

# Logos

a journal of modern society & culture

volume one - issue two  
spring 2002

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# Logos

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*Articles should be approximately 4000 to 7500 words in length. We also accept unsolicited book and film reviews. All queries and submissions should be submitted to Logos at [logosonline@igc.org](mailto:logosonline@igc.org).*

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## Editor's Introduction

The present issue of *Logos* is centered on the theme of Islam. This is, admittedly, a broad canvas, but the articles collected here address the historical dimensions of Islam as a religion, culture, system of belief as well as the contemporary issues concerning Islam and the political interactions between the West—specifically the United States—and Islamic nations. The diagnoses for the upsurge in fundamentalism and terrorism—which actually stretches back decades and is not restricted to the recent events of September 11<sup>th</sup>—do not converge on any single causal explanation. Indeed, whether we see fundamentalism as a product of the religion of Islam itself (a view that is not taken seriously among scholars, but quite popular in the mainstream) or the nature of Islamic states or the legacy of western interference in the area, we are confronted with a panoply of perspectives.

It has become common for analyses of Islam and fundamentalism to lapse into simplicity both in the popular media as well as “higher” intellectual publications. The right is all too quick to see fundamentalism as culturally determined or grounded in a distinctness of Islamic “civilization” as opposed to a western, rationalist one. The left, for its part, has been wedded to an economically determined notion of exploitation via globalization and underdevelopment to explain recent events.

It seems, however, that both are severely misinformed. Class based perspectives miss the problem of indigenous political regimes and their own roots in anti-rationalist, anti-democratic world views legitimated by traditional authority. The “clash of civilizations” thesis also misses this crucial problem grounding its theoretical insights fundamental divisions between cultures. History is not, as conservative commentators would have us believe, the result of individuals and the power of the charismatic who shape the direction of historical possibility. It is more apt to describe history in Marxian fashion, as the result of individuals making choices subject to the constraints of history, culture and social structure. It is this that the present issue of *Logos* wants to address in its different manifestations.

The articles in this issue confront different themes. Lenn Goodman's piece on Islamic humanism is more than a historical background to the different strands of Islamic thought in terms of ethics and politics; it also shows that there were distinct and highly developed humanistic ideas in medieval Islamic

societies and that these were at tension with more conservative elements in Islamic culture. For Goodman, fundamentalism of the sort we see today is actually a phenomenon with its roots in Protestantism and its insistence on a purity of interpretation and lifestyle. In addition, he shows that the ideas of humanism are by no means unique to the West and that there is a tradition of enlightened humanism buried deep within the heart of Islamic thought.

Irene Gendzier's article centers on the problem of thematizing the nature of Islamic politics and its effect upon the culture of fundamentalism. Far from seeing Islamic fundamentalism as a product of its own internal dynamics (of *jihād*, etc.) it is a product of despotic political regimes which have been supported throughout the century by western *realpolitik* and economic interests. The "clash of civilizations" thesis is therefore not an explanation of the confrontation between Islam and the West; it is a matter of international policies and the manner in which Islamic peoples have been affected that are central to understanding modern Islamic politics.

The next two articles look at contemporary issues plaguing two Islamic countries: Iran and Iraq. Hooshang Amirahmadi addresses the potential problems with current U.S.-Iran relations and the damaging consequences of recent U.S. policy toward Iran and the hope for further reform there. Wadood Hamad looks at the effects of the U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq and puts this policy and its consequences in perspective from a political, economic and moral point of view.

The problem of U.S. policies and Islam is critically probed by Stephen Eric Bronner. Bronner argues that the current rhetoric of the "axis of evil" is nothing more than an application of an inherently divisive and destructive view of politics that is not much more than the manipulation of public sentiment for certain domestic policies of the Bush administration. Even more, the "war on terror" has become an excuse for other political forces—such as Sharon in Israel—to serve as a cover for their own nationalist interests. The "war on terror" and "axis of evil" terminology are smoke screens for a real critique of modern politics.

Ömer Çaha turns his attention to the problem of democracy in Islamic societies. For Çaha, the reaction against western imperialism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century spawned an affinity of nationalist struggles with Marxism-Leninism and its notion of a centralized state. This, in addition to the lack of a public sphere, has led to the legitimation of a strong centralized state and the

suppression of democratic forces as the differential of strength between various élites and the public has been increasingly in the favor of unaccountable political leaders.

Francis Bacon's dialogue *An Advertisement Touching A Holy War* was written in 1623 as a dialogue over the competing strands of late medieval thought: specifically secularism and rationality on the one hand and religious zealotry on the other. Tensions between these two forces would inevitably give rise to modernity but Bacon's dialogue—as pointed out by Diana Judd in her introduction to this rarely seen piece—still has resonance today.

Alexis de Tocqueville spent much of his time after writing *Democracy in America* travelling and analyzing northern Africa, especially Algeria. These writings—three volumes worth in the complete edition of Tocqueville's works—have seldom been translated into English. The “Second Letter on Algeria,” which appears here for the first time in English, was written in 1837 to an acquaintance in Paris. Tocqueville examines the problems associated with administering the Algerian colony and makes an argument for the inevitable amalgamation of French and Arab peoples. But this is only a possibility, he argues, once those in France see that governing the colony by the forceful imposition of western institutions can work only against this goal. For Tocqueville—unquestionably a man of his age—the Arab population was in need of western institutions such as private property and western individualism, but this needs to be seen in context. His letter has interesting insights even 160 years later.

There is also an interview with Tariq Ali on the question of Islam, the origins of fundamentalism and the hopes for reform in Islamic states. In addition, a commentary by Dick Howard continues the discourse about anti-Americanism that began with Jeffrey Goldfarb's article on “intelligent anti-Americanism” in the previous issue of *Logos*. There is also a commentary on consumerism in American society after 9-11 by Paul Lachelier.

M. J. T.  
5/2/02

# Humanism and Islamic Ethics

by  
Lenn Goodman

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Normative Islam developed in three phases: the Qur'anic or scriptural phase; its elaboration in the *hadith*, the vast literature of sayings and doings ascribed to the Prophet; and the comprehensive system of law (*fiqh*), which adds new tributaries to the stream, drawing anew upon the ancient floodplain of ethical and juridical culture that had from the outset fed the wellsprings of Islamic norms. This article wants to consider the shape that Islamic practical ethics takes under the impress of scripture, tradition, legal theory and practice, and the theory of action.

*Falsafa*, or philosophy proper, was grounded in the Arabic translations of the great works of Greek philosophy and science sponsored by the Arab princes and potentates of the eighth to the tenth centuries. As the name suggests, *falsafa* was viewed as a foreign import, a Greek enterprise, although its findings, perspectives, even many of its methods were to be naturalized. The philosophical ideal of individual thought, of walking and working the highwire of metaphysics without a safety net, was just as foreign as the Greek language in the precincts of nascent Islamic traditionalism, and far more threatening. Yet *falsafa*, then as now, was attractive to independent spirits. Most of those drawn to it were confident that reason would lead them more surely by far, if less securely, to the very heights that religion sought—or higher, since religion offered ritual and symbolic surrogates of the truths that only a trusting commitment to untrammelled thought could fully and faithfully deliver.

*Kalam*, Islamic dialectical theology, was a long-lived endeavor, born, perhaps, in the intercommunal debates that followed the Islamic conquests. It continued on a massive scale among the hundreds of Islamic movements, sects, schisms, parties, factions, divisions and opinions that reflect the diversity in backgrounds and commitments of the early adherents of Islam. It was *falsafa* that branded *kalam* dialectical, meaning that it was anchored in

stipulative premises extracted from an adversary or (even more suppositiously), from scripture. The *mutakallimān*, or practitioners of *kalam*, for their part, long distinguished themselves from the *falasafa*, philosophers, by shunning the philosophers' most powerful tool, Aristotelian syllogistic. Perhaps recognizing the naturalism implicit in Aristotle's logical scheme, the *mutakallimān* relied on hypothetical reasoning that often seemed suspiciously ad hoc. Their approach may hark back to the earlier, Stoic rejection of Peripatetic logic.

Over the centuries, the *mutakallimān* carried their debates from a primitive yet conceptually radical and often exciting doggedness about core theological values to a pitch of high scholastic seriousness addressing a wide range of metaphysical and cosmological issues. The ramifications of these debates included sustained critical discussions of theistic subjectivism and objectivism, voluntarism and determinism, the sanctions and consequences of virtue and vice, obedience and sin, faith and faithlessness. What emerged were sophisticated, if ultimately etiolated, discussions of moral epistemology and the anatomy of action.

*Adab* was the literary tradition of the secretarial or administrative class, the culture of the professional literati who looked past the lampoons and boasts, self-deprecations and self-vauntings of the desert poets to the more urbane values of the court and chancery. Arabic prose was their creation. Manners were their mores, and history was their meat. They loved style and relished wit. They respected refinement and revered statesmanship. But they also had an eye for slumming and a taste for decadence. They knew how high a man could climb in the world, and how fast and far he could fall. Theirs was not the closed world of the Qur'anic dispensation.

What then of the Qur'an, the revelation vouchsafed to the Islamic prophet? Orphaned young and reaching maturity in the caravan town of Mecca in inland Arabia, Muhammad (570-632) gained financial independence with his marriage to the merchant widow Khadijah. His meditations and his moral abhorrence of the rude ways of his contemporaries led him to visionary pronouncements of divine judgment, the first phase of a prophetic message modeled on the admonitions of the Hebrew prophets, whose imagery and idiom he adapted in his Arabic Qur'an—that is, a bible, an ecstatically received, liturgically recited revelation of God's word.

The Islamic era is dated from 622, the year of the *hijira*, Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to the neighboring city of Yathrib, or Medina as it was later called. He was invited, as a spiritual figure, to mediate a tribal feud; but he became the leader of the place, suppressing its tribalized Jews and turning its formerly warring Arab factions against the caravan trade of Mecca, whose denizens had failed to follow his lead or heed his message. After the *hijira*, the revelations became more legislative than hortatory. The visions of apocalypse gradually receded before the delineation of a society ruled under the dispensation of Islam.

Uniting his followers under the banner of their common faith and law, the Prophet made a triumphal reentry into Mecca, which sacred history pictures him as having fled. By the time of his death, just ten years after the *hijira*, he was the ruler of Arabia. His lieutenants, the *khalifats*, deputies and successors to the executive and military dimensions of his authority, rapidly brought to heel the fractious tribes who imagined that the Prophet's death had somehow canceled their oaths of fealty. They then turned the united power of the armies of the faithful outward, stunningly overturning the immense Sassanian Persian empire and wresting Egypt and Syria from the Byzantines. Within a century of the Prophet's death, the tier of lands from the Indus and Central Asia to the Pyrenees had been brought under Islamic rule.

While Spain, in the course of seven centuries, would ultimately expel the Muslims, the rich lands of Byzantium, after centuries of siege, would finally be subdued. Sicily, much of the Balkans and India would be Islamized. Trade, slaving and missionaryism—often hand in hand—extended the faith deep into Africa, China, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The government of all Islamic lands belonged in principle to the Commander of the Faithful, the *khalifah* or Caliph, the *imam* qualified to lead the people, defend the faith, and apply its laws. In practice the many rival and warring Islamic states were led by military governors, dynasts, ambitious vassals, court intriguers, freebooters, slave soldiers (*mamlāks*), and charismatics.

Despite the fanciful image of the oriental despot, Muslim princes and caliphs did not, of course, wield absolute power. They could be cruel and did exercise a wide discretion. But they were answerable not only to the claims of conscience but also in some measure to the Law, as interpreted by their judicial appointees and by the more independent *ulama'*, the religious scholars, whose preaching could powerfully move the populace. Muslim princes, like any others, had to answer, in a different sense, to the practical



limits that constrain all political claims. They were subject to the pressures of rival rulers, tribal, sectarian or ethnic rebels and pretenders, often of their own kin, who might find powerful sponsors in the armies, the ministries, or the harem. King makers might manipulate or depose the caliph or hold him in the harem, at once an ornament of legitimacy and a reproach to the very notion of an unbroken Islamic line.

In principle, Islamic Law, the *Sharia*, was the proper law of any state that laid claim to the heritage of the Prophet. But tensions could hardly fail to arise between the demands of such a state and the ideals of the jurists and legal scholars. Scripture itself did not stand static and alone in that interaction. It was elaborated in systems of morals and codes of law that sought embodiment in the lives of the faithful. The resultant demands readily became maximal, in view of their divine source and sanction. Small wonder that rival dynasts claimed Islamic legitimacy or that charismatic rebels made claims of their own, often apocalyptic, pledging to restore and renew the primal faith that flourished in the days of Islam's dramatic rise. Small wonder too, that the very identity of more than one Shiite pretender was sublimated, transforming a vanished imam into a cosmic figure or a hypostatic ideal.

Because the Prophet's ecstatic visions and legislative oracles responded so powerfully, even violently, to what he saw around him, Qur'anic ethics is often presumptive, in much the way that Qur'anic narrative is allusive. Legislatively, the scriptural foundation will look open textured, like a constitution, ready to be filled in with concrete institutions. But the scope and reach of its claims gives the Qur'an, like any other monotheistic scripture, an ethical fullness well beyond the sketchiness of mere rules in a law book.

Muhammad's scripturally inscribed moral vision is a distinctive hybrid of puritan revulsion and earthy permissions: Gambling, alcohol, fornication and faithlessness are forbidden, anathema in God's eyes. The heedless, who give the lie to the Prophet and reject God's word, await bitter torments in the Hereafter. But believers are allowed four wives (provided they are treated fairly)—and unspecified concubines. Most of the Jewish dietary restrictions (except for the one on pork) are removed, aiding the Prophet in distinguishing Islam from the religion of the Jewish contemporaries among whom he had once sought followers. Of similar effect is the decision to face Mecca rather than Jerusalem in prayer. Muhammad accommodates the indigenous Arab culture by retaining the Kaba as a sacred site, taking over the

Arab pilgrim festivals and sacrifices, and even introducing into the Qur'an verses, soon canceled, that acknowledge pagan goddesses. Never canceled was the peopling of the land with familiar spirits, the *jinn*. The Biblical and Rabbinical heritage remains evident in the scriptural and midrashic narratives of the Qur'an and its laws of inheritance, prayer, charity, and adultery—which last, in Islam, requires four eyewitnesses to the overt act, in view of the gravity of the offense and its capital sanction.

The Qur'an, to the believing Muslim, is revelation, God's *ipsissima verba*, transmitted to his prophet by the angel Gabriel, capping and sealing the work of all prior prophets. It authenticates God's earlier revelations and is vouched for by them. But should the followers of sister religions balk at the contents or the provenance of Muhammad's revelatory dicta, they are dismissed as scoffers and deniers. Any disparities between their scriptures and the Qur'an result from ancient and impious tampering with the texts of revelation.

In the early days of *kalam*, the Mutazilite theologians adapted an old Stoic argument, claiming that God's justice made revelation a moral necessity. The argument may have been aimed at adversaries who rejected the very idea of special revelation. "Brahmins," in the Muslim sources, are often said to have done that. But the torque of the recast argument, like so much else in Mutazilism, came from theodicy: How could God (justly) punish or reward His servants without warning them of their duties and the consequences of their acts? Later *mutakallimān*, of the Asharite school, plainly faced a different problematic. They were affronted at the notion that mere humans could assay God's justice, let alone bind the Almighty to some human sense of duty. They denounced the Mutazilites for making mere mortals the "creators" of their own acts. And they condemned as heresy the view that the Qur'an was created at all. Borrowing from ancient Jewish notions of God's eternal word or wisdom, as manifested in the Torah, and from the related Christian idea of an uncreated Christ, traditionalists had framed an Islamic orthodoxy, in part by making the uncreated Qur'an an article of faith. They too celebrated the Qur'anic revelation but spoke of its eternity rather than its moral necessity.

The veneration for scripture attested by both sides in this bitter controversy is shared by all faithful Muslims. Against that background, one might imagine that fundamentalism would be a powerful force in Islam. But strictly speaking that expectation would be mistaken. Fundamentalism as we know it is a modern movement arising in the humanism of the European Renaissance

and in the Protestant demand for clarity in theology, plainness in exegesis, and simplicity in Church norms. Fundamentalist biblicism reacted against what seemed overgrown and casuistical in canon law, allegorical interpretation, philosophical metaphysics and scholastic theology. Even the fundamentalist notions of inerrancy and literalism are the reflex of modernist ideas of the plainness and openness of truth.

Islam, like Judaism and Catholic Christianity, did not reject its own post-scriptural elaborations but cherished them as organic supplements to revelation. Subtlety was not the enemy. The early faith, conceived as a pure and ascetic path, has been repeatedly brandished as a challenge to decadence, permissivism, tolerance of non-Muslims and backsliders, and insufficient rigor in prosecuting the cause and fostering the spread of Islam. But Islamic militancy has not sought to separate the scriptural faith from its juridical elaboration. *Falsafa* may be condemned, but dogmatics is not rejected. Even when suspicious of the dialectic of *kalam*, Islamic theology has remained a scholastic enterprise. There has been literalism, and simplicity has been an ideal, but the arbiters of practice have turned to the *hadith* for guidance, far more often than to the Qur'an.

Against the expectation that Islamic norms would simply flow from Qur'an to *hadith*, and thence to the body of *fiqh* (law), we find the reverse. The Qur'an retains the highest authority in principle, but the ultimate arbiter of practice, as Brannon Wheeler has shown, is not the highest but the most proximate authority. For "The authority of a canon," as Wheeler puts it, "depends upon its traditional interpretation." In the Islamic case: "The applicability and thus authority of the Qur'an is fixed by the Sunnah, the Sunnah by the opinions [of the early jurists], and the opinions by subsequent scholarship. That does not license an arbitrary manhandling of the sources. Far from it. Taking the Anafi school as his model, Wheeler explains:

the Anafi scholar does not interpret the revelation alone or even directly, but instead interprets how generations previous to him interpreted the revelation. . . . Using previous scholarship as examples of how to apply the revelation, the Anafi scholar must compare the context in which the revelation was interpreted in precedented cases to distinguish what is specific to each of the cases from what the cases have in common. Through this type of reasoning, the anafi scholar induces a general principle of the revelation from the different precedented cases . . .

The same is true, of course, *mutatis mutandis*, for Talmudic or American Constitutional law. Impressions to the contrary are artifacts of analysis: The Constitution or the Torah oversees case law and in that broad sense explains it. But the principles that may warrant or inspire a law always underdetermine the concrete provisions of practice. The dictates of scripture itself will be understood, ultimately, in terms of day-to-day decisions.

Consideration of the disciplines that foster Islamic norms prepares us to assay the content of those norms. For each of these disciplines affirms its own distinctive notion of reason and the reasonable. Reason in Islamic law, as in law everywhere, will mean analogy with precedent. In *kalam* it will mean dialectical, hypothetical inference, anchored in some seeming common ground. In *falsafa*, reason will mean something more: rational intuition and its discursive exposition in syllogistic argument. But in *adab*, reason means sound judgment, deference to experience, that is, to the history, learning and wisdom of the nations, which Islamic civilization has inherited from its predecessors and made over in new form.

### Islamic Ethics in Theory and Practice

Like Biblical Judaism, Qur'anic Islam does not sharply distinguish between law and morals. Nor does it draw hard and fast lines between ritual symbolism, spiritual expression, and communal engagement. Like Biblical Christianity, it places faith in the forefront of piety. Faith is a matter of trust, but even more, of allegiance. Addressing a community of believers—at first a beleaguered minority, later a triumphant authority—it envisions worship as a public exercise and adopts a legalist, rigorist tone in setting out its devotional requirements and ethical expectations, preferences, requirements, distastes, and prohibitions.

Unlike Marx, or even Plato in some moods, but like the scriptural ethics of Judaism and Christianity, Qur'anic ethics does not countenance the breach of its standards in pursuit of its aims. Unlike Aristotle or Nietzsche but like Biblical ethics, Qur'anic ethics is framed in a language of imperatives. Its primal aim is a way of life charted by divine commands. The scriptural law, as in Judaism, will define an ethos; but obedience to God's commands is clearly an end in itself. That opens the door to a kind of legal positivism,

which is to say, anti-rationalism, quite characteristic of scriptural legal systems.

Acts of righteousness and charity join with worship in giving faith and love of God their clearest expression. The immediate circumstances of the revelation highlight those actions that support the needs of the community and claims of its leader. The proud generosity of the old Arab ideal is channeled to socially preferred and institutionally legitimated uses. It is no longer a noble if reckless abandon but a steadfast, even humble response to genuine need. The old Arab sense that life is transitory has become a righteous dread of final judgment. Earnestness replaces what Izutsu calls the “desperate hedonism” attested in the poetry of the *Jahiliyya*. Loyalty to the nation of Islam displaces (or supervenes upon) tribal allegiance. The paramount commitment is to a covenant, a spiritual as well as social contract. God is now a party to every undertaking, and good faith means purity of intent, a conscience and consciousness open to His scrutiny. Courage has become steadfastness, and the long-suffering that we saw in Imru’ al-Qays is fortified, no longer by bitter irony or sweet memories but by hope in visions of the hereafter.

The word *hadith* means literally a piece of news, a report of the sayings and doings of the Prophet and his circle, as relayed by his companions and the generations of traditionists. In practice, *hadith* was used to justify the regionally divergent practices of diverse schools of law, projecting back their usages into sacred history.

Normatively there is no fatalism in Islam, if fatalism means thinking that human choices make no ultimate difference. Even the most predestinarian of Muslim theologians held vigorously to Qur’anic accountability, the promise and the threat. That seemed to lay the fate of one’s immortal soul squarely in one’s own hands. Even so, from a practical standpoint, the belief that God ordains all events is powerfully bivalent. *It can urge acceptance but also formidable effort and resistance.* All depends on what is seen as the working of God’s will. Theologians who called God the creator of our acts could readily explain that God acts through us—creating motion, sin, or sickness in us, not in Himself, yet acting all-powerfully nonetheless, as in the Qur’anic (8:17) paradigm: “When you shot it was not you who shot but God.” We are accountable, the Asharites argued, because we appropriate a choice, not because we “make” it. We remain responsible, even if we do not “create” our actions. But—here is the hidden, distinctively medieval sting—each of us is

responsible in his own sphere: Every one of you is a shepherd and must answer for his flock, the Prophet urges: the imam for the people, a man for his household, a woman for her husband's house and children, a slave for his master's goods.

The Qur'an (3:104) wraps many of its norms in the broad injunction to "ordain what is right and forbid what is wrong." What is wrong here is called *munkar*, wicked, disreputable—literally, unspeakable (cf. the Latin *nefas*); what is right, *marāf*, is just the opposite: proper, appropriate, respectable. Much of the militancy that has marked Islam stems from this sweeping Qur'anic mandate in behalf of moral decency. For it is not the law alone that does the ordaining and forbidding. Rather, those who are subject to the law are commanded to do so, the community at large. The rub, as legal positivists would quickly stress, is that what counts as right and wrong is not textually defined but still presumptive here, as are the modalities of enforcement.

The Qur'anic command, of course, was never abstract in practice. Over time, it was glossed concretely by the juridical schools, who made the breaking up of musical instruments a paradigm case of what was called for. The open-ended demands of morals and the special expectations of custom, ritual, and propriety now acquire some of the force and stringency of legal statutes, and the law acquires some of the concreteness and open-endedness of morals. The Islamic legal schools and traditions array themselves in the diversity of their understandings of just who is responsible for implementing the proper standards, how it is to be done, and how far public authorities and private individuals should press in this regard.

Energy in fulfilling the obligation to institute right and forbid wrong was (and in the most traditional Islamic circles remains) both a standard of legitimacy for governments and a rallying cry for dissent. Rebels found no sharper lance to fling against the states they deemed corrupt than the charge of failing to institute the canons of authentically Islamic practice. And the defenders of a regime found no stouter shield than an image of public piety. A widely cited *hadith* proclaims: "The highest form of holy war is speaking out truthfully before an unjust ruler, and being killed for it." Admiring stories are told of those who died in this way. One such martyr, a goldsmith, was said to have appeared at the court of Abā Muslim (d. 755), the architect of the Abbasid revolution, boldly denouncing the nascent regime. The moderate jurist Abā Anifa is pictured as warning the outspoken

goldsmith that the obligation to ordain the right and forbid the wrong was a public charge, not one that an individual should attempt alone, since that would only mean throwing away his life. Rebels, Abā Anifa held, can cause more harm than good. The story may be a back-projection designed to explain why Abā Anifa did not himself speak out against what was later perceived, at least by the tellers of the tale, as a corrupt and corrupting polity. The fact is that there were rebel causes of which Abā Anifa did approve. But even the quietist dictum ascribed to him, as Michael Cook points out, gave dissidents (or activists) the moral high ground:

What we see here is the presence, within the mainstream of Islamic thought, of a strikingly—not to say inconveniently—radical value: the principle that the executive power of the law of God is vested in each and every Muslim. Under this conception the individual believer as such has not only the right, but also the duty, to issue orders pursuant to God's law, and to do what he can to see that they are obeyed. What is more, he may be issuing these orders to people who conspicuously outrank him in the prevailing hierarchy of social and political power.

Even as a matter of theory, the doctrine proved a powerful double-edged sword, defending established regimes if they seemed to serve proper Muslim values but assailing regimes that seemed too lax or tolerant. And, of course, the doctrine was never a matter of sheer theory but often held forth as a standard for daily life. The Anbalites, who took it most seriously, gave the Qur'anic mandate concrete application in their war against the lute, the drum and the *unbār*, a kind of long-necked mandolin. They used it against wine and other forms of alcohol and against public fraternizing between the sexes. If a young man rode behind a woman or a druggist was seen chatting too freely with a woman customer, or a man divorced his wife but still lived with her, that became a matter for action and reproach. Chess and backgammon are targeted in Ibn Anbal's response, as are casual and hasty prayers, the display of images, exchanges of gossip or insults, even noisy and overzealous keening. Everyone, even a slave, must take action against the wrongs he sees: Passersby should break up a fight among boys in the street, and a wife should warn her husband that if he does not keep up his prayers she will pursue a divorce.

The *hadith* assigns the obligation to command the right and forbid the wrong to the hand, the tongue, or the heart. Ibn Anbal prefers the more active

interventions. He hopes that an unspoken mental condemnation of wrongdoing will satisfy the Qur'anic demand; but speaking out is better, whether that means counsel, exhortation, censure, direct orders, or shouting at the wrongdoer. With one's hands, one may smash musical instruments and wine bottles, overturn chessboards and scatter the pieces, evict an ex-wife, threaten or beat a youthful offender. But Ibn Anbal draws the line at swords or other weapons, and he cautions those who contemplate coming to blows with adult offenders with the one word reminder, *al-rifq*, civility!

Fear for one's personal safety can legitimately keep fulfillment of the obligation pent up "in the heart." But one should not hesitate to seek the help of neighbors, if singing, for example, is persistent. Nor should one be afraid of insults, or of making a scene. The burden of civility, in that case, it seems, falls on the offenders. But there are bounds of privacy. One doesn't (like some zealots) climb over walls to surprise neighborhood sinners. But if one sees liquor in a jug while visiting a friend's house, one really ought to spoil it, by pouring in salt. Musical instruments left in plain sight should be destroyed, but concealed ones are the subject of various opinions, rather like our own divergent laws about concealed and displayed weapons.

The early Anbalites, Cook notes, did not typically go about reviling or assaulting Mutazilite preachers or raiding brothels. Still less did they take on the authorities. A militant but hardly ascendant minority, they kept their heads down. Ibn Anbal's advice was to stay clear of the ruler, since "his sword is unsheathed." Only rarely does this jurist endorse attempts to enlist the state in a campaign for decency—perhaps in opposing the use of frogs or mice as bait, but not in most other cases. Even an incorrigible wrongdoer should be turned in only if one knows that the authorities will apply the statutory penalties and not overreact, as they so often seemed to do.

