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Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies

BUILDING A
SHARED
FUTURE:

RELIGION, POLITICS
AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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About the Publishers

These books were produced in conjunction with a conference titled 'Acknowledging a Shared Past to Build a Shared Future: Rethinking Muslim/non-Muslim Relations', convened at the University of Cambridge in March 2012 by the following partners:

British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We work in over 100 countries in the arts, education, society and English. The Our Shared Future project, based in the US, aims to improve the public conversation about Muslims and intercultural relations in the US and Europe. Our Shared Future is supported in large part by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The related Our Shared Europe project, a partner in convening the conference held in Cambridge, creates opportunities to discuss and share perspectives on diversity, migration, community cohesion, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue in contemporary Europe.
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The Centre of Islamic Studies is at the forefront of research and public engagement on the role of Islam in wider society. Working with partners across the University of Cambridge and beyond, from academic institutes to civil society organisations and the government, the Centre has developed a reputation for enriching public debate and knowledge through high-profile and innovative research projects about Islam in the UK, Europe and globally.
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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, debates on the role of religion in the public space, migration, social cohesion and other issues have revealed increasing social tensions and polarisation in public opinion. Misperceptions and misinformation often dominate public dialogue about relations between Muslims and others. Although they don't speak with the loudest voice, academics, scholars and thought leaders have a key role to play in helping to rebalance these debates by providing fact-based opinion and informed arguments.

In March 2012, the Our Shared Future and Our Shared Europe programmes in the British Council and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies (CIS) at the University of Cambridge invited seventy scholars, civil society leaders, journalists and other influencers to the University's Møller Centre for three days of discussion, training and collaboration in a conference titled 'Acknowledging a Shared Past to Build a Shared Future: Rethinking Muslim/non-Muslim Relations'.

One of the key objectives of this conference was to help fill the gap between academic expertise and public knowledge of cross-cultural relations involving Muslims. Participants broke into discussion groups around five themes to pinpoint new, more inclusive narratives to reshape the conversation about intercultural relations. They explored areas of research and partnerships among institutions in the US, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa that can help shed light on deep connections between Muslim and non-Muslim societies in the fields of culture, the arts, humanities and science. Rounding out these discussions, participants had the opportunity to work with media professionals to develop effective messaging and gain practical skills to improve their engagement with online, print and broadcast media.

The essays that follow reflect the ideas that participants arrived at the conference with as well as the conversations that ensued throughout its three days. We have produced four books covering each of the themes undertaken at Cambridge: *The Power of Words and Images; Islam, Knowledge and Innovation; Citizenship and Identity; and Religion, Politics and the Public Sphere*.

While those who came together in Cambridge strive to take forward the ideas and opportunities that arose from the conference, we invite our readers to take up new calls to action and engage in dialogue informed by the arguments set forth in the following pages. We owe deep gratitude to our partners in organising the conference: the Carnegie Corporation of New York; the Association of Muslim Social Scientists; the Woolf Institute; and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World at the University of Edinburgh.

To access the companion books in this series and explore further resources on improving the public conversation about civilisation, identity and religion, please visit www.oursharedfuture.org.

> — *Dr Emmanuel Kattan, Project and Partnerships Manager, Our Shared Future, British Council*
> — *Prof Yasir Suleiman, Founding Director, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent debates in Europe and the United States have highlighted tensions around the role of faith and the expression of religious beliefs in the public sphere. Controversies have erupted over the wearing of the hijab, the construction and location of mosques, halal food in schools and public displays of religious belonging. These rows have provoked deep questions about balancing individual and collective religious rights in increasingly secular societies. How successful have European models of integration been compared with the American model of multiculturalism? How can multiple layers of identity be accommodated in pluralistic societies?

Similar discussions on the role of religion in the political space have spread from the US and European context to North Africa and the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring. Some transatlantic experts, pundits and analysts argued before—and even after—the Arab Spring revolutions that Islam is incompatible with democracy. Does the rise of so-called Islamist parties and conversations about the introduction of sharia into legal codes confirm their fears? Despite revolutions that called for 'freedom, dignity and justice', will the formal introduction of religion into politics threaten the future of democracy in the Arab world, or can the emerging political systems accommodate both democracy and Islam?

In two days of discussions at the University of Cambridge, the authors featured in this book came together to address these questions and came away with a series of key recommendations and messages.

Inflated expectations from the Arab Spring revolutions have led to the mistaken notion that social and political processes that have been stalled for decades can suddenly be fast-tracked to completion. There is an expectation that the nations that experienced revolutions will now simultaneously undergo transitions that spanned the entirety of the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and Modernity in Europe. These developments take time; applying this narrative of transition to democracy to the American context, we must remind ourselves that even ninety years after the country's founding, a bloody civil war was fought over some of its founding principles. We must also evaluate the Islamist parties emerging in the Arab world through a historical lens, drawing upon comparisons and analogies to other religious parties of the past.

