

ISLAM**Image and Realities****Karim Douglas CROW**

International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies—Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur

Thank you, Professor Kobayashi and Professor Kamada, greetings colleagues. I am very happy to be here with you and share with you a general oversight about the contemporary reality of the Muslim peoples. All of us are aware of the tremendous urgency and significance of understanding the Muslim experience better because of events over the last decade. The international security situation has been plunged into a chaos of fear and violence, and we are witnessing large-scale military adventures with American forces deep into the heart of Asia—in Iraq and Afghanistan. Anyone who travels today by air knows the inconvenience and general sense of insecurity prevailing largely due to the eruption of Islamic activism in a transnational context. So it is very necessary for us to have a more accurate and better informed appreciation for the realities of Muslims in all the varieties of Islamic societies, and to perhaps have some sympathy for their dilemma, as well as to shed deeply ingrained patterns of perception that tend to demonize or marginalize the center of gravity of the Muslim experience.

Muslims comprise over one-fifth of the population of the world. Figures vary: the last I heard they were 1.4 or 1.5 billion, and the birth rate in many Muslim societies is very high. We should also remind ourselves that Muslims are on the bottom of the socioeconomic scale in many

societies, and if you look at the poorest people in the world, the people who earn one dollar a day or less—people with the least adequate health care, with the worst and most archaic and inadequate forms of education, with the most retarded and authoritarian forms of governance, you will find that the Muslims tend to predominate. The overwhelming majority of Muslims remain committed to a world-view springing out of their faith in the Oneness of God (the Higher Power at the root of all created phenomena), and the oneness of humanity and of the divine providential purpose intrinsic to the multiplicity of the created order.

We also must be aware that the very nature of Islam is under contestation. The very definition of what ‘*Islam*’ is and what it should be or what it could be is being debated, not only by non-Muslims in terms of the basis of violence or irrationality that so many people project onto Islam, but also among Muslims themselves. Although this is an intra-Muslim and inner-Islamic dilemma, it is inevitable that outsiders and observers will take an interest and want to know more about the outcome of this dilemma, this fierce debate, this bitter rivalry. Therefore I hope that the following very brief general remarks may afford a bit of insight into the problems that Muslims face and the burden of history pressing them down. I wish to offer a small degree of hope regarding the way forward by which Muslims themselves, first and foremost, and those sympathetic outsiders who care for the well-being of the human race and the advancement and betterment of all peoples everywhere, should take an interest.

Images of Alienation

We know the images, the mis-characterization and simplistic stereotypes, but I shall list a few and you can probably add many more. First there is the **veil**: women with their hair covered and their faces partially hidden—the image of oppression, denial of rights, of assertion of male privilege—which is so often associated with Muslim societies. That is a very strong and powerful image. Secondly, parallel with this veiled-woman image, we see the **masked face**: the hooded man sometimes brandishing a sword or a Kalashnikov, and in the grainy footage of some

video executing an innocent person. The masked face has now become a widespread image associated with Islam and Muslims in much of the world. The execution or beheading videos that emerged from Iraq by people associated with the jihadist renegade Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi are notorious, but they are not the only ones. (Yet the political act of beheading was a terrorist tactic initiated by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and imitated thereafter by Islamic radicals first in Lebanon and now by the al-Qaeda transnational network.) This image of the concealed face swathed in a hood or head-cloth conveys a strong element of anonymity and alienation, as if Islam was being concealed behind the mask of estrangement. Ironically, the name *Abu Ghraib* denotes ‘*Father of the little Stranger*’ [*ghurayb*: diminutive of *gharib* /estranged-one]. Certainly for many thinking Muslims sensitive to the public perception of Islam among non-Muslims, a strong sense of estrangement and alienation from what other Muslims do in the name of Islam has now become a definite reality.

Ironically we have yet another image accompanying the hooded face, and here we see the opposite view. We have the images from the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad flashed around the world by computers: of an Iraqi man standing naked draped in a poncho or cape of some kind with slits for his eyes and electrodes attached to members of his body, being tortured and abused by American soldiers including a woman grinning in amusement. That is another powerful image! It resonates more with Muslims than with non-Muslims. When I was in Tehran recently I saw the entire side of a large apartment building where this image of the anonymous Abu Ghraib prisoner was painted. The message is: “*We are the victims. They accuse us of being terrorists, but look what they do to us. So who is primitive and violent?*” You see, the table is being turned and the estrangement and alienation works both ways. The other side of this symbolic play of images is that in so many cases the Muslims themselves are the perpetrators of violence by the so-called “mass casualty operations” which is the hallmark of the jihadists over the last decade, or as they prefer to call them, “holy martyrdom operations”—they term the September 11th 2001 atrocity “*the holy martyrdom operation of September 11th*.” The jihadists have appropriated a kind of glory from those acts which they see in terms of their

own perverse understanding of the notion of *jihad*, a doctrine we will have to say a few words about.

Thirdly there are images of **crowds of angry people** protesting and yelling over something they feel deeply moved by, for example the international incidents provoked by the Danish cartoon ridiculing the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist. This widespread image of a communal mob that tolerates violent and irrational acts, an unruly rabble perpetrating injustice and the denial of rights to one half of their own (the women among Muslims) has now aggravated and amplified the old deeply entrenched fears of Muslim frenzy and irrationality lurking in the European subconscious. Until the mid-20th century a widespread Occidental view actively promoted by Imperialism held that Muslims, like other Easterners or Asiatics, were inferior in civilizational terms and irrational when compared to European societies. With the rise of modernity and the unquestioned authority of modern science, Muslim societies found themselves in a marginal position seemingly unable to ever catch up with Europe. The old idea is still going strong that the Euro-American ‘West’ represents humanity in its rational self-conscious mode. All these are powerful images very difficult to dispel. Even if you pay no attention to world affairs and have no interest in Muslims, those images are already lurking in the back of your mind. I will not dwell any further on these images.

But it is good to remind ourselves that when you go back a few centuries other images predominated in Western European consciousness. One that is very strong and continues to echo is the illicit erotic sensual image of the East—the *Harem*, the Arabian Nights, of semi-naked women love-slaves at the will of their master. The lush sexuality and exciting allure of unmitigated desires satisfied through unbridled possession of numerous women, against a background of the exotic décor of Islamic architecture and carpets, pricked and goaded the repressive celibacy of European intellectuals and colonial officials. We know that in the 19th century there were bohemian Europeans who enjoyed travelling to Islamic countries in North Africa and the Near East and acquiring their own harem by purchases in the slave markets, indulging in hashish orgies and surrounding themselves with the luxurious furnishings of upper-class Muslim culture. This obsession was reflected in

the genre of paintings known as *Orientalisme*. There are some interesting publications Algerian-French colonial officials produced in the 18th–19th centuries in Algeria. Many officers maintained their own harems and were fond of making photographic postcards showing all the women they owned at their disposal in this gorgeous, sensual, erotic Eastern image, and sending them back home to their friends writing: “*Having a wonderful time; wish you were here.*”

So there are layers of images. Perhaps from the Christian perspective, where the preference is for some kind of celibate form of austere self-denial, where most of the intellectuals in the Catholic realm, for example, were themselves priests and therefore celibates, this strong sensual side of the East was something very much to be condemned yet at the same time exercised an ineluctable fascination. Of course the Prophet Muhammad famously uttered, “*There shall be no monkishness in Islam.*” This idea of celibacy is something generally rejected by Muslims, who rather embrace all aspects of human life, including the sexual function in its regulated social form and emphasize the importance of family and children—for the family still remains vibrant and deeply rooted in all Muslim societies. Whereas today people in the Euro-American cultural sphere are more and more used to the idea of a nuclear family which has been split (thus a single mother is something accepted and known), while homosexuality is considered a personal preference with no moral stigma attached, in most Muslim societies this is still something that has yet to come, if it ever does come. There is a very conservative social ethos which predominates among Muslims.

God’s Messenger Muhammad

I need to say a few words about the basis of the Islamic faith and its elaboration into an imperial polity and world civilization. Islam was founded by a singular individual, Muhammad (d. 632 CE), who began his career as a merchant and trader. He came from the Quraysh tribe inhabiting the town of Makkah in West Central Arabia, a tribe famed for its commercial activities (the word *muqrish* means “rich man” or “merchant”). Orphaned in his early years, he served as a shepherd and

was raised by his paternal grandfather and uncle. He traveled as a young adult in pursuit of commerce, working for a rich widow named Khadijah whom he eventually married—she became his first wife and mother of his children. After his marriage during the period of fifteen years before his prophetic calling, “*before the revelation reached him*” as Muslims would say, Muhammad was quite active in traveling. We know that he certainly visited the following places in his commercial enterprises and search for knowledge: Palestine (Jerusalem); Syria (Damascus, and Bosra in the Hawran area in south Syria, which at that time was a great commercial center); certainly Egypt; Yemen and parts of South Arabia; Abyssinia across the Red Sea (culturally, ethnically and linguistically close to South Arabia); Eastern Arabia (now Bahrain and Qatar); probably lower Iraq (now Basra), and also very plausibly northern Iraq in the major trading depot of Mosul which connects the great East–West trans-continental Asian trading routes with the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus Muhammad was well-traveled and noted to be a seeker of truth: a seeker of some primordial monotheistic tradition which certain Arabs in his generation (known as Hanifs) identified with the legacy left by the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. Ibrahim was the reputed progenitor of monotheistic belief whom the Arabs associated with the construction of the Ka’bah—the ancient cubic stone temple in Makkah—which became the center for the yearly pilgrimage or Hajj by Muslims until now.

The Prophet struggled in his life. Muhammad was rejected by his own people. For thirteen years in his hometown of Makkah (ca.609–622 CE) he received a stream of revelatory guidance, discrete episodes of prophetic disclosure affecting him powerfully and expressed in inimitable verses cumulatively forming the revealed scripture of the *Qur’ān*. For the following ten years (622–632) he moved north to the oasis town known as Yathrib—thereafter called Madinah or the ‘City of the Prophet.’ Thus his career spans these two cities—his hometown of Makkah, and his adopted town of Madinah wherein he established the first Muslim polity. During the time of Muhammad’s mission in Makkah his tribe of Quraysh vehemently rejected his message of one God, ethical social justice, universal brotherhood of humanity regardless of ethnicity, language or race, rejection of evil social practices then prevalent among the Arabs, and a strong emphasis on communal devotions. The Quraysh

leaders perceived his insistence on abandoning their cultic worship of idols and equality for slaves and the low-born, as a threat to their power and wealth. They tried to dissuade Muhammad at first, then turned to outright persecution, boycott, and even attempted his assassination.

