

Islam and the West: Peace Through Freedom

Ataul Huq Pramanik*

Abstract: The conflict between Islam and West is evident since the fall of the Othmanly state. The West never acknowledged the positive civilizational impact of Islam on them. Western attempts at secularization, the coercive state apparatus in the Muslim world and their Western sympathizers, and the mushrooming of Islamic institutions and movements for Islamization as a way of life has further widened the gap between the two. The West in general and the US in particular have the potentials as well as moral obligations to forge unity and peace by eradicating injustice and exploitation and by promoting economic freedom and well-being in the Muslim world.

The period following the end of the Second World War has, time and again, witnessed the fact that the perpetuation of injustice and denial of freedom in terms of silencing the voices of the oppressed is a major obstacle in achieving the lofty goal of world peace and stability. This holds true irrespective of whether we talk about the territorial conflict between Pakistan and India in Kashmir or the conflicts caused by the racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, ideological and linguistic diversities. Of all the conflicts, the ideological conflict between the secular worldview and the Islamic worldview emerges as the most predominant at the global level. Inherent in this conflict is the ego of the powerful to dominate the powerless not by mutual consent or agreement but by force and evil means. It is argued that a durable peace cannot be attained by sticking to the principle of “might is right.” It is only through cooperation and consultation as opposed to domination, exploitation and arrogance of power that the state can establish peace and stability.

* Dr. Ataul Huq Pramanik is Professor in the Department of Economics, International Islamic University Malaysia. E-mail: ataulhuq@iiu.edu.my

A Historical Reflection on Misconceptions

There is no dearth of literature that suggests the richness of Arab Islamic civilization from which the Western civilization has immensely benefited. History has witnessed that Arab and Islamic Knowledge is at the foundations of the very rise of Western civilization itself. The list of Islamic influences that still pervade in many areas of Western cultural and intellectual life is long. Mathematics and Algebra are unthinkable without the immense contributions of the great Muslim mathematicians such as al-Khawarizmī, whose treatise *al-jabr wal-Muqābalah* written in the ninth century marks the origin of the term “Algebra” itself.

The contribution of al-Rāzī and other Arab scholars in the field of modern chemistry, in the discovery of Alcohol, Alkali, Arsenic and many more can hardly be denied. Without the original contribution of Ibn Sīnā (980-1037) in the form of *Qānūn*, the entire development in the field of modern medicine would have remained incomplete in Europe. The treatises and discoveries by the Arabs in such diverse fields as Geometry, Geography, Navigation and Logic were used by the West only to conduct a war of movement and encirclement against the Islamic World. The Portuguese and the Spanish used maps and charts made centuries before by the Muslims to out-manoeuvre the Islamic world and conquer its dominions.

The developments in various fields which the West unrepentantly claims to be of their own make are the creations of Islamic civilization. From the second half of the eighth to the end of eleventh century, Arabic was the scientific language of mankind.¹ Before 1500, Europe’s debt to Asian science and technology was almost total, yet many apparently responsible Western scholars give the impression that pure and applied science emerged spectacularly, and apparently without antecedents, from the furnace of the European Renaissance.²

The freedom of thought, which the West claims to have been practicing comes from some of the finest minds and greatest thinkers of Islam between the tenth and fourteenth century. At a time when the continent of Europe was devastated by material desires and animal needs of the races which in the tenth century fought for the pasture lands and habitable portions of the only temperate climate, the continent of Asia which had already been prepared by Islam and

was in a full state of intellectual fermentation, was engaged in a battle of ideas involving moral issues like good and evil.³

Some Western scholars have recognized, only very lately, the contributions of the fourteenth century Muslim scholar – Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1906) in the field of economic science, the idea of division of labour and the principle of labour theory of value, theories of money, profit, income and distribution, and the role of the state in regulating the economic activities as well as ensuring welfare of the people.⁴ In general, the West loathes to acknowledge the positive civilizational impact that Islam has had on them. Every major discipline and craft, employed by the West to achieve its progress, is inherited from Islamic civilization when it was at its zenith. Yet, in Western historiography, public education and public information there is a total silence on all of this.