The following contributions present nuanced ways of understanding the intersection of religion, politics and the public sphere in the Middle East and North Africa today. Amjad Saleem writes in his contribution that theological and historical connections between Islam and democracy are being conveniently ignored and that Arabs should have the chance to develop their own vision of democratic governance based on Islamic ideological and legal principles. Nader Hashemi posits in his essay that Arab opposition to western-style democracy does not necessarily stem from revulsion to democratic values ('freedom, justice and dignity'), but more from resentment for western support of Arab dictators like Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. The western notion of 'secularism' does not translate easily into Arabic, as it has multiple connotations and is associated with the old regimes.

Qamar-ul Huda's piece addresses the unrecognised but potentially powerful role that religious actors and organisations can play in peace building and conflict transformation in the political and civic space. Moving to political participation in Europe, Jocelyne Cesari addresses the idea that 'visible Islamic identities are inversely correlated to civic and political loyalties'. She finds that any difference in religiosity and rates of political participation between American and European Muslims is likely due more to 'the general context of religiosity and social legitimacy of religions'. Politics is clearly not the only public space in which religion has played a sometimes-controversial role.

The question of 'religion in the public space' is fundamentally about 'consider[ing] how religious belief can accommodate changing social attitudes . . . [and] how people of faith can hold to their beliefs and still participate in public life', writes Mark Hammond. However, the common European notion of 'integration' does not comfortably fit into this framework for thinking about religion in the public space, according to Florence Laufer, because, 'integration is not the same thing as living together in diversity'. Many integration policies in Europe target Muslims who are already European citizens who hold European passports and participate fully in society but do not fit traditional notions of European national identity. Unlike in the United States, writes Maleiha Malik, where national identity is perceived to be more accessible to immigrants who share 'American' values, 'In Europe, national identity depends on complex factors such as history, race and language'. Malik's response to these challenges is a new brand of 'pluralist liberalism' in which the goal is not reaching consensus as much as it is having a free and open public space to constructively discuss differences and ideas.

The essays that follow expand on these points and many others in an informative and thought-provoking contribution to our collective effort to improve relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

— By Tim Rivera, Our Shared Future Project & Partnerships Officer, British Council

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

BY QAMAR-UL HUDA, PHD

The changing political landscape in North Africa and larger Middle East/Islamic countries reveals a resurgence of religious parties in political participation. According to modernisation theory, religion was to have a minimalist and vanishing role in politics and in the public sphere; however, scholars now contend that the many-faceted forms of 'secularisms' may have contributed to the rise of religious resurgence and mass appeal. The study of religion in international relations seems to have swayed from one end of the pendulum, of being completely neglected or an afterthought in global affairs, to being immensely central to understanding security, terrorism and threats facing fragile states. In the early analysis of the Arab uprisings of 2011, there were countless questions on the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Tunisia and whether religious radicals would hijack the non-violent civil unrest to create an Iranian-style theocracy. With elections in Tunisia and Egypt, we have witnessed the Arab Spring experiment with the idea that religious-based parties may in fact be the most experienced civil society actors to produce social services while linking themselves to a tradition.

Religion's role in political participation is complex, varied and usually the subject of controversy. Is religion part of the problem or part of the solution in democratic reform or developing democratic institutions? Are religious actors sufficiently taken into account in political analysis/reform and in the picture for mass political participation? Are US/western government officials, policymakers and scholars adequately factoring in religious actors in assessing reform and answers to tyranny? The answer is often no. Casting religious actors as villains or insignificant civil society actors relegates them to the margins, yet mainstream international analysts are constantly facing obstacles by ignoring the role of religious actors. Religion is integral to conflict management,

peace building, development and conflict management, especially in conservative religious-based societies.

Religion is often associated, correctly or incorrectly, as a central factor in inter-communal violence in places as diverse as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, India, Northern Ireland, Nigeria and Uganda. Negative perceptions of religious factors in conflict, a motivating factor for violence and driving communities apart, have tended to predominate. At least as important, however, is the power of religious ideas and voices to persuade. Their resonance within communities, the influence of religious leaders to speak as political or social voices and powerful religious symbols all can be used constructively to counteract extremist behavior, bringing about resolution and reconciliation. The recent crisis of the defamation of the Qur'an in Iraq and Afghanistan and the West's attempt to isolate Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Nour Party exemplifies the need to better understand the vital role of religious leaders and communities and their multidimensional function in maintaining peace and stability in their respective communities.

> ## Religion's role in political participation is complex, varied and usually the subject of controversy.

There is a need to re-conceptualise the role of religion and religious actors in political participation, especially where peace building and conflict prevention is concerned. Religious actors are part of a multi-layered matrix where at times some religious actors are contributing to conflict while simultaneously competitive religious actors are working aggressively to

mitigate violence and build institutions for peaceful purposes. As important members of local civil society who have critical social, economic and political functions, religious actors and their faith-based organisations are essential in resolving conflict. The roles played by religious actors and faith-based organisations are diverse, ranging from high-level mediators to peace builders through development at the grassroots. Religion is not restricted to the confines of a church or mosque; rather, religious organisations in the Middle East and other Islamic countries are very much part of the development, humanitarian, conflict resolution and social welfare sectors. Their immense networks and strategic capacity as transnational actors have enabled them to mobilise effectively and to rapidly support their war-affected communities, mediate between conflicting parties and serve as primary civil society actors contributing to reconciliation, dialogue and reintegration.

