

The Changing Role of Islam in International Relations

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This paper examines different aspects of the global Islamic movement and its impacts and implications. We study the theoretical background and different perspectives in Islamic ideology. We discuss the basis of inter-state relations between a Muslim polity and other Muslim or non-Muslim polities that can be found in traditional and neo-traditional literatures relevant to the topic. This paper argues that peace is the original basis in Islam and rejects the idea of perpetual war between Islamic and non-Islamic polity as espoused by Jihadist groups that have raised concerns among security agencies and non-Muslim political and community leaders. Political Islam is undergoing a transformation from being an opposition and marginalised political project to becoming a counter-hegemonic movement fighting at the front line between the West and the rest of the world. The strength of Islamism is shaped not only by its Islamic discourse and rhetoric, but also by its social components and political programs. This paper argues that the West must in one way or another understand, recognize and accommodate Islamism's political motivations and visions. Religious re-awakening, often in the form of fundamental revivalism, is a major phenomenon in the international relations today, especially in the Islamic regions.

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1. CURRENT SITUATION OF MUSLIMS IN THE WORLD

In the twenty-first century, almost one out of every five human beings is a Muslim, and a quarter of the human race will probably become Muslim. The new demographic presence of Islam within the Western World is indicative that the Islamisation is now a major globalising force. In the second half of the twentieth century both Muslim migration to the West and conversions to Islam within the West consolidated a new Islamic presence. In Europe as a whole, there are now 20 million Muslims, eight million of whom are in Western Europe. These figures exclude the Muslims of the Republic of Turkey, who number some 50 millions.

Besides demographic Islamisation of the Western world, there are now over a thousand mosques and Islamic associations in the US alone. And the country has professional associations for Muslim engineers, Muslim social scientists and Muslim educators. There are some six million American Muslims and the number is rising at an impressive rate. Indeed, the American society, in general, is now coping with this issue, which creates cultural tensions between Islam and the West, as some observers have noted. Currently Islam is the fastest growing religion in Central Asia. After the collapse of the USSR, all five states of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) made an official place for Islam as the dominant religion. In France, Islam is becoming the second most predominant religion after Catholicism. In Britain, Muslims have been demanding state subsidies for specific needs such as Islamic education.

Islamic re-awakening, often in the form of fundamental revivalism, is a major

phenomenon in the world today. This new surge of religion and ethnicity owes its new life and strength to the powerful secularising influence of today's new global capitalism, sometimes also termed modernism. Western discourse, which dichotomises West-Islam relations, represents a cultural anxiety in the West that sees a distorted mirror of its own past in Islam. This anxiety lies in the fear that the rise of Islam may mark the revenge of the God who was transformed, through reformation and deformation, into a distorted faith in the form of market capitalism and individualism. Islamism questions and challenges many basic assumptions about society and human beings that are modelled globally and based on Eurocentric social, political, economic and cultural premises. It singles the need to rethink the balance of dichotomising notions of faith, reason, progress, modernity, tradition, secularism, liberation, humanity, freedom etc.

Islam has a powerful hold on the imagination and the loyalty of its followers because it enjoins them to obey the word of God, the holy Quran. This, in turn, means that Islamic social and political practices were partly fossilised in the seventh century, a period during which religious and politics were inseparable.

However, there is a complex relationship between religion and international relations. The implication of the first side of the debate is that religion, Islam in this case, has to be studied as an independent and vital force in international relations. If Islam is the driving force behind political phenomena, it must also have a role in international political phenomena. The counter-argument would go like this: Islam is important for the analysis of IR but only if we recognize that its role is shaped by economic, political, and social developments which are unrelated to the precepts of the religion or the contents of the Quran. Religion should, therefore, not to be privileged as an independent field of study in the context of IR. But a close study demonstrates how there is an Islamic impact on the study of international politics: war, nationalism and the nation-state, and human rights.

Islam does play a role in international relations. We cannot understand the politics of the Middle-East, for example, without some references to it. But the contribution of Islam to politics is not 'independent.' The fault-lines of conflict are not drawn between Islamic and non-Islamic governments or movements, let alone between and Islamic world and the rest. A helpful understanding of the role of religion is one that takes into account the social, economic, and political concerns that lie behind the religious terminology or imagery. Mundane and universal issues such as social justice, political legitimating, and defending the homeland reveal themselves behind the surface of Islamic politics. This is not to claim that religious discourse is reducible to material concerns or simply a facade. Spiritual and moral issues are often really at stake in religious politics. But the interpretation of religion as such is a fluid one. It evolves in constant interaction with specific historical conditions. This approach to Islam developed above can be applied to the study of international relations and religion in general. The recent interest in religion and culture as important factors in international relations is commendable and only redress a curious and unhelpful neglect.

