earth. The truth is that there seems to be no such paradigm or normative model that can be called an "Islamic State".

The Muslim theory of politics does not offer a ready-made blueprint or a definitive methodology to adopt or apply in order to arrive at the 'Islamic state'. Apart from some fundamental and crucial principles, the matter is left open for every generation and every group in order to make a choice that suits them and they consider appropriate to their reality. This is in fact a positive feature of the system of politics of Islam. It would be very constraining and restrictive to prescribe otherwise. Islam has left it open for the people to choose their legislators, their representative and their government, as well as the form their government takes.

This formula applies in the case of choosing the head of the state, the system that came to be called the *khilafa*, or succession. Ever since the abolition of the Ottoman *khilafa* in 1922 in Turkey, Muslim leaders and thinkers have harboured certain ambiguities towards this concept. They had to recognise and lend legitimacy to other forms of gov-

ernment, while at the same time defending the *khilafa* and calling for its restoration. Nobody seems to know how or where to achieve it. This, more than anything else, has been the cause of the turmoil and disorientation that has befallen Muslims for decades.

Weak and puppet political systems throughout the Muslim world are gradually, and inevitably, producing a series of failed states

The answer to the question of whether 'Muslims are politicised today' is therefore clear. Muslims enjoy the culture of a rich political way of life, but they lack the means to live that culture. This is because of the types of governments and leaders they have had ever since the abolition of the *khilafa*, and as a result of Western colonialism in Muslim lands. Their desire to empower the masses has resulted in massive injustices and has led to the emergence of puppet regimes, in some cases mediocre, states that have only a veneer of Muslim principles. Weak and puppet political systems throughout the Muslim world are gradually, and inevitably, producing a series of failed states in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, to name but a few. Governments in the rest of Muslim world are holding to power with the skin of their teeth or by resorting to systematic repression and more injustice. This is hardly a situation worthy of praise or admiration.

The citizens of a Muslim state are political creatures by definition; they are not mere do-gooders, preaching and proselytising; nor are they agitators bent on driving others to extremes. They are pro-active, practical and hands-on subjects, who do not concern themselves with merely promoting "good" causes. They are instigated and challenged to take part in the politics of the society in which reside and participate fully in matters and activities that affect their well-being and fellow citizens.

Any act of degrading the dignity of citizens concerns is antithetical to Islamic teach-

ings. Stifling of public liberties, condoning unlawful arrests, inflicting inhumane treatment (such as torture) upon others, perpetrating any social or political injustice of any kind, encouraging corruption and misuse of powers to achieve selfish ends, violation of human rights, betraying one's country to an enemy... all such crimes and misdemeanours are offences to be fought by citizens, individually and collectively.

Anything that is necessary or required to fight these social and political evils is, therefore, permitted. Freedom to speak and freedom to act, and the organisation of political action are first amongst these. When freedom to act becomes more than simply a right, but a duty, of every citizen, political action becomes a national obligation that must be encouraged and protected by law.

Most present-day governments and rulers of the Muslim world have to admit that their rule, for almost the last one hundred years, has been a total sham; they have betrayed and let their people down. They simply have no qualification or credentials to rule. Their strategy of holding on to power by all means has backfired and is proving to be a colossal failure.

With the sea-change that is gripping the world today, in the media and in global communication, the rulers in Muslim countries will do well to draw up a new 'social contract' with their citizens.

In order for Muslims to fulfil their social and political responsibilities, they will need more freedoms and better security as well as real guarantees in their countries. With the sea-change that is gripping the world today, in the media and in global communication, the rulers in Muslim countries will do well to draw up a new 'social contract' with their citizens. They will need to open up to permit wider participation and empower people,

especially those with differing views and in particular women. No country today can be run according to the whims and wishes of only 'one man' or a small privileged minority.

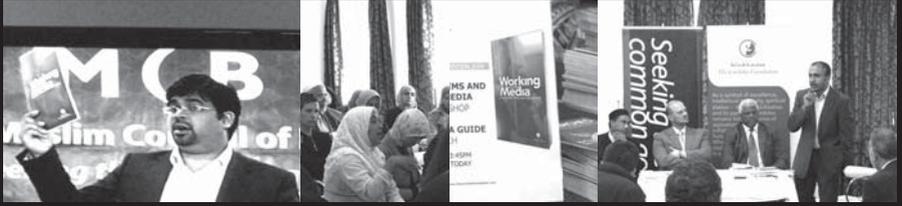
If people are not able to gain freedom through dialogue, debate and consensus, they will have little choice but to resort to other means. One only has to look at what has been transpiring in Iran recently where protestors' seeking to make their voices heard have resorted using Twitter and other modern forms of communications.

Islam in its true sense is more than what the word '*Deen*' or religion can convey. It transcends religion and renders meaningless any concept of separating politics from Islam. Islam is a political way of life and the secular idea of keeping politics a valueless, amoral discipline, devoid of any of Islam's values of justice, freedom and equality, is foreign to the culture of Muslims and alien to the spirit of Islam.

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LAUNCH OF WORKING WITH THE MEDIA GUIDE - MCB ANNUAL CONVENTION '09



EUROPEAN GAZA CONVOY AT RAFAH CROSSING



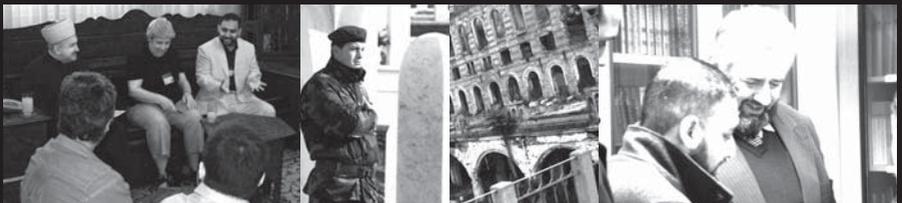
11 JULY SREBRENICA MEMORIAL DAY



MADRID NYON PROCESS & GRANADA DIALOGUE RETREAT



BOSNIA EXCHANGE



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SUDAN ROUNDTABLE AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS



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THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION

Cultures in Dialogue

FOUNDED IN 2005, The Cordoba Foundation (TCF) is an independent Public Relations, Research and Training unit, which promotes dialogue and the culture of peaceful and positive coexistence among civilisations, ideas and people. We do this by working with decision-making circles, researchers, religious leaders, the media, and a host of other stakeholders of society for better understanding and clearer comprehension of inter-communal and inter-religious issues in Britain and beyond.

Our activities include:

- Structured consultation and advisory services
- Face-to-face interaction with decision-makers and figures of authority
- In-house research
- Workshops, seminars and debates on pertinent issues
- Training and capacity-building
- Periodicals and journals
- Resourceful website

www.thecordobafoundation.com

MEDIA GUIDE OUT NOW

Working with the Media is designed to help individuals and local groups better meet their media and communications needs. It introduces the media, outlines how journalists operate and offers practical advice for spearheading a proactive public relations (PR) strategy. The Guide is written for local Muslim groups and Mosques who are unfamiliar with working and dealing with the media