Religious political actors or religious civil society members part of a faith-based organisation attempt to resolve inter-group and intra-group conflicts; they have the most leverage when they have national or international reach and durable relations with members at all levels of society. Religious actors operating within the political process have a complex notion of their work, their sense of the past and how they want to recreate an alternative narrative for their societies. However, there some religious actors who view political participation as a distraction to their mission of a faith-based world view; for these actors, social welfare projects are the most viable option to improving lives. While inter-faith peace activities dominate some religious groups, the vast majority of work by religious actors deals with social services, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, political manoeuvring and conflict resolution as well as participating in peace agreements, offering health care and psychological/trauma healing and contributing toward national and international issues (e.g. water, sanitation, women's rights and poverty alleviation).

Political players (e.g. El-Nahda, Al-Nour, Muslim Brotherhood) emerging from the Arab Spring must be viewed in the larger context of Islamist political activism for over sixty years. The diversity of Islamists (Turkey's Justice Party, Jama'at-e-Islami in South Asia, Muhammadiya in Indonesia, Hezbollah, Hamas etc.) illustrates that 'political Islam' has not dissolved, as some have argued in the 1990s, but rather, key fundamental notions of society, development, economic prosperity, social welfare and the freedom to express cannot be divorced from tradition. The political participation by religious actors is just as much a product of a post-colonial secular framework that inherently de-emphasised the role of religion in the public sphere. I think the post-colonial, single-party/family rule, militarised secular state produced the Islamist parties to be champions of social services while at the same time winning the hearts and minds of the grassroots people who voted.

— Qamar-ul Huda, PhD is Senior Program Officer in the Religion and Peacemaking Center at the US Institute of Peace.

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ISLAM: THE SOLUTION THAT WASN'T

BY MOHAMMAD AYATOLLAHI TABAAR

In the 1960s and 1970s, the slogan 'Islam is the solution' began to gain wide currency. Islamists blamed secular ideas for what went wrong in the Muslim world. They claimed that Islam provides an answer for every human need from the cradle to the grave. Its divine shari'a is not for the other world, but precisely tailored to meet all worldly political, economic, social and moral needs. Islam is the complete religion. The Prophet Mohammad was the Seal of all Prophets, because he perfected the messages of his predecessors. He did not simply bring humanity shari'a law and then leave us on our own. He created a government, became a statesman and executed the divine law. For over a thousand years, Islamic civilisation expanded and experienced a golden era militarily, scientifically, culturally, economically and politically simply by following the Prophet's path. Therefore, it was now incumbent upon Muslims to eschew secular western models, since their religion had it all and even more. Many on the far right of the western political spectrum echoed this view of Islam as an all-encompassing way of life and government. These figures further argued that Islam is 'essentially' a political and violent religion, since its Prophet himself was a statesman who cut off hands and killed the enemies of his religion. Therefore, Islam is a cruel religion, although Muslims can be peaceful people.

The realities on the ground can very well transform their religious doctrines.

Commentators, pundits and even many scholars often forget that that view of Islam was not popular until recently. Indeed it was after the failure of constitutionalism, nationalism and socialism in the Middle East and North Africa that many began to think maybe it was time to 'return' to their religious roots. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many clerics joined lay intellectuals, politicians and others in an endeavour to heal the pain of their societies. Influenced by the success of the West as well as ideals of the French Revolution, constitutional movements emerged throughout the Ottoman Empire and neighbouring Iran. Although these ventures had different degrees of success, in the end, they failed to empower the people and liberate their societies from the domination of colonial powers. The failure of constitutionalism paved the way for nationalism and socialism, both of which contained both western elements with anti-western rhetoric. Again, many intellectuals as well as clerics joined these movements, which once more failed due to a lack of strong institutions and foreign intervention. The US-British-sponsored 1953 coup in Iran and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War were the final straws that put an end to nationalism in much of the Islamic world.

Islam is not and never claimed to be a mega store filled with ready-made commodities to satisfy every human need.

It was in this climate that many even hard-core leftists began to look at Islam as a weapon against the 'evil' West that was now dominating them—not just their economics and politics, but also their culture and very identity. The increasing appeal for religion, however, had a strong revolutionary component. They needed an Islam that could be used as a sword against other political ideologies. As a result, an Islamic ideology with a leftist Marxist vocabulary emerged. Muslim intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s constructed an Islamic ideology highly influenced by popular western ideologies such as Marxism and Existentialism. These Islamic movements gradually surpassed all other