Later Anbalites swung like a pendulum between the private activism of the master and the Savonarola-like exploits of Barbahari (d. 941) and his successors, who harassed the Baghdad populace for two and a half centuries, into the Bāyid and Seljāq eras, only gradually relaxing their vigilance as the Anbalites came in time to better terms with the state. Ibn al-Jawzi, for example, tones down Ghazali's activism, requiring government permission before resorting to threats or blows or vigilante action to enforce the standards of decency. Where Ghazali had commended outspoken censure of slack rulers, Ibn al-Jawzi speaks for tact, arguing that harsh or rude criticism will only provoke its targets and entrench their attitudes.



Ibn Taymiyyah, citing the Qur'anic (2:217) dictum that *fitnah*, dissension, is a graver offense than mortal combat, argued that the Islamic state has a divine mandate to suppress unbelievers who obstruct its purposes. *Jihad* here becomes part of the duty to command right and forbid wrong, a notion pursued today by the bloody minions of Osama bin Laden. The goal in any just war, Ibn Taymiyyah holds, is to establish God's will—as he puts it, to render all judgment unto God. The same broad mandate applies in civil affairs, extending, as one modern commentator explains, to “the legislative, judicial and economic affairs of the Community” and to “its religious and moral life.” For Ibn Taymiyyah, that means the excommunication of heretics, astrologers, slackers, and, of course, Sufis who ape Christian practice by venerating the graves of their departed saints. The Faimid regime in Egypt came under particular condemnation, not only for holding heretical views, but also for appointing non-Muslim state officials and fostering an atmosphere in which inter-communal celebrations and cross-cultural contacts were all too close, and syncretic influences, all too evident. The remedy, Ibn Taymiyyah argued, was strict enforcement of the so-called Pact of Umar, under which Jews and Christians, as People of the Book, are to be humiliated, albeit not oppressed—protected, but never suffered to forget their abased and inferior status.

Ibn Taymiyyah does weigh the obligation to activism against the risks. He often seems to favor leaving enforcement to the authorities, political, spiritual or intellectual. But power brings responsibility. The energy and efficiency that leaders show in enforcing public and private decency will bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of the pious. That thought has not been far from the minds of such modern claimants to Islamic authority as the Wahhabite founders of the present Saudi regime, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Ayatollahs in Iran. It was the Afghan Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice that shut down the Kabul office of Shelter Now, a Christian aid organization, and arrested its workers on capital charges of promoting a religion other than Islam.

None of the first four caliphs, writes the jurist al-Mawardi (d. 1058), needed courts of equity. In their day, he explains, the faith was strong; mere admonitions sufficed to halt wrongdoing—aided, in the case of wild Bedouins, perhaps, with a little strong-arming. But as Islamic society grew larger and more complex and outrages by the great against the small became more frequent, equity courts were established, with their judges, jurisconsults,

guards and bailiffs, scribes and witnesses. The statutory penalties were exacted for apostasy, fornication, theft, wine drinking, and other offenses. But even the rise of institutional law and order did not exempt the rank and file from their Qur'anic charge to command what is right and forbid what is wrong. To speak out or take action against individual wrongdoers is the duty of every competent witness. Where the wrongdoing is by a group or is in some sense socially sanctioned, Mawardi explains, most authorities advise discretion: Seek allies, do not squander your life in fruitless effort. Bide your time, but countenance nothing that you are capable of ending.

In the same spirit, al-Juwayni (d. 1085), Ghazali's teacher, classed the obligation to enforce decent behavior as a public one: Where the wrongdoing is flagrant, the duty to put a stop to it, by word or deed, falls on everyone, as the Sharia has by now long held. Where a legal ruling is required, the scholars and jurists must act. But at a level of finer detail, a well ordered society will have suitable officials in every marketplace, to whom it delegates the communal responsibility to enforce decency.

Such an official is called the *mutasib*, literally the censor (from the Arabic for counting), a man of upright and incorruptible character, fit to serve as the tongue of the *qai*, as Ibn Abdān puts it (ca. 1100). The *mutasib*'s task is to ensure that what can be mended need not be endured: He sees that beggars are kept from the mosque and that no beast is left to foul its entrance. He regulates schoolmasters and the discipline they mete out. He polices the cemeteries against drinking, depravity, and lovers' trysts. He keeps storytellers and other disreputables out of people's homes, ensures that milk is sold only by honest people, undiluted, and from wooden or crockery vessels, not copper, lest it be tainted by verdigris. He sees that market vegetables are washed in the river, not ponds or pools, that poultry are put up for sale with the tails plucked, and rabbits, skinned—to show at a glance what is fresh or spoiled. He sees to it that eggs are tested when sold; abattoirs, enclosed and sanitary, with proper records of the ownership of slaughtered beasts. His inspections should ensure that market women do not turn town gardens into brothels. He must regulate the sale of grapes, lest they be used for wine, and must oversee the professions, especially medicine, to keep its practice clear of impostors. He must see to it that the baths and bathmen too, are covered up, that no Muslim gives a massage to a Jew or Christian, or does menial work for one. The *mutasib* must ensure that Muslim women are not debauched in churches, those dens of wine and fornication, that Jews butcher no meat for Muslims (although they say the name of God in the act of slaughter as the

Sharia requires), that Christian priests are circumcised—by force if necessary, since they are hypocrites to profess the *sunna* of Jesus yet go about uncircumcised.

Villagers must have their long hair cut or shaved on coming into town, and country youths must be disarmed. Church bells may not sound in Muslim territory, and learned books may not be sold to Jews or Christians. Usury must be suppressed, and foreign currency kept from circulation, lest it cause inflation of the legal tender. Schools must be managed by men of proven piety; and daggers (the handguns of the day), banned from manufacture: “for no one buys them but ruffians, good for nothings, and wicked men.” Prostitutes from licensed houses (a telling admission this, in view of the Qur’anic outrage against fornication) must wear veils when they go out and must be kept from teaching their wiles to married women and from attending wedding parties, even when invited. Catamites must be expelled from the city. Christians, Jews, tax farmers, and police agents must be identifiable by their dress and not allowed to dress as dignitaries. And the *dhimmīs* must wear a special badge to distinguish and disgrace them as “the party of Satan” (Ibn Abdān cites Qur’an 58:20). Boxing and martial arts must be barred to boys, since they foment quarrels; and frivolities like chess and backgammon, to everyone, since they are forms of gambling and, as we have learned, distractions from the thought of God and our ultimate destiny.

It is the *mutasib’s* job (somehow) to prevent anal intercourse and other wicked practices and to see that the Qur’anic demand for public humiliation of the tolerated minorities is implemented institutionally—much as we might delegate to a special office some of our concerns about equal opportunity or non-discrimination. Fair trade, public health and safety, and private propriety all fall under the same general heading. The idea that personal morals or private dealings somehow escape the reach of law, or the detailed requirements and regulations derived from the unwritten spirit of the law, is clearly foreign to the principles and tenor of Islam—as it is in most traditional polities. But Ibn Abdān’s somewhat idealized job description testifies to the variety of abuses, ranging from privilege and peccadilloes to open or secret outrages against public piety that Islam cast into the shadow between normative perfection and day-to-day experience.

*Kalam* is less concerned with the morals of positive prescription than with the philosophy of action, meta-ethics—that is, the metaphysic of morals—and the underlying issues of theodicy. Many a *mutakallim* was a *faqih* or

jurisprude, but of all the speculative thinkers of Islam only Sarakhsi was a *mutasib*. He wrote on literature, geography, and art history, on music and on the history of the star worshipping Sabians, among many other subjects, including apparently two titles on fraud. Those last are germane to his government post. But he held it for less than a year before falling out of favor. Issues of normative ethics were generally left to the legal schools, where they did not typically elicit the conflicts of metaphysical values that spurred the theologians to action as dialecticians. But *kalam* disquisitions on the logic of action remain fascinating today, even to philosophers who do not share the motivating theological itch of the *mutakallimān*.

Although the Mutazilites were hardly liberals, their *kalam* is, in many ways, a form of humanism. For it preserves human free will and deems human reason competent to judge justice and injustice, even on God's part. On both counts the Mutazilite outlook was found objectionable by the defenders of tradition: Human ideas of right and wrong were mere opinion. Better to trust God's good pleasure or steady custom than a will-o'-the-wisp like human moral notions. And voluntarism was an affront to divine sovereignty. How could a human choose between faith or faithlessness, when the faith that promises salvation could only come by grace? In a characteristic twist of terms, the Asharites called their adversaries fatalists (*qadariyya*), on the grounds that their affirmations of human freedom and moral judgment in effect tied God's hands. Real voluntarism was focused on God's freedom.

The Mutazilites, and the *falasafa* in turn, could readily retort that the Asharites made God an arbitrary despot. Indeed there is some evidence that Asharite theology was influenced by a desire not to provoke quarrels with constituted authority. But other values were at stake as well. Abā 'l-*asan* al-Ashari (873/4–932) founded a school in theological reaction to the Mutazilite doctrine in which he had been trained and for which he had debated publicly for years before his conversion to the legalism of Amad b. Anbal and to the theological orthodoxy that his own views helped constitute. He and his followers saw Mutazilite theodicy, which deduced God's actions and requitals from the a priori given of His goodness as pollyanna-ish, a refusal to take seriously the fact of natural evil. In arguing for God's freedom to act and choose at His pleasure, they too, in their own way, were defending human moral perceptions. For to free God's will from human moral notions was also to maintain the internal integrity of those notions: God need not hew to human standards, but we need not pretend that all is well by those standards. Thus, the Asharites refused to discover concealed

good behind every apparent evil and held fast by a kind of positivity about the way the world is. For centuries, with varying intent, they argued (even sparring with the great Asharite Ghazali) to show that this world of ours is not the best that was in God's power to make—or why would the air of the Damascus basin be so impossibly polluted? Even in regard to naturalism, the Asharites make welcome contributions. For it was Asharite voluntarism, as applied to God, not humankind, that motivated Ghazali's celebrated critique of the neoplatonic rationalists' deductivism about causality. That critique may have undercut causal necessity, but it also fostered the idea of a more open universe and a more empiric notion of discovery than was known to the *falsafa*. Regrettably, what stuck in the minds of Ghazali's readers through the centuries, however, was not the potential he left behind for the opening of the universe but the rhetorical emphasis on God's ultimate causality, at the expense of proximate causes. Thus, Pervez Hoodbhoy, a physicist at Islamabad University, will complain that guidelines issued in the twentieth century by the Institute for Policy Studies in Pakistan once proposed (in keeping with Ghazali's critique of causality) that effects should not be attributed directly to their natural causes: "You were supposed to say that when you bring hydrogen and oxygen together then by the will of Allah water was created."

The Mutazilites held that a human being acts and chooses by God-given powers—thus he is justly held accountable for his acts. Naturally the doctrine commends itself to moralists. It was complemented by a sophisticated theory of degrees of freedom: Our choices may limit (or enhance) our future effectiveness and capabilities for choice. A development of Stoic theory, this Mutazilite thesis about natural accountability was prominently used by Jewish philosophical ethicists including Saadia and Maimonides.

The Asharites conceded that we act by capacities, scotching the Aristotelian objection that an act for which one has no capacity must be impossible. But capacities, on the Asharite account, are created by God at the very moment of the action. They have no prior existence (as mere dispositions or unactualized potentialities), and they are not polyvalent. If the capacity for an action predated the act, Ashari argued, then the act would already have taken place. And if capacities were polyvalent, they would yield opposing acts.

Grounded in a strikingly Megarian insistence that only the actual is real, Ashari's dogged counter-offensive against human voluntarism and moral objectivism never quite loses its ad hoc tang. But a welcome byproduct was a

kind of behaviorism that put a brake on spiritual militancy: The Kharijite predecessors of the Mutazilites had denied that grave sinners could be faithful Muslims; as renegades, they must be slain in this world and damned in the next. The Mutazilites balked at that extreme and sought a middle ground on the vexing question of the salvation of sinners—again a stance fraught with political meaning. But in the days of Mutazilite ascendancy, the Asharites had found themselves beset by a kind of inquisition, the notorious *Mina*, which sought to gauge the authenticity of their Islam. They responded with the doctrine that human inferences from overt actions to the crucial matter of inner faith, once again, would tie God’s hands, arbitrarily restraining the dispensation of His grace. Since capacities are coterminous with acts, they argued, a person can be judged humanly only for what he has actually done.

Mutazilites might urge that dispositional predicates are well attested in the Qur’an, as when the daughter of Shuayb (the biblical Jethro) describes Moses as “strong and faithful” (28:26). But Ashari responds that Shuayb (“the Teacher of the Prophets” in Islamic tradition) did not let her words pass without reproof but immediately objected: “Daughter, you know his strength from what you have seen of him”—for Moses had watered their flock, unfazed by the shepherds whose presence had intimidated the young girl—”but how do you know that he is faithful?” She answered, fittingly, that Moses had said (28:25), “Walk behind me and direct me.” He was so pure that he feared to see her figure outlined by the wind if she walked ahead to lead the way. So the virtuous maiden judged only what she had seen.

The fanciful supplements to the austere Qur’anic narrative, pinned midrashically to the otherwise puzzling “Walk behind and lead me,” are introduced here by Ashari, solely to support the behaviorism on which the theology of salvation seemed to rest: A simple profession of faith (“There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His prophet”) suffices, as Ghazali puts it, to “save the necks” of unbelievers. We cannot “pry open the hearts” of those who profess the faith, to test the sincerity of their conviction. Verbal conformity is enough. The higher or deeper levels of faith, beyond or beneath the outer husk of lipservice will be judged by God alone.

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\*This article is based on a section from the forthcoming book, *Islamic Humanism: Experiments in Classic Islam* being published by Oxford University Press.

# Islam and Politics

by  
Irene Gendzier

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The Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington have intensified interest in the politics of the Middle East and more particularly, in the relationship of religion to politics. The renewed attention is not only warranted, it is urgent. So is caution in interpreting its roots and objectives.

The political role of religion is not unique to Arab states, as the examples of Turkey and Iran indicate; nor is it confined to Islamic states, as the example of Israel demonstrates. But what marks the current phenomenon that extends from the states of North Africa and the Middle East to Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, the Philippines and the states of Central Asia and beyond, is the leading role that Islamist parties have come to play in the opposition to state power. Their success is a measure of the broad-based popular discontent against repressive regimes and their foreign backers, the very same forces that repressed secular, left-wing parties in the past.

Indeed, many of the Islamist movements were backed by local elites in the past to offset the risks of secular progressive movements coming to power. Hence, what we now witness in some states in the region is what Chalmers Johnson, author of *Blowback*, described in the context of other U.S. policies in Asia, is their unintended consequences. That is, their targeting of the very regimes which in the past supported them. The U.S. has been complicit in such politics, as its policies in Afghanistan reveal.

Whatever their origin or initial support, at present, the popularity of such movements is a mark of the response and resistance to existing regimes and their foreign backers. The failure of states to provide the means of survival for the vast majority of their populations, those unaffected by the benefits of globalization and privatization that have accrued principally to business elites and their political allies, is at the root of such popularity. But it would be an

error to overlook the fact that for the most part such opposition parties offer no credible alternative to the economic policies that are currently being pursued by the regimes they target. Nor do they offer a democratic alternative. That is not their language or their objective. At present their strength as mobilized political forces lies in their capacity to respond to the innumerable crises, social, economic and political, that haunts the region and that exposes the severe incapacity of states and their institutions to respond. In the face of what American academics fondly refer to as “basic human needs,” regime failure has spawned the widening support for Islamist opposition movements.

To this must be added the capacity of such movements to exploit the vast discontent that has mushroomed in the region over past decades, a discontent fed by crucial regional developments that have traumatized regimes and solidified those committed to resisting their policies. Included among these are the events of the 1970s, from the collapse of the U.S.-backed Iranian regime of the Shah to the Iranian clerical revolution, an event of immense influence in the eastern Arab world and indeed, throughout the Arab-Islamic world. To this must be added the punishing invasions of Afghanistan by the U.S.S.R. and the covert intervention by the U.S. that preceded and followed it, as the revelations of Zbigniew Brezinsky have shown. And the decade-long bleeding of Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) in which the U.S. and its allies played one state against the other with the infusion of arms and assistance.

Saddam Hussein, Iraq’s condemned leader who remains the target of U.S. and U.K. sanctions and bombings in Iraq, was then the recipient of Western favors, including arms. His domestic policies, no less despicable than they were later, were well known and a matter of indifference in Washington. Thus, his obliteration of the Iraqi opposition and his record of wholesale slaughter of Iraqi Kurds was insufficient to deter U.S. support. The Gulf War (1991) demonized the same Iraqi leader in the name of saving Kuwaiti democracy and oil. But U.S. policies also blocked the emergence of an Iraqi opposition, lest its program be at odds with that of the U.S.

The seemingly perennial Israeli-Palestinian struggle also played a critical role in the political discourse of Islamist oppositions. That conflict, largely obfuscated in the U.S., continued behind ostensible peace agreements, whether those between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s, or those that achieved global



prominence first at Madrid and then at Oslo in the early 1990s. In this context, the first and then second, Palestinian intifadahs exposed the human as well as the political and economic price of the much vaunted claims concerning the “peace process.”

In Lebanon, the Hezbollah competes with political parties in appealing to the economically deprived and politically disenfranchised Lebanese Shiites as they once effectively challenged the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, Islamist parties such as, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, challenge the autocratic policies of Yasir Arafat’s Palestinian Authority and the continued oppression of Israel’s occupation.

In Saudi Arabia, Islamist parties, including that headed by Osama bin Laden, have long pointed to the corrupt practices of a regime that seeks to legitimize its power in religious terms while relying on the United States for support. That relationship involves high level collaboration of U.S. and Saudi business elites, some of whom are openly critical of the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, its role in Iraq and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Other examples abound, including that of the Algerian civil war in which Islamist parties affiliated with the FIS, the Islamic Salvation Front, with their domestic and foreign backers, faced a military regime that long refused an inquiry into the veritable nature of that confrontation.

Whatever the differences among them, the undeniable political truth is that Islamist parties dominate political opposition and that local elites rely on their U.S. backers to assure their power.

### **Is the Clash of Civilizations the Explanation?**

The preference for cultural explanations of political crises has long been a staple of mainstream interpretations of Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. What such explanations have offered in totally dissimilar contexts is, however, more of an apology for U.S. policies than a key to unraveling the domestic and foreign roots of such conflicts.

The sea of popular anger at the politics of exclusion that explains the support for Islamist opposition movements throughout the Middle East and other

regions of the Islamic world is not an expression of Islamic culture, let alone Islamic civilization. It is a response to political failure, the failure of existing systems to provide for some semblance of social and political justice. Among the clearest manifestations of such failure is the absence of political options. It is a failure deliberately crafted by local political elites and backed by the U.S. in an effort to assure the continuity of pro-U.S. policies, whatever their domestic cost.

In this context, the Islamist option is therefore often the only option. To conclude from this that political change is impossible or that more representative governments are somehow foreign to the region is self-delusional. The problem is simpler and more difficult. There have always been alternatives, but faced with the pressures of domestic political repression backed by the U.S., success is a long, uphill battle.

U.S. policy in this regard is a function of U.S. interests in the region. Those interests are not exclusively oil, but oil has been central to their pursuit.

A recent editorial in the *New York Times* referred to “America’s deeply cynical relationship with Riyadh,” (Oct.14, 2001) but the cynicism also lies elsewhere. It lies in the masking of such policies before the U.S. public, and in the cultivation of their ignorance and indifference. What the *Times* called the “cynical relationship” was initiated by U.S. oil multinationals in Saudi Arabia more than fifty years ago. It has continued to be U.S. policy since. It is a policy that has involved the indirect control of political change in a fashion designed to assure the continuity of pro-Western policies if not pro-Western elites.

Interpretations of clashes of civilization have little to tell us about the workings of such policies. It offers no clue as to the clashes over the control of oil that marred the decade of the 1950s, from Anglo-American intervention in Iran in 1953, to the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956, or the Anglo-American response to the Iraqi revolution of 1958 in which the Western powers committed themselves to retaining control over Saudi Arabia and the Gulf oil states, at any cost. Nor, for that matter, do such accounts tell us about the U.S. intervention in Lebanon’s first civil war that occurred in 1958, the benign little intervention that Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles were at pains to explain away in acceptable terms lest the American public grasp what was

being done. In the very same year the U.S. was covertly intervening in Indonesia and playing the oil game there as well. Cultural explanations, moreover, have nothing to tell us of why the U.S. relied on the Iranian Shah as an agent of U.S. interests in the Gulf, or how Israel came to play the role it had long coveted in the inner circles of U.S. policymaking in the Middle East, as the Iran-Contra scandal revealed years later.

In this context, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been of little consequence to U.S. policymakers so long as regional instability was not at risk. To the extent that the conflict risks intensifying such instability today, it comes back to the fore, albeit with no fundamental changes in U.S. policy in sight. But the regional response to such policies, as to the continued U.S.-U.K. bombings and sanctions in Iraq, are no longer negligible. Yet, to judge by the financial coverage of events in the region, the real action is that involving U.S. oil companies and investor groups. These truly internationalist organizations have little need of holy writ—regardless of its origin—to pursue their policies. In the Caspian region today, the closely watched policies by the U.S. administration are those involving the construction of road networks, airports, pipelines and oil concessions. To the extent that these lie beyond OPEC pricing if not Middle East politics, they promise new profits and increased power.

That, of course, is not the whole picture. But not to see it or investigate its history and consequences and the bigger picture of which it is a part, is to risk blindness in the face of current developments.

# “Satan” versus “Evil”: Can They Get Along? A Proposal for U.S.-Iran Reconciliation

by  
Hooshang Amirahmadi

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With President George W. Bush’s State of the Union address, U.S.-Iran relations have taken a dangerous turn toward confrontation. The President surprised many throughout the world, including leaders in Iran, when he used the word “evil” to describe a country that had most recently given strategic support to the United States in its Afghan war. He warned that a confrontational approach might become necessary to eliminate the threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction that he claims originate in Iran.

While I disagree with President Bush’s characterization of Iran as a member of a purported “axis of evil,” I do share his sense of urgency in trying to change the current state of U.S.-Iran relations. Relations between the two countries have been unfriendly for over two decades, and inimical relations produce inimical behavior and deeds. Complaints, rhetoric, warnings, and soft policies are no remedies; the best approach is to transform the status quo. The question is, how?

But before pondering a reasonable response to the question, we must understand the real nature of the problems involved in U.S.-Iran relations, and the forces facing each other in Washington, D.C., and Tehran. The United States can be expected to have problems with Iran’s power, Iran’s regime and/or Iran’s behavior. Each are problems of a different nature, requiring a different U.S. policy toward Iran.

First, the United States is deeply concerned with Iran’s nuclear capabilities, and in the absence of identifiable intentions, it is not prepared to take any chances with Iran’s growing power. If this assumption were correct, then the United States would not be attempting to change the Islamic regime’s behavior; even a change of regime would not solve Washington’s problem. The only correct policy would be to involve Iran in a military confrontation by means of which Iran’s power would be reduced to a smaller force—as in

the case of Iraq. The policy of “containment,” which could have been an alternative to confrontation, has been unsuccessfully used, leaving military force the only remaining alternative.

Second, the United States has no problem with Iran’s capabilities, that can be utilized to America’s advantage, such as in the Shah’s time, if the regime in Tehran were to be a non-threatening one; the real problem is the Islamic regime as a model of government in a region where Islamic fundamentalism has been a real headache for the United States and its allies, a force that can become even more of a threat in the future given the changing nature of terrorism. If this assumption were correct, then the only solution to the U.S.-Iran problem would require a change of regime in Tehran. How this would be done would depend on a myriad issues.

Third, the United States has no problem with the Islamic regime or Iran’s capabilities. Rather, its problems stem from Tehran’s “unacceptable” behavior. If this assumption were true, then a correct policy would be to force and/or encourage a change of “behavior.” Over the last two decades, various U.S. administrations have underscored this behavioral problem in areas of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the Middle East peace process and human rights. The United States has used a variety of non-military sticks and insufficient carrots to change its relations with Iran. None have paid off.

It is my contention that the United States’s problem with Iran is best defined as a combination of power, regime and behavior. This is so because at the present these three problems are interconnected. But it is also my contention that the United States is not seeking to destroy Iran’s power or change its regime at present. Rather, the real aim of the U.S. Administration at this time is to change Iran’s behavior, an outcome that requires a modification of the regime. In turn, the behavioral change and regime modification will result, the Bush Administration hopes, in a limitation of Iran’s power or, conversely, its utilization in furthering U.S. regional interests.

The Islamic Republic’s problem with the United States consists of a set of grievances that relate to certain American policies and behavior toward, or interventions in, Iran’s pre- and post-revolutionary political economy. Some such grievances are real and objective (such as the frozen assets), while others are imaginary and subjective (like respect for Iran’s independence). However, the good news is that Iran’s real demand or condition for a dialogue and or

resumption of relations with the United States is primarily material in nature, such as unfreezing the Iranian assets and lifting the economic sanction.

Concerning the forces facing each other on both sides, one needs to account for the diverse nature of such forces and their largely unpredictable behavior. On the Iranian side, forces within the Islamic regime may be categorized into four groups. First is the “Iranian hezbollah” group—those who see war with the United States as a path to heaven. These religious fundamentalists are supported by the “militant militarists”—those in the higher and middle ranks of the revolutionary guard, the army, and the police force, who see a limited war with the United States in their best interests; they will use it to get a larger portion of the budget and perhaps even modify the republic into a more militarized regime.

Against these hawkish forces are the “reformists” and the “opportunists.” While the moderate reformists do not see relations with the United States as beneficial, they nonetheless wish to enter into a dialogue and are prepared to make compromises for normalization. They are afraid of the consequences of confrontation with the United States. Finally, within the regime are those with personal or group agendas, who wish to use the U.S. threat to open up a door for themselves as deal brokers.

Outside the regime, the majority of the Iranian people are peace loving. Some see a U.S. threat (not actual use) of force useful as a means of mending relations, making right-wing religious factions accept reform, and even overthrowing the regime. Yet, others see a U.S. threat as insulting and part of the old imperialist practice. Among this group, the most radical or nationalist Iranians would even want to fight a war against the United States, if imposed. This last group has the potential to join the Iranian hezbollah and militant militarists in a fight against the United States.

On the side of the United States too there are diverse forces. Within the States, there are those who have problem with Iran’s behavior. They wish to see a carrot-and-stick policy applied and sustained. The second group has a problem with the regime itself, not just with its behavior. They wish to see the regime in Tehran overthrown, by whatever means necessary. These hawkish forces also share views with another even more hard line force in Washington which has a problem with Iran’s power. They wish to see a crippled Iran, and in their view, a military confrontation is inevitable.

Finally, there are the American people. While most want to support their government in whatever decision it makes vis-à-vis Iran, a small middle class radical group is opposed to U.S. policy not just concerning Iran, but also the rest of the world. The middle class radicalism in the United States is indeed a part of a global middle class radical movement that is also spreading in the Middle East. The terrorists who perpetrated the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy were all middle class radicals, most originating in Saudi Arabia, a land where the middle class today is the most dynamic social force. Saudi society today is akin to Iran a few years before the 1979 revolution.

It is against this background of problems and forces that the two governments would have to come up with a more viable approach for mending their relations. Iran's past attempts to challenge the United States or mend relations with it through the use of economic relations, cultural exchanges, and cover-up diplomacy have all failed. Similarly, the United States's various attempts to punish Iran through economic sanctions or to engage Iran through piecemeal incentives and passive invitations to dialogue have proven ineffective. In a situation of strategic concern and mutual distrust, a more resolute and purposeful plan is needed.