To keep the original sources obscure, the Western scholars deliberately destroyed the original contributions after the translation was done. All the great scholars' names were translated into Latin and other European usages like ibn Rushd as Averroes, ibn Sīnā as Avicenna, ibn Ishāq as Joannitius, al-Rāzī as Rhazes, al-Hytham as Alhazen etc. This giant act of cultural plagiarism was then consolidated because learning Arabic as such was frowned on throughout the West. The role the media played in demonizing Islam and dehumanizing Muslims aimed at convincing generation after generation to believe that nothing comes from Islam and the Arabs except swords, daggers, camels, harems, fanaticism, and despotism. This has led the Muslims to believe that the West is consciously engaged in undiminished war, the crusade or holy war against the Muslims in general and Islam in particular.⁵

Secularization as a Threat to Islam

The constellation of forces that coincided with the decline of Muslims' glory and the emergence of Western secular, colonial power also contributed to the misconception between Islam and West. Equipped with the Muslim-led intellectual energy, Europe planned to use its new found power to destroy Islam. Based on the arrogance of secular logic, they thought if the tools of science and philosophy guided solely by reasoned scientific experiments could undermine Christian spiritual and moral values, it would also destroy Islamic

ethos. Thus, Europe emerged from its conservative Christianity or what might be called Christian fundamentalism into a post-Christian 'value-free', brutal civilization. This is what is termed in European history as the Renaissance that began in the late 14th century. This Renaissance led the foundation of Newtonian physics that contributed to the industrial and French revolution. The Reformation of the churches in the emergence of Protestantism of the 16th Century led to the movement known as the Enlightenment of 17th and 18th centuries that enthroned human reason to the place of God thereby destroying all the prevailing belief systems in general and Christianity and Islam in particular.

This secular belief that gave birth to all that combined together represents the source of modernization, westernization, and scientific and technological advancement. Hence, Europe and its new found ally U.S. took pride in Darwinism, parliamentary democracy, Freudian psychology, free love, liberalism, nation-states, and corporate capitalism as the Kingpin of their success and glory. By the same measuring rod, the absence of ideas makes any other civilization, particularly Islam, as backward, useless and obsolete.

It is equally true that the political and economic power generated by secularism as an intellectual revolution as well as a religion of modernism or materialism successfully befooled the Muslims into thinking that they could benefit from the West and prevent the heritage of Islamic civilization from further decaying. In the absence of any intellectual revolution to rejuvenate Islam some Muslim scholars thought that secularism holds the only option to them. Others like Rifā al-Taḥṭawī, Khair al-Dīn al-Tūnīsī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Abdel Raḥmān al-Kawākibī and Muḥammad Abduh found commonalities between secular and Islamic values.⁶ The subservience to the West have become a necessity and a fact of life.

The success and glory of secular Europe in terms of long crusades and missionary activities aimed at destroying Islam was also made possible by the failure of once the most powerful Othmanly state to pay proper attention to Islam from the intellectual and legislative point of view. The state failed to realize the importance of *ijtihād* as a source of deriving day-to-day rules of governance. *‘Aqīdah* despite being an intellectual foundation of Islamic way of life became lifeless because its lifeblood, *ijtihād*, had stopped flowing.⁷ The Islamic

culture encompassing the comprehensive aspects of life was not crystallized in the minds of Muslims. It was also not linked to the states' actions. As such, the Muslims failed to distinguish between the Islamic and European concepts. The failure to distinguish between science, industry and inventions which Islam encourages Muslims to acquire regardless of the source, culture and ideology further expedited the disintegration of the Islamic state. This indirectly strengthened the secular ideology as a basis of life. As a result, the understanding of Islam was in disarray and Islam was confined to spiritual sense only without understanding its relevance to intellectual, political and legislative aspects.⁸ The most dangerous concept of nationalism as opposed to the universal brotherhood of Islam was very skillfully implanted. The collapse of Othmanī state in 1924 symbolised the West's success in destroying the concept of a universal Islamic state.⁹

The glorious period of Arab-Islamic civilization coinciding with the dark ages of Europe was followed by the period of the West's scientific advancement in concomitant with secularization and modernization. The revenge of the West on Islamic civilization in general and the Muslims in particular was taken primarily to dominate the land of Islam. Colonization was only one of many other forms through which domination took place right until the end of the Second World War that almost shattered not only their economy but also their ego of social superiority. After centuries of colonization, the process of direct decolonization that began in the early 1950s was completed by the end of 1960s. The European expansionist policy to control the vital resources of the Muslim world was rooted through the formation of the Jewish state in the heartland of Islam in 1948.