ideologies in popularity and posed most serious challenges to the western-backed leadership of many Muslim countries.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 was the most successful of these movements. Grand Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Tehran after thirteen years of exile to implement his theory of Velayat-e Faqih, which he had first articulated in his book *The Islamic Government* a decade earlier. However, his naïve view of governance would soon change. Political realities forced Khomeini to reverse his framework and put the survival of the state above the implementation of shari'a law. Those who succeeded Khomeini effectively and selectively pursued his secular legacy to further entrench both the Islamic state as well as their own faction. Nonetheless, the Islamic solution failed to create the just and prosperous society that Iranians had struggled to obtain for over a century. Once the Islamic Republic was forced to make major concessions in its foreign policy (i.e. acquiring weapons from the US and Israel to continue the war against Iraq in the 1980s), many began to wonder about the possible meanings and implications of their religious ideology. If the interests of the Islamic state were more important than its ideological goals, then how far off the table could those goals potentially be pushed? This in turn led many intellectuals as well as marginalised political groups in Iran to question the immutability of the dominant ideology. Pushing for a 'post-religious' Iran, many intellectuals asserted that Islam's completeness did not mean comprehensiveness. Islam is not and never claimed to be a mega store filled with ready-made commodities to satisfy every human need. Religion has become obese. It has to be slimmed down and freed from ideology and jurisprudential dogmatism.

Now, as the Islamists are coming to the centre stage in the Middle East, it is important to note that their religious 'agenda' is not set in stone. They may enter with a particular ideology, but the realities on the ground can very well transform their religious doctrines. The international system will test those ideologies while at the same time the internal political processes will further shape

and prepare them for action. Depending on the nature and strength of the establishment, the Islamists will develop and frame their religious and political narratives. Moreover, Islamic factions can split once they dominate the scene. New factions are born with new perspectives on the relationship between religion and politics.

— *Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar is a visiting scholar in the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge.*

RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

BY JOCELYNE CESARI

In Europe and more recently in the US, the perception of Islamic activities in public spaces (mosques/dress code) has been increasingly interpreted as lack of civism.

The assumption is that visible Islamic identities are inversely correlated to civic and political loyalties. Such an assumption is not validated by existing data about Muslims in Europe and in the USA. At the same time, none of the existing surveys specifically addresses the following controversial question: Is Islam an obstacle or an asset in the integration process?

Focus groups conducted between 2005 and 2008 in Paris, London, Berlin, Amsterdam and Boston by the 'Islam in the West' programme are the first attempt to provide the beginning of an answer to this question.

A Few Counterintuitive Facts from Our Focus Groups Results

First, Islam is an important element of self-identification for Muslims but not necessarily the most significant or even the exclusive marker of group identity. In fact, it is often presented by our focus group participants as an imposition on social interactions with their mainstream society.

Second, multiple and conflicting meanings are associated with Islam. Conformity to orthodox practices (such as dress code and rituals) is often put in opposition with 'universal' Islamic values like honesty, justice etc.

Third, a contradiction emerged between participants' positive views of political participation and the fact that they actually don't participate that much, especially in formal politics (political membership/voting).

In the same vein, most participants expressed a positive appreciation of their resident country, especially when it came to the political and religious freedom they experienced there. This is something worth highlighting at a time when Muslims are under suspicion for their lack of loyalty or appreciation of western values. Finally, the focus groups' discussions hinted at a positive correlation between being Muslim and being a good citizen; that is, the positive influence of religion on political participation. This seems to converge with a broader trend abundantly documented among other religious groups in the United States and to a lesser extent in Europe.

Exploring the Influence of Islamic Religiosity on Political Participation

Numerous surveys in the United States have shown that for all religious groups, religious identification increases political and civic participation. The more a person attends religious services and events related or associated with a congregation, the more that person gets involved in the greater mainstream political community.

When it comes to Muslims in the United States, it is not possible to assert as strongly the same positive correlation between religion and political participation, since there is less data to rely on. However, the Gallup 2011 data on Muslims in America did suggest a relationship between mosque attendance and political participation: 50% of respondents who reported high levels of political participation attended mosque services at least weekly and 68% at least monthly.

It is important however to highlight the unclear causal relationship between religious attendance and civic/political participation for

American Muslims. For some groups, like Arab Americans, religious engagement does positively influence political participation; for others, like South Asians, it does not. To understand these differences, it is useful to distinguish between mosque attendance and subjective dimensions of religiosity (i.e. prayer and salience of religion in daily life). The latter do not have an influence on political participation, while the former does. In this regard, the mosque appears as a place for expressing your belonging (i.e. your identification) to the Muslim group.

More generally, surveys point out the importance of contexts in shaping Islamic group identity. In other words, there is not a direct connection between the fact that someone can identify to an Islamic group identity and the fact that this person is born in a certain ethnic or cultural Muslim group. Demographic characteristics, national origin, duration of US residency and age are important elements that influence the probability for a Muslim to endorse such a group identity.

> It is not surprising to find that some studies support the thesis that Muslims' religious attendance influences civic and political participation, while that of others does not.

When it comes to Muslims in Europe, the challenge of identifying a positive correlation between religious and political participation is even higher. First, Muslim religiosity is still largely unknown and not properly investigated (beyond self-identification and mosque attendance). Additionally, the recent increase of surveys on Muslims in Europe is not very helpful, because the results cannot be compared to a control group of other faiths. Instead, these surveys compare Muslims with a fictitious 'non-Muslim' population. Due to this lack of consistent data, it is therefore not surprising to find that some studies support the thesis that Muslims'

religious attendance influences civic and political participation, while that of others does not. Other dimensions such as ethnicity and class probably influence both Muslims' religiosity and alternatively civic/political participation.