Over the first thirteen years of his mission Muhammad succeeded in converting only a small group of less than several hundred people, men and women mostly from the disadvantaged social classes in Madinah consisting of slaves and tribal-clients (not free-born persons), along with some younger members of important leading Quraysh families. Due to increasing persecution and resistance he counselled a number of his free-born followers to make a migration: to withdraw from Makkah and move across the Red Sea to Abyssinia for some time seeking freedom of faith under the protection of the Christian Monophysite king there. Abyssinia was the site of the first Muslim community which lasted almost fifteen years, being led by the Prophet’s first-cousin Ja’far son of Abu Talib. Muhammad then migrated north and was able to arrange a reception in the town of Madinah where he established a real community, his social and political entity comprising an alliance between different groups—his own small group of followers from Makkah who migrated with him (the *Muhajirun*), the newly converted Arabs of Madinah (the *Ansar*) who joined his community forming the largest group; as well as pagan Arabs living in Yathrib/Madinah who had not yet become Muslim, and a large number of Jews belonging to several important tribes in the larger Madinah area. This first commonwealth or polity was in fact pluralistic comprising a number of religious groups who accepted Muhammad as their political leader. Only after he had been in Madinah for two years when the conflict with his bitter enemies in Makkah—his own tribe of Quraysh—came to a violent head, was the first real hostility experienced: the first battle between the Muslim community together with their allies in Madinah (Jews and Arab pagans) and the Makkan Quraysh pagans opposing the Prophet and who now saw his new political base to their north as threatening their commercial interests and caravans north to Palestine and Syria.

In other words, out of the twenty-two and one-half years of Muhammad’s mission as God’s Messenger (*Rasul Allah*), fifteen years passed without violence of any kind nor any combat against his opponents.

Actually the Muslims during the Makkan period, who were the recipients of violence and persecution, were taught to practice something called “*jihad*”—a form of non-violent resistance—and to suffer persecution for the sake of truth in obedience to divine guidance. That was the original meaning of *jihad* as testified by the verses of the Qur’an revealed in Makkah during the first thirteen years of the Prophet’s mission. However, with the battle of Badr in the second year of his stay in Madinah (2 AH/624) where the Prophet fielded only three hundred thirteen men against about one thousand from Makkah, the activity of *jihad* was extended to include defensive warfare against the active hostility and belligerent aggression of his Makkan Quraysh opponents. Thus, for the last eight years of his life, the Muslim followers of the Prophet were taught to defend the political entity they had created in Madinah with force, but legitimate force as a defensive measure against outside aggression and attack. There were at least three or four major battles led by the Quraysh against the Muslim Madinan community.

Increasingly there were more *jihad* campaigns ensuring the spread and acceptance of his faith among the tribes in the western part of the Arabian peninsula. In the 8th year after his migration in 630 CE Muhammad conquered his home town of Makkah with hardly any bloodshed, leading almost ten thousand Muslims to accept the peaceable capitulation of his former opponents. How the Prophet succeeded in building up his forces from 313 at the battle of Badr to 10,000, and equipping them with weapons and beasts in the environment of western Arabia of that era, has never been satisfactorily explained, although part of the answer lies in the Muslim’s displacement and banishment of the Jewish tribes from Madinah and the settlements of Khaybar and Fadak to the north. By the time of the Prophet’s death in June 632 almost all of Arabia had been brought into the fold of Islam. During the era of his first four Successors—the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs—with the first real establishment of the Caliphate as both political and military succession to leadership, there was quite an active promotion and extension of the *jihad* campaigns outside of Arabia into the territories of the Byzantine (Greek) and Sasanian (Iranian) empires. Within less than one hundred years a large area of North Africa and central lands of Eurasia were brought under Muslim control stretching from

Spain in the far west to the borders of China and India in the east. That is a remarkable expansion, and the causes and reasons for this success are still being debated. Militarily it is difficult to explain, for the original Muslim armies were not professional soldiers (unlike the imperial troops of the Byzantines and Sasanians). They were citizens who did military duty, but their ideology and conviction and determination was such that they could overcome well-trained, professional armies much greater in size. Under the second Caliph ‘Umar (634–644) when Muslim troops were advancing north to engage the army of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius at the decisive battle of Yarmuk (now in northern Jordan) in 636, the emperor’s spies reported to him that the Muslims were: “warriors by day, monks at night.” Be that as it may, we don’t wish to spend more time on Islam’s early history, but rather to bring it up to date in the light of contemporary events.

Community and Sacred Space

Let us mention one small detail of ritual worship. Muslims have adapted a form of ritual prayer practice known in the ancient Middle East before Islam as the peculiar prayer practice of Christian anchorites and hermits—a series of standings, bowings, and kneeling with prostrations where the face is pressed to the ground to signal one’s humility and service to the Lord. This type of night prayer ritual was practiced among the monks and hermits of the Eastern churches, and is known still today in the Orthodox churches of the Near East. If you go to Mount Athos in Greece and Coptic monasteries in Egypt, you still witness this type of Christian worship practice. Although European Christians now consider this a strangely unfamiliar form of worship by Muslims, it is actually a prolongation of this well known form of Christian prayer service. But the Prophet Muhammad formalized it as a series of five daily repetitions at different times for every member of his community (not just for the monks as the ‘spiritual athletes,’ upon whose devotions depended the salvation of the lay people). After he migrated to Madinah he instituted a month-long fast once a year during the sacred month of Ramadan, as well as an obligatory annual charitable

tax of the *zakat* (2½% of one's wealth). Finally, every Muslim is expected to perform the Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah shrine once in their lifetime if they possess the means. Islam's *Hijrah* calendar, being an unbound lunar calendar, regresses eleven days every year according to the solar reckoning.

The Qur'an itself was a revolution in the ethos of Arab Muslim identity. The Qur'an wants to establish a viable ethical social order here and now in this world, an order based on equality among humans or universal brotherhood, and on social and economic justice. This is a very strong imperative both in Qur'anic teaching and in the prophetic teachings embodied in the Hadith—the narrated reports that preserved the sayings, deeds and counsels of the Prophet as handed down through a chain of reputable authorities from his Companions—which represent an extra-scriptural source of revealed authority among Muslims. There is the Book itself, the Qur'an—accumulated over the twenty-three years of continuous discrete revelatory disclosures to Muhammad—which have been rearranged, not in chronological fashion, but in a thematic way into the present form that we have it; and there is the vast body of traditions related from the Prophet contained in the Hadith narratives. Together they both form the basis for the *Shari'ah* or the normative law regulating human society and polity in all aspects—social, economic, political, military, ethical, educational, and spiritual. While there never has been a priesthood or clergy in Islam, there quickly emerged a class of religious 'experts' trained in Qur'an and Hadiths and proficient in deriving legal rulings to address newly arising contingencies: the '*ulama*' scholars whose chief claim to authority lay in their possession and cultivation of knowledge / *'ilm*. A representative type of this scholarly expert was the jurist or *faqih* equipped to deal with both the rulings of case law (*ahkam*) and their bases and methodological philosophy (*usul al-fiqh*). Presently there exists eight schools of religious Law among the Muslims. One of the most significant dynamics and tensions within Islamic history and experience has been the complementary symbiotic relationship between the authority of the '*ulama*' and the rulers or power possessors (Caliphs, Sultans, or amirs).

Islam represents a type of complete system or order in much the same way that Orthodox Judaism was a complete system, with a hierar-

chical series of principles and concrete rulings covering all contingencies and possibilities for humans in their individual and communal existence as embodied in the *Shari'ah*. Humans always exist in a social context, and the communal dimension is uppermost in Muslim organization and activity. There is no society-less individual; there are individuals in relationship with each other, forming the society, although the communal focus of Islamic identity is paramount. One sees this clearly in the forms of worship, as with communal prayer which is not necessarily obligatory but is highly recommended. The efficacy and virtue of prayer in a group is preferred over individual prayer at home in your own space, especially among the majority main group of Sunni Muslims—e.g., the once-a-week communal prayer on Friday noon (*jum'ah*) where a public sermon is proclaimed that addresses issues of interest and concern to the Muslim community locally, nationally and regionally. We saw that the Hajj or annual pilgrimage to Makkah is a vast communal manifestation of Islamic allegiance. At the same time, this does not deny the importance of the individual dimension. Every individual faces their Creator, God the absolute power, without an intermediary interposing between them. There is no priesthood as such in Islam which operates salvational efficacy; therefore the individual worshipper experiences a very intimate and personal bond with their Lord—Allah—that is worshipped or served. And when one prays one has the sense that one is facing God directly, although the direction is always oriented towards the Ka'bah in Makkah. We have here an ideal that preserves human individuality but stresses social, communal activity. Yes—at times and under certain circumstances one aspect might become compromised by the demands of the other dimension, but the balance between these two would eventually reassert itself.

Perhaps Buddhists would debate and say that Muhammad was misguided because the effort to reform the world in historical time is futile and pointless—one can only look after the salvation of one's individual soul. The world, by its inherent nature being corrupt or vitiated, can never be truly reformed and one's efforts should essentially be oriented toward a higher plane of existence where self-transformation may produce lasting results and individual immortal existence. I shall not debate that here, but only wish to emphasize that Muslims do not

understand it in that particular sense. They feel that the profane order of worldly existence has to be brought into a sacred space and that this profane material realm has to be sacralized through human efforts shaped by divine guidance. However they might succeed in that, to what degree they may have to compromise or settle for an approximation, this ideal is maintained—that this material world here and now can be made a more pure and more just realm for human communal existence. That may be a noble aim or it may be naïve, but that's the way Muslims think and feel. A Muslim friend asked me once: should we follow the example of Buddha who left his young wife and baby child behind in order to pursue his individual search for enlightenment? Better if humans try to combine our individual spiritual imperative with our family and community moral requirements. The Sufis (Islamic esotericists) undergo forty-day periods of intense spiritual exercises under the guidance of their shaykh or master, but afterwards they return to engage in their business and family duties trying to integrate what they achieved into their everyday life. Muslims seek to experience a middle balance between the two: they hope to *“Be In the world, but not Of the world”* as the Prophet Muhammad advised. This mode of being is never easy to experience and maintain, and remains a continual challenge. Bear in mind that Islam advocates its path of moderation and balance as an achievable condition, not an impossible burden or hardship beyond the attainment of the majority of people.