The West and its allies were fully aware that the formation of the Jewish state to reestablish their claim on the centuries-old promised land would create more problems than it could solve. Despite knowing that the Jews would never be friendly with the Arabs, more and more of the Jews continued coming unabated with all kinds of financial, moral, ethical and military support from the West. This unconditional support of the West for Israel in exchange for its full assurance in helping to control the rich Arab resources led to the final showdown between the Arabs and the Jews in particular and

the Islam and the West in general. Since wealth has a louder voice in American politics, the Jews by virtue of being the wealthiest of all communities have the highest access to American lawmakers.¹⁰

The humiliating defeat of the Arab-Islamic World in a six-day War of 1967 by Israel was another serious blow from the secular world to the pride of the Arabs. This not only created further animosity between the two worlds, secular and Islamic, but also contributed to creating an environment most conducive to retaliatory actions by the displaced, dispossessed and the disenfranchised.

The success of Islamic revolution in Iran not only reestablished the indomitable power of Islam but also carried a series of shock waves particularly to all secularized Muslim leaders who were supported by the superpowers and were perpetrating injustice and oppression on those crying for justice, freedom and equality. This revolution proved one thing: that without respecting the universal values of Islam such as justice, equality, tolerance and freedom of expression, no power on earth, how powerful it might think to be, can aspire for lofty dreams of peace and prosperity.

Coercive Muslim States and their Western Sympathizers

The conflict between Muslims and the West is also due to the existence of coercive state apparatus in the Muslim world which is directly supported by the West. Thus, in the Middle East the rule of law is highly personalized depending on the motives and interests of state authorities. There hardly exist any meaningful political processes that can be called democratic. Nor is there a mechanism where the political grievances of the ordinary masses can be resolved. Most of these governments have monopolized state power either for subduing the docile or oppressing those critical of the authorities. Purging of opposing views by the dissident groups is very common. In response to the frequent political assassinations, tortures and imprisonment, political terrorism remains the only resort left to the people. The events of the Middle East in particular have proved that it is not the language of law but the language of force that the coercive state power understands.

It has been observed that the entire Arab world is characterized by the absence of press freedom. The media is highly controlled by

economic pressures, killing of journalists, physical torture, censorship, self-censorship, and the like. On a scale of 0-100, the press freedom score of Muslim countries range between 50 and well over 80. This can be compared with freedom scores of 13,19 and 20 for USA, Japan and UK, respectively in 2000.¹¹

The performance on political rights (PR) and civil liberties (CL) in the Arab World is equally bad. According to Freedom House survey 1999, freedom consists of two components: PR and CL. While PR enable people to participate freely in the political process by which the polity chooses policy-makers and make binding decisions affecting national, regional and local community, CL includes the freedom to develop views, institutions, and personal autonomy aspect from the state. The Freedom House survey rates all the countries on a scale of 0 to 7. The Muslim World score ranges between 5-7. Almost all the countries in the Arab World are ruled by military juntas, one-party dictatorships, and brutal autocrats.¹² In contrast, Israel is the only democratic entity and politically most stable in a harem of hysterics. The traditional monarchies in the absence of electoral democracy allow extremely limited freedom to people to ventilate their grievances. In countries with a rating of 7, the political rights are virtually non-existent. Countries with a rating of 6 to 6.9 have a record of severely restricted freedom of expression and association. There is an increasing number of political prisoners and other manifestations of state terror together with justified fear of repression. Free and fair elections, rule of law and separation of powers are absent in the entire Arab World.

The situation is compounded by the concentration of economic power in a few hands. This means there is a lack of economic freedom in the society and this has further contributed to the polarization of political power structure. The distribution of economic power resources (DER) of this region (27.6 average) compares very unfavorably with those of established democracies in EEC. The EEC score revolves around 70. So, the absence of economic freedom together with the polarization of economic power resources explains the magnitude of injustice and exploitation suffered by the general masses. It simply suggests that the overall control and ownership of the productive capacity or employment both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (DER) are beyond the reach of the overwhelming

majority in these countries.¹³ Simply stated, there is a denial of both political democracy meaning the right to participate in a political process and economic democracy implying the rights to participate in the economic process by the general populace.¹⁴

Thus, people are denied their God-given right to exercise free will and to live with dignity.¹⁵ The blame for usurping these God-given rights lies not only with the so-called state power or more appropriately speaking state terrorism at the micro-level but also with the super powers that directly or indirectly sponsor them at the global level. Muslim dictators and despots would have been swept away by the popular revolt had it not been for the support they continuously receive from the West.