Major Takeaways:

Three major conclusions can be drawn from the discussions above. First, the gap is not between religious Muslims and secular Europeans/ Americans; it is between the European and the American contexts in which Muslims are living. Across European countries, the level of self-declared religiosity in the general population is systematically much lower than it is in the Muslim groups, while in the United States, this is not the case. In other words, the general context of religiosity and social legitimacy of religions in each country is the real discriminatory factor necessary to apprehend the situation of Islam and Muslims.

Second, Muslims—who by all indicators attend religious services more frequently than any other groups in Europe and who declare themselves to be more religious—should be more politically and civically engaged. But this does not jive with our existing data. Instead, we see that Muslims in both Europe and the US have less formal political participation than the average believer of other faiths. It may be because other factors like race, ethnicity, class and immigrant status weigh more heavily than 'Islam' on political participation.

Undeniably, more data is needed to really evaluate which forms of religiosity influence which forms of political participation and in what manner.

> — *Jocelyne Cesari is director of the Islam in the West programme, Harvard and Johns Hopkins University (www.euro-islam.info).*

ISLAMIST PARTICIPATION, WESTERN ANXIETIES AND THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB-ISLAMIC WORLD

BY NADER HASHEMI

The widespread and deep-rooted western anxiety about the prospects for democracy in the Arab-Islamic world is captured by a famous statement by Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a former American UN Ambassador and neo-conservative intellectual. When asked to comment on the relationship between Islam and democracy, she paused for a moment, thought about the question and then replied, 'The Arab world is the only part of the world where I've been shaken in my conviction that if you let the people decide, they will make fundamentally rational decisions'.[1]

While Kirkpatrick's comments were made more than twenty years ago, in the aftermath of an Algerian election that demonstrated pervasive support for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), they capture an on-going concern in the West about the possibility of democracy in the Islamic world. Two recent elections in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011 have similarly revealed the popularity of Islamist parties and the weakness of secular and liberal parties in the Arab world.

The question that is being asked today is, *Has the Arab Spring turned into an Arab Winter?* One prominent and influential interpreter of the Islamic world, reflecting a widely held concern among western intellectuals, has observed:

> There is an agonizing question at the heart of the present debate about democracy in the Islamic world: Is liberal democracy basically compatible with Islam, or is some measure of respect for law, some tolerance of criticism, the most that can be expected from autocratic governments? . . . Is it possible for the Islamic peoples to evolve a form of government that will be compatible with their own historical, cultural and religious traditions and yet will bring individual freedom and human rights to the governed as these terms are understood in the free societies of the West?[2]

In this essay, I want to offer a brief comment on this poorly understood subject.

> One cannot propagate the social conditions that give rise to Islamic fundamentalism and then expect secular liberal democrats to emerge after the revolution.

To understand the relationship between Islamist parties and the struggle for democracy in the Middle East, we must take an introspective look at western policy in the region.[3] There is a critical nexus between authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, the western support that bolsters them and the political ramifications of this support for the future of democracy. Stated simply, western support for authoritarian regimes in the Arab-Islamic world has had tremendous negative political consequences for the region's prospects for democracy. Decades of political repression, particularly of secular civil society, has forced political opposition to move towards more traditional sectors of society such as the mosque. The forces of religion have inadvertently benefited from the authoritarian policies of the post-colonial Arab state, in part because all

rival secular political organisations have been suffocated or crushed. The 2011 electoral results from Egypt and Tunisia, where Islamist parties emerged victorious and secular parties performed poorly, confirm this point about oppositional politics in Arab-Islamic societies.

Similarly, it is also instructive to briefly examine the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The rise of political Islam in Iran in the wake of the 1979 Revolution makes perfect sociological and political sense. The social conditions in the decades before the revolution that were a specific and direct by-product of the authoritarian modernisation policies of the western-backed Pahlavi regime created a fertile ground for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. These authoritarian policies undermined the forces of democratic secularism and liberalism (in part, because they were overthrown in a 1953 CIA military coup) and inadvertently strengthened the forces of political Islam in the lead-up to the 1979 revolution. In short, in the same way that the forces of political Islam emerged from decades of authoritarianism as the only credible and organised opposition in Iran, a similar (though not identical) situation prevails in much of the Arab world today. To decry this state of affairs is to overlook the political consequences of supporting repressive authoritarian regimes. Ultimately, one cannot propagate the social conditions that give rise to Islamic fundamentalism and then expect secular liberal democrats to emerge after the revolution. Given this enveloping political context, the strength and popularity of religious movements makes perfect sociological sense *in part* due to longstanding western support for Middle Eastern dictatorships.[4] In other words, that famous English aphorism applies: 'You cannot have your (democratic) cake and eat it too'.

