

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Comprehensive Development from an Islamic Perspective

Islamic economists have been critical of the secularist approach to development for quite some time. Some recent developments, like the fall of socialism and the continuing problems of capitalism, have further brought the weakness of the secularist approach into sharp focus. It was in this background that the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI) of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) jointly organized the International Conference on Comprehensive Development of Muslim Countries from an Islamic Perspective. The conference was held from August 1 to 3, 1994 (23-25 Safar 1415), in Holiday Villa, Subang Jaya, Malaysia.

The conference started with the recitation of verses from the Qur'ān. In his welcoming address, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee and the Deputy Rector of IIUM Prof. Dr. Kamal Hassan welcomed the guest of honour, Right Honourable Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, and thanked the sponsors for making this timely conference possible. Representatives of the sponsoring institutions, Dr. Ṭāhā Jābir al-°Alwānī (President, IIIT), and H.E. Usāmah al-Faqīh (President, IDB), made brief remarks on this occasion.

In his opening speech Right Hon. Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim emphasized the need for development of the Muslim countries. He said that despite being resource rich, the Muslim world happens to have the poorest of the poor amongst its citizens. He argued that Islam has its own universal principles, and it is the job of the Islamic scholars to find new approaches in the light of these principles to solve the contemporary problems of the *ummah*. He pointed out that Malaysia's achievements have been labelled a "Miracle" by the World Bank and other agencies but actually they are the result of sincere hard work of the leadership, the discipline of the people, and cooperation among various segments of the society. He said that the Islamic approach to comprehensive development is the need of the hour, as it will be useful not only for the Muslims but for humanity at large.

The keynote address of the conference was delivered by Dr. °Abdul-

Hamīd AbūSulaymān, the Rector of IIUM. He emphasized that the conference was the need of the hour as the Islamic concept of comprehensive development was the remedy of the ills of the contemporary world and all the humanity would be served if Islamic scholars developed this approach effectively. He also pointed out that over the years Islamic thinking itself has developed its own problems, and the Islamic economists, in their effort to devise a new approach, will have to overcome the problems of the Muslim way of thinking. He emphasized that Islamic scholars should come forward and develop new solutions to economic problems in the light of Islam, rather than recommending outdated approaches which have proved ineffective in the past.

Dr. M. Nejatullah Siddiqi of the Center for Research in Islamic Economics, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, in his paper entitled "Towards Regeneration," argued that the Muslim people as a whole are weak, insecure, and underdeveloped. A regenerated community of Muslims would demonstrate Islamic living in its totality: culture, economy, polity, and international relations. He recommended that the Islamic movements should shift their present focus from obtaining political power to winning the hearts and minds of people by projecting the Islamic vision which encompasses women as well as men, non-Muslims as well as Muslims, and dissenters as well as believers. The paper argued that the dignity and basic rights of all members of the society should be protected and that violence had no role in the process of regeneration.

The paper by Dr. Kamal Hassan of the IIUM was entitled, "Some Socio-Cultural Phenomena which Hinder the Overall Progress of the Muslim *Ummah*: General Observations related to the Malay Community in Malaysia Facing the Challenges of the 21st Century." The paper argued that while a community may achieve a high level of economic development and affluence, and thus may be considered successful on the secular criteria of progress, it may nonetheless not meet the Islamic criteria of comprehensive development. To achieve these criteria, it is necessary to ensure the development of human personality in the area of social responsibility, morality, and ethics as defined by Islam. This approach was used to highlight the problems faced by the Malay community in Malaysia, trying to overcome some of the challenges faced in the realization of Malaysia's Vision 2020. This paper was also presented in Arabic in a simultaneous session led by Prof. Abdul Khaliq Kazi.

The paper entitled, "An Islamic Perspective on the Wealth of Nations" by Dr. Imad al-Dean Ahmed, Maryland, USA, took an overall view of

the issues in the economy. It touched upon questions like decentralization, private property, hard currency, monetary policy, limits on taxation, the public sector, and so on. The author looked into Islamic ideas and also the views of the Western thinkers.

Dr. Louay Munir Safi of the International Islamic University Malaysia presented a paper entitled, "Patterns of Development: The Muslim Historical Experience." It examined the two contending models of development in Muslim society, the secular and the Islamic. The paper argued that while the dominant Islamic model of development draws on the Qur'ān, it does not follow the Qur'anic methodology which requires the study of the history of peoples to gain insights to draw the conclusions needed to make the process of social change effective in a comprehensive sense. The paper concluded that while moral reform is essential to social progress, genuine and sustainable progress calls for intellectual and organizational development as well.

In his paper, "Causes of Decline and Methods of Revival of Nations - A Survey of Major Muslim Thinkers upto the 19th Century," Dr. Abdul Azim Islahi of Aligarh University, India, attempted to look at the rise and decline of the *Ummah*, as discussed by various leading Islamic thinkers in history. His focus was the question of revival, and various approaches taken by the revivalists at different times.

Dr. Syed Abdul Hamid al-Junid and Dr. Syed Aziz Anwar, both from the International Islamic University Malaysia, jointly contributed a paper on, "The Behavioral Science Foundation of Organization Development: A Critique from Islamic Perspective." The paper was presented by Dr. Syed Abdul Hamid Al-Junid. It addressed the question of organizational effectiveness without violating the *shari'ah* guidelines in the fast-changing contemporary environment. It particularly examined the issue whether the behavioral science foundations of Organization Development (OD) are relevant in the Islamic context. The authors contended that generally the OD interventions remain far from capturing the Islamic world view. In this regard the paper highlights the use of Islamic concepts like workers being treated as *insān*, incorporation of the techniques of *tazkiyah* and *usrah* and so on in the OD programmes of Muslim organizations. The paper underscored the need for further theoretical and empirical research in this area.