2. VARIOUS VIEW ON ISLAMIC POLITICS AND THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE WEST

Here we discuss the basis of inter-state relations between a Muslim polity and other Muslim or non-Muslim polities that can be found in the traditional and neo-traditional literatures relevant to the topic. The discussion begins with an introduction to Islam's

foundational view on politics that Islam being understood as a comprehensive religion does not recognize the separation of the religion from politics, and what constitutes an Islamic polity. It then provides three possible options of inter-state relations in Islam: war, peace, or neutrality. Among these three options, it argues that peace is the original basis and rejects the idea of perpetual war between Islamic and non-Islamic polity as espoused by Jihadist groups that have raised concern among security agencies and non-Muslim political and community leaders.

To understand Islam's perspective of international relations requires firstly an understanding of the relationship between Islam and politics. The underlying concept of Islam's political view is one that politics is an inseparable part of Islam.

Islam is a comprehensive religion, meaning all aspects of human life with no separation between any of the aspects (Qutb 2006). The comprehensiveness of Islam may be seen from the variety of books on fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and etiquette in Islam. These books discuss diverse topics in life from hygiene and the relationship between husband and wife to affairs of the state, matters of justice and social regulations. Since Islam is a way of life, it certainly includes politics because politics is a part of the reality of life. This also means that Islam does not accept detaching any aspect of life from the guidance of religion, and it despises people in the past that believed part of God's teachings and rejected the rest.

Another concept is the concept of man as God's khalifah (vicegerent) of this world. As the khalifah, man is to submit fully to God and is obligated to establish his order by implementing what he has decreed in the Quran and has been explained by his prophet in the hadiths (Prophet's tradition) in all aspects of life in this world. Establishing God's order in this world is regarded as an important manifestation of submission and worship of God.

Therefore, Muslims are responsible for implementing Islam in politics or to participate in it in accordance with the principles of Islam because it helps him to carry out his duty as khalifah. In fact, the word khalifah itself means power and leadership in the Quran. (The Quran 24: 55) Hence, a Muslim cannot separate Islam from politics or politics from Islam. To highlight the importance and role of politics in establishing God's order in the world, the Quran points out that God has made some of his prophets to become kings and leaders, for example, the prophets Daud (David) and Suleiman (Solomon). (The Quran 21: 78-9, 2: 102) Even Muhammad was the political leader of Medina as well as a prophet.

Thus, Islam as a way of life differs from secularism. Secularism segregates the role of religion from matters of society and state, limiting it only to the personal sphere and to places of worship. In contrast, Islam has guidelines for all aspects of life and demands its believers' commitment to all of its teachings.

The terminology used to describe the Muslim's political institution is Dar Al-Islam (Land of Islam) or ad-Daulah Al-Islamiyah (Islamic state). The latter is the contemporary version but carries the same meaning. There are two views on the meaning of Dar Al-Islam and Dar Al-Harb. One view states that the Land of Islam must be ruled by Muslims and the Islamic ruling system is applied. Another view put emphasis on the issue whether Muslims are secure or not. Thus, the condition for land to be recognized as Dar al-Islam is where Muslims are safe and not persecuted because of their religion (Ramadan 2002: 125-126).

The land cannot be considered as Dar Al-Islam where both the ruling system and the government are not Islamic or, the latter perspective, where Muslims are neither protected nor feel safe or at peace. To understand the international relations of a Muslim polity with a non-Muslim state, one needs to understand the basis of the relationship at the individual level between the Muslim and the non-Muslim because Muslim scholars view international

relations as just an extension of individual relations (Haniff Hassan 2004: 187-223).

3. ISLAMIC TRADITIONAL VIOLENT VIEW

There are two major views on this issue. One view suggests that that armed jihad is the only kind of relationship that can exist between Muslims and non-Muslims. To the proponents of this view, armed jihad is an obligation until the end of the world and its aim is to fight infidels wherever they may be found, in accordance with the Prophet's utterance to "fight the polytheists until they say, "there is no god but Allah". Armed jihad is to be carried out until all lands are liberated from unbelievers and when all unbelievers submit to the rule of Islam (Khadduri 1966: 16-17).