There is infinitely more to the question of why Islamist parties are popular in the Arab world and the consequences this will have on the future political trajectory of region. The major omission, however, in the western analysis and depiction of this issue is that the struggle for democracy in the Arab-Islamic world needs to be understood on its own terms, not on the terms of the West or from the perspective of European or American political history. Yes, universal values do exist, but to expect replicas of European secular and liberal democratic parties to emerge triumphant in the Arab world is to impose western history onto the Middle East. This erroneous assumption is misleading, because it assumes that the Middle East has experienced the same intellectual, political and economic transformations as those that led to the rise and development of democracy in the West.

The sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt coined the term 'multiple modernities'.[5] He argued that the cultural programme of transformation and the basic institutional constellations that emerged in Europe are not the only path to modernity. Other cultures and regions will travel diverse pathways and will have varied experiences in their modernisation processes. In other words, one model does not fit the entire world. This observation should be kept in mind as we attempt to understand the unfolding events in the Arab Spring today and the unique path of democratic development that the Arab world is currently traversing.

— *Nader Hashemi is Assistant Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver.*

11

REVISITING THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE FROM ISLAMIC TRADITIONS FOR FUTURE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

BY AMJAD SALEEM

Introduction

Democracy, especially in the Muslim World, is highly encouraged but seems to be fraught with obstacles. It is difficult to transplant from one environment to another, as there does not appear to be 'one model that fits all environments'. Thus, the journey of democracy is a 'generational initiative' that must carefully consider internal and external dynamics, contexts and histories. It cannot be imposed on people, nor can it be expected to be understood or implemented in a short period of time, as it is a dynamic process that has gone through a historical evolution. Yet it is important to understand that solid governance structures and principles within communities and societies can help to minimise violence, ensure peaceful transformation of conflict through consensual dialogue and politics and foster a sense of enfranchisement of citizens as stakeholders in their own destiny as well as the destiny of their country.

Challenges

In the wake of the Arab Spring, questions are once again being asked about Islamic Governance and the compatibility of Islam with democracy. Muslim scholars believe there to be no inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy, as at least 750 million Muslims live in democratic societies of one kind or another.[6]

The Constitution of Medina is often cited as an example of the compatibility of democratic practices and theories with Islam, demonstrating the proper relationship between divine revelation and a constitution. The Prophet Muhammad developed the constitution based on eternal and transcendent principles revealed to him but also sought the consent of all who would be affected by its implementation. This first Islamic state established the importance of consent and cooperation for governance by being based on a social contract that was constitutional in character—and had a ruler who ruled with the explicit written consent of all the citizens of the state including language of pluralism and citizenship. Yet despite this example, there appears to be selective amnesia when it comes to identifying governance mechanisms that are appropriate for specific circumstances whilst being based on eternal principles, and this does not explain the lack of democracy in many Muslim countries. For most Muslim societies, a large number of political models were imposed through other historical processes and were not the product of organic development of political history. Thus, the explanation of why so many Muslim countries are not currently democratic has more to do with the historical, political, cultural and economic factors than religious factors.

The issue therefore becomes one of reconciling a practical understanding of democracy and governance with context and understanding the theological framework. For example, Muslims cite the principle of *shura* (consultative governance/ process) as the first step to democracy. Whilst most scholars will agree that these principles can be a source of democratic ethics in Islam, there are also differences in its understanding in terms of whether it is *obligatory* (3:159) or *desirable* (42:38).

Debate also abounds on the nature of what modern democratic sovereignty (a perception that it is only the human whim that constitutes law) means a propos the concept of Islamic sovereignty (the principle that God is the primary law-giver while agents of the state, the *Kalifa* [God's agent on earth], enjoy marginal autonomy necessary to implement and enforce the laws of their sovereign). The issue, though, is not about where sovereignty is placed but actually who exercises it and how the *de facto* sovereignty of people can be 'limited'.

> For most Muslim societies, a large number of political models were imposed through other historical processes and were not the product of organic development of political history.

Understanding these principles and teachings from classical Islamic traditions can help to influence communities in designing and agreeing governance structures both at a community and higher levels that attempt to address competing priorities, avoid violent conflicts and accept compromise.

Some Ideas

The questions related to Islam and governance stem from an understanding of the consensus, particularly within Sunni tradition, that it is hard to create a theocracy because there has been no divinely guided human being since the Prophet. Hence, the alternative is developing a state based on the 'system' that Islam ordains. Within this system, the concept of *Kalifa* (God's agent on earth) is key to opening up a pool of eligible participants, even leaders, in governance. Furthermore, it is important to discuss the difference between Islamic political structures and Islamic political principles; the latter are well established, while the former are not theologically mandated into a single, essential model.

Mustafa Akyol[7] states that there is no clear definition of government within the Qur'an,

which also remains almost silent on fundamental issues of politics, thereby giving the impression that these matters are not to be considered within the purview of divine revelation and that the Caliphate, though based on Islamic norms, was formed within the political norms of the time and the milieu of the early Muslims. Abdelwahab El-Affendi[8] goes further, saying that the Caliphate was 'a means to an end' and not necessarily a blueprint for the future. Ali Allawi[9] talks about a rethinking of the shari'a to provide the mechanism through which a new understanding of the meaning of the sacred in Islamic political life can be realised, held together by common values and institutions by conceiving an alternative way of ordering people's lives.