Three plans are possible: "soft peace," "hard war," and a combination of the two. Being reluctant to take a bolder approach, Iran may wish to continue with its current "no war, no peace" policy toward the United States, which President Mohammad Khatami calls "détente." This dead-end scheme was rejected by President Bush, who seeks to limit Iran's power, modify the regime, and change Tehran's behavior. The détente approach is also harmful to Iran because in the age of globalization, non-alignment is not an option for Iran.

The "hard war" approach to Iran underlies President Bush's State of the Union address. While it may be used to enforce a "soft peace," the approach, in isolation, can be harmful to the national interests of the United States. At the least, it will entail a colossal amount of death and destruction as well as an uncertain outcome. Iran is no Afghanistan; nor is it Iraq: a country with 72 million people and a territory three times the size of France, Iran cannot be easily defeated or its nativist regime quickly overthrown.

Iran is also a historical country. Throughout its almost 3000-year civilization, Iran has fought against the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Ottomans, the Russians, and the British. It has destroyed many empires and states and

has been destroyed many times over by rivals and enemies. Its territories have expanded several times and contracted throughout the ages. The age of war has changed, so has war technology. While it is almost certain that a war with the United States will be most destructive to Iran, it will be fought nonetheless if imposed.

Over the last two decades, Iranians have increasingly become U.S.-friendly, and this was best demonstrated in the days following the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy: They held candlelight vigils, minutes of silence in Tehran Stadium, and anti-Taliban and Al-Qaeda demonstrations. Even the conservative media and authorities followed the people by condemning the terrorist acts and offering sympathy and tangible support to the U.S.-Afghan war.

Iran is a country in a painful transition to democracy, and the only country where the people are rapidly moving away from radical Islam. Notwithstanding the onslaught of the religious right, the democratic movement survives and is joined by a growing number of aspirants. Time is not on the side of the hard-liners, but a U.S.-Iran confrontation could strengthen them. The religious right in Tehran views President Bush's "evil" label as a "gift of God," a phrase the late Khomeini used to characterize the Iran-Iraq war.

A military confrontation with Iran, even if it were to be limited or "surgical" in nature, would surely spill over into the surrounding areas, jeopardizing energy supplies and regional stability. The gains made in Afghanistan could be the victim. The world oil market is already unstable, and radical Islam is prevalent in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, etc. Free elections in these states would put such radicals in power. Military coups and despotic regimes are not viable future options.

A U.S.-Iran war will also harm two other United States interests: Israeli security and the independence of states in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The national security of Israel has visibly deteriorated in recent years. This is despite U.S. "containment" of Israel's foes and a growing Israeli hard line. The United States must also consider Russia's interest in increasing its influence in its "near abroad" and China's interest in expanding its involvement in the geopolitics of energy in the region.



While counterproductive, the hard war option is a real possibility and, in the absence of an effective alternative to change the unsatisfactory state of U.S.-Iran relations, the United States might find it necessary. The hawkish force behind the hard war approach may become more aggressive in time, and President Bush may be tempted to put his 80 percent popularity rate to a serious military use to resolve the most difficult U.S. foreign policy problem in decades.

Iran must face up to this possibility. As the President warned, time is of the essence and his Administration will not wait for long to eliminate the “Iranian threat.” It should be completely immaterial to Iran what logic or agenda lies behind the confrontational scheme and whether it is based on fact or fiction. The Iranian leadership should not postpone the strategic decision it must make for a bold diplomatic encounter with the United States.

Iran must offer the United States a soft peace that produces tangible gains. While not an easy policy shift, the diplomatic offer should not be harder than the “poison cup” the late Khomeini had to drink when he accepted the cease-fire with Iraq. The Iranian hawks will object to the shift, the American hawks will see this as an indication that force works, and the exiled opposition will advise the Administration to continue the confrontation until the regime is overthrown.

It is time that the two administrations listen to the voice of reason. An honest soft peace will produce gains for all sides, but for it to become a reality, both governments need to give it a real chance. Iran must see it as the best remaining option, and the United States must make it easy for Iran to embrace the policy change. The Bush Administration must now complement its big pile of sticks with a similarly big pile of carrots. The price both sides would pay is much lower than the cost they would incur in a confrontation.

What the carrot pile should include can be debated. It must begin with building mutual trust between the two governments regarding their intentions. One sure measure toward this end is simultaneous announcements that Tehran and Washington are ready to reestablish diplomatic ties. These announcements can be mediated by the United Nations. After all, lack of diplomatic relations even between countries at war is against the established norm of international diplomacy.

Another tool of trust building is a reciprocal acceptance of interests and roles. Tehran must acknowledge the legitimate American global interests and role. The United States should do likewise with regard to Iran's regional interests and role. This reciprocity should not infringe upon the legitimate interests and roles of other states. Cooperation is the key to regional trust building and creating a win-win situation.

Misperception has been at the root of mutual demonization and deception. To help build trust and confidence, both sides must broaden their perspectives of each other's concerns, deeds, intentions and capabilities. Iran must stop seeing the U.S. Government as an "arrogant" world power bent to "destroy the Moslem world." True, Americans helped the British in the 1953 coup, but Americans also gave Iranians Howard Baskerville, who lost his life for the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.

American officials have stressed Iran's strategic significance, but this is often done to underscore its potential for aggression. The presumption that "a weaker Iran is a better Iran" was the basis of the "dual containment" policy, now expanded into an "axis of evil" policy. Yet, in the last 150 years, a strong Iran has never initiated any hostility toward its neighbors. In contrast, whenever Iran has been weaker, as in the post-1979 period, wars have been imposed on it and regional instability has followed.

The big carrot pile should also include specific incentives. The United States must repackage its previous offers to Iran and add new strategic incentives immensely attractive to Tehran. A global settlement of Iranian frozen assets, opening of pipelines through Iran, and energy investments are a few examples. While rich in oil and gas, geography, and human resources, Iran lacks the required capital and technology, shortcomings that the United States can uniquely help to mitigate.

But the carrot must be offered with clearly realizable objectives. Paramount among them for the United States is to see Iran become a strategic partner. This requires that the two countries develop a common language, purpose and action plan on terrorism and fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the Palestinian question, regional security, stabilization of Afghanistan, and safe flow of oil from the region. The economic interests of the United States in Iran are far less important than its strategic and geopolitical interests.

Iran must deal with Israel as a de facto reality and Israel must change its perception of Iran as a threat. The two countries have no real basis for animosity. Palestine is not a strategic end for Iran. It has even ceased to be an Arab issue. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been effectively reduced to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Tehran has said it will accept any settlement reached by the two parties. But Iran must do more: it must play a positive role toward a Palestinian state. The lack of peace is a serious obstacle to U.S.-Iran rapprochement.

Iran has condemned terrorism, calling the fight against it a “holy war.” The terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, have been Iran’s enemies for years. Yet, to cooperate with the United States in the fight against terrorism, Iran must end all relations with fundamentalist groups and denounce their violent activities. This change in policy should make Iran a partner with the United States on a definition of terrorism and its causal explanation.

Iran is party to all international WMD conventions. Iran’s nuclear facilities are open to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran’s sole reason to develop WMD is the Iraqi threat. Israel and the United States are not targets. The war with Iraq demonstrated to Iran that Saddam Hussein would use all types of mass destruction weapons that he controls. In the absence of the Iraqi threat, Iran can be persuaded to enter into an acceptable deal with the United Nations.

This approach to U.S.-Iran relations requires a more unified and stronger government in Iran than exists today. The country must rally around President Khatami, and the Leader Ali Khamenei must give him the mandate to work with Washington on the basis of full transparency and accountability. The Iranian people must isolate those opposed to the new policy and demand that reforms continue and the human rights of the Iranians be fully recognized. National reconciliation within a democratic framework is an urgent necessity. At stake are Iran’s national interest, future progress, regional stability, and world peace.

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*This article is based on a talk given to the Iranian-American Council on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002 in Washington, D. C.*

# Iraq, Sanctions and the Ongoing Tragedy

by  
Wadood Hamad

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## I

A casuistical habitude has especially, but not solely, in the aftermath to the September 11 terror attacks, permeated political observation and analysis of events and scenarios in troubled regions of the Third World. Intellectual depravity, as a result, abounds. A few on the Left have initiated themselves into the realm of (malignant) identity politics, with little or no regard to historical facts, and confused genuine attempts by others to explicate and ruminate over the underlying causes of these horrific events with (trite) condonation. Some of those few simply prevaricated.

David Cortright in his December 3 piece in *The Nation*, “A Hard Look at Iraq Sanctions,” admonished opponents to the atrocious sanctions régime for placing “blame for Iraq’s increased deaths on the United States and UN sanctions.” He principally, if not solely, bases his conclusions on (not so) new findings by two prominent studies: A 1999 report by Richard Garfield of Columbia University, “Morbidity and Mortality Among Iraqi Children”; and another, “Sanctions and Childhood Mortality,” by Mohamed Ali and Iqbal Shah, which appeared in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, in May, 2000.

Cortright’s premise is that Garfield’s calculations estimated the “most likely number of excess deaths among children under five years of age from 1990 through March 1998 to be 227,000.” This figure is (less than) half of what the Food and Agriculture Organization published in *The Lancet* in 1995; it is also different from the conclusions of a 1999 UNICEF report that “half a million Iraqi children had died as a direct result of U.S. sanctions.” For now, I will accept the correctness of Garfield’s figures, which were subsequently revised, in light of Ali and Shah’s findings, to approximate child mortality to be 350,000

through the year 2000. (However, I should like to point out that as a scientist familiar with statistical analysis as well as empirical research, in such complex topics of investigation, the margin of error may be appreciable and that averages could continue to be revised as more data become available: the actual death mortality figures could, as Dennis Halliday remarked, be as high as one million or more. But this is something not to quibble about here.) Incidentally, Cortright conveniently eschews an important conclusion by Garfield: Iraq is the only instance in the last two hundred years of a sustained, large-scale increase in mortality in a country with a stable population of over two million.<sup>1</sup>

Consider the following. Would any decent person, adherent to the universal principles of human rights and versed in the rudiments of logic, revise the horrific notion and murderous nature of the September 11 acts of terror when official death figures were recently revealed to be at least one-third lower than what was originally thought? Therefore, are we to relax now that tentative scientific studies indicate that child deaths resulting from the sanctions régime may be a quarter to a third less than originally pronounced? Perhaps, after all, there is an obscene double standard in cringing at crimes against humanity: Indeed, the September 11 terror attacks were a crime against humanity, as is the sanctions régime which has strangled the people of Iraq for over a decade and has bordered on genocide—a word I do not use lightly.

## II

The very institution of the sanctions régime then raises two pressing questions. (1) Can there be a *moral* justification to impoverishing a whole populace for the sake of hurting (or deposing of) a political régime, however despotic it may be, and however desirable a goal this may be? (2) Is it logical that any ruthless dictator, much less one buttressed by the mechanisms of U.S. geopolitical interests, be wholly affected by such measures over a period of time? In responding to these questions, there are several points to bear in mind. First, the cost demanded by the people's deprivation is insurmountable; the social ramifications are certainly bleak. Secondly, a despotism active for well over three decades, during which time it certainly invested huge sums of money to enforce its rule through various sophisticated mechanisms, is bound to bounce back—find loopholes here, there and everywhere—due to the very dynamics of such a system: Its main lifeline embodied in the machinations of

the police state is still enforced. Hungry people could hardly concern themselves with the theoretical underpinnings of radical change; more so if their offspring die before their own helpless eyes. The economic lifeline for the government in power was significantly severed, alas, not cut off. A despotic régime would use all means possible to tighten control: If ration cards are a useful bargaining tool, then they will be used as such regardless of the horrible consequences.

All this seems novel to neo-conservatives and some left-liberals as well. Daniel Pipes and Laurie Mylroie—among other hawks—have waged a ferocious campaign on Capitol Hill to enlist support for bombing Iraq once again, and parading “liberating American troops” into downtown Baghdad. It is apt to remind those interested that those very establishment pundits published in *The New Republic* (April 27, 1987) an article, “Back Iraq,” in which they averred: “The fall of the existing regime in Iraq would enormously enhance Iranian influence, endanger the supply of oil, threaten pro-American regimes throughout the area, and upset the Arab-Israeli balance.” This is the very same régime that occupied Kuwait a mere three years and three months later; used chemical weapons against its Kurdish citizens a year later; used chemical weapons against the Iranians it had fought since 1980 a couple of years *earlier*; deported no less than 500,000 Iraqis from their homes starting gingerly in the mid-seventies and in full force after 1980 because they were presumed to be of Iranian descent (going to several generations back) according to government diktat; extrajudicially executed Iraqi leftists and communists in the aftermath to the February, 1963, bloody coup, and subsequently in the late seventies; illegally sentenced to death several Iraqi Jews in 1969, and (religious and secular) Shi’as throughout the eighties and nineties; sent the army to brutally quell a popular rebellion in the Shi’a city of Najaf in 1977 which claimed at least a thousand lives. (And the list of horrendous misdeeds goes on.)

How come then the sudden discovery that Saddam was the “butcher of Baghdad,” and that he must be held responsible for starving his (*sic*) population? Tariq Ali poignantly remarked in the September-October, 2000 *New Left Review* editorial, “Our Herods”: “No theme is more cherished by left-liberal camp-followers of officialdom, eager to explain that Saddam is an Arab Hitler, and since ‘fascism is worse than imperialism,’ all people of good

sense should unite behind the Strategic Air Command. This line of argument is, in fact, the *ultima ratio* of the blockade.”

Factual evidence for over a decade categorically indicates that: (1) the U.S. administration had purposefully targeted the people of Iraq, rather than the dictatorship, as it was profusely suggested by government officials and media pundits; (2) the régime of sanctions instigated by the U.S. and British governments has had no tangible effect on the despotic rule of Saddam Hussein and his henchmen, rather has witnessed the unfolding of a human tragedy of rarely paralleled dimension. With those in mind we may begin to realize what the normative facts are, and ponder what is to be done.

### III

On August 6, 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 661 imposing a trade and financial embargo against Iraq. It should be recalled that the objective of Resolution 661 was to force Iraqi forces to withdraw from Kuwait. The embargo was one of the most comprehensive and effective measures the world has known. It totally isolated Iraq from the rest of the world, severing its links from air, sea and land routes. It has had crippling effects on the Iraqi economy.

Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee on December 5, 1990, the former director of the CIA, William Webster, stated that “at current rates of depletion, we estimate that Iraq will have nearly depleted its available foreign exchange reserves by spring.”<sup>2</sup> While all evidence suggested that the sanctions were choking off the Iraqi economy and the embargo had its intended effect, the Bush Administration showed no interest in the embargo and began the war option. American and British lobbying for Security Council Resolution 678 authorizing UN members to “use all necessary means” stands in stark contradiction to previous U.S. tactics. To illustrate the hypocritical role played by the U.S. in manipulating the UN, a few examples serve the purpose: The U.S. obstructed UN resolutions in the cases of Turkey’s invasion of Northern Cyprus in 1974, Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and its 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Golan Heights, and not to forget the U.S. invasion of Grenada and Panama.

Having obtained the vote for its war option, the U.S. led its allies to war against Iraq on January 17, 1991, presumably to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. However, Iraq as a country and not only Iraqi forces in Kuwait became the target of the most relentless aerial bombardment in history. More than 100,000 sorties were flown, and 89,000 tons of explosives were dropped over Iraq. Iraq was “bombed into the Stone Age,” destroying bridges, water purification plants, power grids and sewage systems. In the aftermath of the war, a report issued by the UN mission upon visiting Iraq in March, 1991, described the war-ravaged country in the following words: “Nothing that we can see or read prepared us for this particular form of devastation which has now befallen the country.” Furthermore, the UN report concluded with these chilling remarks,

Allied bombing has wrought near apocalyptic results upon the economical infrastructure of what had been prior to this war a highly urbanized society. Now most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has for some years to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency and an intensive use of energy and technology.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S.-led war against Iraq achieved its stated objective of ejecting Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. But in the process, the war resulted in further destabilizing the Gulf region by destroying the balance of power, thus making future conflict not only possible, but inevitable. Having successfully achieved its stated objective by forcing the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the U.S. then shifted its goal to unilateral disarmament of Iraq. In pursuit of its new goal, the U.S. administration announced that economic sanctions against Iraq would not be lifted until Saddam Hussein was removed from office. Ironically, prior to the war, the same (Bush) administration showed no interest in allowing the embargo to work, while after the war the U.S. found new merits in the embargo as an instrument of policy. (It is apposite to also register Bill Clinton’s statement, quoted in the November 23, 1997, issue of the *New York Times*, that “sanctions will be there until the end of time, or as long as Saddam lasts.”)

As a result, Iraq, as a country and people, was effectively bludgeoned by a devastating war and ruthless sanctions. Several years since the “liberation” of



Kuwait, and in the aftermath of the collapse of Iraqi military power and of the destruction of weapons listed in the ceasefire agreement, the UN continued to quibble with the complete and utter disarmament of Iraq. Richard Butler (and Ekeus before him), while choosing to ignore all these facts, engaged in a mammoth inconsequential diversion: The truth of who lied and when, with utter disregard to a population torn asunder, and according to UN agencies' reports famine was beginning to grip up to 12 million people in the country.

At present, the economic sanctions continue to strangle the people of Iraq and the country today is on the verge of social and economic collapse, placing the life of its civilian population in great peril. Those whose lives may be spared from impending U.S.-British bombing are faced with continued danger from starvation, the lack of safe water, sanitation and basic medical care. In this human tragedy, the innocent people of Iraq are held hostage by the U.S.-British policy of collective punishment and by Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. In this impasse, the U.S. and Saddam Hussein are both locked in a deadly test of wills. The U.S. insists that Saddam Hussein be removed from office before the sanctions are lifted, while Saddam Hussein is determined to stay in power at any cost. On the face of this dilemma, more questions confront us. Where does the UN stand regarding the stand-off between the U.S. and Iraq? Are the U.S. objectives compatible with those of the UN, whose name the U.S. has used to wage a war?

The basis for linking the lifting of economic sanctions to the removal of Saddam Hussein, however desirable this may be, is *ultra vires*. Moreover, the U.S. has been pursuing an agenda of its own, which has nothing to do with the UN or International Law. To the contrary, Article 54 of the Geneva Convention of 1977 states that, "starvation of civilians as method of warfare is prohibited." Moreover, during the early months of the embargo, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross has warned against total blockade of Iraq as being contrary to International Law.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the U.S. had obstructed, among other things, recommendations of the UN mission which visited Iraq in March, 1991. Upon assessing the impact of the war and the continued economic sanctions, the UN recommended that the sanctions regarding food and medicine be immediately lifted. The UN report stated,

Sanctions in respect of food supplies should be immediately removed, as should those relating to the import of agricultural equipment and supplies. The urgent supply of basic commodities to safeguard the vulnerable groups is strongly recommended and the provision of major quantities of the following staples for the general population, such as, milk, wheat, flour, rice, sugar, vegetables, oil and tea.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the sanctions, the U.S. imposed a series of punitive resolutions in the name of the UN punishing Iraq and its future generations for the behavior of a brutal dictator they did not elect. In effect, this policy has backfired and failed to draw a distinction between Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people. Instead, the U.S. has played into Saddam Hussein's hands by showing that it is Iraq and the people of Iraq who are the targets of a hostile policy of the U.S. This is despite repeated contentions by then-U.S. president, George Bush, that "U.S. quarrel is not with the Iraqi people, but with Saddam only." However, Iraqis know that it is they and not Saddam who are the victims of the most severe food and medicine shortages. Therefore, the U.S. lacks the credibility in demonstrating to the Iraqis that they are not the real targets of U.S. hostilities, but rather Saddam and his underlings.

The extent of hurt and perpetual suffering has accumulated and become synonymous with the Iraqi milieu: The damaging effects are all but apparent. Dr. Hoskins, a medical coordinator for the Gulf Peace Team, and a member of the Harvard Study Team, wrote in the early nineties, "it is likely that sanctions have resulted in more suffering and death of the civilian population of Iraq than the war itself."<sup>6</sup> Another member of the Gulf Peace Team, Ann Montgomery, shed some light on the conditions of children as a result of the sanctions. Ms. Montgomery reported that forty babies were dying a day, not from any extraordinary illness, but because of the lack of simple medication. She conveyed her angry plea of a doctor by stating, "please tell them not to make war on children."<sup>7</sup> Reports of heart-rending tragedies continue to unfold with unrelenting ferocity.

The sanctions have, *inter alia*, induced hyper-inflation, and the prices of basic staple goods skyrocketed, placing most Iraqis out of the food market. For example, the price of bread increased by some 2800%, infant formula rose by 2200%, flour went up by 4500% and eggs increased by 350%. In addition to

these massive increases in food prices, the purchasing power of most Iraqis was drastically reduced as measured by U.S. dollars. As a result of inflation, the Iraqi dinar depreciated in value: For instance, in 1980, one Iraqi dinar was equivalent to three U.S. dollars, while in 1990, just before the U.S.-led war, four Iraqi dinars were equal to one U.S. dollar. Presently, the Iraqi dinar is precipitously demoted in value to a ratio of well over 1500 Iraqi dinars for one U.S. dollar. This translates into the following: a university professor's monthly salary, to take but one example, of some 12,000 Iraqi dinars is no more than \$8 a month. Ration supplies generally last for about two weeks for a family of four; when this runs out, a chicken (on the black market) costs around \$3, a kilogram of lamb \$5, and so on.

Al-Muttanabi Street, famous for its bookshops, now has its sidewalks littered with all sorts of literary, philosophic and scientific books sought to be sold by what remains of the intelligentsia in order to fetch a meal for their children. The more fortunate ones who have relatives or close friends living abroad now rely completely on their financial support. Young university graduates flee the country by the hundreds in search of a better life abroad. Prostitution, bribery, begging, crime, and apathy tinged with reliance on the "other" have become visceral social ailments.

In the meantime, Arab and Muslim (governmental and private) organizations alike have not donated a single grain of rice to the hapless, impoverished people of Iraq—except for the occasional gesture donations, e.g., a one-time largesse of 3,000 kilograms of wheat, straight to the government. The Union of Arab Writers had even convened its annual meeting last spring in Baghdad at the behest of the Iraqi government, in spite of the pleas to the contrary of many of their Iraqi colleagues in exile, and leftist Arab intellectuals. Those descending on Baghdad thoroughly enjoyed the lavish hospitality proffered by the Iraqi régime and enthralled themselves in oratory competition extolling the virtues of the suffering Iraqi people, but could find no opportunity to visit ravaged villages in the south, still with no running water; nor did they muster the courage to visit Basra and witness both the devastation befallen it from the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, the U.S.-led onslaught in 1991 and the added punishment instituted by Saddam Hussein and his régime for the March, 1991, uprising the city's inhabitants instigated. Striking how some Arab,

American and British pseudo-intellectuals choose to elide deeds and consequences of human suffering and tragedy, selectively and proportionally.

#### IV

The “smart sanctions” régime currently envisioned by Secretary of State Colin Powell is not motivated by humanitarian concerns, as Marc Lynch aptly observed, but one intended “as a more or less permanent system, quietly removing the option of lifting (rather than suspending) the sanctions from the table.”<sup>8</sup> Iraq, since the spring of 1991, had to endure not only a tightly-controlled police state, but a vicious nexus of economic sanctions which most adversely hit the ordinary populace while leaving the ruling clique practically intact. This situation was compounded by the fact that the 1991 U.S.-led attack had literally decimated the country’s infrastructure, while paradoxically (perhaps not so) preserving the machinations of the atrocious polity. A mere few days after the cease fire of 1991, the U.S. government “allowed” the closely-administered and ruthlessly-trained republican guards to mercilessly quell the spontaneous uprising that swept most of Iraq under the American military’s very watchful eyes. It should have become very clear (by then) that true democratic change in Iraq was as far removed from official U.S. “interests” in the Middle East as the Andromeda galaxy is from ours. And yet, Kanan Makiya once again pleads in a *New York Times* op-ed (November 21, 2001), with the current administration to overthrow Saddam Hussein, by invasion, bombing, or whatever means appropriate. This, he reminds us, is necessary “[i]f the challenge represented by the attacks of Sept. 11 is going to be met.”

Any enduring change in the political and social climate in Iraq must begin with the unconditional lifting of economic sanctions. People need to emerge out of the demoralizing trenches of misery, and organize. Prior to Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, there were widespread reports of demonstrations across the southern and central provinces demanding democracy and bread. In the current malaise, neighboring countries from the despotic Saudi monarchy to Turkey, along with policymakers in London and Washington, prefer a *coup d’etat* led by a Sunni strongman, thus exacerbating any genuine democratic prospects and social rehabilitation, however, ensuring full compliance with the Washington-London policy diktat: The Iraqi people most certainly need not a new barrage of aerial bombardment, nor the

installation of a corrupt, sectarian government of CIA-trained and funded Iraqi National Congress mercenaries.

The tragedy of the people of Iraq is that they are victims to continuing misdemeanour by the ruling clique in Baghdad and that in Washington: Realpolitik has yet again served to shield the ruling dictatorship from being overthrown by the people, and further strengthened their position to keep a very tight grip over the populace—to whom the damage has been horrendous and the price future generations will have to pay, socially, politically, economically and environmentally, is proving to be colossal. Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor to George Bush, had enunciated quite bluntly how Western governments value human rights: In a Channel 4 program (broadcast in Britain on January 3, 1996) which critically questioned the aims of the 1991 U.S.-led war, Mr. Scowcroft responded to a question as to why the Americans would use fuel-air explosives (FAEs) by saying that it was more economical and since “a thousand Iraqi lives were equal to one American.” Madeleine Albright concurred, on U.S. national television, with the letter and spirit of the aforesaid: Half-a-million Iraqi kids dying would be a worthwhile price to meet U.S. goals of targeting Saddam Hussein.

The current practice of human rights is severely delinquent. We must work to usher in a genuine, critical assessment based on a universal conception that values human lives—swarthy, yellow, white, and shades in between—and adheres to a true recognition of peoples’ rights to self-determination and to the peaceful co-existence of nations.

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# Us and Them: The State of the Union and the Axis of Evil

by  
Stephen Eric Bronner

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The “State of the Union” offers every president the chance to identify his accomplishments, laud the condition of the country under his reign, and offer a vision for the future. In his speech of 30 January 2002, however, George W. Bush focused on the need for a drastic military buildup, and a new doctrine for fighting terrorism in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by the Al Qaeda terrorist network. The President painted the picture of a nation at risk since 11 September 2001, imperiled by enemies from without who will strike again without warning. A healthy state of the union is now, according to President Bush, dependent upon our willingness to act preemptively in response to the terrorist designs of what—harking back to the fascist alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan during the Second World War—he called the “axis of evil.”

More is now on the table than the War in Afghanistan. The fighting in the hinterlands was fierce, and competition between the warlords over the spoils of victory is still intense, but this first stage in the war against terrorism is essentially finished. A second stage is already underway. Certain hopes raised by President Bush have, admittedly, been disappointed. A democratic future for Afghanistan is anything but a foregone conclusion. Osama bin Laden and much of the top leadership of Al Qaeda is still at large. New bases of terrorist operation are forming in Indonesia, Malaysia, and elsewhere. Over one hundred Americans have died. “Collateral damage” in Afghanistan includes many thousands of civilians killed and the devastation of the countryside from carpet bombings. Clouds of war still hang over Kashmir, and the rumblings of Islamic fundamentalism still threaten many existing states.

Nevertheless, many of the fears raised by the pacifist critics of the President's war policy have proven groundless.