This view argues that verses on armed jihad in the Quran are revealed in the first stages. God revealed verses of Chapter 9 of the Quran to finalize the last stage. These last verses abrogate the earlier verses revealed on armed jihad, which state that it is only permissible when Muslims are attacked. To support this view, its proponents in contemporary times often revive historical experiences of war during the Crusades, colonialism, the persecution of Palestinian Muslims by Israelis and the neglect of the international community under the leadership of the United States, and recent developments related to the attack on Afghanistan and Iraq by coalition forces. This view proposes the idea of perpetual war between Muslims and non-Muslims that will only cease or end when all non-Muslims embrace Islam, fall under the rule of the Muslim nation or enter into a peaceful agreement with Muslims.

Corollary to this view is the classification of state into Dar Al-Islam (Land of Islam) and Dar Al-Harb (Land of War). Dar Al-Harb refers to lands other than Dar Al-Islam as a terminology to describe non-Muslim lands and suggests that all lands that are not Dar Al-Islam or does not submit to it should be considered to be at war with it (Johnson 2002: 12-41).

According to proponents of this view, Muslims are not allowed to enter into any permanent peace agreement with non-Dar Al-Islam states. If they do enter into any peace agreement, the period of the agreement should not exceed ten years. They argue that such a position makes the obligation of armed jihad against non-Muslims redundant. However, some view that the period of any peace agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims is at the discretion of Muslim rule (Khaduri 1999: 8-17, 142).

4. ISLAMIC TRADITIONAL PEACEFUL VIEW

Another view suggests that peace and harmony is the basis for relationships, not war. The view argues that the claim of the final stages of armed jihad abrogating all the previous stages is unfounded and not supported by prominent classical Muslim scholars. The prevalent opinion is that not all verses on jihad can be interpreted independently of each other. All the verses on jihad in Islam need to be studied together and reconciled to derive the true understanding of jihad in Islam. In this respect, Muslim scholars agree that the verses that are general and unconditional must be interpreted as conditional.

In addition to that, the study of verses on jihad must not be detached from the historical context of the time they were revealed ("Does the Quran teach violence?" 3 May 2005). The classification was an attempt made by Muslim scholars during the classical period to

interpret their context and to implement certain Islamic laws when the application differed, depending on the country where Muslims lived.

These Muslim scholars felt that it was important to classify time periods to ensure that laws pertaining to jihad were applied to the correct situation and place. It also helped them to issue fatwa according to the appropriate social and political environment. It is a fundamental principle in Islamic law that shariah (Islamic rule) considers context when it is implemented (Safi 2002). The political culture between states during the classical period also played an important part in the construction of the binary classification. States in the previous centuries had a stronger tendency to use war as the preferred means of solving a problem or conflict. History has on record rulers who went to war over trivial issues. This attitude was prevalent in the political scene and thus affected the perspectives of Muslim legal scholars.

Proponents of the second view argue that the objective of armed jihad is not to fight non-Muslims because of differences in faith but to establish justice and eradicate oppression. (The Quran 22: 40). And armed jihad in Islam can only be waged against those who wage war (The Quran 22: 39, 40, 2: 193, 4: 7, 2: 194, and 2: 190). Like other major religions, the essence of Islam is peace, love, mercy and compassion (The Quran 21: 107). Islam forbids violence and the shedding of human blood. War cannot be used to win over non-Muslims to Islam. In Islam, there is no compulsion in religion (The Quran 2:256, 10: 99). Diversity and differences in faith are part of God's creation (The Quran 49: 13, 5: 48, 11: 118-9, 10: 99-100). Muslims are called upon to accept diversity and coexist with it (Muhammad Haniff Hassan 2001: 187-223).

They also note that the classification of states according to Dar Al-Islam and Dar Al-Harb did not originate from the Quran. Nowhere in the Quran is such a classification mentioned explicitly. Nor is there any reference to it in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, there is no divinity embedded in the classification. (Sheikh Atiyyah Saqr 2004). Furthermore, Dar Al-Islam and Dar Al-Harb are not the only classifications found in the writing of Muslim scholars. Islamic terminology is full of many other classifications, such as Dar Al'Ahd (Land of Covenant), Dar Al-Sulh (Land of Truce) and Dar Al-Kufr (Land of Unbelief) among other.