Dr. Ameer Ali, of the University of Brunei Darussalam presented a paper entitled "Reconciling the Quest for Religio-Cultural Identity and Socioeconomic Development in the Contemporary Muslim World." The

paper focused on the two current trends in the *ummah*, namely growing desire for the Muslim masses to assert their Islamic identity and the relative underdevelopment of the Muslim population in its socio-economic sphere. The paper, discussing the revivalist, reformist, and radical responses in the Muslim world, argued that all these approaches establish a very simplistic equation between Islam and material welfare: "Bring back Islam to the centre stage of societal life, and the material problems would disappear." This makes the present problem and its resolution a religious issue. The paper put the point across that the real issue is the socioeconomic upliftment of the masses, and given the areas of future growth in the world economy it is essential that the Muslim countries invest massively in human resources.

The paper by Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Ali of the International Islamic University Malaysia was entitled, "Development, Change, Progress, and Civilization." It attempted to present the concept of development and other related terms from both the Western and Islamic perspectives. The purpose was to enable the scholars to appreciate the Islamic perspective and contribute towards its actualization. One of the important conclusions of the paper was to underscore the need for and the role of the development of the human personality itself which has been defined in Islam very clearly.

"Islamic Concept of Comprehensive Development and its Contemporary Implications" was the title of the paper presented by Dr. M.A. Mannan of the IRTI, Jeddah. The paper focussed on some of the key elements of the Islamic concept of comprehensive development to identify the conditions under which the process of comprehensive development could begin in a Muslim society, given the dynamics of decline and revival. This paper, among others, highlighted the dimensions of totality, hierarchy of needs, social surplus, distribution, and so on. It provided guidelines for sustainable growth together with ethical and moral values and their internalization. The implications of comprehensive development were also addressed in a global context.

Prof. Dr. Zubair Hassan of the International Islamic University Malaysia in his paper "Islam and Development: Some Reflections" addressed the question of comprehensive development in a contemporary setting, especially in the light of post-World War II issues. The paper, discussing the approach to comprehensive development, looked into the role of consumption and efficiency and the relevance of combinational productivity as a measure of progress. The paper also addressed the question of priorities and issues in the process of comprehensive development.

Dr. Tahir Beg of the International Islamic University Malaysia presented a paper under the title "Development Perspective in Capitalism and Islam: Some Policy Directions for GO's and NGO's in Islamic Countries." The paper addressed the issue of comprehensive development of Muslim countries within the framework of the existing world order in which Muslim countries are marginalised. The paper argued that the Islamic world today is faced with a great challenge of reconstruction. Summarising the philosophy of capitalist development as the "theology of acquisitiveness" and discussing its methodology, the paper argued that there is a need for a new perspective, and in this regard it presented the view that since both the state and the market have their own constraints in today's world, and global arrangements like the IMF, GATT are the tools that perpetuate the present capitalistic world economic order, the NGO's can play a very important role in the comprehensive development of Muslim countries from an Islamic perspective. In this regard the paper looked into the issues of capital formation, promotion of entrepreneurship, technology, and popular participation in development.

The paper entitled "Development Theories: An Islamic Interpretation," by Dr. Behrooz Ghamari Tabrizi of the University of California, started with a philosophical overview of the Western concept of development, and then looked into the Islamic perspective of development. It argued that the realization of human potential is at the core of the Islamic approach, which is governed by the universal application of *tawhid* in various aspects of individual, collective, and social life.

The last paper in the conference was presented by Dr. Muhammad Arif Zakauallah of the International Islamic University Malaysia, and was entitled "Islamic Culture as an Essential Component of a Comprehensive Approach to Development: Some Lessons from the Malaysian 'Miracle.'" The paper argued that many developing countries in general, and Muslim countries in particular, despite their rich resource base and good economic policies, have failed to achieve a commendable level of development. Most of the time it has been due to the internal conflicts within their societies which have affected their strength adversely. In this context the paper emphasized the need for a peaceful and amicable Conflicts Resolution Mechanism (CRM) and argued that the institutions and practices based on Islamic values, when used as components of a CRM, can not only resolve the conflict but are capable of producing an overall environment in the society which will be conducive for growth. In support of this position the paper presented a detailed case study of

the CRM of the Malaysian society that has been built into its Malay Islamic Culture and has contributed enormously to the country's remarkable development.

The following papers were presented and discussed in Arabic. They were presented in parallel sessions during the conference:

1. "Islam—A Civilizational Viewpoint: An Introduction to the Influence of *Īmān* on Comprehensive Development and Cultural Change in the Islamic World." Dr. M. Abdus Sattar Nassar, University of Qatar.
2. "The Role of Theological Reform on the Islamic Renaissance." Dr. Mustafa Abu-Sway, IIUM.
3. "The Polemics Between Arab Islamic Civilization and Western Civilization: Factors of Development and Degeneration." Dr. Ismail Mustafa Safar.

A number of prominent Islamic scholars also participated in the conference and served as chairpersons, discussants, and experts. Some of the names are as follows: Prof. Khurshid Ahmad, Dr. Umar Chapra, Dr. Fathi Uthman, Dr. Anas Zarqa, Dr. Omar Zubair, Dr. Ṭāhā Jābir al-°Alwānī, Dr. Jamal Barzinji, Dr. Mahmoud Rashdan, Dr. Sami Homoud, Dr. Sultan Abou Ali, Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, Dr. Abdul Hamid Ghazali, Dr. Abdul Khabeer M. Ata, and Dr. Muhammad Ali al-Qari bin Eid. The conference also organized working groups to prepare recommendations in the following areas: Education, Development and Muslim Culture, Social Integration, and NGO's.

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