The sensational reprisals by Islamic fanatics have not yet taken place. The Taliban has fallen from power without producing another Vietnam, and the original alliance of eighty nations held firm in support of American foreign policy. Terrorist cells have been smashed in England, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere while more than 1,000 agents of Al Qaeda in over sixty countries have been apprehended. Millions in terrorist assets have been seized; military bases have been destroyed; and doubt has been cast over the god-given assurances of victory associated with the *jihad*. Body bags of American soldiers are not swamping the airports and, whatever the inevitable excesses and stupidities associated with armed intervention, the war was concluded with relative speed and efficiency. There indeed seems little doubt that most of the more *realistic* objectives of the military enterprise have been realized: terrorist activity has been hampered, a measure of resolve has been shown, and retribution has been exacted in the name of those killed in the attacks of 11 September.

But the President now wishes to turn what was a contingent response against a single terrorist attack into a more general war against terrorism. In his speech, he again spoke of "tens of thousands" of trained terrorists still at large and how Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and other groups comprise a "terrorist underworld" of planetary dimensions. He emphasized how the victorious troops in Afghanistan discovered "diagrams of American nuclear power plants and public water facilities, detailed instructions for making chemical weapons, surveillance maps of American cities and thorough descriptions of landmarks in America and throughout the world." Responding to this web of terror, he insisted, now requires shifting from battling such organizations, or a particular regime like the Taliban that explicitly supports them, to engaging this network of what were once called "rogue" states. Evidence concerning the potential of these states for actually employing nuclear and biological weapons is mixed at best. But the President hammered home again and again that the danger posed by these states is real.



He noted with pride that the United States has already placed troops in the Philippines and that American ships are patrolling the coast of Africa. All this, however, is only the beginning. There remains North Korea, Iran, and Iraq: the “axis of evil.”

Carl Schmitt viewed the distinction between “us” and them,” or “friend” and “enemy,” as the organizing principle of politics. This insight by one of the great legal and political theorists of the twentieth century is fairly well known. Somewhat less well known, however, is the implication suggested by this Catholic conservative who wound up a supporter of Nazism: the stronger the distinction drawn between “us” and “them” by the existing political authority, the more likely the success of its policy. In setting up a situation in which foreign nations are either “for us or against us,” in demanding what amounts to unconditional loyalty from the American populace, President Bush has apparently embraced the logic of Schmitt’s argument. His speech heightened the urgency of the present crisis even as it pitted the United States against those nations not merely comprising the axis of evil, but wavering in their will to abolish it. The rhetoric was telling: it employed the time-honored techniques of projection, hysteria, and exaggeration.

Imminent threats of attack were projected upon states with deservedly poor international reputations, but which had nothing to do with the assault on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The logic of projection in the speech by President Bush was abundantly clear. An enemy somewhere is secretly preparing to do what the United States is actually preparing to do. Projection thereby was used in order to generate hysteria. Precisely when things are somewhat returning to normal even in New York, terrorist alerts are seemingly uncovered every few weeks. *The New York Post* wrote of plans more than a year ago to detonate a nuclear device in the “Big Apple,” which it originally refused to publish in order to prevent panic, but which apparently deserved to be published now: the report dropped from sight the next day. Other veiled hints of impending catastrophe have attempted to

heighten the sense of insecurity at home. This justifies the need for intervention abroad resulting in demonstrations of anti-Americanism that, in turn, artificially validate the original projection and hysteria. The nation must be prepared; it is time to revamp our nuclear strategy with an eye on the axis of evil.

Just as virulent anti-Semitism does not require empirical validation of Jewish power, in the same way, the paranoid image of a nation under siege can grip the public even though no new terrorist attacks have taken place. Irrelevant is whether North Korea is actually sponsoring terrorist groups, whether the condemnation of Iran has proven disastrous for democratic forces seeking to reform the regime, or what an assault on Iraq would mean for the region. Forgotten are the possibilities that once seemed so bright for the de-escalation of tension between North and South Korea sought by the winner of the 2000 Nobel Peace Prize, President Kim Dae Jung. Virtually unreported are the fears expressed by European leaders concerning the new policy. That indeed only makes sense. The United States seems intent upon embracing a unilateral stance that would enable it to determine arbitrarily which is a terrorist state or organization and what punishment should be implemented. The present administration has already decided to send 600 “special forces” to the Philippines, 200 to Georgia, and 100 more to Yemen. The old vision of the United States acting as the policeman of the planet is ever more surely becoming a reality and this, in turn, requires fueling the emotional distinction between “us” and “them.”

Exaggeration of our peril and political paranoia generated by an increasingly conservative mass media are being used by the present administration to justify the demand for a huge increase in military spending, an increasingly narrow understanding of political bi-partisanship, and a foreign policy less predicated on the “national interest” than the interest of the President in securing his authority and getting re-elected. There should be no mistake. The new anti-terrorist effort by President Bush in the year 2002 has nothing in common with the idealistic policy of Woodrow Wilson in 1919. No new institutions like the “League of Nations” have been envisioned or promised;

the international alliance against terrorism has, in fact, become subordinated to unilateral forms of decision-making by the United States. No authoritarian ally is called upon to introduce democratic reforms let alone a democratic form of government; the new policy, in fact, offers support to the repression of internal movements often resistant to existing authoritarian regimes. The Bush Doctrine has no cosmopolitan vision; it only echoes the vulgar refrains of an old-fashioned jingoism.

There has been talk about “non-negotiable values” like the rights of women, the importance of free speech, and religious tolerance. But members of the Republican Party—one in four of whose votes came from the Christian Coalition during the last presidential election—have never exactly mounted the barricades to further such ideals at home and, when considering some of our authoritarian and theocratic allies abroad, they turn into little more than platitudes. Hardly a word has been wasted, however, in explaining why the danger posed by Iran, Iraq, and North Korea is greater now than it was in the days before the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. Not including nations like China or Syria in the alliance of evil, not stating what particular measures will be employed against which state and why can similarly be construed less as an oversight than as a way of heightening the arbitrary character of the anti-terrorist doctrine, the wiggle room available for its practitioners, and the uncertainty of the enemy. Few in the mainstream media have bothered to connect the dots between North Korea and two nations, whose own relationship is beset by any number of unresolved tensions stemming from a catastrophic war, let alone the actual bonds between the axis of evil and real existing terrorist networks.

The sheer cynicism of the new doctrine has indeed been studiously ignored. There is no war, if war implies a sustained set of attacks, there is no clear enemy or even alliance of enemies, there is hardly any international support for this international intervention, and there is no general plan for victory. Above all, however, there is little concern with asking whether an elective affinity might exist between the extraordinary popularity gained by the President in retaliating for the attack upon the World Trade Center and the

current attempts to identify his administration with a broader war against terrorism. What is increasingly appearing as an isolated attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 is being manipulated—as surely as the sinking of the *Maine* was manipulated in 1898—to justify a unilateral form of militarism and a new hegemonic posture by the United States.

There is a sense in which the entire war on terror is less an expression of a seemingly irreversible globalization than the nationalist response against it. No re-mapping of the world has taken place. The internationalist strategy directed against the “western devil” was no strategy at all: there was little concern with what would come next other than future bombings, there was no plan for how to co-ordinate fundamentalists across the Arab world, and no articulation of an alternative to the nation-state. The result has been less to advance the interests of any Arab state than to aggravate tensions among fundamentalists themselves between those who support a *jihad* and those who consider the killing of innocent civilians a crime against Islam itself. Existing states have not fallen, others have not risen, and a number of nations have used the “international” war against terror to advance their own domestic, national, aims. Authoritarian leaders like General Mushareef of Pakistan and others used the anti-terror war to identify their critics with the terrorists. Ariel Sharon has employed it to dismantle the Palestinian Authority and President Bush has manipulated it to serve his domestic agenda. While it is not at all clear that the United Nations has been strengthened, or even that a new internationalism has been furthered, it is clear that there have been real ethnic and national winners and losers in the phony war against terror.

For all the talk about what divides “us” from “them,” there is little concern with what divides “us.” Cuts in job training programs combined with a “tax relief” and stimulus package will place another few hundred dollars into the hands of workers and millions more into the pockets of their bosses. Social Security stands in danger of being privatized and the new environmental policy of the President designates fewer ecologically devastated sites for restoration and shifts the bulk of costs from the industries responsible to the

taxpayer. Again, however, that is only the beginning. Virtually the entire domestic agenda of the present administration, in fact, can be understood as an attempt to lower social benefits while raising private costs.

Economic reductionism is unnecessary in noting how his demand for symbolic solidarity against “them” abroad serves as an ideological cover for the pursuit of material inequality for “us” at home. \$48 billion in the military budget has been designated for emergency responses in the war against terror, double security at our borders and in our airports, and the development of measures aimed against bio-terrorism. This proposed increase is the largest since the Korean War and it alone is larger than the entire military budget of any other country. Such military increases have been undertaken by both major parties and in times of crisis, which it is sometimes in the interest of a sitting president to prolong, neither party is likely to call for reductions. Nevertheless, there is something different going on here: an attempt is being made to place the United States on a permanent war footing.

Always being ready for war and seeking military superiority are staples of political realism and Benjamin R. Barber surely has a point when he writes—in “Beyond Jihad vs. McWorld: On Terrorism and the New Democratic Realism” for *The Nation* (21 January 2002)—that international terrorism has rendered the “old realism” inadequate given its anachronistic assumptions concerning the nation state as the locus of power, the transient nature of alliances, and calculable interests as the motor of politics. He is also correct in suggesting that the real allies of the United States are the same as usual, the western democracies, and that the other worldly ideology of religious fundamentalism has rendered calculable interests secondary in the minds of its most radical partisans. It would, however, be dangerous to write off the old realism too quickly.

The nation state remains the point of institutional reference even for transnational movements like the Islamic Brotherhood. None of these movements, whatever their dreams of an Islamic world, have offered an organizational alternative to the nation-state and nothing guarantees, even in

the regions where they are strongest, that they would prove successful if they did. The most pressing issue is also probably less recognizing the constancy of our western allies than developing criteria, other than the “national interest,” for dealing with non-democratic states. Islamic fundamentalism is, moreover, not the first ideology that has blinded leaders and followers to their material interests or has demanded dramatic sacrifices for the cause: communism and fascism came earlier. Indeed, rather than simply choosing between the “old” and the “new” realism, it seems more sensible to conceptualize a situation in which the former now serves as an overlay for the latter.

Foreign policy has become more complex in the aftermath of 11 September. President Bush has responded by retreating into an old form of unilateral decision-making predicated on an even older form of power politics. Underlying this retreat is less a psychological denial of the new reality, however, than an attempt to revivify the power to deny complexities as he and his administration see fit. The *right* of the United States to engage in pre-emptive strikes against arbitrarily determined terrorist regimes is being presented as the only alternative to isolationism and a paralytic pacifism. But this argument won't stand on its own merits. *The New York Times* of 19 February 2002, in fact, has reported that the present administration is considering deliberately using its media outlets to spread false information abroad in order to bolster support for the Bush Doctrine. That such disinformation will help define terrorist intentions, and that it will also bleed over into domestic reporting, is readily apparent.

The moral appeal of the original military action in Afghanistan derived from the general understanding that it was directed against the organizational authors and supporters of a *crime*. It provided retribution against non-uniformed criminals who had attacked civilians, and who had sought to maximize the number of them killed, without due warning in a time of peace. The United States retained the moral high ground following the terrorist attack and the sympathy it elicited from all nations—many of whom had also suffered losses—was genuine. The flags, the candlelight vigils, and the various displays of solidarity with the victims may well have brought a

degree of comfort to many. But the slope is slippery. That high ground can easily be lost and it will be lost should the Bush Doctrine go into effect.

Spontaneous feelings of solidarity are being transformed into demands for conformity. The range of debate has narrowed and critics of the anti-terrorist war face censure: it is indeed chilling to consider how Senator Tom Daschle, the Senate Majority leader, was initially castigated by the entire Republican leadership for “dividing the country” and threatening national unity after he finally—if somewhat timidly—suggested the need for a “clearer understanding” of the “direction” informing the present policy. Increasingly, the institutional possibilities for accountability are becoming circumscribed at home while implications of what is a growing asymmetry of power between the United States and both its allies and its enemies are being drawn abroad. Support for the action undertaken by President Bush against Al Qaeda and the Taliban should never have been understood as a blank check. It should always have been articulated as provisional and, had such support been expressed in that way from the beginning, perhaps there would have been less inclination to juxtapose a “patriotic left” against a “pacifist left.” The bitter battles on the Internet might then have been a little less bitter and disagreement over the issue might not have threatened to produce a permanent fissure among progressive forces.

What seemed so important in early October of 2001 when the bombing of Afghanistan started, however, seems less so in late March of 2002. The language of “irresponsibility” on the one side and “betrayal” on the other is now bereft of meaning. The source of the conflict between what has been dubbed the “patriotic” and the “pacifist” left has lost its salience. There remains a zone between the two lefts consisting of progressives who recognize that the context is the same now as on 11 September as far as what C.W. Mills called “the power elite” is concerned. The historical conjuncture highlighted by the Bush Doctrine presents a new need for unity, clarity, and critique by the ideologically divided partisans of a progressive politics. Indeed, looking back on the immediate response to the 11 September, it is now time for the dead to bury their dead and for the living to move on.

# The Deficiency of Democracy in the Islamic World

by  
Ömer Çaha

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The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, has once again drawn attention to the reconciliation of Islam with democracy. It is generally accepted that today, among the five religious and cultural blocs which predominate in the world—namely Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam—it is the Muslim societies which have been furthest from democracy. Most countries in the Islamic world are governed by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Some of these regimes have constructed authoritarian structures under the absolute rule of a cult or party leader, an ideology, a king or an emir. One can appreciate how vital it is for Muslim intellectuals to focus a great deal of their energy on the reasons behind the deficiency of democracy in the Islamic world. Once we consider that democracy not only brings about political freedom and human rights, but that it is also a driving force behind economic growth and development, we can better appreciate the significance and urgency of this issue for Muslim societies.

## Islam at the Crossroads of Democracy and Despotism

Before discussing the relationship between Islam and democracy, we should clarify the actual meaning of democracy. Democracy is a mode of governance which came to the fore and evolved as an alternative to despotic regimes prevailing in both traditional and modern societies. The most fundamental values of democracy are human rights and individual liberties. It has been evident that democracy, among its various alternatives, is a unique form of government that strives to guarantee the rights of all minorities and individuals on the basis of the rule of law. A democratic system requires the existence of certain procedural (formal) conditions in order to guarantee its fundamental principles, i.e., human rights and liberties. Periodical elections, constitutional government, majority rule, the accessibility of the media and the free market economy, multiparty system and separation of powers are all ultimately intended to protect fundamental rights and liberties. In a democratic society the relationship between the state and society is founded on “contract.” By means of social contact, democracy limits the absolute and unlimited



autonomy enjoyed by the state on the basis of societal will and the principle of the rule of law.

Political systems opposed to democracy may manifest themselves in different forms. Such modes of government may display authoritarian characteristics, while others are totalitarian in nature. Needless to say, in terms of state-society relationships and from the perspective of human rights, there is hardly any difference between the two regimes. Indeed, both types of regimes are disposed toward force and compulsion. In both, the state exercises arbitrary control over society. The political initiative remains entirely in the hands of the ruling elite. In short, both authoritarian and totalitarian regimes hinge on a coercive and despotic state. Here, the state is everything and the individual nothing.

In trying to understand the position of Islam between these two systems of government and to single out the one that comes closest to the Islamic approach to political governance, we observe that neither the Qur'an nor the Sunnah (the deeds and the words of the Prophet of Islam) contains a comprehensive list of injunctions about the theory of political governance. The Qur'an only talks about a number of moral principles (consent and fairness) relevant to the political values, but not about the organizational structure of political governance. Likewise, the Sunnah does not touch upon the organizational structure of political governance, but contains advice geared to rulers on principles of justice, compassion, mercy and obedience to God.

Given that the Qur'an and Sunnah do not call for clearly-defined and binding principles about political governance, Muslims have been free to establish their own organizational structure in matters of politics, in accordance with the social conditions of their times. This was indeed the case for the Four Caliphs period (which emerged immediately after the death of the Prophet Mohammed) and thereafter. The caliphate system, established during the Four Caliphs period, emanated from the *de facto* will and choice of Muslims rather than stemming from Islamic theology. Therefore, it hardly seems difficult to see a certain type of government as an ideal model in Islamic theology and its practice in history. The flexibility about the structure of political systems in Islam gives an opportunity for Muslims to adapt any political system which serves their aims over time.

Islam primarily addresses the human individual—basic rights are accorded to individuals, and not to collective entities. Islam guarantees the human rights to life and property, protection of honor, freedom of

conscience and enterprise. Moreover, Islam has abolished the legal hierarchy between human beings and put them under equal status. There is no distinction between the ruler and the ruled in terms of their standing before God. Both have the dignified privilege of being human. One can only speak of the superiority of a person to the extent of his fear and obedience of God (*takva*), i.e., his goodness.

In addition to its theology, the practice of Islam by Muslims in their long history also indicates that Islam is far from being an organic unity of religion and state. In other words, neither Islamic theology nor Islamic practice over the course of centuries, under different empires (Umayyads, Abbasids, Seljukians, Ottomans, etc.), have obtained a political basis for the construction of a theocratic state. What we see however, is that throughout Islamic history, a distinction was always made between *common law* (secular law) and *religious law* (*Shariah*), and the rulers could enact laws which met the needs of their age. The Qur'an itself opens a space for common law by holding, "don't disregard common usage (*orfi*) in your commands" (7/199). This Qur'anic verse in fact permits the contribution of a particular culture to the construction of government and thus gives an opportunity for the relativity of the governmental structure.

In short, in analyzing the question as to whether Islam is closer to democratic or despotic regimes, we ought to conclude, in light of the criteria examined above, that democratic regimes, rather than despotic regimes, ought actually to be more compatible with Islam. We must not disregard the fact that democracy is a political system which has been an outcome of historical conditions (Ancient Greek ideas and institutions, Feudalism, industrialization, etc., in the West), whereas Islam is a religion which contains moral principles—in other words, admonishes the exaltation of the human spirit. Needless to say, democracy serves the aim of Islam with respect to the basic human rights it gives to Muslims as well as in respect to the construction of the government it envisages, i.e., the by the consent of the subjects.

### **The Failure of Democracy in the Islamic World**

It has been stated above that the teachings of Islam are not opposed to democracy. Despite this, most Islamic countries are today governed by authoritarian rather than democratic systems. Most Islamic countries are beset by rigid and centralized political structures shaped around a tribal chief, party leader, member of the army, king or emir. Why is it then that democracy cannot take root in this part of the world? The relative absence

of liberal democracy in the Islamic world in general, and the Arab world in particular, has been taken up by many scholars dealing with the subject. Modernist thinkers used to link the development of democracy with the existence of the indicators of modernity such as the level of GNP per capita, rate of literacy, urban life indexed to industry, level of media consumption, the degree of the development of social classes, and population. This mode of analysis suggested that in order to achieve transition to democracy, non-Western societies had to complete their processes of economic modernization in a manner similar to Western societies.

This was the most common explanation for the lack of democracy in the Arab world in the 1970s. However, although GNP per capita in countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait has reached a level comparable to Western countries, this has not resulted in the arrival of democracy there. Authoritarian regimes still survive in petroleum-exporting Arab countries in spite of the fact that the economic infrastructure of some conforms with Western standards. This suggests that the lack of democracy in the Islamic world depends on factors other than the indicators of modernization. There are historical and contemporary factors which make the concentration of political authority in the hands of a clique or a small group of elite possible in Islamic world.

When looked at from the angle of history, it is to be seen that the social classes that played a leading role in the course of sweeping social and political changes during Western feudalism and capitalism, and therefore, acted as an intermediary between society and state, never took hold in Muslim societies. While economics and the social classes emanating from the economic sphere were the driving forces behind civil society in the West, this function has been performed by a central authority in Islamic societies. Although Islam considers property in a positive vein, in Islamic states of the past, societies were mostly estranged from economic life and therefore inevitably came to depend on the states as the property holders. We cannot speak of the existence of market-based economic exchange nor of social classes which would guarantee the survival of the market in traditional Muslim societies based on agriculture. No doubt in the past there existed some intermediary institutions that played the role of civil society. However, since they were established on *cultural* rather than *economic* foundations, they could not transform themselves into strong organizations. Instead they came to operate not unlike a branch of the state. The segments of society, such as the caste of religious scholars, foundations and guilds, acted like functionaries of the state in the provinces. This traditional relationship between state and society

hindered the emergence of politically and economically powerful social groups over time.

In addition to this historical background, the colonization of the Islamic world at the beginning of the twentieth century seems to be another fundamental factor behind the deficiency of democratic systems in the Islamic world. In most Muslim societies, people rallied around the central government and the ruling elite with full force in order to throw off the colonial yoke and to gain independence. The European countries which had been carved out of vast empires easily furnished themselves with democratic systems by building up national states. By contrast, the Islamic countries, which broke off from vast empires, failed to do so and fell prey to colonial empires such as Britain, France and Italy. While countries like Bulgaria and Greece—which had been split from the Ottoman Empire—managed to acquaint themselves with democracy in the early twentieth century, Muslim countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq and Syria came under colonial domination during the same period. Saudi Arabia and Egypt aside, which gained independence in 1922, the Arab world was under European colonial rule in the early twentieth century. Therefore, the priority in these countries did not lie in the dissolution of power between the centralized political authority and the people, but in concentrating around a political authority for the purpose of liberating their countries.

The experience of colonialism in the Islamic world reinforced the centralized political culture which had solid foundations in traditional Muslim societies. The charismatic power of the rulers who had presented themselves as the representatives of God on earth during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras was sadly reinforced in the post-colonial era of the twentieth century. Some leaders, by virtue of their essential role in independence struggles, came to be idolized in their country, and most of them used this charisma to disregard their people. Many groups or leaders who played a pivotal role in the struggles for independence, began, perhaps inevitably, to perceive people as their own property, thus resisting demands for sharing power with them. Many Islamic countries that gained independence after the second world war naturally developed an aversion toward democratic institutions which had evolved in Western countries like France and Britain, since they were the same countries against which they had been fighting for independence. For this reason, most of the Islamic countries were lured into the Russian way of socialism in the aftermath of the second world war.

The case of Ottoman/Republican Turkey—which was not colonized by Western countries—is a very clear indication of the impact of colonization over the mode of political systems in the Islamic world under colonization. The Ottoman Empire acquainted itself with democratic mechanisms such as parliament, multi-party politics and elections beginning from 1876 up to 1918. However, such democratic mechanisms were disbanded following the outbreak of the War of Independence beginning in 1918 against Greece and such other Western countries as France, Italy and Britain. The question of how to liberate the country then came to be the central care of the political elite and even of the subjects, rather than the discussions about democratic mechanisms. The society felt a strong need to unite around leaders promising independence against the West. Indeed, the need for independence and the construction of a national state as the representative of national independence, created an authoritarian single-party regime in Turkey until 1950.

### **Reactionary Movements and Democracy**

One of the main obstacles which undermine the arrival of democracy in Muslim societies is the existence of reactionary movements. Radical and revolutionary Islam, which emerged as reactions to colonialism, were inspired more by socialist values than by liberal democratic values and they formulated their principles in line with this outlook. It was common in the Islamic world until the 1980s to consider Islam as a source of ideology as well as a revolutionary ideology. It was particularly the Iranian revolution that became an inspirational reference for Islamic movements at that time. In this period, Islam was taken by Muslim thinkers of Iranian origin as well as by those of North African origin, almost as a kind of state religion, a revolutionary ideology, and a theocratic political structure.

Such interpretations of Islam can be traced back, in the case of some North African countries, to the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the first half of the twentieth century. At that point in time, Muslim countries began to suffer a long and painful setback in the face of the mind-boggling economic growth and development that Western countries were enjoying. Moreover, the colonial ambitions of Western countries directly over Islamic territories evoked strong reactions from Muslim thinkers of North Africa who began to think in terms of Leninism. This explains a great deal about the distance, which Muslims began to feel toward liberalism, democracy, capitalism and other similar systems and ideas.

The two key concepts that these thinkers borrowed from Leninism were the “state” and “revolution.” It was, in their view, the state that symbolized social justice, social unity, and the struggle against the West. Such a state could only be established through revolution, under the leadership of a pioneering group. The works of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian Islamic intellectual who was hanged by the Nasser regime in 1966, for instance, emphasized the role of a revolutionary group. Largely on account of his Leninist background, Qutb envisaged the establishment of an Islamic state by means of a revolution led by a specially trained group versed in Islamic values. The project toward the creation of such a group, indeed, can be seen as an attempt to replace Lenin’s proletarian vanguards with their Muslim counterparts. For Qutb, the salvation of Muslims as well as the entirety of humanity depended on an Islamic state that would represent a third way, i.e., an alternative to socialism and capitalism. Although critical of socialism, many Islamic intellectuals, as in the case of Qutb, operated on values which might be combined with a Leninist style of state socialism in one way or another, such as collectivity, brotherhood, revolution, equality, salvation, a centralized state, anti-capitalism, anti-democracy, etc.

Hence, both authoritarian regimes and Muslim intellectuals with a first-hand experience of colonial domination completely refused the West, and sought to set up alternative institutions which were authoritarian in character. When realizing that traditional interpretation of Islam fell short of enabling the deployment of adequate means by which to resolve existing problems, they began to borrow concepts and perspectives from Russian socialism, which was anti-capitalist and anti-liberalist in character, to develop an Islamic myth as an alternative. The concepts of “nation” and “centralized state,” the latter of which emerged out of the former, raised the greatest difficulty for such intellectuals. Although initially these intellectuals emphasized the universality of the Islamic message, following the ascendancy of nationalism and of the idea of national state, they chose to transpose Islam into a national context, thus they organized nationalist movements as responses to the Western challenge.

As for the intellectuals who came from non-colonized countries, they sought to understand the West rather than reject it entirely and made use of Western ideas and institutions which they considered to be useful. While, by the end of the nineteenth century, the foundations of a reactive movement of an anti-Western character were being laid in countries under colonial domination, the Ottoman intellectuals, who had no such

experience, had a vision of society which was open to interaction with the West.

The vanguards of the movement toward Ottoman enlightenment, such as Namýk Kemal, Ziya Pa°a and Ali Suavi, advocated institutions and values such as freedom, democracy, and constitutional and parliamentary government in a Western sense. The appearance of democracy in Turkey despite occasional setbacks, as opposed to the lack of democracy in other Islamic countries, should be linked to the above. Whereas the intellectuals in Ottoman society pursued a strategy of modernization, which, *inter alia*, embraced Western institutions, the colonization of other Islamic countries by the West was the prime cause of the rejectionist attitude developed by Muslim intellectuals against Western values.

Present-day revolutionary radical Islamic movements emphasize the sovereignty of God, rather than human beings in the world. These movements strive to consolidate their version of sovereignty, which relies on various Islamic interpretations, instead of embarking on projects designed to improve the living conditions of Muslims and those who live with Muslims. However, it is obvious that God never acts as sovereign, this being true for all times and places; therefore, those who rule in the name of God in fact represent a particular interpretation of religion. It is correct to assert for all religions, including Islam, that there are always more than one equally valid interpretations of a given religion. Those who claim to be acting on behalf of God, in truth, rule on the basis of one of such interpretations. Granting that the human is the most exalted among all of God's creations, the services designed to respond to the needs of human beings should of necessity constitute part of God's sovereignty. In God's reckoning, political rule should be based on assembly and consultation. In modern societies, this can only materialize by means of principles such as an oath of allegiance, elections, contract, consultation, consensus of the learned, constitutional government, and the separation of powers. The entitlement to the right to govern through elections is the synonym of the principle of consultation admonished by Islam; surely this authority is not intended to act as the sacred shadow of God on earth, but as the representative of Muslims for a defined period.