Among the number of other remarkable events that have contributed to the polarization of Muslims particularly of the Arab World, the most prominent ones need mentioning. These include: one, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s followed by the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan; two, the bombing, dismantling of the Taliban and the US occupation of Afghanistan in 2001; three, the Western-motivated Iraqi aggression on Islamic republic of Iran to counter the spread of Islamic revolution with Arab secularism in other parts of the Arab world and the Muslim world. Finally, the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US and its allies.

Indeed, the West has been doing its best to humiliate the Muslim World. Examples abound: the CIA-led coup in Iran in 1953, Israeli occupation of Lebanon in 1983, Israel's massacres in two Palestinian camps in Sabrila and Satila, and the bombing of Libya, Sudan and Afghanistan on the pretext of destroying terrorist networks.

The Muslim World's humiliation and suffering are due to what Anatole Karetzky calls the arrogance of America.¹⁶ By all indications, America has been leading the world in all dimensions of power. According to a Report on American's World role by the *Economist*, the US having a share in the global population of only 4.7 percent is enjoying nearly one third (31.2 percent) of global GDP \$31.4 trillion, more than one-third (36.3 percent) of global defense spending of \$811.5 billion, two-fifths (40.6 percent) of global spending on R & D of \$652.7 billion and more than four-fifths (83.1 percent) of global

cinema box-office revenues of \$18.2 billion.¹⁷ However, America's arrogance of power is enjoying full support from other powers in the West. Many feel that this arrogance of power directly or indirectly contributed to the widening of the gulf between Muslims and the West and has fuelled the so-called terrorist activities.

The West in general and the US in particular despite being successful in practicing the spirit of democracy, freedom, human dignity and liberty among its own people failed to respect the democratic rights of those millions who are dispossessed, displaced and dehumanized. Time and again, the United Nations that was created to champion the cause of the victims of injustices and exploitations is manipulated undemocratically by the veto of superpowers. The democracy that aims to respect the opinions of others is used to reject the opinions of the victims of either deliberate policies or of circumstances endorsed by the West.

Islamic Resurgence

A leading political scientist, Samuel Huntington, has aptly observed that one of the most significant social, cultural and political developments in the past several decades has been the resurgence of Islamic consciousness, movements and identity among the Muslims almost everywhere. This resurgence in response to modernization and globalization is found to be highly useful in many ways in terms of social welfare activities encompassing social and moral supports, welfare, health and education services, unemployment reliefs etc. The West, however, has treated Islamic resurgence rather badly. In this respect, it is necessary to note three things. One, Islamic resurgence has never been a threat to the West. It has been recognized by the West, time and again particularly after the glorious period of Islamic civilization during the 8th and 15th centuries, that Islam as a creed, religion and culture broadly understood has a tremendous power to shape the whole world.¹⁸ That Islam and the Muslim societies have made immense contributions to world development in such fields as science, mathematics, medicine and theology. Yet, Islam and Muslims have been maligned.

Two, admittedly, Islamic movements do have a small number of extremists who take part in terrorist activities and guerrilla wars

against those whom they oppose. The Muslim struggle for autonomy/independence in Kashmir, the Philippines, Chechnya, among others, has now been included by the West as terrorist activities. Most violences are due to the policies either of the colonial powers who created artificial geographical boundaries or of the direct and indirect impact of policy changes of U.S. governments over the last few decades.

What was once considered most appropriate policy by one administration based on American's own interest and values within the context of global power structure turned into a self-destructive boomerang afterwards. These include, among others, equipping Saddam Hussain to destroy Iran and creating and arming Osama bin Laden and Mujāhidīn to destroy socialism and to drive Soviet Union from Afghanistan.¹⁹ It is well-known that the defeat of the Arabs in the Six-day war with Israel in 1967 was a turning point for the politicization of Islam setting the stage for militant Islamic movements.²⁰ Their grievances are directed against the Western policies as a consequence of the imperialism and domination of the Muslim world for much of the 20th Century, American action against Iraq since 1991, and the continuous unconditional support for all Israeli actions. The corrupt, ineffective and coercive state powers and their Western sympathizers are no less contributory factors to the resurgence of Islamic revolutionary forces particularly in the Arab world.