Peace & War, and the State

There is a widespread perception that Islam was spread by the sword. Although the *jihad* effort in its original context under the Prophet's direction, and perhaps during the first era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs or first thirty years after his death, may have been more or less in line with its original impetus, by the time the first major dynasty appeared within less than thirty-five years of the Prophet's demise *jihad* clearly became a device for maintenance of State power and for raising revenue. The first Umayyad dynasty (661–732) was centered in Damascus, followed by the second major 'Abbasid dynasty (732–1258)

centered in Baghdad. Baghdad was built from scratch by the Caliph al-Mansur in 763 to serve as the center of the new world empire and Islamic civilization. We have a phenomenon whereby what had once been an activity done by citizen soldiers as members of the community in volunteer service, now became an organized professional military effort with troops who were equipped and paid a salary for their martial expertise. When that type of institution becomes set up, the very nature of the *jihad* changes and it becomes an activity supported and performed in the service of the State. And, I should emphasize, undertaken with the cooperation of the *'ulama'*—the early religious scholar authorities—who served as both enforcers of the right practice of divine law, as well as theoreticians of the new societal and political order under the dynasties which established rule over central Islamic lands. In the 2nd/8th century there was elaborated a theory of international relations and warfare known in classical Sunni tradition by various handbooks entitled *kitab al-siyar* /“rules for war”, wherein the jurists *l'fuqaha'* detailed how the State should conduct itself in terms of international relations (hostilities, treaties or truce, commercial relations...) *vis-a-vis* the neighboring non-Muslim entities and polities, particularly its great rival on its Northern frontier the Byzantine Empire which remained in its heartland in Anatolia and was not initially conquered by the Muslim advance. This was in contrast to the eastern Sassanid dynasty where the ancient Persian empire was destroyed, a polity which had stretched from Parapotamia and Armenia all the way to the borders of Central Asia and India. The way lay opened to South Asia and China, and beyond to the island lands of Southeast Asia.

There is a further significant implication of this shift eastwards. For close to a century under the Umayyad Caliphs based in Damascus, Islam was perched at the edge of the Mediterranean. With the establishment of 'Abbasid power by the mid-8th century a new empire center was created further east in central Iraq. Baghdad was built and designed to be a strategic center of the known empire in the form of a symbolic city in circular form with four gates facing the different cardinal directions. (Several of those gates still survive in Baghdad today, remnants of the original round city built by Caliph al-Mansur.) This shift from Damascus to Baghdad represents a far-reaching change in terms of the

future destiny of Islam. Islam had already reached the far west in the Iberian peninsula or Andalusia—so named because of the Vandal tribes displaced by the advent of Muslim forces. The fact that Islam did not become heir to the great Mediterranean empires of the Romans and then Byzantines (*Rum*), but shifted its energy and attention east in terms of a middle Asiatic empire (in ‘central’ Asia, namely Iraq and Iran), now meant that the further energy of Islam would be directed east, north, and south—rather than westward into Europe. The Battle of Tours in the late 7th century where Charlemagne stopped the Muslim advance into southern France, marked its furthest advance into Europe. This was a defining moment for the unfolding of Islam. From then on we find that its great cultural, intellectual and missionary efforts and activities were oriented more to the east and south. Over succeeding centuries Islam was eventually to penetrate into Turkestan, China, and finally Southeast Asia, and to other areas including sub-Saharan Africa and eastern Europe, to the point where Islam truly became one of the most far-flung religious civilizations both geographically speaking and in terms of the ethnic and linguistic components that it comprises. If one looks at the diversity of the Islamic world, this is something we have to remind ourselves constantly, because there is that widespread tendency to slip into simplistic generalizations by saying “the Muslims” and “Islam”—as if it is one monolithic entity. Actually, the Muslims themselves frequently aid that way of thinking by themselves talking about Islam as a monolithic ideal, a single entity or set of teachings; but that is another issue we could discuss—namely, how Muslims conceive and think about Islam as an object they possess (‘objectification’).

Here, one may list the major ethno-linguistic groups which Muslims comprise today: Arab—at least 300 million people. The main contribution besides the historical accident, or “providential design,” that Islam was revealed originally to an Arab merchant in west-central Arabia was the contribution of the Arab language and the efforts of early Arab Muslim warriors in the spreading of Islam. For well over a century, although they conquered and controlled large territories in the Middle East and North Africa and were pressing ever further east, the Muslims remained a kind of ruling military caste who were not that interested in

converting the subject peoples. They did not exert much energy to convert people to their Islamic faith, and it took several centuries for the indigenous peoples to convert to the point where the majority populations of many of those areas were Muslims. Over 20% of Egyptians today remain Coptic Christian, and Egypt was one of the first areas conquered by the Muslims.

The Arab contribution is fundamental, but I would say that the most important aspect is the language. Arabic is a very unusual Semitic language with the capacity to be stretched and to incorporate and express sophisticated ideas and concepts through its inherent richness of vocabulary production based on trilateral verbal consonantal roots. This was one of the keys to the success of Islam because a new lingua franca emerged whereby the Arabic tongue served as a ‘vehicular language’ for communication and exchange between many other local vernaculars, reflecting the military, mercantile or cultural dominance of the vehicular language group. Arabic proved more than adequate to the task of articulating not only religious and ethical teachings, but scientific, mathematical, physical, literary, and aesthetic concepts. Anyone who has had the privilege of studying and becoming familiar with the rich wealth of Arabo-Islamic literature will understand when I say that the Arabic language is of fundamental importance to the success and long-lasting influence of Islamic civilization. Today spoken Arabic vernaculars are used by ca. 422 million people, thus forming the second largest spoken language after standard Chinese, while the Arabic script (the language of the Qur’an) remains after Latin the second most widely used alphabetic system in the world. Furthermore, within various Muslim cultural regions historically, a number of other languages adopting Arabic script also served vehicular functions, including Persian (lingua franca of India before the British conquest), Turkish, Azeri, Urdu, Swahili, and Jawi [Melayu]. This displays the integrating unitive effect of Islam over far flung territories previously separated by geographical barriers and racial-cultural divides.

The Arabs are the largest group; but the second largest group of Muslims today are Melayu—the Malay-speaking peoples of Southeast Asia. Collectively they comprise almost 300 million. Indonesia is a very populous country, and at least 90–95% of people there are Muslim in

one degree or another. I do not know the latest figures, but believe it's something like 240 million people in Indonesia; every time I hear the latest figure it seems to grow by 10 million. Then there are the people in Malaysia, the Muslim communities of south Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei, and Singapore. Collectively this forms a large group of people united by ethnic and linguistic factors, although the modern nation-state has tended to divide and split them. Next comes the Iranian peoples who are greater than the geographic extent of Iran, and include Afghan people who speak a form of Iranian language (Dari) as well as the Tajik people of Central Asia speaking a form of Iranian language. Persianate culture is larger than the geographic entity called Iran; historically the Persian language was an important ingredient in Turkish-Islamic culture—e.g., among the Saljuq Turks, then the Ottoman Turks—and among Muslims of North India until British colonialism. The Turks are another major linguistic group, including the eastern-Turkish speakers of Central Asia in the Newly Independent States. There also exist very large Muslim minorities in India (Urdu speakers), in China (Han Chinese), and in sub-Saharan Africa. Islam was very inclusive and pluralistic, and its current social demographics show that it is growing increasingly cosmopolitan and multi-cultural—e.g., take the United Arab Emirates, or Malaysia.

There is no doubt that the original doctrine taught in the Qur'an is a doctrine based on pluralist tolerance unprecedented in Middle Eastern lands in that era. There was a built-in notion of inclusiveness and tolerance directed toward the *'People of the Book'* /*Ahl al-Kitab* who had received a divine scripture and guidance and who should thus be tolerated and not be forced to abjure their faith by adopting Islam. The Qur'anic teaching on *Ahl al-Kitab* encompassed Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians; it accepted the validity of their faith-communities with each forming an *ummah*, although when subjected to Muslim political control they were liable to taxation and other constraints. The communities who should forcibly be brought into the fold of Islam are those with no previous prophetic guidance lacking a divine scripture. This would theoretically include people like Hindus, or pagan peoples who lack understanding of a higher monotheistic, scripture-based revealed religion. That was the legacy imposed by the Quran, and which as an

ideal was not always lived up to by Muslims at various times and places. Over time and through extension this concept of the *'People of the Book'* could be enlarged or expanded to include Brahmins with their Vedas, Indians with their Yoga, and even other religious teachings, depending on the enlightened attitude of the Muslim scholar-authority or ruler directing that process. Yet at other times and places often prompted by conflicts or power imbalance, there could be a reversion to an exclusivist attitude of superiority denying all other religious traditions any salvational efficacy—even to Jews and Christians! In fact, this latter close-minded attitude is not at all uncommon in our day and age.

Modernity and Identity

Islam was a unified world civilization, but as a unitary state centered in Baghdad it really functioned as a united political entity only for several centuries—the 8th, 9th, and part of the 10th centuries. After that era of strong central authority the 'Abbasid Caliphate tended to dissolve itself into a number of regional powers controlled by lesser power-possessors, and the reality that transpired was a pluralist commonwealth where regional political entities coexisted under the umbrella of the symbolic authority of the 'Abbasid Caliph. In 1258 when the horsemen of Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, swept down from the steppes of Central Asia and destroyed the caliphal city of Baghdad, they put an end to the five century-long 'Abbasid Caliphate. What succeeded it after two centuries of turbulence under Turco-Mongol tribal warlords, were three major regional empires or Sultanates which claimed in some degree to be the successors to the power and legitimacy of the medieval caliphate. These were the Ottoman dynasty based in Asia Minor but with important extensions into eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East; the Safavid dynasty which recreated an Iranian identity and transformed the Iranian heartland into a majority Shi'ite religious zone; and further east was the Mogul Empire, originally a Central Asian based Turkic entity that extended its own rule into the Indian subcontinent. Two of these empires—the Ottoman and then the Mogul—were undermined and eventually displaced by European impe-

rial penetration beginning in the 18th century.