The verse of the Qur'an which is all too often cited by revolutionary and radical Islamic circles, that "sovereignty belongs to no one save God," does not in any way imply legal, legislative or political authority. The verses which speak of "God's sovereignty" are expressions of God's creative role in the entire universe. Those who first distorted the meaning of these verses to give them a political bent, were the Haricis. The

Haricis, in their time, used such verses to shake the legitimacy of rulers whom they opposed. The Qur'an enjoins believers to conduct their affairs by consultation, which means that it is a moral principle related to governance. As in the verse, "their affairs are a matter of counsel" (42/38), there are numerous verses which hold that believers, in conducting their affairs, consult one another. This suggests that people should resolve political-administrative problems on the basis of consultation among themselves, or they will entrust an able person with the task of resolving the problem. There is no model better than democracy to sort things out in this way. In conclusion, we can assert that sovereignty lies in the people (the source from which the authority emanates), and those who exercise sovereignty should act in accordance with the commands of God so as to enjoy legitimacy. Good and useful works done by human beings are mentioned in the Qur'an among the deeds which earn the approval of God.

Since radical Islamic approaches are primarily reactionary movements, they have a propensity for wholesale rejection of everything that comes from the West. This attitude in fact contradicts with sociological reality. We cannot perceive a particular way of life simply as black or white, as good or bad. There are always elements to learn and borrow from different cultures, ideas and life experiences; to be more accurate, societies, of necessity, exchange cultural elements and products. What is more, we need to *understand* Western civilization. Today, we observe that political institutions and values, which are most in tune with the essence of Islam, are in fact to be found in the democratic political structures of the West, and not in the despotic political structures prevailing in Islamic countries. When regard is made to the political institutions current in Western societies, we come across institutions and the system of fundamental rights and liberties whose level of perfection have rarely been seen in the course of Muslim history.

Those who advocate political Islam are no lovers of freedom. Instead of defending their freedom alongside that of others, they are after a hegemonic system under their political control. After all, sustenance of political domination to the exclusion of others is a fundamental problem that Muslim countries have had to face in the past as well as today. Replacing a dictatorship, which relies on the army, a tribe or a clan, the state bureaucracy or the leader's charisma, with another dictatorship grounded in a particular interpretation of Islam, is apparently futile. The perspective of political Islam is full of malice, hatred and fury. This mode of thinking is in fact far from being able to comprehend the autonomous



human person; instead it considers him as an object of political domination.

This mode of thinking also operates at the level of identities. Its adherents approach social actors from the perspective of “us” and “them.” A greater part of such movements could easily accuse others (if Muslim) of blasphemy rather like Haricis, and consider violence an acceptable method of struggle. Such movements focus their energy on distinctive characteristics that separate them from others and are therefore likely to accuse others of blasphemy and to exclude and look down upon them instead of underlining the points of convergence which makes space for peaceful coexistence. Since this mode of thinking falls into the trap of dogmatism by failing to approach issues from a critical perspective and idealizes elements or values which belong to them, it fails to identify the contemporary problems for which Islam has already provided answers and those that it has not.

The state is the sphere in which human ambitions, interests and will to power are set in motion. The transposition of religion into the realm of the state distorts the primary purpose of religion, results in its defamation and exploitation, and allows freedom for only one religious approach (and group). While the state is an entity that constantly undergoes changes in response to changing sociological needs and conditions, religion, by contrast, possesses immutable universal principles. Because of this, when state and religion merge, the sociological living sphere is inevitably held outside the process of change. The demand for political authority and the peculiar consecration of sovereignty enjoyed by this authority has aborted the emergence of a tradition of critical thinking among radical groups in the Islamic world; and this has paved the way for the stifling of ideas and intellectual fertility.

# Islamic Modernity: Barriers and Possibilities

by  
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Shortly after 9/11, Bernard Lewis' book, *What Went Wrong* appeared. He asked a longstanding question: why have Muslim societies generally rejected modernity and remained impoverished, undemocratic and often fundamentalist? Many have claimed that without notions of freedom, a confident middle class or the autonomous corporate institutions of "civil society," Islam thwarts modernity. As Daniel Lerner put it, there was only a choice between "Mecca and mechanization." To consider this question, we must also ask: what is modernity and what is essential to modernity? Have Muslim societies rejected modernization? Fundamentalism, after all, is a modernist movement. Perhaps most importantly, we should also ask what the likelihood is of uniquely Islamic modernity(ies) emerging in Muslim societies? The events since 9/11, the displacement of the Taliban, the degrading of Al Qaeda, the conflict in Israel/Palestine, the growing resentment to the U.S./Israel alliance, and threatening moves toward Iraq make such questions especially germane. Notwithstanding the headlines of conflict, terror and even wars, we will suggest here that Islamic modernities are nascent and indeed may very well be led by those who now seem to embrace the most anti-modern, anti-Western positions.

Modernity can be seen as a post-Enlightenment vision in which rationality as cultural movement, and instrumental reason as a practice have been widely embraced and clearly seen in commercial practices and democratic governance based on popular sovereignty with competition between political parties-qua mediating institutions. Secular law is valorized, the state is administered by rational bureaucracies, reflexive rationality is institutionalized and there is a general tolerance and respect for human difference and human rights.

Modernity, in this view, was historically dependent on political economic factors that gave rise to "civil society" as intermediate social groupings formed a "public sphere" where ideas and truth claims were freely debated. The roots

of Western modernity can be traced to Classical Greek democracy, Roman commercial law, Christian world views, the Renaissance—itsself quite dependent on Islamic culture—the Reformation and Enlightenment. For Max Weber, rationality was nascent in a number of classical civilizations. Egypt, China, India, and Greece developed sciences, technologies, philosophies, mathematics, and various elements of rational law. The flourishing of science and philosophy among Islamic scholars influenced Europe as the growth of its trading classes led to its emergence from the Dark Ages. But, only in Western Europe, where Protestantism had emerged, did rational modernity develop along with capitalism, democratic public spheres with the social and political critiques that provided the alternative visions of different interest groups and eventually parties and social movements.

While modernity thus defined first emerged in the West, its embrace in other societies has been mediated through cultural traditions as with the experience of Indian and Japanese modernity and even an emerging Confucian modernity in China, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand. Notwithstanding variations of its forms, there are certain commonalities. But as we will see, the emergence of Islamic modernity has been systematically thwarted by both cultural legacies from within and geopolitical pressures from without. Western Modernity, in its liberal democratic form, was borne by the bourgeois classes. But in other subsequent cases, authoritarian states, the military, intellectual, or even communist revolutionaries have been the agents fostering modernization—often through revolutions against traditional elites. As we shall argue, an essential ingredient for modernity is a developed civil society of mediating institutions outside of the State in which there are public spheres where a plurality of views and truths can be subjected to debate and dialogue. Informed by the Frankfurt tradition of critical theory and Weberian historical studies of the interaction of politics, economy and culture, we will offer a historical analysis of ideal typical articulations of Islam, a monotheistic religion of salvation, in order to analyze the potential for democratic modernity in Islamic countries. Many civilizations have long depended on extensive trade networks. Many societies have adopted modern technologies and scientific thinking. However, while all but the most traditional cultures must deal with capitalism in one form or another, not all cultures have adopted the emancipatory aspects of Western democratic values, individualism, popular sovereignty with contested rule, rational institutions, secular law, human rights or reasoned social-political discourse (highly imperfect though these may be in practice in the West). The resistance to modernity has been due to various factors starting with

certain features of Islam in which the community (*umma*) has priority over the individual, and Qu'ranic law interpreted by elder religious scholars (*ulama*) and *Kadi* justice provide a seamless framework for political, economic and personal morality. Aside from these historically rooted cultural factors, contemporary political elites often resist Western political-economic practices that might undermine their locally based, traditionally legitimated authority.

Islamic societies are likely either to embrace a modernity that will enhance the life chances of their people or implode in violent paroxysms between fundamentalists and modernists. We are not embracing an Orientalist stance that ignores the actions of the secular West that has often subverted trends and movements toward democratic modernity to secure oil profits and/or geo-political strategies. European colonialism/imperialism, and U.S. led postwar politics have colluded with certain aspects of Islamic culture to suppress its traditions of openness to change, tolerance, democracy and equality.

We would like to offer a dialectical analysis arguing that the *same factors that led to the rise of Islam as a glorious civilization at one time, thwarted the emergence of modernity at a later time*. In the face of challenge and threat, typically from actual or imagined competing classes or ideologies and challenges at cultural, institutional and personal levels, and especially defeats, groups become more rigid, dogmatic and intolerant. When cultures limit variability and diversity, they lose their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Islamic societies were indeed strongly influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy and culture, but democracy qua popular sovereignty never became a social-political practice despite traditions of social justice and tolerance. Why did the seeds of democratic theory and practice that emerged in Greece find fertile ground in post Reformation Christendom but *not* in the Islamic world? To pursue such questions, we will discuss the rise and decline of Islam and barriers to modernity in Islam, the responses of Islam to Western modernity, and trends toward an Islamic modernity that will not however be a carbon copy of the West but its own unique synthesis.

Islamic modernities are likely to emerge as Islamic societies find various ways to reconcile traditional and modern interests and practices. Historically, colonialism, the geo-politics of oil and capital, have colluded with traditional despotic rule to secure short-term profits and strangle various

progressive movements and or the intermediate organizations of “civil society” that would have facilitated the emergence of modernity.

### **The Rise and Decline of Islam The Origins of Islam**

In general, early Islam was typically spread by conquest or *jihad*, holy war, while merchants often spread later Islam. It is important to note that *jihad*, with variable meanings, would remain an essential element of Islam along with its five pillars of faith. The central meaning of greater *jihad* was the inner struggle to live a spiritual life according to Quran and Hadith (holy teachings). Military conflict was considered a lesser *jihad*. In political economic terms, the lesser *jihad* empowered the expansion and defense of the largest empire of its time.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> century on, Islamic mercantilism grew, prospered and eventually supported centers of advanced learning devoted to art, science and medicine in Damascus, Baghdad, Basra, Todedo among other places. There was generally a relaxed relationship in Islam between faith and reason. While Islamic societies were tolerant of secular reason, more so than early Christendom, the Quran and Islamic law, *sharia*, defined morality in a traditional way that maintained traditional political and economic action. Islam gave free reign to philosophy, albeit generally a pursuit of educated elites as well. There were important scientific and technical innovations. But there was less latitude to the moral life. In ethical terms, Islam is a highly codified religion that regulates many aspects of everyday life, but its practices were highly variable. Lawyers and administrators, not a clergy, regulated traditional Islamic society, who engaged tradition through interpretation and local decisions. It was highly important that for Islamic societies, social rationality was closely tied to the foundations of specific religious categories, beliefs, and exercises in relation to everyday life, commerce, and governance.

### **Islam Triumphant**

Within 500 years, Islamic warriors and merchants had spread the faith from across the Mediterranean to many parts of Asia, including parts of Western China, Indonesia and Malaysia. As Islam initially spread, institutionalizing faith and law, it established the conditions in which a new kind of society of

merchants emerged. The fairly universal (but flexible) Islamic law, *sharia*, also enabled the expansion of trade throughout the region. In contrast to the European Enlightenment, for Islam, in general, there were few contradictions between the life of faith and valorizing intellect, reason, and science. Muhammad encouraged the study of knowledge of many cultures, the Quran drew on Judeo-Christian tradition. Islamic societies regarded worldly and sacred knowledge as complementary; worldly knowledge was useful and desirable. There was a strong drive in early Islamic societies to amass knowledge, starting with that of other civilizations (including Byzantine, Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and those of the ancient middle East). This knowledge was critiqued and elaborated. Cordoba, a center of Andalusian culture was a model of toleration, openness and learning-housing a larger library than anywhere in Christendom. Many Jewish and Christian scholars, living side by side with their Muslim counterparts contributed to this efflorescence. The Islamic scholars of the Golden Age were renaissance thinkers, simultaneously doing medicine, science, philosophy, and theology. New forms of knowledge were created, including social theory, such as formulated by Ibn Khaldun in the 13th Century. But such intellectual advances were usually available only to small circles of elites.

### **Defeat and Domination of Islam by the West: Retrenchment and Barriers to Modernity**

In face of various assaults or challenges to Islam, from the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols, to the Inquisition and expulsion from Spain, civil wars, more recently the decline of the Ottoman Empire that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and finally European colonization, Islamic societies and their leaders repeatedly embraced more conservative positions which became highly entrenched cultural frameworks that would radically transform Islam and lead to the ossification of a once dynamic, vibrant culture of tolerance and learning. Following the Reformation, the Catholic Church retreated to the more orthodox, dogmatic positions of the counter-Reformation. Similarly, as its dynamism waned and Islam faced the challenges of a declining hegemon there were retreats to various forms of dogmatism and orthodoxy such as Wahabism, other worldly mysticism such as Sufi, as well as xenophobia and intolerance of Others. The European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment were relatively unknown while European innovations in technology, philosophy and commerce had little impact on in early modern Islamic societies. The intolerance of Christianity may have

forestalled a more gradual transition toward a rational society, a more gradual secularization of ethics and/or more tolerance of other religions. Toynbee and other historians have suggested that civilizations grow, flourish, stagnate, fail to meet challenges, and eventually decline in face of other civilizations. Such analyses do not specify why this happens, nor do they explain the meaning of “challenge,” save in military terms.

There are a number of reasons why Christendom prospered, grew and then surpassed Islam. We would suggest that the following nine major factors that limited the impact of foreign ideas and/or created indigenous barriers to the emergence of the economic, political and cultural rationality that enabled capitalist modernity qua democratic secular nationhood, administrative rationality and a culture of critique and equality.

1) *Economic barriers and the law.* The economic practices dictated by Qur’anic law, Kadi justice and Hanafi codes precluded large-scale economic enterprises and capital accumulation. Firstly, Islamic merchant trading associations could not assume the legal form of a corporation with juridical rights independent of the owners. Secondly, Islamic inheritance laws meant that when one of the associates died, the partnership was terminated and inheritance was divided in egalitarian ways. Hence, no great merchant families such as the Medicis emerged. Third, proscriptions on usury meant that financing of economic enterprises was limited. In general, commerce regulated by Qur’anic laws limited the growth of a secular, commercial, sphere.

2) *Islam as a decentralized religion.* Islam, while a world religion, unlike Roman Christianity, was decentralized, without a singular supreme authority or centralized hierarchy. This enabled a number of competing learning centers and variations in local practices and precluded a Reformation as a form of resistance to Church control (Collins, 1998). As Islam remained compatible with both its merchant and warrior traditions, there did not emerge an oppositional class that would foster a public sphere, embrace a separation of Church and state and/or foster a systematic critique of religious dogma.

3) *Political centralization.* It is also necessary to note that whereas ascetic Protestantism was a rational bourgeois religion from the start, Islam began as a religion of a ruling stratum, and to a large extent, despite its formal egalitarianism, it disposes the acceptance of various forms of dynastic rule

and, more often than not, legitimates suppression of democratization and pluralism. In this vein, there has been little difference between God-ordained kings, presidents for life, and one party states.

4) *Close relations of mosque, dynasties and commerce.* There was a seamless relation between Islamic religion, its political dynasties and the merchant classes. Indeed many mullahs and imams either came from the merchant classes, as did Muhammad, or were themselves still actively engaged in commerce and trade. This constrained both the development of an independent bourgeoisie constituting “civil society” and supporting a public “sphere” of free speech situations where ideas might be debated—especially the forms of reflexive critique found in the West. The radical critiques of Church and State seen in Locke, Diderot or Marx would have led to death.

5) *Conservatism and limits to diffusion.* In its maturity, in the face of external challenges and weakened by “internal” strife, Islamic societies turned to orthodoxy as a resistance to change. Indeed, in sharp contrast to early Islamic societies, later societies actively maintained various barriers to external cultural influences. While this reproduced Islamic cultures and preserved social arrangements, it created the conditions that resisted the incorporation of Western innovations from modern factories to democratic parliaments to nationalism, etc. The highly advanced Islamic pursuits of science and philosophy were forgotten and/or eclipsed. Further, Christendom was largely identified with a defeated Byzantium and a vague land of infidel barbarians beyond the borders. In addition to having little interest in these lands, Muslims feared living or traveling there. These fears were sustained by religious edicts against living with the infidels.

6) *A theology of determination and a culture of denial and blame.* The belief in the power of Allah to impact this world disposed a fatalism that would stifle the attempt to control/dominate nature. With the exception of elite scholars and mystics, there has been little tendency to locate causality from within and accept blame for one’s actions. There has been a tendency to locate causality from without and deny culpability from within. Hence, the relative underdevelopment of Islam today is typically blamed on the West, Jews, or both. This cultural pattern of denial becomes intertwined with fundamentalism and facilitates *Jihad* as the solution to underdevelopment. This is not to ignore the many injustices of colonialism, underdevelopment, geo-politics and globalization that colluded to sustain underdevelopment.



7) *Ressentiment of the West*. Just as Nietzsche suggested that the marginalized Christian artisans of Rome saw themselves as morally superior to the rich, powerful and debauched, Romans, so too have many Muslim voices seen the secular West as morally degenerate compared to the “superior” morality and ethical practices of Islam that promises a return to a righteous society and glorious rewards in heaven. Combined with resistance to political domination and the framework of radical fundamentalism, with avenues of resistance suppressed internally, *ressentiment* may dispose alienated youths to militant terrorism against the West with counter reactions hardening opposition to and demonization of the West for some Islamist movements.

8) *Intolerance of individualism*. Perhaps one of the most important moments of modernity was the rise of the autonomous, self-interested individual with the capacities to adapt to new situations. The importance of the individual and his/her freedom of thought and action in the West can clearly be seen in contrast to the value of the community (*umma*) in Islam. Freedom of thought is not seen as a barrier to either political democracy or business practices. A central factor that hindered the spread of modernity in Islam has been the intolerance of individualism seen as selfishness, the denial of God, or anarchy. The absence of a cultural commitment to individual rights and personal freedom serves to limit change and innovation.

9) *Suppression of socially reflexive critical reason*. Indigenous Muslim elites, secular or theocratic, did not wish to see Western values such as democratization and self-reflexive social critique influence their societies. Reason, that would make Man higher than God was seen as blasphemy, while Critical, emancipatory, Reason that might question tyranny, dynastic rule or theocratic corruption would be treason. Thus, the exercise of social criticism of within is systematically suppressed and directed to outsiders, esp the West/Israel. And, until recently, in most Islamic societies, the school systems and media have done little to foster self-critical analyses of society and understanding of multiple and problematic natures of truth and competing claims for validity or authority. In Europe, with the spread of capital and its rationalizing effects, the growing merchant classes became the bearers of Enlightenment-based emancipatory critique of clerical and royal domination that would set people free.

But Islamic merchant classes never become a powerful, autonomous class as did the Europeans, nor would they stand in opposition to the ruling classes. Thus, Islamic societies did not have social conditions disposing an ideological

critique of dynastic rule or religion. Nor were there sources of resistance that might lead to the emergence of a public sphere that might be a locus for counter-hegemonic discourses of resistance, strategies of mobilization, and alternative visions. In general, these many barriers to social change, resistance to the embrace of “foreign” ideas and practices, and the retreats to conservative theologies, together with *ressentiment* to and disdain for the secular West, served to limit trade, interactions and cultural exchanges between Islam and the “morally inferior” infidel cultures. As the West prospered and flourished, there was little adaptation of their technological innovations nor its cultural moment in critical social reason which saw the reflexive exercise of. The increasing economic gap between Islam and Europe was exacerbated by the fact that Muslim merchant classes were regulated and sponsored by Muslim political and religious authorities.

### **Responses to the West: The Ambivalence of Modernity**

As the power of Islam began to wane, perhaps the expulsion from Spain was a marker, European powers expanded and by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, had colonized most of the Islamic Middle East. While modernity included many progressive social changes, European modernity did not extend to its colonies and seek to modernize their subjects. Neither the European colonizers nor their sponsored intermediaries attempted to empower the people or encourage any form of pluralistic democratic governance lest it turn anti-imperialist. But colonialism sustained both economic and political underdevelopment. Local authorities, dynastic or military, in turn gained wealth-sustaining autocratic governments-creating a tradition that would endure beyond colonialism.

Yet there were various attempts at modernization in some Islamic societies. The introduction of newspapers and the telegraph by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. made widely evident the “backwardness” of the “Oriental” Other. Two major strategies were developed to pro-actively respond to Western power and its expanding hegemony. Some indigenous leaders and intellectuals did advocate *westernization* and secularization as the surest way to compete with Europe. As the West carved up the Islamic world into various states, some indigenous leaders led modernization/secularization movements of some Islamic societies. Most notable was Ataturk’s secular transformation of post Ottoman Turkey that became the first Muslim country to embrace Western modernism, establish a secular State with rational law, “representative”

government and more or less independent media. And yet Turkish “modernity” still rests on its military that has often intervened to suppress traditionalist elements. Nevertheless we can find elements of modernity in several other Islamic countries: Lebanon’s commercial sector, the Bangladeshi government, the Tunisian education system, and even the Iraqi and Syrian Baath Socialist party can be seen as elements of modernity. Both states educate women.

Secondly, a relatively small circle of intellectuals advocated an *Islamic Modernism*, arguing that Western methods and key institutions, legislatures, bureaucracies and banks could be revised along the lines of Islamic law. (Confucian, Buddhist, Shinto and Hindu societies were more able to embrace secular institutions and practices.) This movement was neither able to influence either the secular political elites of the day nor the conservative Islamic religious authorities. Nor did these ideas reach the uneducated masses. Hence, Islamic development generally became polarized between Westernizers and conservatives. Western social movements from secular nationalism to socialism were often embraced and by certain sub elites, but, insofar as these movements were secular and advocated separation of State, secular law and religion, they typically garnered little mass support and were strongly resisted from both indigenous elites and feared as the harbingers of socialism by imperial powers. In either case they were suppressed.

There were some efforts to foster secular institutions such as the laws and courts, but these efforts were fragile and faced opposition from states, elites and the conservatism of the general population not exposed to alternative understandings. While in many cases there was an expansion of public education and Western science was often taught, in social and cultural areas like law, history and philosophy, traditional Muslim views were taught. In many Islamic communities, *sharia* is still taught as sacred, the only acceptable system of law.

### **Fundamentalism**

To understand the movement toward modernization, we need to note how fundamentalism, *a modern movement*, emerged. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism was the result of many factors beginning with those that have also fostered the growth of Christian fundamentalism, Orthodox Judaism and even Hindu fundamentalism. More specifically, as the

*Fundamentalism Project* has demonstrated, fundamentalism is a response to the rapid social changes, stresses and strains of the secular culture of modernity which, devoid of a religious base, can be seen as existing without transcendental meaning. Fundamentalism provides stable identities in a world in which globalized capital and its mass mediated popular culture create pluralized life worlds with disparate self identities. This mass mediated consumerism extols privatized hedonism and all manners of “sin,” debauchery and perfidy. Individualism and the attenuation of social ties is often seen as civil anarchy, religious apostasy, undermining both the state and its primordial communities such as the family and religion).

As westernizing strategies in Islamic states have either failed and/or were suppressed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, conservative religious responses grew more pronounced generating various Islamic fundamentalist movements. Moreover, within Islamic societies, limited embrace of Western modernization did not yield its promised results. Instead, we have seen the erosion of tribal economies, but without compensatory economic opportunities and population explosions, the result is wide spread poverty. The embrace of education has led to a tremendous expansion of college graduates-many of whom cannot find jobs and instead turn to the mosques and fundamentalist religion. Throughout the Islamic world, elites, secular or theocratic, generals or mullahs, have typically used their power to secure wealth, often through massive corruption. Without a public sphere to organize protest and discontent, Islamic fundamentalism provides a framework to refract secular problems through theological frameworks. Insofar as authoritarian elites have opposed efforts at popular democracy, freedom of expression or the support for human rights, fundamentalism has been a way of challenging states.

With the failure of modernity to bring its promised benefits, conservative Islamic brotherhoods and movements, originally organized to address social justice issues, have attempted to reinvigorate, reform and reestablish Islam as the basis for the revitalization of Islamic states. Religious ways of life and authoritarian social-political institutions hold great sway in Islamic countries. Hence, there is a strong link between religious belief and the resistance to Western modernization among many elites, as well as radical religious movements in the Islamic world. Yet dialectically understood, we will suggest that fundamentalism, as a “voluntary” intermediary organizations, often challenging the state, sometimes strongly suppressed by the state (Egypt, Algeria, Syria), create the condition for the emergence of civil society-

understood as mediating institutions. While they may well oppose the secular culture of modernity, they readily embrace Western technologies and often economic practices. Further, they often provide social services that states cannot or will not provide, for example Hamas or Muslim brotherhood. Finally, fundamentalists often have the critique of corruption and bribery as the business classes—even if their critique is religious rather than practical.

### **Overcoming the Barriers: Trends Towards Islamic Modernity Civil Society**

Benjamin Barber has argued that the modern world can be seen as dialectic between tribalism and political disintegration (*jihad*) and global economic homogenization (McWorld). *Jihad*, replete with parochialism, ethnocentrism and intolerance is quite anti-modern, while globalization is the leading edge of techno-capitalist modernity. But neither promise the ideals of progressive modernity, participatory democracy, universal toleration or personal freedom. While this may be somewhat of an oversimplification, and we do not equate fundamentalism with warrior *jihad*, it nevertheless captures the problematic directions of Muslim societies. Given the many indigenous cultural barriers we noted that have colluded with external forces to maintain authoritarian rule and economic stagnation, we ask, “what is to be done”?

From what has been argued, we suggest that in face of internal and external pressures, intellectual, cultural and political barriers noted can and will be overcome. But cultural transformations cannot rest simply on hope or the intellectual analyses of an outsider. As Marx noted, ideas do not have a life of their own, but are borne by a group—and new and rising groups seek the ideas that will provide them with power. We suggest that there are emerging coalitions that can constitute the intermediate groupings of “civil society” where emerging alliances can join to forge challenges to “weak states” headed by mullahs, ayatollahs, generals or presidents for life, most of which with little legitimacy but strong militaries and police.

There seem to be five groups that might forge the coalitions leading pluralistic “civil societies” that would move Islamic societies away from both conservative traditions and authoritarian rule. We suggest the most important group consists of the *liberal intelligentsia*, typically found in the

state, segments of the professorate, education, press/media e.g. culture producers (artists, writers, film producers), professional organizations and include some liberal Muslim theologians. Many were educated in the West. They generally desire a liberal democracy with a civil society that has space for the free expression of ideas—without fear of *fatwas*. A number of liberal Muslim theologians and secular scholars are recapturing the history of the tolerant past of Islam and reinterpreting and critically evaluating Islam and Islamic society in a modern light. For example, law professor Khaled Abu El Fadl argues that the Quran has many resources for tolerance, respect for diversity and doubt. To recover the classical intellectual resources of Islam, El Fadl admonishes that the current trends of conservatism and extremism must be critiqued. Theologian Tariq Ramadan, who has been characterized as an Islamic Martin Luther, claims that it is very important to understand the distinction between theological interpretations and interpretations of social norms. Ramadan, argues that Islamic teachings on social issues are more of a field of possibilities than fixed statutes, except for explicit prohibitions.

The reclamation of liberal, flexible, interpretive traditions of Islam can open the door for economic and cultural rapprochements with Western practices and values. Similarly, Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Kuds University in Jerusalem has been another such voice of moderation and reconciliation between Islam and the West. Nusseibeh advocates reasoned compromise based on clear-eyed analysis of the interests of all parties involved, which in essence appeals to two essential moments of modernity—self-critical reason plus secular statecraft—as essential to resolving Islamic international relations.

Such intellectuals collectively act as a class or interest group *as well as* role models and culture brokers to larger publics. But further, they impact large numbers of *student youth* that constitute a second interest group disposed to critical views of power, are disposed to activism, and embrace democratization. While such youth groups are most likely to be progressive, without hope for a better life, and/or suppressed by authoritarian governments, they often support fundamentalist movements. Consider Iran as a case in point where college students are among the strongest supporters of moderation. The growing numbers of women students and professionals play important roles in democratization and modernization. The very existence of educated women in professions, business and even government serves to erode the patriarchy that sustains traditional, undemocratic forces.