Furthermore, the contemporary context requires the restructuring of the Muslim political praxis from a scheme of permanent warfare against non-Muslims to one that includes protracted truces, formal diplomatic relationships and membership in the international community of nation-states because any Muslim-ruled polity that is a member of the United Nations is, by default, in a peaceful agreement with all other members under the United Nations Charter (Khalid Yahya 1994: 6-9). Finally, they say that history has witnessed the peaceful spread of Islam and peaceful coexistence of Muslims with non-Muslims in China and Southeast Asia. There is no need for the idea of perpetual armed jihad to be used to spread the message of Islam to non-Muslims (Malise Ruthven 2004: 122-123).

When a Muslim state is not at war with another state because of a peaceful agreement between them, Islam requires such a relationship to be based on the commitment to the peace agreement, international convention and peaceful coexistence (The Quran 8: 61, 5: 1, 2: 177), non-aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of any state; (The Quran 4: 90, 8: 72) cooperation for the common good; (The Quran 5: 2) respect for differences of cultures and civilization; (The Quran 49: 13) justice for all and equal treatment and equal opportunity to all nations to participate in building the world order and in formulating the standard of international conduct, principles and norms.

The proponents of war as the basis of a relationship, Muslim and non-Muslim polity, view the differences of faith as a just cause to wage war against non-Muslims until they

become Muslims or accept the rule of Islam. However, the proponents of peace as the basis of a relationship view that there must be an act of hostility that amounts to an act of war. A mere difference of faith is not a just cause to wage war. War always affects the public at large, so the principle of consultation taught by Islam requires proper mandate from the people. The most suitable people to hold such a mandate are those who are mandated to be the government. Only in a situation where the government has collapsed are Muslims allowed to organize themselves collectively to fight against any aggression, as what happened in Afghanistan during the invasion by former Soviet Union.

Both perspectives also agree that Muslims are guided by the rule of proportionality, based on the prohibition against any transgression and extremism. The rule of proportionality is also invoked in some of the rulings pertaining to the Islamic code of conduct in war that prohibits Muslims from certain acts such as the unnecessary cutting down of trees or destruction of buildings, animals and places of worship for Muslims and non-Muslims. Based on this principle, contemporary Muslim scholars issue the prohibition against weapons of mass destruction. While Islam commands Muslims to fight injustice and evil, it does not allow Muslims to do it in a way that will cause an equal or greater evil or injustice. The most important aspect of the code of armed jihad in Islam is the prohibition of killing civilians and non-combatants during war. They also view that an armed jihad may only be waged if the benefit derived from it is bigger than the harm it inflicts in relation to the desired objective, that is, the just cause. If the level of harm outweighs the benefits, then Islam does not condone it. Muslims are required to make due consideration between its advantages and disadvantages.

5. TOLERANT PERSPECTIVE

Islam is a religion of peace. This is, firstly, by virtue of its name that is derived from the verb “aslama”, which means “to submit, surrender” and it is derived from the root word “salm” or “silm”, which means “peace and security” (Baalbaki 2001: 107-109). Secondly, the greetings that Muslims are enjoined to convey to others is “Assalamualaikum”, which means “peace be upon you.” Thirdly, the Quran prefers peace to conflict (The Quran 8: 61). Fourthly, history has proven that Islam is more accepted during peacetime and through peaceful means. The Hudaibiyah Accord serves as a powerful demonstration of this: a record number of people came to Islam in the following two peaceful years. In fact, it was almost the same as the total for the preceding 19 years of the prophet’s mission. History has also shown that Islam has the potential to spread rapidly via peaceful methods as it did in the Malay Archipelago and in China.

Therefore, establishing and maintaining peace and the use of peaceful means to convey the message of Islam are important to Islam. On that note, peaceful coexistence with other faiths and cultures is enjoined upon Muslims. It is a means and a manifestation of their commitment to peace and better serves the objective of sharing the message of Islam.

Islam regards diversity and plurality as a natural state of God’s creations. For example, the Quran states that God created the different sexes and ethnic groups among mankind for positive reasons, that is, to know and understand each other (The Quran 49: 13).

Even fruit, though of one type, may look and taste different (The Quran 6: 141-2).