[This is something to remember: Shi'ism was originally an Arab phenomenon centered in Iraq, and became integrated into Iranian culture about 500 years ago—yet previously the Iranian lands were a stronghold of the Sunni majority group. When we think of the Shi'ah we should remember they embrace not only Iranians or Persians, as we have now been reminded countless times in Iraq where the Shi'ah are primarily Arab and not necessarily that sympathetic to Iranian identity. Iraqi Shi'ah have their own specific Arab identity forming 60% of the Iraqi population; while in Iran today about 25% of the majority Shi'ites are Azeri Turks, not ethnic Persian, and 20% of Iran's population are Sunni Muslims including most Kurds and Baluchis as well as Turcoman tribes.]

Further east in Southeast Asia with Dutch and then British penetration into the 'East Indies' we see the precursor to the post-colonial era of our modern world. It is good to be reminded that large sections of the Islamic world were dominated and controlled by colonial European powers over the previous two-and-a-half centuries, with Iran being an exception of sorts. But in the living memory of many Muslims today the struggle against colonialism is not easily forgotten. In Algeria, for example, one in ten of every Algerian was killed by French forces in the struggle for independence during the late 1950s and 1960s—that is a hard price to pay for independence. One has to take into account the suspicion and distrust that many Muslim societies and leaders still entertain concerning the ultimate agenda and designs of Euro- and now Anglo-American powers, especially in our new globalized era where cultural and symbolic factors, alongside of economic and political factors, are very much at play in the spread of outside influences. Whether one is dominated physically by a alien conquering or occupying force, or whether one is dominated internally by a consumerist, materialist ethos being generated by transnational capitalist corporations, one still feels in a sense that one is a victim of larger forces. This is a very common perception among many Muslims today, coupled with a widespread view that there exists a conspiracy, there is an ulterior plan; there is some ultimate agenda being pushed or manipulated by groups in the West—in London or in Washington or wherever. Most ordinary as well as many

well-educated Muslims are prey to this type of thinking which merely clouds their perceptions of contemporary reality and perpetuates immature adolescent aspects of their identity.

Let me invoke one incident that confirms this conspiratorial mindset, although being a sort of contradictory confirmation. In the 1980s when Hezbollah, a radical Lebanese Shi'ite Islamic party, was first organizing itself nationally and emerging as a political actor on the local Lebanese scene during the chaos of the civil war, a vicious attempt was made on the life of Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, one of their leading *'ulama'* or religious leaders, with a car bomb which missed him outside his apartment by five minutes but killed eighty innocents in his neighborhood in south Beirut. My friends came to me and said, "*Karim, the CIA did it!*" I replied, "*I don't know. Many people want him killed—the Israelis, the Syrians, the Americans... yes. But we don't know really who was responsible, so it's too soon for you to judge.*" Several years later William Casey, who at that time had been the director of the CIA under President Ronald Reagan, died of a brain tumor. During the last few weeks of his life he was interviewed a number of times by the leading journalist Bob Woodward, who has written many interesting books about the American presidency—Woodward was one of the two journalists who broke the Nixon Watergate case. He wrote an interesting book entitled *Veil: Uncovering the CIA*. In this book he mentioned that he asked William Casey specifically, "*Did the CIA do that operation in Beirut against Fadlallah which killed eighty innocents?*" And Casey took credit for this saying in effect, "*Yes, we did it with the cooperation of Saudi and Lebanese intelligence; but we were the ones who initiated it.*" So I went back to my friends and admitted to them, "*Maybe you're right: apparently it was the CIA.*" But not *everything* that happens in the Middle East is initiated by the CIA. Nevertheless, Muslims tend to see things through that kind of lens, black and white without much gray.

Clearly one cannot characterize Islam as monolithic. One of the main points mentioned here in passing is the division among Muslims between the majority group of the Sunnis and the minority communities of the Shi'ah (about 13% of Muslims falling into three main doctrinal schools, the largest being the Twelver or Ja'fari Shi'ah dominant in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon). This is an ancient schism and an unhealed

wound that has persisted and has unfortunately been aggravated and unleashed again in a rather perverse form due to the American intervention in Iraq. I cannot dwell on it, but wish to point out in terms of the contemporary socio-political dynamic what is really happening now. There is a new kind of energy being invested in the Shi'ite communities of the modern Middle East—ranging from Northern India, Pakistan, the Arab Gulf right over to the Eastern Mediterranean and Lebanon. Historically in recent centuries these Shi'ite communities had been marginalized and cut out of political and cultural power or influence within their own countries by the Sunni majority. In many cases they are minorities, for example in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia which is predominantly Arab Shi'ite (Ja'fari Imami Shi'ah). Due to the peculiar nature of the modern Saudi state whose ideology is Wahhabi—a strictly severe traditionalist form of Hanbalite Sunni Islam—the Shi'ites are anathema. They are seen as the worst thing one can find, even being considered “not Islamic”—which has led the exclusivist extremists among Wahhabi authorities to declare them to be *kafirs* / unbelievers whose blood is legal to shed. This attitude explains why much of the destruction and killing in Iraq spearheaded by jihadist or al-Qaeda groupings has been aimed against the Shi'ite community: out of a kind of reflex action from fear over the emergence of what was formerly a suppressed group that had very little political influence or power yet has now been revealed in fact as being the majority in Iraq and allied ideologically with Iran, a majority Shi'ite nation with important outreach to other Shi'ah communities in Lebanon, Syria, or possibly even in the oil-rich regions of Kuwait and Southeast Arabia. The Gulf monarchies began promoting anti-Shi'ite polemic after the Iranian revolution of 1979 brought Ruhallah Khomeini into power, and their instinct of self-preservation took hold.

What is taking place now, through this revival of an ancient blood feud between these two branches of Islam in an extremely perverse form, represents the emergence of previously marginalized or constrained national communities and regional powers. This will transform the map of the Middle East over the next decades. I do not think any careful observer would deny that the long-term effects of the reemergence of the Shi'ah as a major social and political entity within the

Islamic community as a whole shall have profound repercussions for the Islamic world and for the non-Muslim world in its relations with the Islamic world. Do I need to remind you that 70% of the world's proven oil reserves and about 60% of the world's combined oil & gas reserves are in the countries bordering the Persian Gulf? I am sure Japan is well aware of that. Fossil fuels enable the Middle East to be the largest importer of military hardware in just about the most corrupt region in the world, plagued by the worst forms of crude authoritarian regimes and greedy ruling-clique governments. This is one of the severe problems Muslims are suffering from—the fact that they have a crisis of governance and that most of the regimes in place in many Muslim societies are the leftovers or successors to the colonial regimes whose altruistic motives were not necessarily benign in the first place. We have a plethora of colonels and generals who run many countries, or have until recently, in parts of the Muslim world. This reality only aggravates the widespread sentiment among Muslims that this form of socialism, or that form of more-or-less semi-representative parliamentarianism—which is merely a charade—or vernacular appeals to crude religio- or ethno-nationalism are not adequate to address the real needs and the aspirations of their population.

But what is? Islam: *'Islam'* is an increasingly popular credible answer. When Muslims say they want the Shari'ah—the divine law—to be operative in their societies, it is a naïve expression and a protest against the corruption and authoritarian abuse that they experience all the time from their own political systems. But Muslims themselves are not so clear about what *Shari'ah* constitutes and what it really implies. The fact is that in the majority of Muslim societies not much is left of the classical *Shari'ah* system, except in the domain of family law and personal status law, but not in commercial law, nor in criminal law. In most other areas of legal jurisdiction one finds many countries that have adopted civil codes based on European models—Napoleonic, British, or whatever. There are a few countries claiming to still maintain a *Shari'ah*-type legal system. Saudi Arabia is one of them; it does not have a constitution, but they say they have the *Shari'ah*—their particular form of conservative Traditionalist Hanbali Islam as defined and elaborated by the Wahhabi *'ulama.'* Iran is supposedly now trying to enforce

the *Shari'ah*, but it has its own longstanding parliamentary experience and there are elements in the legal situation in Iran which do not derive from Ja'fari jurisprudence, so it is a mixed bag. Sudan supposedly has created some *Shari'ah* form of legal system, while Pakistan flirts with this idea. Rather, it is an ideology, it is a promise and a protest. The *Shari'ah* symbolizes the hope that the abuse of authoritarian politics can be reversed by some kind of incorporation or ethical reversal of a highly idealized Islamic form of legal system. Often one finds that this boils down to some kind of moral discomfort with the inroads made by modernity—social and economic changes that our modern, globalized world enforces on society, especially in terms of gender status and role of women in one's society.

Aceh, the westernmost province in Indonesia which has recently seen a resolution of its conflict (it had a long-running low-level insurgency against the central government in Jakarta), is supposedly enacting a form of *Shari'ah* law as a concession by Jakarta to the sentiments and the aspirations of many Acehnese, where Islam is still a very strong force in society. But when you go there and see what does this *Shari'ah* law consist of, it amounts to little more than harassing women whose veils are not that complete or tight, or whose clothing is a little bit too revealing, or couples who seem to be engaged in some kind of activity deemed unacceptable by very conservative Muslim sentiments, and of course cracking down on vice: gambling and prostitution.