Thirdly, there are *indigenous business* classes who must deal with transnational corporations (TNCs) and are becoming ever more critical of government regulations, bureaucratic procedures—such as bribery, the absence of transparency and isolation from world markets. They understand that authoritarian governments, indigenous conflict and/or possibilities of war are bad for business. The Palestinian economy is all but moribund, largely dependent on EU charity. Without a just settlement, there is no chance of economic growth.

Fourthly, some *members of elite classes* understand that they need to democratize their societies in order to retain power. Thus we are beginning to witness a number of indigenous elites supporting modernization and democratization. For example, when the Emir of Bahrain, Sheik Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, assumed the throne in 1999, he immediately opened the jails, released all political prisoners and allowed the return of political exiles. More recently, he declared himself king, but with plans to create a constitutional monarchy with democratic elections in which both men and women can run for office and/or vote.

Finally, and this might well come as something of a surprise, we suggest that fundamentalist groups, perhaps not their clerics, have the potential of being agents for modernization. Indeed as noted, they emerge in response to a modernizing influences that they may not be able to stop. Moreover, much of the seeming irrationality and violence of Islamic fundamentalists comes *less* from ideology than from their relative lack of power to redress grievances and often violent suppression by state elites. Many fundamentalist groups do accept an implicit notion of differentiating what is sacred according to *sharia* from the actual political community where politics are the means to realize the common good. While they might reject the theoretical arguments of a political scholar like Abd al-Raziq, they accept the notion that the form of a state is left for people to determine. Thus they would welcome democratic elections as much as the liberal intelligentsia. Indeed, one of the most common ways to moderate fundamentalism is giving them power. When fundamentalists have to run schools, hospitals water supplies and municipal sewage, when they must regulate banks and welcome foreign investments or buy modern technologies, they must increasingly rely on Western technologies and expertise. The Qur'an gives little advice for highway construction or public health. This moderation of fundamentalism can be clearly seen in Iran where the conservative clerics are losing ground to the more moderate clerics who would leave administration to experts, modernize

their society and halt the growing erosion of religion faith as conservative edicts and practices incur more and more scorn and derision from younger more educated populations. In sum, we see that throughout the Muslim world new coalitions are emerging that can enable overcoming the barriers to modernity. A coalition consists of disparate groups who join together and gain strength in numbers yet may each have different agendas, e.g. conservative Christians have little in common with investment bankers yet they must work together to secure Republican victories.

### Overcoming barriers

1) *Legal Barriers* We first noted how Qur'anic commercial law, the Hanafi codes, promoted a mercantile economy but limited economic rationality. The merchant/commercial classes of today, especially those who deal with global corporations on the one hand, find themselves stifled by corrupt government officials and burdensome regulation. Yet they are a growing force demanding the rationalization of commercial law as well as governmental transparency and honest, competent, administrators dependent on salaries rather than *bakeesh* (gifts of appreciation aka bribes). With globalization, the insularity and autarky of the local is ever more eroded and global capital demands rational commercial laws and political stability. Thus following the end of a long and brutal civil war, Beirut is again flourishing. Business classes, especially those educated in the West and/or who deal with global capital understand how their self interest depends on social transformation-modernization. While most Muslim societies tend to be predominantly lower middle class, the more upper middle class businessmen, of the office not the bazaar, understand the need for coalitions to impel modernization.

2) *An Islamic Reformation* Many scholars such as Bernard Lewis, Randall Collins etc have noted that Islam never had a Reformation in which religious schisms might have major consequences. But as was noted, as more and more Muslim elites are either trained in the West or exposed to Western views, a growing number of clerics, scholars and member of the liberal intelligentsia are actively engaged in the recovery of traditions and are reinterpreting Islam to restore the legacies of Averroes and Avicenna to illustrate the precedents and possibilities for a Muslim country to offer a more progressive stance conducive to modernity that remains very much rooted in Islamic traditions. Insofar as clerics, intellectuals and liberal intelligentsia are essential for the emergence of Islamic civil society, we are suggesting that a long stalled



“reformation” is beginning to emerge that will on the one hand create openings and conditions for modernization and democratization, it is unlikely that this will take a secular form. Rather, a uniquely Islamic synthesis is being formed.

3) *Cleric, dynasties and commerce.* The Prophet Muhammad was camel trader, an exemplar of the merchant classes. Throughout much of Islamic history, there was considerable overlap between clerical, political and commercial elites. But whatever else can be said about modernity, it requires an extensive division of labor dependent on education based skills. Thus it become more and more difficult for people to be religious virtuosos, political leaders and business/technical classes with modern skills. Thus while the growth of technological and commercial sectors has been quite limited, insofar as there has been some expansion, it becomes more and more evident that theologians and theologically prepared do not have the skills to run refineries or factories, politics is likely to be ever more a specialized “vocation”, and large scale businesses require those schooled in Western methods of business administration. Thus regardless of specific local factors, there is ever greater division of labor and social differentiation. As such, certain members of the elites are ever more likely to join in those institutions that would transform the social.

4) *Ressentiment:* We noted that *ressentiment* to the West/U.S./Israel is pervasive throughout the Islamic world. Given the legacies of imperialism and current policies of Western governments, Muslims have a number of realistic political grievances ranging from U.S. support for authoritarian governments to unqualified support for Israel. But much of this anger is an outward displacement of the repression maintained by authoritarian governments that blame “others” for failed policies and adversity and maintain repressive policies and human rights abuses. But that said, it is also crucial to consider the role of an unacknowledged shame of backwardness based on internal factors and historical legacies of Islam that have contributed to stagnation.

As Nietzsche noted, the only way to overcome *ressentiment* was to give up the pursuit of revenge, lest one be destroyed by one’s own hatred. But the acknowledgment of one’s own shortcomings requires critical reflexivity that is usually associated with modernity—especially Marxism and psychoanalysis as ways of erasing the deceptions of ideology or defenses (repression). But as we have noted, there are a number moderate modernizing intellectuals that

are pursuing such examinations and are finding fault with certain interpretations of dogma, authoritarian governance, blatant corruption, patriarchy and schools that serve to indoctrinate extremist ideologies rather than impart knowledge and skills. These factors must be addressed lest anger, blame and recrimination endure for centuries.

## Second Letter on Algeria

(AUGUST 22nd, 1837)\*

by  
Alexis de Tocqueville

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Suppose, Sir, for a moment that the emperor of China, landing on the shores of France and at the head of a powerful army, made himself master of our greatest cities and of our capital. And after having destroyed all of the public registers before even having given himself the pain of reading them, destroyed or dispersed all administrators without acquainting himself with their various attributes, he finally rids himself of all state officials from the head of the government to the *gardes champêtres*<sup>at</sup>, the peers, the deputies, and in general of the entire ruling class; and that he exiled them all at once to some faraway country. Do you not think that this great prince, in spite of his powerful army, his fortresses and his fortune, would soon find himself rather bothered in administering the conquered land; that his new subjects, bereft of all those who did or could manage political affairs, would be incapable of governing themselves, while he, coming from the opposite side of the Earth, knows neither the religion, nor the language, nor the laws, nor the customs, nor the administrative procedures of the country and who took care to send away all of those who could have instructed him in these matters, will be in no position to rule them? You will therefore have no difficulty in seeing, Sir, that if the regions of France that are effectively occupied by the conqueror were to obey him, the rest of the country would soon be left to an immense anarchy.<sup>1</sup>

You will see, Sir, that we have done in Algeria precisely what I supposed the emperor of China would do in France.

In spite of the fact that the coast of Africa is separated from Provence by only about 160 leagues of sea, that there are published each year in Europe the accounts of several thousands of voyages to all parts of the world, that here we study assiduously all of the languages of antiquity that are no longer spoken as well as several living languages that we never have the occasion of speaking, we could not meanwhile face the profound ignorance in which we lived, not more than seven years ago, on all that could concern Algeria: we had no clear notion of the different races that lived there, nor of their

customs, we did not know a word of the languages that these people speak; the country itself, its resources, its rivers, its cities, its climate were unknown to us; one could have thought that the whole breadth of the world lay in between us. We know so little even of what regarded warfare, though this was the issue of greatest concern to us at this time, that our generals thought they would be attacked by a cavalry similar to that of the mameluks of Egypt, whereas our main enemy, the Turks of Algiers, have never fought on anything but on foot. It is in ignorance of all of these things that we set sail, which did not stop us from conquering, because on the battlefield victory is to the bravest and the strongest and not to the most knowledgeable. But, after the fighting, it did not take us long to see that to rule a nation it does not suffice to have conquered it.

You remember, Sir, that I had told you previously that the whole government, civil and military, of the Regency was in the hands of the Turks. Barely had we become the masters of Algiers that we hurried to gather all of the Turks without forgetting a single one, from the *Dey* to the last soldier of his militia, and we transported this crowd to the coast of Asia. In order to better eliminate the vestiges of the enemy domination, we took care earlier to tear up or burn all written documents, administrative registers, official or unofficial evidence, that could have kept alive a trace of what had been done before us.<sup>2</sup> The conquest was a new era, and from fear of mixing in an irrational way the past with the present, we even destroyed a great number of the streets of Algiers, with the purpose of rebuilding them according to our methods, and gave French names to all of those that we agreed to conserving. I think, in truth, Sir, that the Chinese of whom I spoke earlier could not have done better.

What is the result of all of this? You can guess without difficulty.

The Turkish government owned in Algiers a great many houses and in the plains a multitude of domains; but its property titles disappeared in the universal wreck of the old order of things. It was found that the French administration, knowing neither what it owned nor what had remained in the legitimate possession of the conquered, was wanting of everything or thought itself reduced to appropriating half hazard what it needed, in spite of law and rights.

The Turkish government peacefully collected the fruit of certain taxes that out of ignorance we were not able to levy in its place, and we were forced to

take the money that we needed from France or to extort it from our unfortunate subjects with methods much more Turkic than any the Turks had ever employed.

If our ignorance was such that the French government became illegitimate and oppressor in Algiers, it also rendered all government outside of itself impossible.

The French had sent the *Caïds* of the *outans* back to Asia. They ignored completely the name, composition, and usage of that arab militia which, as composed of auxiliaries, was used as police and levied taxes under the Turks, and that was called, as I have said, the cavalry of the *Marzem*. They had no idea concerning the division of tribes. They did not know of the existence of the military aristocracy of the *Spahis*,<sup>3</sup> and, of the *marabouts*, it took them quite long to figure out, that when talking of them, one could mean a tomb<sup>4</sup> or a man.<sup>5</sup>

The French did not know any of these things, and to tell the truth, they hardly preoccupied themselves with learning them.

In the place of an administration that they had destroyed down to its roots, they imagined they would substitute, in the districts we had occupied militarily, the French administration.

Try, Sir, I implore you, to picture these agile and untamable children of the desert ensnared in the thousand formalities of our bureaucracy and forced to submit themselves to the inertia, the formality, to the writings and the trifling details of our centralization. We conserved from the old government of the country only the usage of the yatagan and of the stick as ways to police. All of the rest became French.

This applies to the cities and to the tribes that are tied to them. As far as the rest of the inhabitants of the Regency, we did not even try to administer them. After having destroyed their government, we gave them no other.

I would be leaving the the framework that I had laid out if I took it upon myself to write the history of what has happened for the last seven years in Africa. I only wish to prepare the reader to understand it.

For the three hundred years that the Arabs living in Algeria were submitted to the Turks, they had entirely lost the impulse to rule themselves. The leaders among them had been distanced from political affairs by the jealousy of the dominators; the *marabout* dismounted his horse to climb onto a donkey. The Turkish government was a detestable government, but after all it maintained a certain order and, though it tacitly authorized wars between the tribes, it reduced theft and made roads safe. It was furthermore the only link that existed between the diverse peoples, the center at which ended so many divergent rays.

The Turkish government destroyed, with nothing replacing it, the country that could not yet govern itself fell into a terrible anarchy. All of the tribes fell upon one another in an immense confusion, robbery organized everywhere. The very shadow of justice disappeared and each resorted to force.

This applies to the Arabs.

As far as the Cabyles, since they were almost independent from the Turks, the fall of the Turks produced only few effects on them. They stayed vis-à-vis the new masters in an arrangement nearly analogous to the one that they had taken with the former. Only that they became even more inclusive, the inborn hate that they had for strangers coming to combine with the religious horror that they had for Christians whose language, laws, and customs were unknown to them.

Men submit themselves sometimes to humiliation, to tyranny, to conquest, but never for long do they suffer anarchy. There is no people so barbarous as to escape this general law of humanity.

When the Arabs, whom we often looked to vanquish and submit to our will, but never to govern, were subjected for a while to savage intoxication given birth by individual independence, they began to search instinctively to remake what the French had destroyed. We quickly saw appear among them entrepreneurial and ambitious men. Great talents revealed themselves in some of their chieftains, and the multitudes began to herald certain names as symbols of order.

The Turks had pushed the religious aristocracy of the Arabs away from the use of arms and the direction of public affairs. The Turks destroyed, we saw it almost immediately once again become warlike and governing. The most

rapid effect, and also the most certain, of our conquest was to give back to the *marabouts* the political existence that they had lost. They again took up Mohamed's scimitar to fight the infidels and soon used it to govern their fellow citizens: this is a great fact and one which must draw the attention of all those who concern themselves with Algeria.

We have let the national aristocracy of the Arabs be reborn, it is only left to us to use it.

To the west of the province of Algiers, near the frontiers of the empire of Morocco, was living since long ago a family of very famous *marabouts*. Its lineage led straight back to Mohamed himself, and its name was venerated throughout the Regency. At the time when the French took possession of the country, the head of this family was an old man named Mahidin. In addition to his illustrious birth, Mahidin joined the advantage of having been to Mecca and a long history of being energetically opposed to the Turks. His saintliness was greatly venerated and his abilities well known. Once the tribes of the surrounding area began to feel the intolerable malaise which the absence of power causes in men, they went to find Mahidin and proposed to him that he take charge of their affairs. The old man had them gather in a large plain; there, he told them that at his age one had to concern himself with the sky and not the Earth, that he refused their offer, but he urged them to bring their sufferage to one of his youngest sons, which he brought before them. At length he enumerated the qualifications of this one to govern his compatriots; his precocious piety, his pilgrimage to the Holy Lands, his descent from the Prophet; he made known several striking signs of which the sky had made use to designate him among his brothers and he proved that all the ancient prophecies that announced a liberator to the Arabs manifestly applied to him. The tribes proclaimed by unanimous agreement the son of *Mahidin emir-el-mouminin*, that is to say, leader of the believers.

This young man, who then was only 25 years old and of a frail appearance was named Abd-el-Kader.<sup>6</sup>

Such is the origin of this unique leader; anarchy gave birth to his power, anarchy developed it without respite and, with the grace of God and our own,<sup>7</sup> after having given him the province of Oran and that of Tittery, it put Constantine in his hands and made him much more powerful than the Turkish government that he replaced had ever been.

While these events took place in the west of the Regency, the east offered another spectacle.

In the time when the French took Algiers, Constantine Province was being governed by a bey named Achmet. This bey, contrary to all custom, was *couloughli*, meaning the son of a Turkish father and an Arab mother. It was a particular stroke of luck that allowed him, after the taking of Algiers, to stay in power in Constantine with the support of his father's compatriots and later to found his power on the surrounding tribes with the help of his mother's parents and friends.

While all the the rest of the Regency abandoned by the Turks and not occupied by the French fell into the greatest disorder, a certain quality of government therefore was maintained in the provinces of Constantine and Achmet by his courage, his cruelty and his energy; there was founded the empire, solid enough, that we look to restrain or destroy today.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, at this very moment, three powers are present on the soil of Algeria: In Algiers and on various points on the coast, are the French; in the west and to the south an Arab population that after three hundred years awakens and follows a national leader; in the east, the rump Turkish government, represented by Achmet, a stream that continues to run after the source has dried and will soon itself dry up or lose itself in the great flood of Arab nationality. Between these three forces and as though enveloped from all sides by them, meet an array of minor *cabyles* peoples, who escape from any and all influences and play off of all governments.

It would be pointless to extensively research what the French should have done in the time of conquest.

We can only say in a few words that we should have at first simply settled there, and as much as our civilization would permit it, in the place of the conquered; that, far from wanting from the beginning to substitute our administrative procedures for their own, we should have for a while adapted our own, maintained political limitations, taken control of the agents of the defunct government, included its traditions and continued to use its procedures. Instead of exiling the Turks to the coast of Asia, it is obvious that we should have taken care to keep the greatest number of them among



us; bereft of their leaders, incapable of governing on their own, and fearing the resentment of their former subjects, they would not have waited to become our most useful intermediaries and our most zealous friends, as were the *couloughlis* though they were much closer to the Arabs than were the Turks but nevertheless have almost always favored throwing themselves into our arms rather than theirs. Once we had known the language, prejudices, and the customs of the Arabs, after having inherited the respect that men always hold for an established government, it would have become possible for us to return little by little to our customs, and to galicize the country around us.

But today that the mistakes are irrevocably committed, what is there left to do? And what reasonable hopes should we conceive?

We first distinguish with care between the two great races of which we have spoken further above, the *Cabyles* and the Arabs.

When speaking of the *Cabyles*, it is visible that<sup>9</sup> there can be no question of conquering their country or colonizing it: their mountains are, as of now, impenetrable to our armies, and the inhospitable disposition of the inhabitants leaves no security to the isolated European who would there peacefully go to make himself a home.

The country of the *Cabyles* is closed to us, but the soul of the *Cabyles* is open to us and it is not impossible for us to penetrate it.

I saw previously that the *Cabyle* was more positive, less religious, infinitely less enthusiastic than the Arab. In the life of the *Cabyles* the individual is nearly everything, the society nearly nothing, and they are just as far from bending themselves uniformly to the laws of a single government taken from their heart than to adopt our own.

The great passion of the *Cabyle* is the love of material joys, and it is through this that we can and must capture him.

Though given that the *Cabyles* let us penetrate their society much less than do the Arabs, they show themselves much less inclined to make war on us. And even when a few of them raise arms against us, the others do not stop frequenting our markets and still come rent us their services. The cause of this is that they have already discovered the material profit that they can get out of our being neighbors. They find greatly it advantageous to come sell us

their goods and to buy those of ours that can be useful to the kind of civilization that they possess. And, while they are not yet in a state to achieve our well-being, it is already easy to see that they admire it and that they would find it very sweet to enjoy it.

It is obvious that it is by our arts and not by our arms that we will tame such men.

If frequent and peaceful relations continue to be established between us and the *Cabyles*, that the first do not have to fear our ambition and encounter among us a legislation that is simple, clear, and which they are sure will grant for their protection, it is certain that soon they will fear war more even than we do and that this almost invincible attraction that draws natives towards civilized man from the moment that they no longer fear for their liberty will be felt. We will see then that the habits and ideas of the *Cabyles* change without their realizing it, and the barriers closing their country off to us will fall on their own.

The role that we have to play vis-à-vis the Arabs is more complicated and more difficult:

The Arabs are not solidly fixed in one place and their soul is even more nomadic than are their dwellings. Though they are passionately attached to their liberty, they adopted a strong government, and they are keen to form a great nation. And, though<sup>10</sup> they show themselves to be very sensual, immaterial joys are of great value in their eyes, and at every moment the imagination wisks them away towards some ideal good that she discovers for them.

With the *Cabyles*, it is most important to be concerned with questions of civil and commercial equity, with the Arabs of political and religious questions.

There is a certain number of Arab tribes that we can and must govern directly from this moment on and a greater number upon which we must, for the time being, want to obtain only an indirect influence.

After three hundred years the power of the Turks established itself only incompletely over tribes remote from the cities. The Turks nevertheless were Islamic like the Arabs, had habits similar to theirs and had managed to remove the religious aristocracy from public affairs. It is easy to see that what

with us not having any of these advantages and being faced with much greater difficulties, we cannot hope to obtain the level of influence on these tribes that the Turks had nor even approach it. On this point our immense military superiority is almost useless. It makes it possible for us to win, but not to keep under our laws nomadic populations that when the need arises will go deep into the desert where we cannot follow them, leaving us in the middle of the desert where we could not survive.

The object of all our present efforts must be to live in peace with those of the Arabs that we have no present hope of being able to govern, and to organize them in the manner least dangerous to our future gains.

The anarchy of the Arabs, which is so deleterious to these peoples, is vastly damaging to us, because having neither the will nor the power to submit them all at once by our arms, we can hope only to act on them indirectly through contact with our ideas and our arts; which can take place only to the extent that peace and a certain order reign among them. The anarchy pushes these tribes one on the other, throws them without end on us and robs our frontiers of all security.

We have then a great interest in recreating a government among these people and it is perhaps not impossible to succeed in making it so that this government depends partly on us.

Today that the scepter has just left the hands that held it since three centuries ago, no one has an incontestable right to govern nor a good chance now at founding an uncontested power that will last . All of the powers that will establish themselves in Africa will therefore be unstable, and if our support is given with resolution, with justice, and with consistency, the new sovereigns will constantly be driven to resort to it. They will therefore depend in part on us.

We have to aim before anything else at accustoming these independent Arabs to seeing us meddle in their interior affairs and at making ourselves familiar to them. Because we must realize that a powerful and civilized people such as our own exercises solely by virtue of the superiority of its luminaries an almost invincible force on small, more or less barbarous peoples; and that, to force these to incorporate themselves with it, it only needs to be able to establish sustainable relations with them.

But if we have an interest in creating a government with the Arabs of the Regency, we have a much more visible interest in not letting only one government establish itself there. For then the peril would be far greater than the advantage. It is without a doubt very important for us not to leave the Arabs subject to anarchy, but it is even more important for us to not expose ourselves to seeing them aligned all at once against us.

It is with this point of view that the last treaty with Abd-el-Kader and the expedition planned for Constantine are of a nature to arouse certain fears.

Nothing is more desirable than to establish and legitimize the power of the new emir in the province of Oran where his power was already strong. But the treaty concedes to him in addition the government of the *beylik* of Tittery and I cannot stop myself from believing that the expedition that is in preparation will have for a final result of delivering to him the greater part of the province of Constantine.

We can be sure that with the extent of power that Abd-el-Kader has achieved, all of the Arab populations that find themselves without a leader will go to him of their own volition. It is therefore imprudent to destroy or even undermine the Arab powers independent of Abd-el-Kader; it would be better to think of bringing some about if there are not some already. In opposition to all of this, if our campaign in Constantine succeeds, as we have every reason to believe it will, it can only result in destroying Achmet without putting anything in his place. We will overthrow the *couloughli* and we will not be able to succeed him nor give him an Arab successor. Our victory will therefore deliver the tribes that are under Achmet to an independence that they will not wait long to sacrifice in the hands of the emir who neighbors them. We will make anarchy and anarchy will make the power of Abd-el-Kader.

This is what we can foresee from a distance and with our ignorance of the details.

What it is possible to affirm from now with certitude is that we cannot suffer that all of the Arab tribes of the Regency ever recognize the same leader. It is already far too little with two. Our present security, and the care<sup>bt</sup> for our future, demands that we have at least three or four.

Independently of the tribes over which it is in our interest to look only to exercise, for now, an indirect influence, there is also a considerable part of the country that our security as well as our honor oblige us to keep under our immediate forces and to govern without an intermediary.

This is the case where we find a French population and an Arab population that must be made to live peacefully in the same region. The difficulty is great. I am far from believing it, however, to be insurmountable.

I do not pretend to engage here, Sir, with you in a discussion on the specific means that we could use to reach this goal. It is enough for me to indicate in broad terms what appears to me to be the principal conditions of success.

It is obvious for me that we will never succeed if we take it upon ourselves to submit our new Algerian subjects to the rules of the French administration.

We do not impose without consequences new concepts in the realm of political customs. We are more enlightened and more powerful than the Arabs, it is for us to bend at first to a certain point to their ways of life and prejudices. In Algeria as elsewhere, the main duty of a new government is not to create what does not exist, but to use what does. The Arabs lived in tribes two thousand years ago in Yemen; they traversed all of Africa and invaded Spain in tribes, they still live this way in our day. Tribal organization, which is the most tenacious of all human institutions, could not therefore be taken from them now nor long from now without sending a shock through all of their sentiments and ideas. The Arabs appoint their own chiefs<sup>af</sup>, it is necessary to let them keep this privilege. They have a military and religious aristocracy, we should not look to destroy it, but to use it as had done the Turks. Not only is it useful to draw from among the political customs of the Arabs, but it is necessary to modify the rules regarding their civil rights only little by little. For you will know, Sir, that the majority of these rules are outlined in the Koran in such a way that with the Muslims civil and religious law are confused without end.

We must be careful most importantly of all in giving ourselves over to this taste for uniformity that torments us and acknowledge that to dissimilar beings it would just as dangerous as it is absurd to apply the same legislation. In the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, we saw reign at the same time barbaric laws to which the Barbar was submitted and Roman laws to which the Roman was submitted. This model is a good one to follow, it is only this

way that we can hope to pass without perishing through the period of transition that takes place before two peoples of different civilizations can come to meld into a single whole.

Once Frenchmen and Arabs live in the same district, we must resolve to apply to each the legislation that he can understand and has learned to respect. That the political leader be the same for both races, but that for long all of the rest differ, the fusion will come later on its own.

It would be quite necessary as well that the legislation that governs the French in Africa not be exactly the same as the one operating in France. An emerging people can hardly tolerate the same administrative hassles as an old people<sup>d</sup>, and the same slow and multiplied formalities that guarantee at times the security of the latter prevent the former from developing and nearly from being born.

We need in Africa as much as in France, and more than in France, fundamental guarantees for the man who lives in society; there is not a country where it is more necessary to establish individual liberty, respect for property, and the guarantee of all rights than in a colony. But on the other hand a colony needs a simpler administration, more expeditious and more independent from the central power than the one that governs the continental provinces of the empire.

It is therefore necessary to retain with care in Algeria the substance of our political state, but to not hold on too superstitiously to its form; and to show more respect for the spirit than for the letter. Those who have visited Algeria claim the opposite is happening: they say that the smallest details of the administrative methods of the mother country are there scrupulously observed and that often are forgotten the great principles that serve as a foundation for our laws. In acting like this we can hope to increase the number of public officials, but not of colonists.

I imagine, Sir, that now that I reach the end of this too-long letter, you are tempted to ask me, after all, my hopes for the future of our new colony.

This future appears to me to be in our hands, and I will tell you sincerely that with time, perseverance, ability and justice, I do not doubt that we could erect on the coast of Africa a great monument to the glory of our country.

I have told you, Sir, that in the beginning the Arabs were both pastoralists and agriculturists, and that, though they possess all of the land, they only cultivate a negligible part of it. The Arab population is then widely dispersed, it occupies much more land than it can sow every year. The result of this is that the Arabs part with their land willingly and at a low price and that a foreign population can without difficulty settle at their side without their suffering from it.

You then understand from this, Sir, how easy it is for the French, who are richer and more industrious than the Arabs to occupy without violence a large part of the land and to introduce themselves peacefully and in great numbers all the way to the heart of the tribes that neighbor them. It is easy to see ahead to a time in the near future when the two races will be intermingled in this way in many parts of the Regency.

But it is hardly enough for the French to place themselves at the side of the Arabs if they do not manage to establish a lasting bond with them and in the end form from these two races a single people.

Everything that I have learned of Algeria leads me to believe that this outcome is nowhere as chimerical as many people suppose.