Muslims are enjoined to embrace diversity and, thus, tolerance for diversity becomes a fundamental teaching of Islam. This is then manifested through Islam’s command for the

respect of other faiths, non-interference in matters of other religions (The Quran 109: 1-6), prohibition of any form of compulsion and coercion in matters of faith and rebuking or insulting other faiths, which become the basis for peaceful co-existence of the various faiths in society. Islam requires the acceptance of faith based on free choice (The Quran 18: 29). Intolerance inevitably produces conflict. This does not go well with the claim that Islam is a religion of peace.

Since conflict produces hardships and difficulty, this negates another important characteristic of Islam, that is, a religion of simplicity, practical and easy (The Quran 2: 185, 5: 6, 22: 78). The following can also be found from the prophet's tradition that reinforces the Quranic message of tolerance, practical and realistic. There are many ha'diths (prophetic tradition) that point to the same character. One of them is, "Make it convenient and do not make it difficult, tell them the good news and so not make them run away" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari).

The idea that Muslims are obligated to wage war perpetually against all non-Muslims and, as a corollary to it, against all un-Islamic polity is only plausible if one accepts that all non-Muslims are fundamentally hostile towards Islam and will never cease conspiring against it, subverting it, trying to subjugate it and fighting it when there is an opportunity that underlies the idea. This also means that Muslims are allowed to hold prejudiced views and negative stereotypes towards all non-Muslims. All of these do not sit well with the message of the Quran and rational thinking. In line with the rule of diversity, the Quran enjoins a differentiated view, not only towards Muslims but also towards non-Muslims. In the Quran, both, Muslims and non-Muslims are constantly described as non-homogenous groups. God accords each kind of them their own status and ruling (The Quran 8: 72-5, 35: 32). There are many verses in the Quran that mention non-Muslims positively (The Quran 2: 62, 5: 69, 82).

From rational thinking, prejudice and stereotype towards non-Muslims as mentioned above is no different from the misconception among some non-Muslims that all Muslims are terrorists and fundamentalists. It is highly questionable when Muslims argue against non-Muslims' stereotyped perception towards Muslims but at the same time are guilty of stereotyping all non-Muslims as bad and villainous (Al-Azmeh 1993: 55-89).

Most important for both communities is active engagement. Active engagement with one another, through sustained dialogue, permits each to understand the deep meaning, associations, and implications of the prevailing clash of symbols. The West needs not recoil from Islamic symbols, as they do not represent anti-Western, anti-secular, irrational extremism. The West remains secure enough to uncover the extent to which a deeper pathology has been clothed in religious rhetoric. Active engagement permits us to understand and recognize the true expressions of human religiosity and protects us from the politics of manipulated symbolism. Healthy expressions of religiosity reflect a mature understanding of a faith tradition. Confrontation feeds on the need to address despair through actions predated upon and intended to accelerate fear (Lawrence 1998: 36). It should not be difficult for Western Christians to understand the danger of misappropriating religious symbols, for we need only look at the experience of the Crusades of the 12th and 13th centuries, in which mobilization for material and political goals was cloaked in the symbolism of religious devotion. Active engagement would allow the West to avoid entrapment in this process of confrontation, moving beyond initial negative reactions to Islam in order to discover human commonality and shared experiences and needs.

6. ISLAM AND THE WEST IN INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION: THREE DIFFERENT IDEAS

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all trace their origins back at least to the Old Testament prophet Abraham. Each of these three religions venerates him. Each of these “Abraham faiths” has similarities with the other two, and each historically has produced civilizations and societies with recognizably similar characteristics (Casanova 1994: 27-33).

If we consult additional portions of the Quran, we understand that the planned operation only could have been undertaken by Muslim apostates. To the extent that the Quran endorses war at all, it endorses only defensive combat designed to protect Islamic community in the most dire of circumstances (Hanwers 1992: 54-63) No faithful Muslim possibly could justify the operation of September 11 within that limitation.

For almost a decade Muslim religious leaders and public figures have been sponsoring international conferences designed to demonstrate the fallacy of any notion of Islam being an enemy of the West or the likelihood of any clash of civilizations (Hunter 1998). Those who persist in merchandising notions of Islam as being an enemy of the West should know that there is an almost universal rejection of this idea in the Muslim world itself (Huntington, 1993: 14-23) Such writers mislead Western public opinion and alienate Muslims everywhere who otherwise might be only too glad to be friends with the West.