Three, there are several Muslim countries known for the pro-Western policies and support, yet they are not fully trusted. For example, Pakistan is considered as the possessor of Islamic bomb and not just nuclear power like her close neighbours, China and India and distant neighbour Israel. Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Egypt, despite pro-West leanings, are identified as the hot bed of revolutionary ideas inimical to the West. Despite all the rhetoric of good diplomatic relations, these Muslim countries are definitely not trusted and are at best in the list of countries suspected to be inimical to the interests of the U.S. and the West. They are closely watched simply because the West is afraid of Islam's power to bring back the influence of religion (churches) into their lives.

The West had to fight for centuries to separate church from the state to usher in the era of modernization, secularism and

development. Quite contrary to this imaginary fear against Islam, all Muslims claim to carry the church (religion) within them implying an inseparable bond between the religion of God and the creation of God, i.e., human being.

Freedom for Justice, Peace and Stability

The historical animosity between the two great cultures should not endure for long. It is proposed that the West can contribute to the understanding between these two cultures by promoting economic and political freedom. The initiative has to come from the West since it is affluent and powerful. This means a change in philosophical outlook of the West, or a paradigm shift. Simply stated, the affluent will have to abandon part of their affluence.²¹ They must embrace moderation in lavish life style as strongly advocated by Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

The aspiration for freedom, i.e., the rights to participate in meaningful activities seems to vary directly with economic betterment meaning the satisfaction of physical and biological needs. The stability of a society hinges on a right balance, i.e., equilibrium in social, economic, moral, civil and political parameters.²² If the socio-economic rights (SER) are not accompanied with the rights to participate in political decision-making and civil society (i.e., civil and political rights - CPR), then the social disequilibria in the form of instability are bound to take place. If people enjoy relatively more of SER (i.e., economic freedom) but limited CPR (political freedom), which is the case with most of the better off Muslim countries in general and the Arab countries in particular, the undemocratic governments will suppress the basic liberties and thus generate violent opposition to themselves and to the Western governments that support them. This speaks strongly in favour of the need for economic and political freedom in the Muslim world in general. In fact, a stable political democracy cannot be established without a stable economic democracy, i.e., economic freedom. But the basic institutions that can take care of the distribution of economic and political resources are lacking in the Muslim world.

The institutions that can secure property rights and prevent malpractices and corruptions in judiciary, customs department, and the bureaucracy are in a very bad shape. The disproportionately

bigger size of the government vis a vis the private sector, enhanced government regulation, and interventions in trade and fiscal policy choices pose a big limitation on economic freedom of the entrepreneurs. The policies pertaining to money control (i.e., inflation), flow of capital and investment, banking and finance, wages and prices have been thwarting the growth of a free enterprise system that is essential for enhancing economic freedom and hence growth and human development.

The disastrous economic performance measured by long term growth in per capita GDP concomitant with the distribution of economic power resources merely depicts the extremely limited economic freedom in the Arab World for the last quarter of a century (1975 – 2000). This is what has contributed to the social disequilibria in the relatively affluent part of the Arab World which is identified by the West as the safe haven for terrorist and extremist organizations. The authoritarian nature of Arab governments is a major contributory factor to limited economic and political freedom and thereby inviting violent reactions from the jobless, educated and aspirant younger generations.

The onus to improve old institutions and build new ones lies more with indigenous leadership rather than with international organizations and foreign leadership. The failure so far to build appropriate institutions to ensure economic freedom is caused by the failure to promote civil societies that work for the interest of the change agents. In this regard, four fundamental lessons that the World Bank suggests include: designing new institutions to complement what already exists in terms of other supporting institutions, human capabilities, and available technologies; two, innovating to identify new institutions that work and those that do not; three, connecting communities of market players through open information flows and open trade; and four, promoting competition among jurisdictions, firms, and individuals. These lessons are essential for building institutions to ensure a stable and inclusive growth.