The concept of governance could be modelled along the lines of what Al-Farabi described as an 'ideal government', describing it as the 'community state' bearing the essentials of a true democracy. The question then becomes, 'Would the legal system be based on Shari'a Law?' This raises interesting issues about incorporating elements of the Shari'a (which has different linguistic, legal and literal meanings that could give rise to understandings of different definitions and interpretations) via a democratic process or enacting it as an official doctrine. Abdullahi An-Na'im[10] has argued that a coercive enforcement of Shari'a by the state betrays the Qur'an's insistence on voluntary acceptance of Islam and hence argues for a 'secular' state that is neutral to religion and respects the right of its citizens to live by their faith (i.e. allowing people to be Muslim by conviction and free choice). Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina Mustafa Ceric[11] elaborates on the concept of the 'social contract' as a way of integrating a community 'founded on the norms that are sanctioned by religion through its beliefs, faiths and creeds' with a society based on 'the norms of morality that are sanctioned by public opinion which arises from common interests'.

Dina Abdelkader[12] cites the classical scholar Imam al-Shatibi's work, *Al-Muwafaqat*, which provides a seminal contribution to the principle of public welfare in Islam by connoting issues such as modernity, civil society and governance, which by implication are thought to be the essence of an ideal state. In drawing arguments from the consensus to be found

amongst Rousseau, de Tocqueville, Foucault and Habermas on the importance of religion in public life, the case is made for the Muslim world to develop ideological and legal principles that define their own vision of governance, religion and reason. Andrew March[13] uses Rawls' theory of liberal societies, relying on a consensus between a public conception of justice and popular religious doctrines, to identify arguments for accepting the demands of citizenship in a liberal democracy. This in his mind balances the commitment between traditional ethics and the real-life circumstances of Muslim minority and majority communities.

> It is important to understand that solid governance structures and principles within communities and societies can help to minimise violence, ensure peaceful transformation of conflict

Conclusion

All the previously mentioned viewpoints illustrate differences in thought, which means that there is considerable scope for discussion on Islam and governance, particularly pertaining to understanding issues of conflict resolution and transformation, because it is misperception and misunderstanding that set the scene for conflict to arise.

— Amjad Saleem is head of communications at the Cordoba Foundation.

'YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR RELIGION AND I SHALL HAVE MY RELIGION': RELIGION, BELIEF AND SECULARISM IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN[14]

BY MARK HAMMOND

The state of religion and belief in Britain today feels that it may be at a crossroads. Not just with the arrival of a new Archbishop of Canterbury to lead the established Church, but with any number of issues that challenge the role of faith in public life. It seems that almost daily we have to consider how changing social attitudes can be reconciled with religious belief: how to address the wearing of religious symbols and clothing required by belief; how people of faith can hold to their beliefs and still participate in public life; or how we face up to and tackle fear and prejudice motivated by misunderstandings of the real shared history and values of Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

In our work at the Equality and Human Rights Commission, we address these issues through three pressing interests in religion and belief. First, we have a compelling interest in how all people and communities of faith live successfully in a modern, largely secular state and society. How can equalities and human rights both protect people's religion and belief and enable them to live out their faith? Second, we have an equally compelling concern for how Muslims in Britain today live, learn, work and worship alongside those of other faiths and of none. How can we start to overcome the challenges Muslim communities and individuals face? And third, we should be supporting opportunities to people of faith to play a full part in the public space of modern Britain and not feel they are being excluded.

Seeking answers to these questions leads us inevitably into difficult arenas. It leads to much wider debates about the fundamental nature of faith and belief—whether faith is an inherent or adopted characteristic of a person's identity and whether this means that religious rights should have a different level of protection to other rights such as race or gender. How do we all resolve issues where honesty and strongly held beliefs are in conflict?

Increasingly, there is going to be pressure on how far society and governments are going to be willing to stop at the temple door and allow religions, or any other private institution, to practice in private what would not be accepted in public. To address the challenges of modern life, we need to create much closer and broader relations with the communities of faith and those of no faith. It is not good enough for the Commission to sit and muse in our ivory tower; we need to build partnerships with everyone, even those who hold views that may be difficult in the current legal framework of equality and human rights. So my first conclusion is that in a modern Britain, we need the Commission to be more active and outward looking and so help create the partnerships and alliances that can tackle the difficult questions. Without that, dialogue and understanding progress and resolution will be impossible.

The fundamental element of this dialogue and engagement is respect for pluralism and diversity. In protecting and advocating our different traditions and customs, we celebrate the greatness and strength of our common humanity. Pride in one's culture should not be allowed to ignite prejudice, to encourage polarisation

between nations and cultures or to marginalise the 'other' because they do not copy our norms and beliefs that may be peculiar to them.

The ultimate goal of dialogue should not be to change 'the other' but, rather, to co-exist peacefully with the other. I am no expert in Islamic studies, but what I have read suggests the Qur'an supports freedom of choice, pluralism and religious diversity when it says, 'You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion'.