Developing an effective policy response to global problems such as terrorism needs re-examining of the fundamental assumptions about the Islamic world and its relationship to the West. Three ideas compete to define this relation. Based on the first idea, the idea of confrontation, Westerns and Muslims share few common values, and are entrapped by an intensifying “clash of civilizations” with deep historical roots. In this “us versus them” or “black and white” story of conflict, opposition between contrary civilizations can be resolved only through the political defeat and cultural assimilation of one civilization by the other. In the present context of mistrust, conflict and insecurity, it (what is it? In this sentence) is to mistake the dominant narrative of Western-Islamic relations as the only narrative.

This idea is repeated by those who argue that the most important lessons for dealing with contemporary problems can be found in historical analogies to epic struggles against implacable foes. For example, some Muslims proclaim that the US and Israeli predominance in the Middle East differs little from the Crusader occupation of the Eastern Mediterranean between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. For their part, some people in the West compare the current situation with World War II or the Cold War demanding responses such as those used to rollback fascism and communism. Does not matter which side narrate this idea, such narratives of epic confrontation promote conflict escalation as the only viable strategic response to present challenges (Halliday 1998: 23-44)

The second idea as the idea of compatibility- argues that the present problems in relations between the Islamic world and the West represent the tragic but not inescapable outcome of a complex historical process. Islam shares a significant cultural heritage with the West, and can respond to the challenges of the modern world if given a chance to do so. The Islamic civilization is not an “exceptional” case among world cultures, uniquely predisposed to conflict or resistant to democracy. The human common denominators that unite the Islamic historical experience with the historical experiences of other world cultures are far more significant than the differences, and the problems of Muslims may be understood in terms that are similar to those used to explain the challenges of political, cultural, and economic development faced by other peoples.

The people who believe the second idea, argue that Islam and the West are joined by common roots within the Judeo-Christian and Hellenic cultural continuum. The classical Islamic civilization matured in the Fertile Crescent- The birthplace of Western civilization- and was constructed out of Arab, Biblicist, and Hellenic cultures. This civilization also cast a wider net by integrating Persian and Central Asian as well as Indian components within its cultural synthesis, becoming a bridge between East and West. The fact that so much has been integrated within Islamic cultures indicates that Islam is not only a theological doctrine, but also a historical dynamic (Esposito 1995: 11-27).

This analysis provides useful guidance for distinguishing between Islamic “terrorism,” a destructive and anti-pluralist reaction to perceived external threats, and Islamic “renewalism,” a reformist movement to revitalize the community from within. Where violent Islamic movements attribute the ills of Islamic civilization almost exclusively to foreign infiltration and internal diversity of opinion, Islamic renewalists accept responsibility for internal sources of malaise, and seek to adapt Islamic culture in ways that might help Muslims meet modern problems more effectively (Merrari 1993: 213-251).

Based on this idea, radicalism in the Islamic world stems from deep feelings of powerlessness fostered by governmental corruption, autocracy, inequality and subservience to foreign masters. Western actions that help to restore this sense of security by collaborating to correct shared problems and provide Muslims with a sense of political efficacy might inspire creative thought and action.

The third idea – the complementarily idea – is a new one, seeking to create a framework for understanding how Islam and the West might coexist peacefully without renouncing their cultural distinctiveness (Wilson 1996: 141-142). The foundation of this story renounces triumphalism on the part of any culture. Triumphalism – the assertion by one culture of absolute superiority on all indices of progress – leads not only to hubris and destructive polarization, but also to the rejection of the most vital source of cultural dynamism: openness to what the “other” has to offer. No scope for learning remains; “foreign” cultures must be rejected and defeated. In contrast, a relationship between civilizations that accommodates and even values cultural differences provides an indispensable foundation for fostering mutual respect and enduring cooperation.

According to this idea, the “clash of civilization” is actually a “clash of symbols”. Complex belief systems are being reduced to politicized symbols that can be used to reject the Muslim or non-Muslim “other” and impose conformity upon populations who may or may not accept “Muslim” or “western” as an exclusivist identity. Westerners, for example, are finding “overdressed” women, headscarves, turbans and other symbols of Islamic religious expressions just as repelling as fundamentalist Muslims who have seen explicit anti-Islamic statements in blue jeans, “underdressed” women, and other manifestations of Western culture (Rahnema 1986: 19-24).