Given the magnitude of the task to build necessary institutions capable of creating an enabling environment both for economic and political freedom, the role of the individual nation state has been seriously constrained by the new wave of globalization heralding a

borderless world.²³ The ideals of globalization have created an opportunity for the world leadership to help the developing Muslim world to strengthen their institutions. The U.S. leadership supported by its Western allies has, over the decades, demonstrated its ability to mould the world's opinions on the right causes in many instances. Its push towards unilateralism is likely to diminish its influence in the world and create instability where the need is for unity and peace.

One aspect of U.S. military unilateralism is evident in its unqualified support for the state of Israel. In the opinion of Western scholars, Israel is the most costly ally to US in the whole world. One can simply refer to the extraordinarily huge amount of foreign aid, both financial and military, US has provided to Israel given its limited territory and very insignificant population to protect. This has definitely shattered the US's good track record on all the best of world values she advocates for.

The European Union – the closest and most reliable long-term ally and not of course, the costliest one like Israel – has the courage to say that despite the colossal loss of life and property, the event of September 11, 2001 on U.S. soil was the inevitable result of American policies. The resentment, however mild it might sound, comes from all the big powers against the unilateralist and selfish superpower of U.S. particularly since the 1990s. This becomes evident from the newly emerging partnership among Russia with China and India on one axis and Japan and China, on the other. Furthermore, Europeans – and not just the French – have said they must be united in order to provide a counterweight to the U.S.

What has been delineated above simply indicates that the use of political and military might as opposed to economic by U.S. is fraught with more danger and risks in terms of alienating the poor Muslim countries as well as big powers aspiring for global leadership. The policy impacts resulting from constructive engagements with less better-off Muslim countries need to be shaped more by economic considerations. Since these countries have yet to attain a respectable level of human development, say of 0.7 and more, opening of markets in developed West to the products of these countries conditioned by good governance can be instrumental in expanding opportunities for economic freedom.²⁴ To continue to work for a new world balance, the industrialized world should strive to fight

against its own protectionism. They should share their bounty by making their rich world a home for the talented in the developing world especially the Muslim world. The war against terrorism can be won by lowering trade tariffs and immigration requirements. The countries that comply with the requirements of good governance must be given all opportunities through free trade, investment and financial aid to succeed. Only this can create a truly multi-cultural society with the desired global objectives of justice, peace and stability.

Provided the U.S. can give the leadership to make the world shift in this direction, it is bin Laden who will be history, not civilization. In regimes where terrorism grows, economic and political repressions go hand-in-hand. However, economically-free countries show greater tolerance and civility than economically-repressed countries, where helplessness and isolation are known to foment fanaticism and terrorism's unquenchable thirst for blood.

Concluding Remarks

Islam, like two other Abrahamic faiths – Judaism and Christianity – is a universal religion and hence stands for universal brotherhood based on the universal values like equality, justice and compassion, freedom of conscience, human rights, and dignity. This commonality existing among the three major faiths are expected to be the uniting force only if the followers of these faiths truly practise the values of moderation, justice, and cooperation. The lack of trust emanating from the culture of arrogance, authoritarianism and corruption has become the major cause of conflict and disunity. The secular West has successfully dominated the Muslim world using their economic, political, technological and military superiority. This has not resulted in peace and security either for the West or the Muslim world.

Economic, military and technological superiorities are not enough to ensure peace. The recent records of wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan do not support the view that the arrogance of political power and military superiority can ensure world peace through war. The belligerent attitude of the U.S. backed by its close allies forced many countries in the past to take a hostile stance to the West on many issues. It is only through continuous dialogues and constructive

engagements endorsed by multi-lateral decision-making bodies like the UN that conflict resolutions can be peacefully arrived at. The trust and confidence that the U.S. has already earned from the comity of nations together with the love for some universal American values the people at large have been cherishing can be used most effectively in terms of promoting economic freedom thereby bringing justice to those who are desperately in need of it regardless of racial and geographical divides.

To find such a common ground, the onus also lies equally well with the Muslim world to reshape existing attitudes and methodology of Islamic movements. The Muslim world is too divided on petty, trivial issues relating to the detailed article of faiths and ethos. The elites are too pre-occupied with narrow parochial boundaries that are contributing to isolation of Muslims from non-Muslim in general or one particular school from other schools like Shī'ah vs. Sunnī, Wahabī vs. non-Wahabī etc. Sectarianism and tribalism have been instrumental in disuniting the Muslim world during the last decades of the twentieth century.