In many cases calling for *Shari'ah* boils down to emotive symbolic aspects of social morality, especially the sacrosanct area about gender relations and the role of women in contemporary society undergoing the economic and cultural transformations of modernity. Yet anyone familiar with Indonesia will recognize that the Muslim women in Indonesian Muslim society play a very active role, not just in the official political realm (they had a woman President several years ago), but also in the informal realm of non-governmental activities, institutions and organizations at the civic level. Women in Indonesia are assertive, dynamic and creative in a significant manner; over two centuries ago several woman *Sultanahs* ruled in Aceh. Despite the assertion of some kind of control over women there, we also have to understand that the model of Islamic dress with the head-scarf predominant today in Indo-

nesia is a relatively new phenomenon in terms of the historical expression of Muslim culture in Indonesia. You ask many Indonesian women today, "*Did your grandmother cover?*"—they would say no. "*Did your mother cover?*"—not until recently from the 1970s onward when there was an increasing impact of Arab-style Islam exported from the oil-rich countries of the Arabian peninsula. Along with their financial aid, mosque-building, and support of schools and other institutions came this insistence that the women have to be taught to be more Islamic in their outer appearance and behavior.

Take the state of Turkey which was one of the political and cultural centers of the Muslim world less than a century ago, and then saw a secularizing process under Ataturk in which the remnant of the Ottoman Empire was saved as the modern nation-state of Turkey—itsself a remarkable achievement considering the designs that European powers had on the fading Ottoman Empire. Yet we see recent reassertions of Islamic identity and a kind of retrenchment on the part of the military and banking elite who really have controlled Turkey since the days of the installation of the Republic under Ataturk. What is actually happening is a slow incremental irreversible process of Islamization reflecting shifts in the center-of-gravity of the cultural identity and aspirations of the majority of the Turkish citizens. This is what its Army leadership could never understand or reconcile themselves with: that their form of secularized laicity or non-religious identity based on the legacy of Ataturk was something being put to one side by the majority of their own people. Today they find themselves to be a kind of minority within their own country who insist on a secular identity for the Turkish people. In the last election of 2007 the AKP Party, the semi-Muslim party, emerge by winning a greater plurality of power. This ruling party has been very careful to modulate itself and hide its real Islamic identity out of fear of provoking a backlash on the part of the military-business elites. It has carefully maneuvered into a position where it cannot be stopped, and the threat of a military coup to remove it is no longer a viable alternative, with the European powers telling the Turkish military, "*If you do that, you won't be a candidate for admission to the European Union; we don't tolerate military dictatorships in Europe.*" (However, in living memory we know there were military dictatorships

in Europe.) This is another interesting phenomenon which many Muslims in other societies are watching carefully.

In Turkey we also find that the headscarf (*türban*) or woman's Islamic dress has become a very important symbol for the reassertion of Islamic identity, to the point where laws were passed by the authorities to prohibit the wearing of the Muslim headscarf by female university students and by all government employees in public institutions in Turkey. These laws are still in place today. The ruling AKP Party has been very careful not to move too openly against that, although they clearly intend eventually to modify these laws. In 1925, when Atatürk took power, he passed the Hat Laws that required men to remove the *fez*—the conical felt cap which was the typical headwear for the male elites in late Ottoman times. Ironically, the *fez* itself originally was an innovation promulgated by a reformist Sultan in the mid-19th century in imitation of a certain kind of headgear worn in Europe, to do away with the old-fashioned male wound headcloth or turban. But one hundred years later under Atatürk, the *fez* became viewed as a symbol of the outmoded Islamic identity and was therefore outlawed; several dozen men were publicly hung in the years following that law simply because they refused to remove their *fez*.

Furthermore, the current situation in Turkey reflects an economic and social class reality. Incidents involving the prohibition against wearing the women's headscarf are frequently prompted by class differences and socio-economic disparities. Thus, modern educated secularized or Western-oriented Turkish women see nothing wrong if their maid or the wife of their gardener continues to wear a headscarf, but if the daughter of the maid goes to university and wants to get an M.D. or a lawyer's degree and become part of the urban educated professional elite and earn a good income—and she still insists on wearing her headscarf—then it becomes an issue. Then: “*you are rejecting the secular nature of our state;*” then: “*you are a threat to the authority of the state;*” then: “*you must be legislated against and imprisoned if you refuse to abide by this prohibition.*” Similarly with the parallel problem in France over this same issue, another secular state that is averse to public manifestations of religious identity. In that sense, this is an issue for certain Islamic communities in Europe as well (e.g. Turkish workers in Germa-

ny). This is a very emotive issue, and what one finds is that among the emerging Turkish educated elite, more women are insisting on wearing the headscarf as a sign of their allegiance to Islam integral to their cultural, ethical and religious identity; yet at the same time they also seeking to become modern, educated, and to earn a good income and live a good middle-class urban existence.

This is a basic aspect of the dilemma facing Turkish Muslim identity. Those people remember that at one time Turkey was the heartland of the great Ottoman Empire, which for over five centuries formed the heartland of the western extension of the Islamic world from Iraq westward intimately bordering Europe. They have not forgotten this, asking themselves that perhaps there is something more to being a secular modern Turk, and reminding themselves that they have an essential claim to be part of a greater legacy—the Islamic legacy. Therefore, today in Turkey if one visits the large bookshops one finds so many books are being published about Ottoman religion, Ottoman architecture, music, calligraphy, philosophy, the Islamic glories of Turkey's past. There is a definite revival underway. Even if people themselves may not all be practicing Muslims, they take pride in their Islamic cultural legacy as an important layer of their identity. They are saying, “*At one time we were part of a larger whole with great achievements and great accomplishments offering high intellectual and spiritual culture; why should we turn our back on it? This is not something backward at all, rather refined and uplifting which gives more meaning to our life.*”

The AKP Party has managed to win control of so many municipalities with their regional or local governments building the many new mosques and opening the carefully crafted semi-religious schools and private universities. This is an irreversible process, because public services and education are the most effective avenues to effect real change in human minds and hearts. I am convinced that it represents a hopeful sign of how Muslims can be committed to a secular political order and yet cultivate their authentic religious identity. Not only Turkey, but nations such as Malaysia and perhaps Indonesia. It is also an example of a very widespread phenomenon of de-secularization. Thirty or forty years ago, Euro-American observers took it for granted that religion was passé—it was going to fade away as westernization and industrialization

took root in traditional societies. The positivist, scientific thinking of the late 19th–early 20th century Euro-Anglo thought mistakenly assumed that religion, being a remnant of man's irrational past, would shrivel up and die, and once economic development and modernity was established in many societies, not just in the West but around the world, that the old allegiances to religious forms of identity with their public expressions and communal rituals would be inevitably undermined and marginalized. Globalization rode the wave of this unavoidable process of secularization inherent in our modernity. But now we discovered that is not the case, that many peoples—among them so many in the heartland of Muslim societies—insist on maintaining their allegiance to Islam as a cultural, ethical, spiritual and intellectual force. Yet simultaneously they seek to live fully as citizens of our modern world and to take full advantage of the various benefits that globalization, with its transformed socio-economic regime that we all now take for granted, has afforded the large majority of humans.

This is an issue that non-Muslims will also have to face. Perhaps people in China will one day understand that material progress and acquiring Gucci bags and drinking French wine is not all what life is about. Maybe there is a fundamental aspect which Buddhism or Taoism or Confucianism may offer the human spirit that is still valuable and that should not be completely thrown away on the trash heap of history. I remember asking professors in N.E. China at the *Center for Fundamental Theory of Philosophy* (in Chang Chun, at Jilin University) when I was there in July six months ago about their officially maintained neo-Marxist doctrine—and some of their philosophical thinkers are quite astute. They have upgraded their understanding of Marx through the lens of Wittgenstein, Habermas and Whitehead and continue to invoke these Western European thinkers as interesting intellectual models for advancing historical materialist thought. I asked them, *“It’s very good, you have achieved a lot in order to learn German and read Wittgenstein. It’s not easy to do that by any standards, his philosophy is not simple. Yet you are not interested in your own thinkers in Chinese culture and thought? You are not interested in the depths of what Buddhist or Taoist or the Confucian legacy has to teach you as a society and as a civilization?”* I never got an answer to that question. But I noticed that an

advertising agency cited a famous Taoist aphorism on their giant billboards promoting drinking water, and one teacher confided that Marxism was like a shirt removed at night revealing Taoist skin. Now they have opened Confucianist primary schools which are very popular; and I learned that Korean Evangelicals as well as Mormons and Bahais stealthily propagate their foreign doctrines. These are questions that Asians also may be brought to face: whether there is something of value in their own culturally authentic ethico-spiritual traditions that should not be simply rubbed out and effaced by consumerist globalizing forces.

Jihadism—a Modern Hybrid

It remains an observable fact that the single greatest cultural block acting as an obstacle to the complete domination and success of pervasive globalization of the Euro-Anglo consumerist materialist ethos, remains the Muslims. Whether by design or by default they find themselves placed as a kind of heavy stone blocking the globalizing flow of the current. Of course, the most irredentist and obtuse aspect of that resistance comes about with the Jihadists. Here, I need to add a word about that ubiquitous phenomenon since I began my remarks by alluding to them.

I want to make it clear that the essence of Islamic teachings as expressed in the Qur’an and in Hadiths from the Prophet, and in the examples and utterances of great authorities in the past and in the present, are utterly opposed to the indiscriminate use of violence on a mass scale and killing of innocents in such a brutally callous manner. This cannot be justified in Islamic terms by any stretch of the imagination, nor does self-immolation by suicide bombing have any legal or moral justification in Islam. Therefore one might rightly ask: how come the Jihadists are in fact justifying their acts in Islamic terms and how come they have had such a sympathetic response among sectors of Muslim societies in different parts of the world? After all, jihadism is a phenomenon that is still experiencing some kind of life as the recent events in Algeria or in India reminded us—and it will not going away tomorrow. It also was given a new lease on life by the aggressive posture that the

United States has taken in the heart of Asia by pursuing the jihadists into their homes or bombing them from unmanned predator aircraft, giving them an added impetus to foster and to promote their own ideology. But when we look at the ideology of people like Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and a host of others, although they use a smattering of Islamic terminology and they make an inverted appeal to a certain basic set of Islamic concepts and teachings, we find that their actual *modus operandi*, their way of conducting themselves, their goals, are thoroughly Western, and even, one might argue, actually promote secularization.