Acting on common interests and values, however, will require a new approach to dealing with our differences, founded upon a vision that will enable us to achieve fuller engagement across the boundaries of culture and religion. By using this idea, we can transcend the most destructive idea in contemporary Islamic- Western relations: the idea that peace cannot be achieved so long as significant cultural differences persist (Tibi 1990: 40-47).

Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori explore how the politics of Islam play out in the lives of Muslims throughout the world. They discuss how recent events such as September 11 and the 2003 war in Iraq have contributed to reshaping the political and religious landscape of Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities elsewhere. As they

examine the role of women in public life and Islamic perspectives on modernization and free speech, the authors probe the diversity of the contemporary Islamic experience, suggesting general trends and challenging popular Western notions of Islam as a monolithic movement. In so doing, they clarify concepts such as tradition, authority, ethnicity, protest, and symbolic space, notions that are crucial to an in-depth understanding of ongoing political events.

Their book poses questions about ideological politics in a variety of transnational and regional settings throughout the Muslim world. Europe and North America, for example, have become active Muslim centers, profoundly influencing trends in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South and Southeast Asia. The authors examine the long-term cultural and political implications of this transnational shift as emerging generations of Muslims, often the products of secular schooling, begin to reshape politics and society – sometimes in defiance of state authorities. Scholars, mothers, government leaders, and musicians are a few of the protagonists who, invoking shared Islamic symbols, try to reconfigure the boundaries of civic debate and public life. These symbolic politics explain why political actions are recognizably Muslim, and why “Islam” makes a difference in determining the politics of a broad swath of the world.

The rise of Islamic movements in different parts of the world, aimed at resisting Western domination and control over Muslim territories and resources, Muslim cultures and communities, has provoked a new wave of aggressive emotions against the religion and its practitioners. It is resistant to western domination and control which is taking place within the Muslim world is a reality that is concealed from the general public. What Islamic movements are opposed to is the annexation and occupation of their lands as in the case of Palestine and Lebanon, the usurpation of their rights over their own natural resources as in the case of Persian Gulf Sheikdoms, and the denigration of their religion as often happens in the western media, sometimes abetted by local elites and writers (Eickelman 1996: 55-67).

As the turn of the Western millennium, it is crucial to consider whether Islam is a monolithic force; whether the clash between Islam and the West is inevitable; and whether the so-called Islamic civilization poses a credible threat to the West. If the notion of a political and monolithic Islam should be taken with some skepticism, it is still true that a fundamentalist movement has emerged with the specific political task of reforming Muslim societies. This, however, is essentially a reaction to westernization, though not modernization, and constitutes an attempt to check a perceived social drift and weakening of morals. In the West, modernization is synonymous with westernization, but Muslims clearly dissociates the two. This discordant understanding of modernization has given western analysts the impression that a rejection of westernization is the equivalent of a battle-cry against the West. Even if we assume that Islam forms a united movement in comparison to western culture, it is not certain whether the Islamic civilizations will constitute a true adversary to the West. However, it would be helpful if commentators in the West recognized that the pursuit of modernization need not be accompanied by westernization, and that a rejection of westernization is not an inevitable call to battle the West (Piscatori 1986: 81-89).

So far the reality is that Islamic revivalism demonstrates the depth of frustration and anger against European colonial rule, support for unpopular regimes and the internal weaknesses of the Moslem governments. Although some scholars argue that the present awakening in the Muslim world is a response to the decline of power and the loss of divine favor, in fact, the current revolt is a product of the weak economies of the Muslim countries, illiteracy and high unemployment, especially among the younger generation. The lack of

political institutions, absence of democracies and good governments in the Muslim world is also an immediate cause of extremism. In this context, the Muslim demand for changes is no different from the demands in Eastern Europe (Tibi 1998: 32-39).

The West's approach to relations with the Muslim world has suffered from deep contradictions and inconsistencies. By highlighting both the cultural and political roots of the present impasses, advocates for a new foreign policy vision, predicated upon coexistence and peaceful change, can have an important impact on public discourse. They can serve as intercultural bridge builders, formulating a message and agenda to which both American and Muslims might wish to subscribe.