An intellectual revolution should be the basis for reshaping the methodology of all future Islamic movements. To achieve this, Muslims need to organize themselves collectively as a single authentic *jamā'ah* (group). Muslim scholars need to enjoy intellectual freedom to study the Qur'ān in the light of modern scientific knowledge by borrowing, when necessary, from the West. To discover the truth and the mystery behind this universe and the unifying force underneath its creation must be the focal point.

The social contract agreed upon by the Prophet (SAS) and other communities in Madinah included the Jews and Christians. This means that the Jews, Christians, and Muslims being the inheritors of three great revealed religions should form part of the original *ummah*, which was seen as a political community and not just an exclusive religious community. To achieve this goal, continuous dialogues, intellectual discourses and conferences can go a long way to narrow the gaps among the believers of diverse faiths thereby widening the horizon of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the existing interpretations of religion for the sake of mutual enrichment.

Notes

1. See F.A. Noor, *Terrorizing the Truth – The Shaping of Contemporary Images of Islam and Muslim in Media, Politics and Culture* (Penang, Malaysia: Just World Trust, 1997), 43.
2. Although the educational establishment of the West from its universities, cultural centres and mass media, have been at the fore front of the process of erasure and forgetting, the indispensable fact is that Arab and Islamic knowledge is at the foundations of the very rise of Western civilization itself. See *Ibid.*, 41.
3. See F. Valyi, *Structural and Political Revolutions in Islam* (London: Kegal Paul, 1925).
4. As cited in J.D.C. Boulakia, “Ibn-Khaldūn: A Fourteenth Century Economist,” *Journal of Political Economy* 79, no. 3 (1971): 1105-1118.
5. See F.A. Noor, *Terrorizing the Truth*, 43.
6. See John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamīmī, eds, *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
7. See K. Siddiqi, *Stages of Islamic Revolution* (London: The Open Press, 1996).
8. See Taqiuddin An-Nabhanī, *The Islamic State* (Walnut, USA: Islamic Cultural Workshop, 1996).
9. *Ibid.*
10. See M.C. Gizzi et al., *The Web of Democracy: An Introduction to American Politics* (UK: Wadsworth Thompson Learning, 2002), 369.
11. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report, 2002* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 38-41.
12. Freedom House Survey, *Freedom in the World, 1998-99* (New York: Freedom House, 1999).
13. See T. Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization - A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-1988* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990).
14. L. Kelso & P.H. Kelso, *Democracy and Economic Power* (New York: University Press of America, 1991).
15. For an Islamic perspective on the dignity of man, the sanctity of human life, freedom, equality and accountability based on the Qurʾān and Sunnah. See H. Kamali, *The Dignity of Man: The Islamic Perspective* (Malaysia: Ilmiah Publishers, 1999).

16. A. Karetsky, "The Times," cited in *The New Straits Times* (The Malaysian English Daily) September 18, 2002.

17. Ibid.

18. Margaret Thatcher argues that communism was a pseudo-religion but Islam is certainly a real one. According to her Islam is a challenge not only to the liberal or Pro-Western rules in the Muslim world but also to the West itself. She appreciated some Islamic values like strong family ties, stigma attached to anti-social behaviour, sense of obligation to the poor - all of which speak for the lower level of crimes in Muslim societies. She condemned corruption, hypocrisy, cruel treatments of woman and cruelty of traditional practices. See M. Thatcher, *State Craft and Strategy for a Changing World* (New York: Harpercollin Publications, 2002), 216.

19. According to Nelson Mandela, the U.S. decision to arm and finance the Mujāhidīn movement in Afghanistan following the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country led to the rise of the Taliban regime. See *The New Straits Times*, September 16, 2002.

20. See D.S. New, *Holy War: The Rise of the Militant Christian, Jewish and Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Farland & Company, 2002), 166.

21. See John K. Galbraith, *The Affluence Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 1-6.

22. Nawab Haider Naqvi has forcefully spelled out the implications of the concepts of equilibrium, trusteeship, and constrained freedom. See Nawab Haider Naqvi, *Ethics and Economics* (UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1981), Preface.

23. Chandra Muzaffar, "Globalization of the Human Spirit," *New Sunday Times* (the Malaysian daily), September 2, 2002.

24. Robert Williams ed., *Explaining Corruption: The Politics of Competition I* (UK: Edward Elgar, 2000).