This might sound contradictory, but I would remind you that the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb, one of the godfathers or ideologues of modern jihadism and a leader of the 20th century movement *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, wrote and talked about creating a “vanguard” of committed Muslims of a revolutionary type who would lead the Muslim masses into a confrontation with godless Western materialism and reassert the glory and the primacy of Islamic governance and identity, arguing strongly that Muslims must seize the initiative and install Islamic governments which would enact *Shari’ah* in their various nation-states and societies. That was the basic message of Sayyid Qutb, which he developed being tortured in prison by the Egyptian authorities who finally hung him. Qutb rather exacerbated his own sense of injury, victimhood and hatred for authoritarian abuse at the hands of his own government. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a lot of people still read him and you can walk into bookshops in the Arab world where his complete works are available in cheap multiple copies; he has become quite influential. But Qutb has now been superseded by several new generations of Jihadists who developed and elaborated their own version of this message of a mortal sense of injury, a profound sense of marginalization, a nagging sense of being left behind by history—always with blame assigned to the nefarious plotters in closely guarded rooms of the Pentagon or the White House or White Hall—the conspiracy vision again.

It is a powerful, satisfying, and simple way of solving all your problems: “*It’s their fault, they are doing it to us.*” It resolves into targeting a few individuals or groups: “*If we can only kill the President, or blow up*

the Parliament, or assassinate these intellectuals and these religious men who preach moderation, then we would be one step closer to the realization of our goal. And what is our goal? Regime change in the Islamic world: getting rid of the authoritarian cliques who abuse their power and authority and make life miserable for so many Muslims.” That is the first goal that the Jihadists have. The second goal is to extend their struggle against “*the godless materialistic atheists of the West.*” In a sense, that is only an extension of their first goal, because they see the West as supporting and propping up many of these authoritarian regimes. Their third goal is revenge—or maybe vengeance is their first goal? It is hard to tell with them, their message seems to be moving or oscillating back and forth. There is a profound sense of an acute need to avenge oneself combined with a frantic sense to overcome their marginalization by empowerment through acts of radical violence: acts which they confuse with the atoning and redemptive effect of a blood-sacrifice: their own blood by martyrdom, and the blood of innocents.

What is remarkable is how they achieve some spectacular effects with such limited resources, both human and material resources. One should not give too much credence to exaggerated accounts of the ‘millions of dollars’ controlled by people like Osama Bin Laden; it is not that much money, they act through volunteer efforts and contributions on a small scale, and mainly by low tech means. The paranoia of chemical genocide being perpetrated, or a dirty nuclear bomb smuggled in a suitcase, may be overly exaggerated. If one really appreciated the potentialities and resources of these groups, one would be a bit more realistic about what threat they could pose. Nevertheless, one must take everything into account in a cautious sane manner. Perhaps the Jihadists get some ideas about what to do next by listening to western Intelligence experts speculate over what might happen—then they get an idea. “*Maybe we could put poison gas in balloons and puncture them up in a football stadium: we might kill 20,000 people.*” I hasten to add that I do not know if such a feat is feasible or not, but I do not think Jihadists have thought of it yet—but British and American security experts are worried about it because it is an easy target. An athletic event with 80,000 people where it is almost impossible to maintain real security: it is difficult to keep beer out a stadium in that kind of event.

In their rhetoric they repeat: *“Jews and Crusaders.”* It is an effective and clever way of talking. We need to inject a footnote at this point about the special relationship that the United States government enjoys with Israel, Israel’s special or “exceptional” status relevant to America’s political leadership, and the fact that Israel is definitely contributing to the perception that the West, aided by the Israeli regime, is anti-Islamic and bent on inflicting injury and injustice to Muslim peoples—Palestinian, Lebanese, . . . Iranian. This rhetoric therefore has a certain utility and affords some traction. When one critically examines their rhetoric it reminds one of the 19th century anarchists or proto-Communists: the idea of mobilizing a ‘vanguard’, the ideology of hatred and anger to be consummated in a purifying act of radical violence, and a vague ‘cure-all’ in the Islamic toolbox of ideas and practices that answers all their problems in a very simplistic naïve way. If you pin them down and ask how will an Islamic government do this, they are very indefinite. They don’t know, themselves, they just insist that Islam will provide an answer, it must as it has in the glorious idealized past. Being trained in western disciplines like engineering or medicine, and posing as ‘experts’ in Islamic solutions as some new kind of scholar-authority bearing a Kalashnikov rather than an inkwell, Jihadists in reality encourage secularizing estrangement from the authentic teachings and values mediated by Islam. They aid and abet the authoritarian abuse of Islam for political motives, and contribute to the dumbing-down of the Muslim mind, while poisoning hopes for conciliation and understanding between cultures and peoples.

Convergence of Values?

Here I return to a related issue, and I am going to have to close my remarks. When we look at the ultimate metaphysical values at the basis of cultures and polities, we may glimpse a glimmer of hope. There is this effort being projected to portray the irrational nature of Islam and its propensity to violence—one recalls the remarks by Pope Benedict two years ago in Germany. He was implying that Christians, who turn the other cheek and respond to hatred with love, are inherently in a bet-

ter position to show a way forward for solving humanity’s conflicts. But recycling this tired image of *“the infidel Turk beating at the gates of Europe”* and *“the irrational, primitive Muslim, whose religion teaches violence”* commits an injustice to the historical legacy that Muslim civilization and its intellectual and scientific achievements are well known for. The Renaissance was prompted in large part by fertilization from the Islamic realm. There was a time when people like Roger Bacon lectured in Oxford dressed in Saracen robes and turban, quoting Arabic texts as a more advanced model for European thinkers. We should not forget that.

I mentioned the significant reality that Islam turned away from the Mediterranean towards the East where the sun rises, a movement symbolized by Baghdad, and that there occurred a kind of departure in history. Europe fell into a Dark Age for eight hundred years with the advent of Islam. It was not until the 15th or 16th century that Europe began to regain its own poise and confidence and found its own inner resources to project outside as a great world force that set the stage for the modern period. But ask yourself: *“What are the intellectual and metaphysical sources at the base of Islam?”* Above all there is a monotheistic prophetic teaching which explicitly identifies itself in harmony with Jewish and Christian prophetic teaching. The Qur’an is quite prolix about repeating the names and speaking in an admiring way of the previous prophets in that tradition—Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus—they are very frequently heard in the Qur’anic discourse. The Muslims have always viewed themselves as belonging to that stream of ethical and spiritual guidance which the prophets of the Old and New Testament exemplify. Muslims see themselves as a kind of confirmation and advancement or apotheosis over this venerable monotheistic teaching derived from the prophets.

Secondly, there is the Hellenic component, namely a Greek intellectual and philosophical element which was a potent element in the compost of fertilizing resources that went into the construction of Islamic civilization in the 2nd through 5th Islamic centuries—the 8th through 11th centuries CE—led by the early ‘Abbasid Caliphs who founded their Wisdom Academy where they sought to incorporate and translate into Arabic all known wisdom of the day from Sanskrit to Chinese to Greek

to Syriac and other languages, and make them available for the work of Muslim scholars, whether it was cosmology, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, physical sciences, or even the occult sciences (which they took quite seriously in those days). One can say after the Arabo-Islamic input, there was an Hellenic fertilization or, if you will, a component which became interwoven and was imbibed and acclimatized and eventually Islamized over time within a number of important disciplines. Thus, syllogistic logic became a necessary tool for the thinkers who pursued *usul al-fiqh* or the methodologic-philosophy of law as the basis of the *Shari'ah*; as well as for those who studied speculative theology / *kalam* and developed rational systems of doctrinal and polemical defense of creed in classical Islamic thought, and in a variety of other disciplines exploiting physics, psychology and metaphysics—these Greek philosophic components became an important part of the mix.

Furthermore, there were important elements drawn from the East with ethical and spiritual resources springing from Iran and Central Asia and India—in particular the humanistic Iranian Sasanian court tradition—that were also tapped and flowed into the Islamic synthesis in a civilizational confluence. Although in ideological and metaphysical terms Islam has a greater complexity of elements in its synthesis than the European civilization possessed, many of these elements were held in common to an important degree. Therefore, one cannot assert that the Islamic is in any essential way alien to the European. Furthermore we have to question this idea of the Greco-Roman 'West' as somehow being an invincible monolithic cultural and civilizational bloc—as recycled and purveyed by people like Huntington and others. People in Asia especially must be very wary of this self-serving type of simplification, this type of cultural arrogance or let me put it very bluntly this cognitive imperialism. Muslims themselves are not very clear about it in their own minds, but they instinctively sense this projection of a "great West" that is civilizationally advanced or more rational (since we all know that Orientals are incapable of being rational, right?) We heard the Imperialists say that to us for centuries—that the mind of the Easterner is incapable of being as scientific and rational as the White man. Now we find the same thinking is being recycled in a more sophisticated way, often with added layers of security and strategic resources thrown in.

Permit me to leave you with this observation which those of you who have followed my remarks will assent to: the Sunni Jihadists are ideologically closer and in tune with the contemporary globalized Euro-American worldview and values than most people imagine, even though their form of modernity opposes the prevailing political forces shaping our lives. The Shi'ah Muslim intelligentsia are metaphysically more in harmony with the underlying values and ideals at the basis of European civilization, even though their form of modernity is culturally dissonant with the prevailing consumerist materialist worldview shaping our lives. Do Ayman al-Zawahiri or Bin Ladin comprehend and draw upon Aristotelian epistemology, Islamic philosophic soul-psychology, or trans-rational Sufi metaphysics when advancing their goals? Yet Ayatullah Khomeini himself studied and taught these disciplines, which still are understood by Shi'ah thinkers. Ultimately if I were forced to prophesy and not philosophize, I catch a glimmer of light from the possible convergence of the ideals and values maintained by the latter with the best ideals once upheld by the 'West'. Perhaps it will be the destiny of Asians to assist such a convergence becoming reality.