One of the main problems in the international politics between Islam and the West is the problem of Iraq. The US should actively seek international support for post-war reconstruction efforts in Iraq, working within a collaborative framework defined by new United Nations resolutions. Meanwhile the next step would be a renewed US commitment to a negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in conformity with international standards of legitimacy. The US should actively cooperate with its partners, the UN, the EU and Russia in the mediation process. The US should coordinate religious-based peacemaking efforts in conflicts between Arabs and Israelis as well as Western and Muslims. Such efforts would actively enlist civil society leaders in track two activities that complement official diplomacy, and seek the counsel of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in formulating policies that respond to those aspects of contemporary conflicts that fall outside the purview of traditional statecraft.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the above arguments and the significance of context in shaping the view of Muslim scholars during the classical period as illustrated in the section that touched on peace as the basis of relationship with the objective of ensuring the security of a Dar Al-Islam, this writer holds that the idea of perpetual armed jihad is just a theological construct offered by the scholars in that specific period, not a divine injunction, in response to the prevailing reality of an international system that is anarchic and during which war as an important instrument of power and security predominated. In this respect, one can find supporting arguments from conventional international relations tradition such as offensive realism, which holds that the anarchic international system provides strong incentives for states to continuously strive for maximum accumulation of power in relation to other states because security is best guaranteed by achieving a hegemonic power. In doing so, states pursue expansionist policies when and where the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. A non-hegemonic power in an anarchic international system constantly worries that other states will use force to harm or conquer.

Many of the conflicts that involved Muslim countries are motivated by realpolitik or local grievances rather than the nature of ideology. The scale and regularity of the armed conflicts lack the kind that is motivated by an "imperial ambition," as exemplified by Saddam Hussein's war against Iran and his occupation of Kuwait. The number of conflicts between Muslim countries and the nature of alliance also do not point to the idea of perpetual armed jihad. Muslim countries are in constant alliance with non-Muslim superpowers to ensure their security, rather than allying among themselves to subdue the un-Islamic polity.

Political Islamism is undergoing a transformation from being an opposition and

marginalised political project to becoming a counter-hegemonic movement fighting at the front line between the West and the rest. The strength of Islamism is shaped not only by its Islamic discourse and rhetoric, but also by its social components and political programmes. The West must in one way or another, understand, recognise and accommodate Islamism's political motivations and visions.

As Muslim seek to harmonize the Islamic spirit of communalism with the changing conditions of their own societies, now they have a new opportunity for conceptualizing the nature of Muslim citizenship and assuming a greater role in shaping the history. A retreat to a cultural ghetto by any group, be it Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu, is not only a denial of the rich diversity of the modern cultural experience, but also a rejection of responsibility for future generations.

Islam and the West have the ability to develop and a new mutually rewarding relationship. Such a relationship would be premised not on ideas of cultural superiority, but on mutual respect and openness to cultural eclecticism. Muslims and Westerners can learn from each other and cooperate in pursuit of humane values. The West and Islam are not destined to meet as rivals. The West can give Islam the best that it has in exchange for the best of Islam.

Frustration on the part of many in the Islamic world at the persistence of corruption and infighting in the Islamic world contributed to the spread of both Islamic revivalism, sometimes termed Islamic fundamentalism, and Islamic liberalism. Adherents to Islam were more or less likely to adopt one interpretation of such Islamic concepts as ta'whid and shura. It would be unrealistic to deny that Islamic revivalism has attracted substantial support in a number of predominantly Islamic countries, and those developments such as elections provide opportunities for the expression of such support. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that it represents the unanimous opinion of a homogenous Islamic world, as it would be a mistake to assume complete unanimity on all points among Islamists.

To resolve the problem of terrorism, the West, and especially the US, has to understand the anger in the Islamic world created by its foreign policies: America's one-sided support of Israel at the expense of Palestinians, its hegemonic role in military invasion in Iraq and its support for certain societal reforms relating to liberty and governance in Muslim states because of its excessive concern with strategic and economic interests. Therefore, when concepts like religion, fundamentalism, religious identity, religion-state, secularism, secularization, modernity, etc. are taken into concrete international affairs, and then alteration, distortion and misinterpretation of their actual implications can occur. Moreover, Western secularism, as developed in one particular period of history, cannot emerge as having general validity without imperial enforcement and colonization.

To achieve human security in the world, international community needs a policy grounded in cultural empathy, multilateralism, and broad consensus about interests, values, and hopes that are widely shared in the international community. By calling for respectful dialogue and mutual engagement, we can help to transform a legacy of pain, producing a deeper knowledge, a more realistic understanding of present opportunities and dangers, and an enduring basis for cultural peace.

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