The majority of Arabs still have a spirited faith in the religion of Mohamed; meanwhile it is easy to see in this Muslim part of the territory, as in all others, that religious beliefs constantly lose their vigor and become more and more powerless to fight against the interests of this world. Though religion has played a large role in the wars that we have made up to now in Africa, and that they have served as a pretext to the marabouts for taking up their arms once again, we can say that can only be attributed as a secondary cause for these wars. We have been attacked much more as foreigners and conquerors than as Christians and the ambition of leaders more than the faith of the people has put arms into hands against us.<sup>11</sup> Every time that patriotism or ambition does not carry the Arabs against us, experience has shown that religion did not stop them from becoming our most zealous auxiliaries, and, under our flag, they make as brutal of a war against others of their own religion as these make against us.

It is therefore possible to believe that if we prove more and more that under our domination or in our vicinity Islam is not in danger, religious passions will extinguish themselves, and we will only have political enemies in Africa.

We would also be wrong to think that the Arab way of life would make them incapable of adapting to life in a community shared with us.

In Spain, the Arabs were sedentary and agricultural; in the areas surrounding the cities of Algeria, there is a great number among them who build houses and seriously devote themselves to agriculture. The Arabs are not naturally nor necessarily pastoralists. It is true that as one approaches the desert, one gradually sees houses disappear and the tents erected. But it is because as one moves away from the coasts security of property and person diminishes and that, for a people who fear for their existence and for their liberty, there is nothing more convenient than a nomadic way of life. I understand that Arabs like better to wander in the outside air than to stay exposed to the tyranny of a master, but everything tells me that if they could be free, respected, and sedentary, they would not wait to settle themselves. I do not doubt that they would soon take up our way of life if we gave them a lasting interest in doing so.

Nothing finally in the known facts indicates to me that there is incompatibility of sentiment between the Arabs and ourselves. I see on the contrary, that in times of peace, the two races mingle without difficulty, and that as they get to know one another, the distance between them lessens.

Everyday the French develop clearer and more just notions on the inhabitants of Algeria. They learn their languages, familiarize themselves with their customs and we even see some who show a certain spontaneous enthusiasm for them. In addition, the whole of the younger generation of Arabs in Algiers speaks our language and has already in part adopted our customs.

When it was a question in the area surrounding Algiers of defense against robbery by a few enemy tribes, we saw form a national guard composed of Arabs and Frenchmen who joined the same units and who together shared the same exhaustions and dangers.<sup>12</sup>

There is therefore no reason to believe that time cannot succeed in amalgamating the two races. God does not prevent it; only the faults of men could put an obstacle in its way.



Let us not therefore lose hope for the future, Sir; let us not allow ourselves to be stopped by temporary<sup>et</sup> sacrifices while an immense objective comes to light that with perseverant efforts can be reached.

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*\*Translated by Valery DeLame, Rutgers University. This translation is taken from volume II of the Écrits Politiques of the Ouvres Complètes, Gallimard.*

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Tocqueville here seem to be paraphrasing the famous parable of St. Simon

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Esquer. *Les commencement d'un Empire. La prise d'Alger*. Alger, 123, pp. 428-421. The author notes that the occupation of Algiers by French troops was achieved with great disorder, that they neglected to gather administrative, and that many soldiers lit their pipes with government papers. To establish the ownership of properties and of public revenue, it was necessary to take the word of claimants.

<sup>3</sup> Originally, the term *spahi* (from the Persian *spahi*, from which the word *cipaye* in India is also derived) simply designated a soldier. But, in the Ottoman Empire, the name was reserved for a corps of irregular cavalymen, then for the elite cavalry. The Turks organized formations of these cavaliers in Northern Africa.

<sup>4</sup> *Note Tocqueville*. The Marabouts give hospitality near the tomb of their direct ancestor, and this place bears the name of he who is buried there. From this came the error.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of marabout is much more imprecise than thinks here Tocqueville: not only a tomb, but also a pile of rocks, and storks, etc. can be "marabout". Cf. DOUTTÉ, *Les Marabouts*, Paris, 1900.

<sup>6</sup> Mahiedin, father of Abd-el-Kader, belonged to the *Hachem* tribe and was a *marabout* venerated by the powerful brotherhood of the *Kadria*. Once the tribes in the west of Algeria decided to fight against the French settled in Oran, they thought of putting him command. But at the Essebieh Reunion near Mascara (22 November 1832), he, enlightened by a dream, had his son Abd-el-Kader, who had just reached twenty-four years of age, nominated in his place

<sup>7</sup> The Treaty of Desmichels, of February 26<sup>th</sup> 1834, named after the general commnading the forces in Oran, affirmed from the beginning the power of Abd-el-Kader by recognizing his title of *Emir*; in not determining precisely the territorial limits of his power nor the precise obligations of a vassal state; the treaty of Tafna signed by Bugeaut on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1837 ratified<sup>r</sup> it by ceding him the province of Oran and the Tittery.

<sup>8</sup> On El Hadj-Ahmed, bey of Constantine from 1826 to 1837, his tyranny and his cupidity, but also his qualities as a leader, see E. MERCIER, *Histoire de Constantine*, Constantine, 1903, pp. 371-436. For his rapports with France in 1837 see above p.129 n.2

<sup>9</sup> *Var.* : évident

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<sup>10</sup> *Var.*: bien qu'ils

<sup>11</sup> In a study on the moral and intellectual state of Algeria in 1830 (*L'Etat intellectuel et moral de l'Algérie en 1830, Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 1954, pp. 199-212), M. Marcel Emerit writes: "Many French and Arab witnesses tell us that the war did not have, at the beginning of French occupation, the character of a holy war. It was more a movement of resistance on the part of Arabs in the presence of soldiers from a foreign power to whom they had no reason of submitting."

<sup>12</sup> Since Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> 1830, Marshall (*Maréchal*) Clauzel had created in Algiers an urban guard to which could belong Frenchmen and those natives from 20 to 60 years old who owned property or industrial establishments. But, from the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1832, the duke of Rovigo decided to admit to it only Frenchmen. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1836, Clauzel, once again *directeur général*, went back on this decision by creating an African militia to which natives could be admitted with special permission.



EUPOLIS. They are the less hardy, and the more dangerous. But come and sit down with us, for we were speaking of the affairs of Christendom at this day; wherein we would be glad also have your opinion.

POLLIO. My lords, I have journeyed this morning, and it is now the heat of the day; therefore your lordships' discourses had need content my ears very well, to make them intreat mine eyes to keep open. But yet if you will give me leave to awake you, when I think your discourses do but sleep, I will keep watch the best I can.

EUPOLIS. You cannot do us a great favour. Only I fear you will think all our discourses to be but the better sort of dreams; for good wishes, without power to effect, are not much more. But, Sir, when you came in, Martius had both raised our attentions and affected us with some speech he had begun; and it falleth out well to shake off your drowsiness, for it seemed to be the trumpet of a War. And therefore (Martius) if it please you to begin again, for the speech was such as deserveth to be heard twice; and I assure you, your auditory is not a little amended by the presence of Pollio.

MARTIUS. When you came in (Pollio), I was saying freely to these lords, that I had observed how by the space now of half a century of years there had been (if I may speak it) a kind of meanness in the designs and enterprises of Christendom. Wars with subjects like an angry suit for a man's own, that mought be better ended by accord. Some petty acquests of a town, or a spot of territory; like a farmer's purchase of a close or nook of ground that lay fit for him. And although the wars had been for a Naples, or a Milan, or a Portugal, or a Bohemia, yet these wars were bust as the wars of Heathen (of Athens, or Sparta, or Rome) for secular interest or ambition, not worthy the warfare of Christians. The Church (indeed) maketh her missions into the extreme parts of the nations and isles; and it is well: but this is *Ecce unus gladius hic*. The Christian princes and potentates are they that are wanting to the propagation of the Faith by their arms.

Yet our Lord, that said on earth to the disciples, *Ite et praedicate*, said from heaven to Constantine, *In hoc signo vince*. What Christian soldier is there that will not be touched with a religious emulation to see an order of Jesus, or of St. Francis, or of St. Augustine, do such service for enlarging the Christian borders; and an order of St. Jago, or St. Michael, or St. George, only to robe and feast and perform rites and observances? Surely the merchants themselves shall rise in judgment against the princes and nobles of Europe. For they had

made a great path in the seas unto the ends of the world; and set forth ships and forces of Spanish, English, and Dutch, enough to make China tremble; and all this for pearl, or stone or spices; but for the pearl of the kingdom of heaven, or the stones of the heavenly Jerusalem, or the spices of the spouse's garden, not a mast hath been set up. Nay they can make shift to shed Christian blood so far off amongst themselves, and not a drop for the cause of Christ. But let me recall myself; I must acknowledge that within the space of fifty years (whereof I spake) there have been three noble and memorable actions upon the infidels, wherein the Christian hath been the invader. For where it is upon the defensive, I reckon it a war of nature and not of piety. The first was that famous and fortunate war by sea that ended in the victory of Lepanto; which hath put a hook into the nostrils of the Ottomans to this day; which was the work (chiefly) of that excellent Pope, Pius Quintus; whom I wonder his successors have not declared a saint. The second was the noble though unfortunate expedition of Sebastian King of Portugal upon Africk, which was achieved by him alone; so alone, as left somewhat for others to excuse. The last was the brave incursions of Sigismund, the Transylvanian prince; the thread of whose prosperity was cut off by the Christians themselves; contrary to the worthy and paternal monitories of Pope Clement the eighth. More than these, I do not remember.

POLLIO. No! what say you to the extirpation of the Moors of Valentia?

*At which sudden question, Martius was a little at a stop, and Gamaliel prevented him and said:*

GAMALIEL. I think Martius did well in omitting that action, for I, for my part, never approved it; and it seems God was not well pleased with that deed; for you see the Kings in whose time it passed (whom you Catholics count a saint-like and immaculate prince) was taken away in the flower of his age; and the author and great counsellor of that rigor (whose fortunes seemed to be built upon the rock) is ruined; and it is thought by some that the reckonings of that business are not yet cleared with Spain; for that numbers of those supposed Moors, being tried now by their exile, continue constant in the faith and true Christians in all points save in the thirst of revenge.

ZEBEDAEUS. Make not hasty judgment (Gamaliel) of that great action, which was as Christ's fan in those countries; except you could show some such covenant from the crown of Spain, as Joshua made with the Gibeonites,

that that cursed seed should continue in the land. And you see it was done by edict, not tumultuously; the sword was not put into the people's hand.

EUPOLIS. I think Martius did omit it, not as making an judgment of it either way, but because it sorted not aptly with actions of war, being upon subjects, and without resistance. But let us, if you think good, give Martius leave to proceed in his discourse, for methought he spake like a divine in armor.

MARTIUS. It is true (Eupolis) that the principal object which I have before mine eyes, in that whereof I speak, is piety and religion. But nevertheless, if I should speak only as a natural man, I should persuade the same thing. For there is no such enterprise, at this day, for secular greatness and terrene honor, as a war upon infidels. Neither do I in this propound a novelty, or imagination, but that which is proved by late examples of the same kind, though perhaps of less difficulty. The Castilians, the age before that wherein we live, opened the new world; and subdued and planted Mexico, Peru, Chile, and other parts of the West Indies. We see what floods of treasure have flowed into Europe by that action; so that the cense or rates of Christendom are raised since ten times, yea twenty times told. Of this treasure, it is true, the gold was accumulate and store-treasure, for the most part: but the silver is still growing. Besides, infinite is the access of territory and empire by the same enterprise. For there was never a hand drawn that did double the rest of the habitable world, before this; for so a man may truly term it, if he shall put to account as well that that is, as that which may be hereafter by the further occupation and colonizing of those countries. And yet it cannot be affirmed (if one speak ingenuously) that it was the propagation of the Christian faith that was the adamant of that discovery, entry, and plantation, but gold and silver and temporal profit and glory: so that what was first in God's providence was but second in man's appetite and intention.

The like may be said of the famous navigations and conquests of Emanuel, King of Portugal, whose arms began to circle Africk and Asia; and to acquire not only the trade of spices and stones and musk and drugs, but footing and places in those extreme parts of the east. For neither in this was religion the principal, but amplification and enlargement of riches and dominion. And the effect of these two enterprises is now such that both the East and West Indies being met in the crown of Spain, it is come to pass that (as one saith in a brave kind of expression) *the sun never sets in the Spanish dominions, but ever*

*shines upon one part or other of them.* which, to say truly, is a beam of glory (thought I cannot say it is so solid a body of glory) wherein the crown of Spain surpasseth all the former monarchies. So as to conclude, we may see that in these actions upon gentiles or infidels, only or chiefly, both the spiritual and temporal honor and good have been in one pursuit and purchase conjoined.

POLLIO. Methinks, with your favour, you should remember (Martius) that wild and save people are like beasts and birds, which are *ferae naturae*, the property of which passeth with the possession, and goeth to the occupant; but of civil people it is not so.

MARTIUS. I know no such difference amongst reasonable souls, but that whatsoever is in order to the greatest and most general good of people may justify the action, be the people more or less civil. But (Pollio) I shall not easily grant that the people of Peru or Mexico were such brute savages as you intend; or that there should be any such difference between them and many of the infidels which are now in other parts. In Peru, though they were unapparelled people, according to the clime, and had some customs very barbarous, yet the government of the Incas had many parts of humanity and civility. They had reduced the nation from the adoration of a multitude of idols and fancies, to the adoration of the sun. And, as I remember, the Book of Wisdom noteth degrees of idolatry, making that of worshipping petty and vile idols more gross than simply the worshipping of the creature. And some of the prophets, as I take it, do the like, in the metaphor of more ugly and bestial fornication.

The Peruvians also (under the Incas) had magnificent temples of their superstition; they had strict and regular justice; they bare great faith and obedience to their kinds; they proceeded in a kind of martial justice with their enemies, offering them their law, as better for their own good, before they drew their sword. And much like was the state of Mexico, being an elective monarchy. As for those people of the east (Goa, Calcutta, Malaca) they were a fine and dainty people, frugal and yet elegant, thought not militar. So that if things be rightly weighed, the empire of the Turks may be truly affirmed to be more barbarous than any of these. A cruel tyranny, bathed in the blood of their emperors upon every succession; a heap of vassals and slaves; no nobles, no gentlemen, no freemen, no inheritance of land, no stirp of ancient families; a people that it without natural affection, and, as the Scripture saith, that *regardeth not the desires of women.* and without piety or

care towards their children: a nation without morality, without letters, arts, or sciences; that can scarce measure an acre of land, or an hour of the day: base and sluttish in buildings, diets, and the like; and in a word, a very reproach of human society. And yet this nation hath made the garden of the world a wilderness; for that, as it is truly said concerning the Turks, *where Ottoman's horse sets his foot, people will come up very thin.*

POLLIO. Yet in the midst of your invective (Martius) do the Turks this right, as to remember that they are no idolaters: for if, as you say, there be a difference between worshipping a base idol and the sun, there is a much greater difference between worshipping a creature and the Creator. For the Turks do acknowledge God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, being the first person in the Trinity, though they deny the rest.

*At which speech, when Martius made some pause, Zebedaeus replied with a countenance of great reprehension and severity.*

ZEDEBAEUS. We must take heed (Pollio) that we fall not at unawares into the heresy of Manuel Comnenus, Emperor of Graecia, who affirmed that Mahomet's God was the true God; which opinion was not only rejected and condemned by the synod, but imputed to the Emperor as extreme madness; being reproached to him also by the Bishop of Thessalonica, in those bitter and strange words as are not to be named.

MARTIUS. I confess that it is my opinion that a war upon the Turks is more worthy than upon any other gentiles, infidels, or savages, that either have been or now are, both in point of religion and in point of honor; though facility and hope of success mought (perhaps) invite some other choice. But before I proceed, both myself would be glad to take some breath, and I shall frankly desire that some of your lordships would take your turn to speak that can do it better. But chiefly, for that I see here some that are excellent interpreters of the divine law, though in several ways; and that I have reasons to distrust mine own judgment, both as weak in itself and as that which may be overborne by my zeal and affection to this cause; I think it were an error to speak further, till I may see some sound foundation laid of the lawfulness of the action, by them that are better versed in that argument.

EUPOLIS. I am glad (Martius) to see in a person of your profession so great moderation, in that you are not transported, in an action that warms the blood and is appearingly holy, to blanch or take for admitted the point of



lawfulness. And because methinks this conference prospers, if your lordships will give me leave, I will make some motion touching the distribution of it into parts.

*Unto which, when they are all assented, Eupolis said:*

EUPOLIS. I think it would be not sort amiss if Zebedaeus would be pleased to handle the question, Whether a war for the propagation of the Christian faith, without other cause of hostility, be lawful or no, and in what cases? I confess also, I would be glad to go a little further, and to hear it spoken to concerning the lawfulness, not only permissively, but whether it be not obligatory to Christian princes and states to design it; which part, if it please Gamaliel to undertake, the point of the lawfulness taken simply will be complete. Yet there resteth the comparative: that is, it being granted that it is either lawful or binding, yet whether other things be not to be preferred before it; as extirpation of heretics, reconcilements or schisms, pursuit of lawful temporal rights and quarrels, and the like; and how far this enterprise ought either to wait upon these other matters, or to be mingled with them, or to pass by them and give law to them as inferior unto itself?

And because this is a great part, and Eusebius hath yet said nothing, we will by way of mulct or pain, if your lordships think good, lay it upon him. All this while, I doubt much that Pollio, who hath a sharp with of discovery towards what is sold and real and what is specious and airy, will esteem all this but impossibilities, and eagles in the clouds: and therefore we shall all intreat him to crush this argument with his best forces: that by the light we shall take from him, we may either cast it away if it be found but a bladder, or discharge it of so much as is vain and not sperable. And because I confess I myself am not of that opinion, although it be a hard encounter to deal with Polio, yet I shall do my best to prove the enterprise possible, and to show how all impediments may be either removed or overcome. And then it will be fit for Martius (if we do not desert it before) to resume his further discourse, as well for the persuasive, as for the consult touching the means, preparations, and all that may conduce unto the enterprise. But this is but my wish, your lordships will put into better order.

*They all not only allowed the distribution, but accepted the parts: but because the day was spent, they agreed to defer it till the next morning. Only Polio said:*

POLLIO. You take me right (Eupolis); for I am of opinion, that except you could bray Christendom in a mortar, and mould it into a new paste, there is no possibility of a Holly War. And I was ever of opinion, that the Philosopher's Stone, and a Holly War, were but the rendez-vous of cracked brains, that wore their feather in their head instead of their hat. Nevertheless, believe me of courtesy, that if you five shall be of another mind, especially after you have heard what I can say, I shall be ready to certify with Hippocrates, that Athens is mad and Democritus is only sober.

And lest you should take me for altogether adverse, I will frankly contribute to the business now at first. Ye, no doubt, will amongst you diverse and discourse many solemn matters: but do as I shall tell you. This pope is decrepit, and the bell goeth for him. Take order, that when he is dead, there be chosen a Pope of fresh years, between fifty and three-score; and see that he take the name of Urban, because a Pope of that name did first institute the cruzada, and (as with a holy trumpet) did stir up the voyage for the Holy Land.

EUPOLIS. You say well; but be, I pray you, a little more serious in this conference.

*The next day the same persons met, as they had appointed; and after they were set, and that there had past some sporting speeches from Polio, how the war has already began, for that (he said) he had dreamt of nothing but Janizaries and Tartars and Sultans all the night long, Martius said:*

MARTIUS. The distribution of this conference, which was made by Eupolis yesternight, and was by us approved, seemeth to me perfect, save in one point; and that is, not in the number, but in the placing of the parts. For it is so disposed, that Pollio and Eupolis shall debate the possibility or impossibility of the action, before I shall deduce the particulars of the means and manner by which it is to be achieved. Now I have often observed in deliberations, that the entering near hand into the manner of performance and execution of that which is under deliberation hath quite overturned the opinion formerly conceived of the possibility or impossibility. So that things that at the first show seemed possible, by ripping up the performance of them have convicted of impossibility; and things that on the other side have shoed impossible, by the declaration of the means to effect them, as by a back light, have appeared possible, the way through them being discerned. This I speak, not to alter the order, but only to desire Pollio and Eupolis not to speak

peremptorily or conclusively touching the point of possibility, till they have heard me deduce the means of the execution: and that done, to reserve themselves at liberty for a reply. After they had before them, as it were, a model of the enterprise.

*This grave and solid advertisement and caution of Martius was much commended by them all, whereupon Eupolis said:*

EUPOLIS. Since Martius hath begun to refine that which was yesternight resolved, I may the better have leave (especially in the mending of a proposition which was mine own) to remember an omission, which was more than a misplacing. For I doubt we ought to have added or inserted into the point of lawfulness, the question how far a Holy War is to be pursued, whether to displanting and extermination of people? And again, whether to enforce a new belief, and to vindicate or punish infidelity, or only to subject the countries and people; and so by the temporal sword to open a door for the spiritual sward to enter, by persuasion, instruction, and such means as are proper for souls and consciences? But it may be, neither is this necessary to be made a part by itself; for that Zebedaeus, in his wisdom, will fall into it as an incident to the point of lawfulness, which cannot be handled without limitations and distinctions.

ZEBEDAEUS. You encourage me (Eupolis), in that I perceive how in your judgement (which I do so much esteem) I ought to take that course which of myself I was purposed to do. For as Martius noted well that it is but a loose thing to speak of possibilities without the particular designs; so is it to speak of lawfulness without the particular cases. I will therefore first of all distinguish the cases; though you shall give me leave in the handling of them not to sever them with too much preciseness; for both it would cause needless length, and we are not now in the arts or methods, but in a conference. It is therefore first to be put to question in general (as Eupolis propounded it) whether it be lowful for Christian princes or states to make an invasive war, only and simply for the propagation of the faith, without other cause of hostility, or circumstance that may provoke and induce the war? Secondly, whether, it being made part of the case that the countries were once Christian and members of the Church, as in ancient partimony of Christ?

Thirdly, if it be made a further part of the case, that there are yet remaining in the countries multitudes of Cristians, whether it be not lawful to make a war for the purging and recovery of consecrate places, being now polluted

and profaned; as the Holy City and Sepulcher, and such other places of principal adoration and devotion? Fifthly, whether it be not lawful to make a war for the revenge or vindication of blasphemies and reproaches against the Deity and our blessed Saviour; or for the effusion of Christian blood, and cruelties against Christians, though ancient and long since past; considering that God's visits are without limitation of time, and many times do but expect the fulness of the sin? Sixthly, it is to be considered (as Eupolis now last well remembered) whether a Holy War (which, as in the worthiness of the quarrel, so in the justness of the prosecution, ought to exceed all temporal wars) may be pursued, either to the expulsion of people or the enforcement of consciences, or the like extremities; or how to be moderated and limited; lest whilst we remember we are Christians, we forget that others are men? But there is a point that precedeth all these points recited; nay, and in a manner dischargeth them, in the particular of a war against the Turk; which point, I think, would not have come into my thought, but that Martius giving us yesterday a representation of the empire of the Turks, with no small vigour of words (which you, Pollio, called an invective, but was indeed a true charge) did put me in mind of it: and the more I think upon it, the more I settle in opinion, that a war to suppress that empire, though we set aside the cause of religion, were a just war.

*After Zebedaeus had said this, he made a pause, to see whether any of the rest would say anything; but when he perceived nothing but silence and signs of attention to what he would further say, he proceeded thus:*

ZEBEDAEUS. Your lordship will not look for a treatise from me, but a speech of consultation; and in that brevity and manner will I speak. First, I shall agree, that the cause of a war ought to be just, so the justice of that cause ought to be evident; not obscure, not scrupulous. For the first consent of all laws, in capital causes the evidence must be full and clear; and of so where one man's life is in question, what say we to a war, which is ever sentence of death upon many? We must beware therefore how we make a Moloch an heathen idol of our blessed Saviour in sacrificing the blood of men to him by an unjust war. The justice of every action consisteth in the merits of the cause, the warrant of the jurisdiction, and the form of the prosecution. As for the inward intention, I leave it to the court of heaven. Of these things severally, as they may have relation to the present subject of a war against infidels, and namely, against the Turk is lawful, both by the laws of the nature and nations. And by the law divine, which is the perfection of the other two. As for the laws positive and civil of the Romans, or other

whatsoever, they are too small engines to move the weight of this question. And therefore, in my judgment, many of the late Schoolmen (though excellent men) take not the right way in disputing the question; except they had the gift of Navius, that they could *cotem nauacula scindere, hew stones with pen-knives*.

First, for the law of nature. The philosopher Aristotle is no ill interpreter thereof. He hath set many men on work with a witty speech of *natura dominus*, and *natura servus*, affirming expressly and positively, *that from the very nativity some things are born to rule, and some things to obey*. Which oracle hath been taken in divers senses. Some have taken it fir a speech of ostentation, the entitle the Grecians to an empire over the barbarians; which indeed was better maintained by his scholar, Alexander. Some have taken it for a speculative platform, that reason and nature would that the best should govern; but not in any wise to create a right. But for my part, I take it neither for a brag nor for a wish; but fir a truth, as he limiteth it. For he saith, that is there can be found such an inequality between man and man as there is between man and beast or between soul and body, it inveteth a right to government, which seemeth rather an impossible case that an untrue sentence. But I hold both the judgement true, and the case possible; and such as hath had and hath a being, both in aprticular men and nations. But ere we go further, let us confine ambiguities and mistakings, that they trouble us not. First, to say that the more capable. Or the better deserver, hath a being, hath such right to govern as he may compulsorily bring under the less worthy, is idle. Men will never agree upon it, who is the more worthy. For it is not only in order of nature for him to govern that is the more intelligent, as Aristotle would have it, but there is no less required for government, courage to protect; and above all, honesty and probity of the will, to abstain from injury. So fitness to govern is a perplexed business. Some men, some nations, excel in the one ability, some in the other. Therefore the position which I intend is not in the comparative, that the wiser or the stouter or the juster nation should govern; but in the privative, that where there is an help of people (though we term it a kingdom or state) that is altogether unable or indigh to govern, there it is just cause of war for another nation, that is civil or policed, to subdue them: and this, though it were to be done by Cyrus or a Caesar, that were no Christian.

The second mistaking banished is, that I understand not this of a personal tyranny, as was the state of Rome under a Caligula or a Nero or a Commodus: shall the nation suffer for that wherein they suffer? But when

the constitution of the state and the fundamental customs and laws of the same (if laws they may be called) are against the laws of nature and nations, then, I say, a war upon them is lawful. I shall divide the question into three parts. First, whether there be, or may be any nation or society of men, against whom it is lawful to make a war without a precedent or provocation? Secondly, what are those breaches of the law of nature and nations which do forfeit and devest all right and title in a right to govern? And thirdly, whether those breaches of the law of nature and nations be found in any nation at this day; and namely, in the empire of the Ottomans? For the first, I hold it clear that such nations or states or societies of people, there may be and are. There cannot be a better ground laid to declare this, than to look into the original donation of government. Observe it well, especially the inducement of preface. Said God: *Let us make man after our own image, and let him have domination over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the land, etc.* Hereupon De Victoria, and with him some others, infer excellently, and extract a most true and divine aphorism, *Non fundatur dominium nisi in imagine Dei.* Here we have the charter of foundation: it is now the more easy to judge of the forereiture or receizure. Deface he image, and you devest the right.

But what is this image, and how is it defeated? The Poor Men of Lyons, and some fanatical spirits, will tell you that the image of God is putiry, and the defacement sin. But this subverteth all government: neither Adam's sin, or the curse upon it, deprive him of his rule, but left the creatures to a rebellion or reluctance. And therefore if you note it attentively, when this charter was renewed unto Noah and his sons, it is not by the words, You shall have domination; but, Your fear shall be upon all the beasts of the land, and the birds of the air, and all that moveth: not regrating the sovereignty, which stood firm, but protecting is against the reluctance. The sound interpreters therefore expound this image of God, of Natural reason; which if it be totally or mostly defaced, the right of government doth cease; and if you mark all the interpreters well, still tey doubt aof the case, and not of the law. But this is properly to be spoken to in handling the second point, when we shall define of the defacements.