This is part of the mix that enters in when one wants to apprise oneself of the reality of the Muslim world—a body of societies of great variety, but with a consistent unity at the civilizational and the ideological levels grounded on the sources of their religious teaching and hierarchy of values. Islam today forms a coherent series of human societies and collectivities still committed to an ethical and spiritual element in its political, cultural and social existence. It has not reached the point of denying the relevance of such elements for human social endeavor. These are societies that possess and still control great natural resources that are of vital interest to the rest of the world. Yet these societies are wrestling with their own demons, their misunderstandings of their own great tradition, their amnesia of certain of its higher elements elaborated within the great medieval Islamic synthesis—rational, ethical, and spiritual—which are being denied by segments of the contemporary Islamic scene, particularly the Wahhabi-oriented form of Islam that has become so ubiquitous and influential. All of this leaves us wondering: truly, where the tide will turn? We pray that Muslim societies will be enabled to offer a more adequate response to their dilemma

through energizing their own inner resources; and we remind you that they need the disinterested help of non-Muslim friends and neighbors to resolve this painful dilemma. As the wise man from the North was fond of saying: *They cannot do it alone, but they alone can do it.*

Thank you very much for listening so attentively, I feel privileged to have met with such an audience in Tokyo here at your *Center for Philosophy*.

Q & A

Q: A question about the tension between secularization / de-secularization?

A: De-secularization connotes the re-emergence of religion into the public sphere. You can have a situation where the nature of the polity and government remains essentially secular, while religion is readmitted into the public sphere and expressions of religious identity become accepted, whereas before they may have been considered backward and not given full credence or recognition. That is the case in Turkey where the government is a secular system; they are not going to have a Caliph or Sultan in Turkey again. But the actual conduct and observance of Islamic rituals and beliefs in a public context is becoming a reality in Turkey. For example, it is increasingly hard to buy liquor in many large towns in Turkey. In a secular regime one can purchase whiskey or arak or wine anywhere. There is no law against selling it, but increasingly people just do not want to sell it as much anymore. Secularists who seek to drink have more difficulty getting their bottle of liquor or beer, they have to go further and there are fewer places selling it. It is sort of an unofficial thing, especially in certain regions; while in the city or in suburbs of the city this not as evident.

Furthermore, there is the evident acceptance of society for religious observances and ritual deeds that are hallmarks of Islamic identity. In the past certain Islamic religious days would occur and officially not much was done, but what happens today in Turkey on Friday / *Jum'ah*, traditionally the weekday off in the Islamic calendar? Officially in Turkey the day off is still Sunday, because they imitated Europe where

Sunday is the day off, even though there is only a small minority of Christians remaining in Turkey. For practical reasons the day off should be like the Europeans. But if you are a Muslim you might say, "*Why don't we have Friday as the day off?*" (In Egypt they have made a compromise: Friday off and also Sunday off. That is because over 20% of Egyptians are Coptic Christian; it is not a matter of imitation, rather a matter of recognizing a large minority and honoring their right to have Sunday off.) While in Turkey when Friday comes, if you are a Muslim and want to go to the mosque to pray the communal Friday prayer and listen to the sermon / *khutbah*, you are given a lunch break of one hour. But to go and pray and listen to the sermon and come back will be about two hours. If you do this then everyone in your office knows you are observing the communal *Jum'ah* prayer. This might decrease your chance of promotion, or blacken your name among your secularist colleagues in the office. If you are smart you could say, "*I will forgo observing the Friday prayer because I don't want to hurt my career.*" Other people might say, "*I don't care, I will observe my religious obligation and it does not matter if I don't get an advancement. That is not as important for me, more important is to obey my religious requirement.*" Perhaps they will admit to you privately, "*I could have been promoted but I was kept back because they know that I go every Friday to pray.*" You see how it works? This choice to bring your faith commitment out in public poses a problem and invites penalty.

Perhaps the situation today is becoming more favorable to people who insist on taking two or three hours on Friday for going and praying and coming back. It is more than the legal allotted time for your lunch break. In many other Muslim countries, even where, for purposes of productivity they insist that Friday afternoon not be sacrificed and people go back to the office—as in Malaysia—they accommodate this type of public expression: "*come 11:30 you leave, and return by 2:30pm., we understand; but you should be back in your office, there are several work hours left. We cannot sacrifice half-a-day a week, national productivity needs are important, yet we do not penalize anyone who leaves for 2½ hours in the middle of Friday.*" Many take advantage of this and Friday prayer is well attended in Malaysia where the majority are Muslim. If you are a Chinese or Indian citizen in Malaysia you may stay in the

office, but the office would be half empty or more than half empty. [The British imported Indian and Chinese laborers into Malaya under colonial rule.] These are some of the issues meant by emergence into the “public sphere.”

Furthermore, de-secularization also implies that certain state resources are committed to things which are essentially an indirect form of religious support, such as building public mosques. Some Muslim majority countries have a budget for this; Malaysia takes tax money and builds public monuments including mosques. Tax money is collected from citizens, but 45% of the Malaysians are not Muslim and this can lead to problems. You know that last month there was a riot in Kuala Lumpur on the part of ethnic Indians and Hindus protesting against their treatment by the majority Muslim Malays by asserting, “*Our rights are not being given us and some of our temples were destroyed or not allowed to be rebuilt; we feel prejudiced and biased against due to our being non-Muslim, and the Muslim majority are doing this to us.*” It is a very sensitive issue and unfortunately does not reflect well on the Malay Muslim majority: their inability to be sensitive to minority groups who are not Muslim, their sense of arrogance that it does not matter—“*these protesters are only a small group*”, ... this type of thing. Yet official ideology upholds that Malaysia is an interracial society which does not prejudice the basic human rights of any citizen, including their right to worship by the kind of faith they want. In my view this is an important issue that the Malay Muslim majority has not handled well, because they have an irredentist conservative political Muslim opposition (the PAS Party) outside of the governing Malay coalition UMNO that is in coalition with Chinese and Indian political forces allowing them to have a majority in their parliamentary system. The main grouping of Malays in Malaysia who are in political office therefore feel it necessary to co-opt the Islamic discourse and critique of the hardline Malay opposition, by being more Muslim than their critics and not saying things that would anger the conservative hardline Malay Muslim groups. “*If we mistreat minority Hindus, so what? They’re not important anyway, they are only 12% of the population and most are poor plantation workers on the rubber estates and palm oil plantations. They are not that well educated.*” On the other hand if you are a Muslim minority, as in

India, and you want to emphasize your identity and partake in public expressions of your faith in areas where there is a non-Muslim majority, there is a prejudice against the Muslim minority in India. A decade ago when the aggressive Hindu majority BJP party was in power, there were claims made that Muslims were not being treated well. They had a tubal ligation campaign to cut down on birth as part of their birth control policy. They forcibly sterilized women. Some Muslims were saying, “*Were the ones being sterilized, they’re not doing it to Hindu women, they’re doing it to our women. Why is it that only we have to be sterilized?*” I do not know whether that was true, or whether there were also Hindu women who were being sterilized. But among Muslims, the perception was, “*We are the people who this is mostly being done to, and it seems to be for a purpose: they don’t want us to procreate and multiply, they don’t want us to be around.*” These are some of the issues faced by minority Muslims.

In China there is an important Muslim minority of ethnic Han Chinese, as well as Uyghur and Turkic ethnic groups in certain regions. The Uyghur Muslims have an active opposition and one of their leaders (“Abu l-Qasim”) claims to be a kind of *Mahdi* or savior figure leading an armed group against the authorities. He is being hunted by the state authorities in Xinjiang Province. But then you have the Han Chinese Muslims which is an old community that has been there for over one thousand years. The Chinese state authorities have a fear: Muslims have this known ability to organize, they seem to act in concert and have communal needs that prevail over their individual prerequisites and priorities. It might be that if they organize they could become a threat to the authority of the state or to the Party. Recall the SHANGHAI ASSOCIATION between China and the Newly Independent States in Central Asia; one of the main motives behind forming this organization was to serve as a block against possible internal Muslim opposition and unrest.

What about non-Muslim minorities in Muslim majority societies? With the Christian communities in the Middle East it is a sad story: Palestinian Christians have largely migrated out of Palestine; the Coptic community in Egypt is also under a cloud; throughout Iraq different Christian communities have been targeted by Sunni extremists. In Lebanon with the Maronites, many have emigrated and they have lost their

position of political dominance, displaced to a large extent by the rise of the Shi'ah. The Palestinian case is regrettable: there are only 5% of the Christians left among the Palestinians now, but it used to be over 25%. The Eastern Christian experience and contribution in the Middle East is an important one, and that it should end in a kind of whimper dying out like a gasp, is hard to accept. The Muslims should be the first to say: *We want to protect and keep and honour these communities, they have a role in our history and we don't want them to leave and abandon our space.* Then there is the situation with eastern Jews as well. The Iraqi, Egyptian, and Yemeni Jewish communities were herded into migrating to Israel, often by underhanded tactics. Most of the Jewish communities in the Arab countries left from the 1950s. I grew up in Beirut, where my doctor was Jewish, and I remember him well—he emigrated to Montreal and became director of a large hospital there. There was a Jewish quarter (which had the best sweets shops, by the way, the best chocolate was there), now there is no Jew left in Lebanon, unfortunately I do not believe there is one Jewish family left in Lebanon, they departed mostly around the breakout of our civil war in the mid 1970s.

This is one of the shameful things given that Muslims boast about their stand on pluralism and tolerance which is a Qur'anic doctrine as we stated. Even in the career of the Prophet, no matter how you interpret and give weight to various things, there is little doubt one has to credit the Prophet with a more advanced form of religious pluralist tolerance than had previously been known in the Middle East. Yet historically it was modified in practice by the rulers. Muhammad originally hoped that the Christians and the Jews in Arabia would accept him, but he was disappointed in that expectation. The Prophet came around to the acceptance that there are going to be different communities and they will stay—*“but it would have been better had they followed me and became one community, one human brotherhood.”* Despite this, the Islamic brotherhood remains superior and still possesses a type of finality, even given the continuing existence of the other salvational paths. Could it be that human contingency interferes with divine providential will, if you will? I am more inclined to that view, but theologically it is problematic; I stand in the middle between determinism and free will.

Q: Is this de-secularization an irreversible trend in Turkey?

A: It has become more visible recently in a longer process that has been going on slowly. The military elite could not finesse the selection of Abdullah Gul as president, even though they wanted to stop him. The AKP party was reelected with a larger majority, and Gul was appointed president; and the military did not interfere with this process. This shows that the generals lost something: they threatened that if you make Gul president, we will intervene; then they did not intervene. It shows that AKP exercised a check on the elite stronger than expected and that the generals were outmaneuvered—it was a setback for them. They had in the past demonstrated that they were willing to intervene. Also AKP has demonstrated economic competence: the economy is okay, not as good as it could be, according to some, but a military intervention would mean bad news for the economy. Turkey had bad inflation for years, and now people are finally able to save money and make investments, everyone is profiting and benefiting. There is a sense of prosperity and security, and no matter what your ideology is, you do not want to sacrifice that.

I did not mean to imply by de-secularization that this is a wide-scale, pervasive thing throughout the Arab world or other Muslim societies. It is an uneven at times irregular phenomenon. In Egypt you have the attempt by Islamic parties to come back into politics formally, but they are being kept at bay and suppressed, their political participation is hampered by the authorities in a gross abusive way. Take Algeria—it was always a secular state, there was the unfortunate decade of the 1990s, but the government is still committed to a secular vision there, yet they have learned to give more room for Islamic expression in the public sphere. What is so striking about Turkey is that it was such a formally committed secularist regime. It seems that their social context has given the lie to that to a certain extent. The work of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi (d.1960) was exceptional. He was an old Ottoman intellectual reformer who lived into the Ataturk republican era, who almost single-handedly kept Islam alive nonviolently. His influence is very strong and widespread, outside of Turkey as well with his books translated into Urdu, Bahasa Malaysia, Persian and other languages. The Fathallah

Gülen movement in Turkey is really an offshoot of Nursi's work, the series of schools that they maintain and are even opening in countries like Indonesia. This is a remarkable effort. That is why I say de-secularisation has been going on for a long time in Turkey under the surface. Their policy was patience and a long-term commitment—“*we put up with the regime, we are not anti-regime, we will not make a revolt.*” But then the Iranian Revolution is another side of this phenomena, more activist and interventionist. Many Muslim activists have taken heart and inspiration from that revolution, including Sunnis.



Socialist and Marxist-oriented movements were important and well-established in the Arab world as well as in other Islamic societies. But they have been largely discredited over the past twenty years. That is why I contend that Jihadism is a kind of displaced energy from the Socialist and Communist, or Marxist-oriented efforts, partly absorbed by the Jihadists, and also by the nationalists, since the nationalists were also failures in certain areas. Thus, nationalism and Marxism and kindred ideologies, that in the 1950s and 1960s were very strong in many parts of the Arab and Islamic world, have been bypassed. What has emerged and taken their place are the ‘Islamist’ movements, in some cases moderate, and in other cases radical and violent. Remember, one cannot label everyone.

‘Islamist’ is not a dirty word in itself, but it is an occidental term. Strictly speaking, Islamist should not have a negative connotation. Like one says “Salafi” and means by that “neo-Wahhabi”, because the original Salafi were the reformers of the late 19th century/early 20th century with some good ideas and progressive for their day. To use the word “Salafi” to talk about the Jihadists—the conservative Traditionalists of today—is a misnomer. We should do justice to the memory of the real reformers, like Muhammad Abduh and others, who should not be burdened with the violence of Jihadists or the backward-looking obscurantism of the Traditionalists. In any case, Wahhabism is alive and well, and forms the wellspring to a large extent of the Jihadist movement. Wahhabism is not confined to Arabia, what may be termed “neo-Wahhabism” is much more widespread across several continents. You see it in Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as in the UK and the USA. It is not a dead force, but

is being rivalled now by other organized movements such as the *Hizb ul-Tahrir* or the *Jama'at ul-Tabligh* or Tablighis.

All these different groupings are manifestations of a new Islamic awareness and commitment, but for the most part they are backward-looking and what may be accurately called “intellectual minimalists”. They do not want to admit nor invoke the depth, the hierarchical scale and nuance of the great Islamic intellectual-rational tradition and trans-rational metaphysical teachings, largely because the neo-Wahhabist mindset hates Sufism as a heresy. Even more do they hate the Shi'ah who are deemed worse than heretics and an abomination. Nor do the neo-Wahhabis tolerate all the other liberal Sunni legal methodologies (*usul al-fiqh*) with their differences among various schools allowing one to choose from a variety of legal interpretations based on one's comprehensive knowledge. They are against “*Madhhab-ism*” as they denominate it, and insist that others conform to their own limited narrow vision.

Who loves philosophy today in the Islamic world? Who gives pride of place to great metaphysical expressions of Islamic thought and experience? One place is Iran. I do not mean Ahmadinejad; I mean the clerical, scholarly, well-trained *mujtahids* in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini was a great commentator of philosophical and mystical topics. When I read his works, I was surprised: they are profound, he was truly a master. Khomeini comments on great masters of the past and criticizes them at a very deep level; he was not a dilettante. He was someone working within the tradition speaking with authority. He criticized the great Safavid-era gnostic Mir Damad in a way that one has to take seriously. He thought about ideas and was working in that tradition and advancing it—and he was critical. He does not accept everything, but has his own viewpoint. Ruhollah Khomeini was also a great jurist / *faqih*, and was a political radical who initiated a revolution that destroyed a monarchy and established an Islamic regime in Iran. Many non-Muslims appreciated his stand against the West; one does not have to be Muslim to dislike the policy of the United States—and I am an American citizen.



Self-Critical. Muslims come down on both sides of certain issues because in some cases they are a minority who are being victimized, and in other cases they are a majority who victimize. I am a Muslim and am

not afraid to say that certain Muslim majorities sometimes victimize non-Muslim minorities within their societies, but most of my Muslim colleagues and friends would never say that to a group of non-Muslims. They tell me, “*It’s better we keep it quiet, why should we criticize ourselves before others? We are being bombed and killed by our enemies. Why should we start disrespecting ourselves?*” But my feeling is we have to be honest and critical. We have to be critical of ourselves before other people are critical of us, we must be self-critical first. We need to criticize the mistakes made by our own people, and specifically the shallow-minded ignorant, parochial, and misdirected energies of many Muslim radicals which harms Muslims more than anyone else. You know that the majority of the victims of Jihadists are Muslim. The people in Algeria killed by those bombs were almost all Muslim, they were not Europeans. We hurt ourselves more than others.

We have to take the lead in being self-critical. In Islamic ethics the virtue of sincere self-criticism, termed *muhasabat al-nafs* /self-observation, is highly valued. When one studies the Islamic intellectual and cultural tradition one appreciates that Muslims were very good at being critical—they excelled in it. They were the most advanced in this field. Their achievements in so many rational and civilizational fields set the tone and universal model for almost a millennium. What happened? How come we Muslims have amnesia? I am getting beyond the topic of de-secularization and getting back to my emotional tone which Professor Kobayashi noted. You know that the mind divorced from the heart is a curse, and that the heart and the mind have to be integrated together. This is what Muslim exponents and thinkers always understood—that the mind and the heart are part of a single entity. When the mind dominates over and suffocates the heart, then the human is crippled and imbalanced. This is what has happened to our modern world: our contemporary civilization and the forces of globalization represent an imbalance. The needs of the stomach and sex organs are not enough to satisfy the inner human being. Let me cite a famous tradition of the Prophet Muhammad who uttered, “*The one thing I fear most from my followers after I go is the stomach and the sex organ.*” They asked, “*Well, what do you mean?*” He said, “*I fear they will live only to put food in their stomach and satisfy their sexual desire.*”

I probably should not say more than this, but when you go to certain parts of the Muslim world you will see that Muslims have big stomachs. Especially if they are wealthy they eat much meat every day. If you consume meat regularly it increases your sex drive. They are able to satisfy this because in some countries Muslims may have more than one wife, up to four. Historically in the past wealthy Muslim men could own as many female slaves as they could afford in addition to their legal wives, and generally they used female slaves for their own sensual satisfaction. It is true that the Prophet Muhammad inaugurated major reforms in the old Arab treatment of women. According to what I understand based on my research, certain early legal authorities or Jurists (the *fuqaha*) in the late 1st–early 2nd century AH (7th century CE) rolled back some of the advances that the Prophet sought to enforce and institute in Arab Muslim society, and they re-asserted the old male privileges. Their patriarchal preferences had to be expressed and codified and justified in terms of the *Hadith* they attributed to the Prophet—e.g., narratives of the type which assert that women are lacking in intelligence (*naqisat al-‘uqul*), etc. There exists an entire genre of these utterances put into the mouth of the Prophet, and many found their way into the authoritative canonical collections.

I once undertook a special study where I examined certain of these *Hadith* and analyzed their chains-of-authorities—the people who transmitted them—and then studied their biographies in the voluminous biographical literature. The most prominent transmitters were eminent early Muslim authorities including Ibn ‘Umar, Ibn Sirin, and Ibn al-Musayyab and several other Successors of Madinah; Muslim tradition has preserved many details about their lives and their attitude towards women. They are excellent incarnations of male Arab patriarchal privilege. Take the son of the second Caliph, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (*may God be well satisfied with him*), who used to scrupulously fast the thirty (or twenty-nine) day Ramadan fast—no food or drink from earliest daylight until sunset and no sexual intercourse. At night one breaks the fast: eats, drinks, and if desired has sexual intercourse. The Prophet Muhammad originally wanted Muslims to abstain from sexual intercourse during the entire thirty-day period, but women complained to the Prophet saying, “*It is too much, you cannot deny us this.*” So he

relented and said to men, *“Very well, at night you may also indulge yourself with your wife and not deny them their right.”* Now we have it on good authority (and this is well attested and can be demonstrated by sound sources) that Ibn ‘Umar would break his fast at the end of each day by first having intercourse with his female slaves—before he ate or drank. That was more important for him than his need for food. I refrain from adding more unflattering details of his treatment of his love-slaves.

Normally Muslims would never say this in a context before non-Muslims, but I am not shy about being critical. A lack of critical sense has kept Muslims from effectively dealing with their dilemma and with evolving and propounding adequate means and understanding congruent with the needs of our time—not necessarily an understanding which agrees with essential values mediated by capitalist globalization. One has to be wary about globalized free markets stripping humanity of many things that are valuable and cannot be dispensed with so easily, and once thrown away are difficult to recoup. But everyone has their own understanding in accordance with one’s innate nature and the striving one exerts to comprehend.

Again, Thank you all very much.