To go on. The prophet Hosea, in the person of God, saith of the Jews: They have reigned, but not by me; they have set a signory over themselves, but I knew nothing of it. Which place proverth plainly that there be governments which God doth not avow. For though they be ordained by his secret providence, yet they are not knowledged by his revealed will. Neither can this

be meant of evil governors or tyrants; for they are often avowed and established as lawful potentates; but of some perversness and defection in the very nation itself; which appeareth most manifestly, in that the prophet speaketh of the *signory in abstracto*, and not of the person of the lord. And although some heretics, of those we spake of, have abused this text, yet the sun is not soiled in passage. And again, if any man infer upon the words of the prophets following (which declare this rejection, and to use the words of the text, rescision of their estate, to have been for their idolatry) that by this reason the governments of all idolatrous nations should be also dissolved (which is manifestly untrue); in my judgment is followeth not. For the idolatry of the Jews, then and the idolatry of the heathen then and now, are sins of a far different nature, in regard of the special covenant and the clear manifestations wherein God did contract and exhibit himself to that nation.

This nullity of policy and right of estate in some nations is yet more significantly expressed by Moses in his canticle, in the person of God, to the Jews: *Ye have incensed me with gods that are no gods, and I will incense you with a people that are no people.* such as were (no doubt) the people of Canaan, after seisin was given of the land of promise to the Israelites. For from that time their right to the land was dissolved, though they remained in many places unconquered. By this we may see that there are nations in name, that are no nations in right, but multitudes only, and swarms of people. For like as there are particular persons utlawed and proscribed by civil laws of several countries; so are there nations that are utlawed and proscribed by the law of nature and nations, or by the immediate commandment of God. And as there are kings *de facto*, and not *de jure*, in respect to the nullity of their title; so are there nations that are occupants *de facto*, and not *de jure*, of their territories, in respect of the nullity of their policy of government.

But let us take in some examples into the midst of our proofs, for they will prove as much, as put after, and illustrate more. It was never doubted but a war upon pirates may be lawfully made by any nation, though not infested, though not infested or violated by them. Is it because they have not *certas sedes* or *lares*? In the Piratical War which was achieved by Pompey the Great, and was his truest and greatest glory, the pirates had some cities, sundry ports, and a great part of the province of Cilicia; and the pirates now being, have a receptacle and mansion in Algiers. Beasts are not the less savage because they have dens. Is it because the danger hovers as a cloud, that a man cannot tell where it will fall and so it is every man's case? The reason is good; but it is not all, nor that which is most alleged. For the true received reason

is, that pirates are *communes humani generis hostes*, whom all nations are to prosecute, not so much in the right of their own fears, as upon the band of human society. For as there are formal and written leagues, respective to certain enemies; so is there a natural and tacit confederation amongst all men against the common enemy of human society. So as there needs no intimation or denunciation of the war; there needs no request from the nation grieved: but all these formalities the law of nature supplies in the case of pirates. The same is the case of rovers by land; such as yet are some cantons in Arabia; and some petty kings of the mountains, adjacent to straits and ways. Neither is it lawful only for the neighbor princes, to destroy such pirates or rovers; but if there were any nation never so far off, that would make it an enterprise of merit and true glory (as the Romans that made a war for the liberty of Grecia from a distant and remote part) no doubt they mought do it.

I make the same judgment of that kingdom of the Assassins now destroyed, which was situate upon the borders of Saraca; and was for a time a great terror to all the princes of the Levant. There the custom was, that upon the commandment of their king, and blind obedience to be given thereunto, and of the was to undertake, in the nature of votary, the insidious murder of any prince or person upon whom the commandment went. This custom, without all question, made their whole government void, as an engine built against human society, worthy by all men to be fired and pulled down. I say the like of Anabaptists of Munster; and this, although they had not been rebels of the empire: and put case likewise that they had done no mischief at all actually; yet if there shall be a congregation and consent of people that shall hold all things to be lawful, not according to any certain laws or rules, but according to the secret and variable motions and instincts of the spirit; this is indeed no nation, no people, no signory, that God doth know; any nation that is civil and policed may (if they will not be reduced) cut them off from the face of the earth. Now let me put a feigned case (and antiquity makes it doubtful whether it were fiction or history) of a land of Amazons, where the whole government public and private, yea the militia itself, was in the hands of women.

I demand, is not such a preposterous government (against the first order of nature, for women to rule over men) in itself void, and to be suppressed? I speak not of the reign of women (for that is supplied by counsel and subordinate magistrates masculine) but where the regiment of state, justice, families, is all managed by women. And yet this last case differeth from the



other before; because in the rest there is terror of danger, but in this there is only error of nature. Neither should I make any great difficulty to affirm the same of the Sultanry of the Mamaluches; where slaves, and none but slaves, bought for money and of unknown descent, reigned over families of freemen. And much like were the case, if you suppose a nation where the custom were, that after full age the sons should expulse their fathers and mothers out of their possessions, and put them to their pensions: for these cases, of women to govern men, sons of fathers, slaves freemen, are much in the same degree; all being total violations and perversions of the laws of nature and nations. For the West Indies, I perceive (Martius) you have read Garcilazzo de Viega, who himself was descended of the race of the Incas, a Mestizo, and is willing to make the best of the virtues and manners of his country: and yet, in truth, he doth it soberly and credibly enough. Yet you shall hardly edify me, that those nations might not by the law of nature have been subdued by any nation that had only policy and moral virtue; though the propagation of faith (whereof we shall speak of the proper place) were set by, and not made part of the case. Surely their nakedness (being with them, in most parts of that country, without all veil or covering) was a great defacement: for in the acknowledgement of nakedness was the first sense of sin; and the heresey of the Adamites was ever accounted an affront of nature. But upon these I stand not; nor yet upon their idiocy in thinking that horses did eat their bits, and letters speak, and the like: nor yet upon their sorceries, which are (almost) common to all idolatrous nations.

But, I say, their sacrificing, and more especially their eating of men, is such an abomination, as (methinks) a man's face should be a little confused, to deny that this custom, joined with the rest, did not make it lawful for Spaniards to invade their territory, forfeited by the law of nature; and either to reduce them or displant them. But far be it from me yet nevertheless, to justify the cruelties which were at first used towards them: which had their reward soon after, there being not one of the principal of the first conquerors, but died a violent death himself; and was well followed by the deaths of many more. Of examples enough: except we should add the labors of Hercules; an example which, though it be flourished with much fabulous matter, yet so much it hath, that it doth notably set forth the consent of all nations and ages in the approbation of the extirpating and debellating of giants, monsters, and foreign tyrants, not only as lawful, but as meritorious even of divine honor. And this although the deliverer came from then one end of the world unto the other.

Let us now set down some arguments to prove the same; regarding rather weight than number, as in such a conference as this is fit. The first argument shall be this. It is a great error, and a narrowness or straitness of mind, if any man think that nations have nothing to do with one another, except there be either a union in sovereignty or a conjunction in pacts or leagues. There are other bands of society, and implicit confederations. That of colonies, or transmigrants, towards their mother nation. *Gentes unius labii* is somewhat; for as the confusion of tongues was a mark of separation, so the being of one language is a mark of union. To have the same fundamental laws and customs in chief is yet more, as it was between the Grecians in respect of the barbarians. To be of one sect or worship, if it be a false worship, I speak not of it, for that is but *fratres in malo*. But above all these, there is the supreme and indissoluble consanguinity and society between men in general: of which the heathen poet (whom the apostle calls to witness) saith, *We are all his generation*. But much more, we Christians, unto whom it is revealed in particularity, that all men came from one lump of earth, and that two singular persons were the parents from whom all generations of the world are descended.

We (I say) ought to acknowledge that no nations are wholly aliens and strangers the one to the other; and not to be less charitable than the person introduced by the comic poet, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Now if there be such a tacit league or confederation, sure it is not idle; it is against somewhat, or somebody: who should they be? Is it against wild beasts? Or the elements of fire and water? No, it is against such routs and shoals of people, as have utterly degenerate from the laws of nature; as have in their very body and frame of estate a monstrosity; and may be truly accounted (according to the examples we have formally recited) common enemies and grievances of mankind; and disgraces and reproaches to human nature. Such people, all nations are interested, and ought to be resenting, to suppress; considering that the particular states themselves, being the delinquents, can give no redress. And this, I say, is not to be measured so much by the principles of jurists, as by *lex charitatis*, *lex proximi*, which includes the Samaritan as well as the Levite; *lex filiorum Adae de massa una*, upon which original laws this opinion is grounded: which to deny (if a man may speak freely) were almost to be a schismatic in nature.

[The rest was not perfected.]

# A Clash of Civilizations or Fundamentalisms?

## A Conversation with Tariq Ali

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**T**ariq Ali, an editor at the *New Left Review* and a London based film maker, playwright and an author of more than a dozen books on politics and world history and fiction. He has been an active observer and critic of the interpenetration of the West and the Islamic societies. He was educated in Pakistan as well as at Oxford University. His new book, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, has just been released from Verso Press.

This interview was held in March, 2002 with Michael J. Thompson of *Logos*

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**Q:** Much attention has turned to the issue of Islamic fundamentalism—its historical roots and sociological causes—since events of September 11th. Views have been divided primarily among three different positions: (a) radical fundamentalism is a function of political repression by Islamic states; (b) it is a phenomenon inherent to the religion of Islam itself—as Salmon Rushdie has said, “the problem is Islam”; and (c) it is a reactionary movement against Western imperialism. What are your views on sources of Islamic fundamentalism?

**Tariq Ali:** Historically, all religions have harbored a fundamentalist layer. The early English settlers in North America were Protestant fundamentalists. It was the same tradition that challenged the monarchy and fueled the passions which led to the English Revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Its Catholic counterpart led the Reconquest in the Iberian Peninsula, after which it took South America. Islam, too, had a fundamentalist faction, but this was mainly concerned with fighting other Muslims. The Islamic collapse in Spain is partially explained by this fact.

To say the “problem is Islam” is fatuous and ahistorical. Islam encompasses a culture under which a billion and more Muslims live. Most of them are hostile to religious extremism. Radical Islam today is a direct result of the cold war policies of the U.S. when they used it as a bulwark against the Communist enemy. They did so directly in the case of Afghanistan and indirectly during the '50s, '60s and '70s when they used the Saudis as a conduit. Here the state religion was Wahabbism, an ultra-sectarian and virulently puritanical streak within Islam. Wahabbi preachers, bloated with petro-dollars, were dispatched all over the world with the approval of Washington. This is the paradox. The reactionary movement was backed by Western imperialism and later dumped. Elements within it (the Frankenstein tendency) then broke with their patrons and sought to challenge pro-U.S. regimes in the Muslim world. Because of uncritical U.S. support for Israel, there is a real hatred and anger in the Arab world. By striking at U.S. targets, the radical Islamists were showing their own people that they could hit the Americans, unlike the weak and corrupt regimes in the region.

The West colluded in the destruction of secular nationalist and socialist currents in the Muslim world, and created a vacuum which has been partially filled by a Frankenstein tendency, but even today I'm completely convinced that in a free election the Islamists would lose in the bulk of the Muslim world.

*Q:* Why are there no republics in the Islamic states? Do you see any prospects for democracy in Islamic states and if so, under what conditions?

*A/:* Most Muslim countries are Republics. The only monarchies are Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf States. In every case they are creatures of Washington. They survive only because of U.S. support. Democracy in Islamic states is not a problem any more than it is in the West. Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh have regularly held elections. The problem here is that in this epoch of neo-liberal economics and IMF rules, democratic regimes are unable to deliver anything. Apart from lining their own pockets, the politicians do little else. So there is a general disillusionment with democracy itself. However, in the Arab world, both the pro-U.S. regimes and those opposed to them have discouraged democracy and punished dissent. This has little to do with Islam.

*Q:* Considering the undemocratic, and fairly repressive nature of many Islamic regimes, why hasn't peaceful dissent become a more common

practice—as it has been in Iran, for instance—in Islamic states as a whole? Is there a deficiency in a civil society that may be necessary for such a movement, or is there some other factor limiting this phenomenon?

*Ali:* Because it is punished. Read the poets, they'll tell you. Nizar Qabbani has written dozens of poems complaining about the lack of freedom. Abder Rehman Munif's novels (the *Cities of Salt* tetralogy) are a brilliant critique of Saudi despotism. Iran is different because its Revolution raised expectations which were never fulfilled and now an angry generation (the bulk of the population is under 35) is confronting the clerics. This was an organic development, not the result of a military intervention by the West. So the clerics have no excuses. What strengthened them temporarily was the "axis of evil" speech by George W. Bush. I'm convinced that there would be similar developments in the long run if the West did not interfere in the region.

*Q:* Concerning the peace process in Israel, what are your thoughts on: (a) the Oslo Accords, what problems/issues do you have with it; (b) the current Saudi proposal; and finally (c) what would be your proposal?

*Ali:* I never believed in the Oslo Accords even though I wanted peace and a settlement. The Accords created shrivelled little Bantustans. In terms of decolonization it was a pathetic exercise and it collapsed *not* because of Arafat, but because of Zionist intransigence. In the words of a revisionist Zionist historian Benny Morris, "like all occupations, Israel's was founded on brute force, repression and fear, collaboration and treachery, beatings and torture chambers, and daily intimidation, humiliation and manipulation." The Accords changed very little. The Israeli Army remained in control of 60 percent of the West Bank, and partial control of another 27 percent. Add to this the settler enclaves built on stolen land and controlling 80 percent of all water in the occupied territories. This combined with Arafat's corrupt and authoritarian regime led to despair. Sharon's provocation was well timed.

The Saudi proposal was orchestrated by Colin Powell and Anthony Zinni to open up a new dialogue which might temporarily halt the violence and enable the U.S. to take Iraq. It didn't work. My ideal situation is a bi-national Israel/Palestine, but Zionists can never accept this because they fear the loss of their majority. This is the big difference between Zionist colonization and the more traditional sort. The Zionists have nowhere to go. In these circumstances realism dictates a separate Palestinian state with Israel withdrawing to its pre-1967 borders. Personally I would make the new

Palestinian state incorporate Jordan as well. This should be a sovereign, independent state, with inviolable frontiers. I think such a solution could work.

*Q:* What is the extent of anti-Semitism among Palestinians?

*A/i:* Palestinians include Muslims and Christians. Prior to the formation of Israel there was little anti-Semitism. The Jewish communities in Egypt, Syria and Iraq co-existed peacefully with Christians and Muslims. The brutal creation of the Zionist entity changed that world forever. Anti-semitism undoubtedly exists, just like many blacks in the U.S. admit they can never trust whites.

*Q:* The Left's stance on judging non-Western cultures generally shies away from critique. One thinks, in this regard, of the oppression of Muslim women and the more postmodern defense of cultural relativism. Does a left critical perspective need to change this tendency?

*A/i:* Yes, definitely. I have always opposed cultural relativism. My new book *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* is a critique of all that. I would stress, however, that one can't criticize religion in the East while ignoring its presence in the West. That too is a form of cultural relativism. Take the United states, for example. It is saturated with religion—90 percent of the population regularly declare their belief in a deity. Secularization has proceeded far more slowly than in Europe. Religion is a major marker not so much of immigrant communities, but rather of the dominant Anglo community itself divided into different churches and sects of competing brands of piety or bigotry.

Since capitalism is taken for granted on all sides, the political realm is marked by few or no significant ideological oppositions of a secular sort. But religious passions run high on issues like abortion, something that is unknown in most of Europe. The current President and Attorney General are born-again Christians, and quite bigoted. Critiques of Islam don't sound convincing when mouthed by them.

*Q:* Is there any coherent left political force in the Islamic world or are most radical groups swallowed in Islamism?

*Ali:* The left has been destroyed in this world. It may rise again, but not in the immediate future. Many radicals are attracted to the Islamists because nobody else is doing anything.

*Q:* What are your thoughts on Orientalism? Or, should we perhaps speak more about an “Occidentalism”: a predominantly western set of values and institutions that Islamic states are reacting against?

*Ali:* What the populations are reacting against is *not* democracy or press freedom or dissent, but the double standards of an empire which always acts in its self-interests. Double standards are, as a result, genetically embedded in all empires, including the American. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the West did not back the Enlightenment in the Muslim world. They backed its opposite. Now they complain that this world is derelict of values. This is nonsense. The West has played a part in creating the vacuum. Wars make things worse not better.

*Q:* Marxism sees religion as alienation. Should atheism be an important component of an Islamic left? If there really cannot be any moral autonomy for the individual within a predominantly religious framework, how can there be any self-determination of workers or of politically oppressed groups in general?

*Ali:* I am an atheist and there are millions of us in the Muslim world. What is needed is an Islamic Reformation that sweeps away the cobwebs and lays the basis for a separation between state and religion. Incidentally this separation has existed in Nasser’s Egypt and in Syria and Iraq today, but it needs to be institutionalized. This can’t be done by force, but through the will of the people and, as I said earlier, Iran could be a good model.

*Commentary :*  
Authentic Anti-Americanism is True Americanism\*

by  
Dick Howard

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Anti-Americanism is usually identified with a Left European perspective, that as a result manifests its archaism and absence of political imagination in its inability to face the future and to recognize the novelty of modern social life. Nothing could be more true. But one should not forget that stupidity is the thing the world shares most—for the Right is far from being exempt from the same allergies, which it directs against a materialist civilization geared uniquely toward success. This shared anti-Americanism expresses the shared rejection of a democratic and egalitarian society that rejects any higher authority and gives criticism its free reign. What is rejected is a unique and united republic whose values are the inherited values of a tradition which proceeds and defines us. The Left and the Right see in America an archaic capitalist society rebelling against all solidarity; but in fact they fear the force of attraction exercised by that society. And neither understands the values of the tradition that it incarnates.

Put differently: If the German socialists at the time of the Weimar Republic denounced anti-Semitism as socialism for fools, our contemporaries should criticize the anti-Americanism that leads to support for bin Laden as anti-imperialism for fools. Reduced to a slogan, anti-Americanism expresses an anti-democratic reflex that is not recognized for what it is. This may well be because true anti-Americanism is a form of anti-democratic politics produced by the process of democracy itself.

Writing in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Jaques Julliard criticizes what he calls the “poverty of anti-Americanism” on the part of a Left that shows itself incapable of appreciating the technological conquests of modern civilization, (November 13, 2001). But he is aware that a similar critique is found also on the Right, which supports a traditional communitarian life that seems to guarantee social solidarity. A similar point was made already by the great



German social theorist, Karl Mannheim, writing in exile in England in 1936 in *Ideology and Utopia*. This coincidence suggests that it is necessary to search further into the origins of the anti-Americanism that reappeared once again after September 11th.

Anti-Americanism has always attained its most virulent form in the United States. The American language utilizes an expression that is foreign to other languages: Un-American. Can one imagine a label such as un-French? To what end? This word primarily serves as a political means of denouncing one's enemy. Thus, the Congressional Committee that conducted the infamous hearings on communist infiltration of American life was called the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The word also reappears frequently in partisan discourse, above all in difficult times.

A German might object that Hitler was partial to the expression *Un-deutsch*, just as he criticized "degenerate art." But this use of the expression only serves to make clear its distinct American implications. Hitler was referring to a German *essence*, which was supposedly betrayed by its critics. In the American context, the concept "American" refers clearly to the fact that America is a nation that is defined—and defines itself—by its values. A new nation, founded by willing immigrants seeking freedom (including freedom of worship), America was a nation whose existence is guaranteed neither by its past or present. Like the biblical city on a hill, it lends itself to the admiration of the world. But "values" do not lend themselves to a precise definition—and, more importantly, "values" do not make room for legitimate compromise. That is why the city on the hill could transform its isolationist politics into an aggressive unilateralism that is incapable of recognizing the traditions and values of other nations.

In the midst of the flood of concurrent definitions of American values, anti-Americanism can also represent a sort of (ultimate) weapon in political-ideological combat. American democracy is a society where nothing is fixed, where what is achieved today can disappear tomorrow, and where the legacies passed on by tradition become difficult burdens to bear. These phrases carry a Tocquevillean accent, but our modernity adds a dimension to the older analysis, one that goes beyond what Tocqueville describes under the heading "manners [*moeurs*]." There exists also a competition among *values*, where one sees that democracy gives rise to hateful passions, desires impossible to appease, and worries that touch the values which make up its constantly self-

transforming and always unstable essence. In this way, democracy in America constantly produces its own anti-Americanism.

One still has to identify the nature of this self-critique. We can try to understand what is at stake by means of a kind of parlor game. Can you name the four books published in English during the year 1776 that not only maintain their relevance today, but conserve also their capacity to explain both America and its unique form of anti-Americanism? Each of them points at once to the strength of this peculiar country, and a weakness that could undermine it from within.

The first of these writings is obviously the Declaration of Independence, drawn up by Thomas Jefferson. Proclaiming the values that “we hold to be self-evident” and which consist of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” this affirmation of natural rights would become a precursor of the Declaration formulated 20 years later in France. But the idea of the “pursuit” of a happiness that always seems to remain on the horizon, and that flees just at the moment that one is about, finally, to catch it, is perplexing and in the end unsatisfactory. We need to go further.

The second work of 1776 is located precisely in the (self-) questioning process set forth by the Declaration of Independence. It is *The Wealth of Nations*, in which Adam Smith explained not only the functioning of the “invisible hand” but also, and above all, where he becomes the great apologist for the social division of labor. But Smith, who was also a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow and who participated in the now-forgotten (or at best neglected) movement called the “Scottish Enlightenment,” could not ignore the human ravages which resulted from the increasing division of labor; society runs the risk, he says, of “creating a nation of helots.” Therefore, the prophet of unconstrained capitalism is constrained to recognize that this mode of production can only maintain itself with the help of something like the welfare state.

We are thus led to discover the third work from 1776: this is the *Fragment on Government* in which Jeremy Bentham presents for the first time his utilitarian premises. If unconstrained capitalism and the welfare state seem to co-exist in Smith, we know very well that it is necessary to choose between them when faced with concrete circumstances. Utilitarianism provides a

method which permits the rationalization of such a choice, which cannot depend on the relations of brute force nor expect the solution from the application of universal human rights to a specific problem whose particularity does not lend itself to such a level of generality. But utilitarianism is also in its own way a universalism, for the goods and the ills that it believes it is able to measure and to calculate are in the end the result of a reification which treats people as things, each having the same weight as the other. All reflection on values is absent from this calculus, which methodically levels them to a single standard which cannot itself be evaluated or justified.

This problem of justification leads us finally to the most surprising of the four works of which we have been speaking: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by Edward Gibbon. The values that are at issue here are not those that can be simply affirmed and which thereby permit one to constitute a fixed identity. They are rather those values whose fleeting fragility constantly challenges the values that we thought were fixed once and for all. Gibbon's thesis is familiar: those republican values that permitted the Roman republic to win the glory and the greatness that became the Empire are condemned to disappear by the sheer fact of their success. The structure underlying Gibbon's argument is classical: success carries with it the poison that kills it. The young Protestant American nation, whose Founding Fathers were great admirers of classical republicanism, could not have avoided leaving to their offspring that fear of a success that one pays for with his soul.

Of these four prominent works marking the year of the founding of America's independence, it is Gibbon's, which, in my view, is the foundation of American anti-Americanism. It serves also to explain the difference of homegrown anti-Americanism from European anti-Americanism. A nation which is able to define itself only by its values, and which, for that very same reason, is forgetful of its history, will always doubt itself. But as opposed to European anti-Americanism, this domestic variety does not propose an alternative solution, one that leaps toward the future of happy tomorrows while harping always on the same themes. Is it a good thing to constantly meditate on one's self and one's values? Perhaps not; but in any case, that is what a democratic society condemns its citizens to address again and again. American anti-Americanism teaches us that critique need not be reduced to negation; critique can also be founded on the quest for betterment, for a return to origins, and on a refusal to accept the status quo.

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*\*This article originally appeared in Esprit, January 2002, pp. 26-29 and was translated by Michael J. Thompson and Evette Rhoden and subsequently revised by the author.*

*Commentary :*  
9-11 and the Triumph of Capitalism

by  
Paul Lachelier

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A few months ago, standing in a mall before news cameras to encourage Americans to shop, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani said—and I quote almost verbatim from CNN footage—“someone told me they thought it’s their patriotic duty to shop. I certainly think it is our patriotic duty to get back to our lives.” This notion that shopping is patriotic—perhaps never more urgently stated than since the September 11 terror—signals the triumph of capitalism in America, the corresponding failure of democracy, and may even help explain whether and why “we” were attacked.

It is now glaringly apparent from the sometimes desperate-sounding pronouncements of Giuliani, George W. Bush, and other American political and business leaders that the very political stability of our nation now depends more on citizens’ urge to spend than on their inclination to vote.

These pronouncements underscore a gradual but significant shift in America over the last century, and especially since World War II deep into consumer capitalism and away from democracy. This change has manifested itself significantly through the move of countless Americans away from participation in enduring civic and political associations, as political scientist Robert Putnam amply documents in his major study *Bowling Alone*, and into what sociologist George Ritzer calls capitalism’s “cathedrals of consumption.” These include fast food outlets, malls, casinos, cruise lines, and theme parks, all of which are now familiar, but none of which existed in any significant form a century ago.

Accordingly, it was a telling moment when on September 20, 2001, George W. Bush delivered his first address to the nation after 9/11, posing the questions “why do they hate us?” and what do American leaders “expect of us” as ordinary American citizens in response. Bush answered the first question by asserting that the terrorists were attacking our “democratically elected government . . . [and] our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each

other.” He answered the second question with the following: “live your lives and hug your children,” “uphold the values of America,” pray for the 9/11 victims and their families, donate to the victims’ funds, cooperate with the FBI, be patient “with the delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security,” and give “your continued participation and confidence in the American economy.” If our First Amendment freedoms of religion, assembly and speech are indeed under attack, why are we not urged to exercise these freedoms with all the more fervor? If our freedoms to vote and form democratically elected governments are under attack why are we then not urged to vote and run for elected office? Why are we instead called to pray, give money, be patient, comply, and shop? These are prescriptions more for passive consumers than active citizens.

Perhaps the terrorists were not attacking our democratic freedoms, as Bush claims, but rather something else. But then what? Well, we do know the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The first is one of the most widely recognized symbols of global capitalism. The second is one of the most widely recognized symbols of American military power. And it appears that if the terrorists had fully had their way, they would have crashed the third commercial jet they hijacked into the White House, one of the most widely recognized symbols of American political power.

Note that they did not fly a plane into the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Monument, an established voting center, town hall, or the headquarters of some prominent national civic or political association. The uncomfortable truth is that the planes and anthrax have targeted the actual and symbolic centers of American power and coercion—major news media corporations, financial corporations, the Pentagon, the White House and Congress.

Just as citizens are urged to “participate in the American economy” at home, any honest survey of American foreign policy history shows that the U.S. government has long protected and promoted big business abroad far more than democracy. Consider the history of the United Fruit Company and the U.S. military in Central America, the history of oil companies and the huge sums the U.S. government expends to protect their international oil traffic, or how the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its “Market Promotion Program” uses taxpayer money to advertise Chicken McNuggets, Pillsbury muffins, Sunkist oranges, American Legend mink coats, and other major corporate products abroad. And this is just the tip of the corporate welfare iceberg. Indeed, the U.S. government, especially since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has

often used its money and might to support repressive regimes throughout the world—and at the direct expense of democracy—so long as those regimes provide a favorable environment for American business profit.

Hence, if 9/11 has revealed anything, it is the triumph of consumer capitalism, and the failure of democracy in America. This triumph and failure is evident not just in the fact that our political leaders urge us to spend money rather than exercise our political freedoms. It is also evident in the way the vast majority of Americans assume that an attack on capitalism and militarism is an attack on America. And it is most painfully evident in the ways that we as Americans have become too preoccupied with consumerism to notice how our government's deeds abroad sow the seeds of terrorism at home.

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