I do not think you have to be a historian to be worried at times at the level of political and public discourse we have reached. Fact and knowledge are no longer the foundations of argument, just optional extras. The history and reality of Muslim communities in this country is clearly one of those areas where myth trumps truth.

The power of private morality translated into the ethical life of the community is a transformative power.

It is indisputable that Britain has benefited for centuries from its own Muslim heritage. There is much more to be gained from the sharing of culture and art, humour and humility. From the positive links formed among different communities in this country, we can reach out and help to promote understanding between the countries of the Muslim world and Britain.

There is a view—which has its merits—that the broad answer to the problems of religion and belief and public life in modern Britain is the temple door response. The argument that in order for communities of faith to hold onto their beliefs, they must recognise that they can hold onto what happens inside the temple or the mosque door but not seek to apply it to the world beyond.

That argument is not without its supporters, and it has its parallels in the history of Islamic communities in other times and countries, where the best choice appeared to be for Islam to become purely a private faith without a public face. It has some sense, too, for those of us who administer the law, as it is a tenable and consistent approach. In the face of continued pressures from some who would happily burst down the door and seek to regulate everything that lies within, it is an approach that may well be part of the overall answer.

But I feel that is far from a complete answer. It pens faiths inside the temple when there is so much more people of faith can contribute to public life. We must strive for more. The values and examples of people of faith can contribute hugely to a public sphere that is often portrayed as disenchanted with politics and politicians and in need of better leadership and values that chime more closely with the challenges and pressures of their own lives.

The power of private morality translated into the ethical life of the community is a transformative power. And over time, it can change the laws that reflect and lead society's views. With that in mind, as the Qur'an says, 'Let us go forth and vie with each other in doing good'.

— *Mark Hammond is Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.*

OVERCOMING EMPTY DEBATES ON ASSUMED INCOMPATIBILITIES: INVENTING PRAGMATIC ANSWERS ON HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER IN PLURALISM

BY FLORENCE LAUFER

The debate on religion in the public space is often based on misleading questions when applied to Islam in the West. First, 'integration' is not the same thing as living together in diversity. While a part of the Muslim population in the West has indeed an immigrant background, let us remember that Islam is rooted in the old continent's history and that many if not most European Muslims are full-fledged citizens of their countries. For all of them, integration is not relevant.

> Conflict with religious dimensions can oppose clashing worldviews, diverging actions, or reveal a tension between one's worldview and the other's actions.

When it comes to integration, the 'rights and duties' of Muslim immigrants are not different from those of non-Muslims. Western countries pride themselves on universal legal and social norms that guarantee equal rights to all: The host country provides the framework to welcome and support immigrants, and the newcomers gradually increase their contributions and participation. In case of infringement to the norms or 'poor integration', there is no reason for the relevant social or legal response to be different, whether for a Muslim or a non-Muslim.

Quite another challenge is for western countries to officially acknowledge that religious or cultural homogeneity is more myth than fact, that their societies have become increasingly diverse and that this is an asset. To advance this awareness, measures should support the whole of society in 'integrating' the new reality of diversity and learning to deal with it positively.

In the turmoil of economic and political crises on both sides of the Atlantic, the two principles above have been seriously mishandled and eroded. The bogey of 'secularism under threat' then came in the spotlight, along with anxiety about the expression of religious beliefs in the public sphere.

Most European and North American countries have established a national secular identity at the core of their modern societies, albeit with very diverse notions of what this implies. The shared history of struggle for the separation of State and Church stands *de facto* as a common identity marker. This recent issue is still quite sensitive in collective representations, as many wonder what constitutes the essence of our societies now that Christianity seems to have been removed from the public sphere and from most political and moral debates.

For some, this sets the stage for a comparison— or a competition—with other religions, whether explicitly or subconsciously. For instance, the Swiss right-wing politician Oskar Freysinger remarks that the West has lost the spiritual battle

against Islam and thereby justifies his resistance to the influence of Islam. Despite the extreme diversity in the practices of Muslims, claims are made that Islam is expressed more visibly than other religions, and this is certainly at the core of reactions of fear and rejection. As a result, Muslims in the West are faced with a terrible paradox: They are asked to engage proactively and prove that they belong, yet they are blamed of 'flaunting their difference' when too visible.

Because this emotionally charged issue combines the impossible equation of modern national identities with fear of cultural difference, it has become the topic of choice for political instrumentalisation. This is how 'failure of multiculturalism', equated with the visibility of religious minorities, became a no-brainer unifying narrative. Due to misinformation and gaps between policies and public perception, such scapegoating catches easily and allows xenophobic parties to gain political capital.

I would like to offer here a few ideas inspired by the programme I coordinate with the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva, which promotes exchange between cultures and civilisations and contributes to advancing peace. Set up in partnership with the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, our action research programme analyses socio-political and religious dynamics in regions at risk of conflict and implements tailor-made conflict transformation strategies in the Muslim world and on Islam in the West.

Cordoba's approach of 'collectively shared knowledge' can be helpful in steering public discourse away from misleading questions that polarise and hinder real debates. It builds understanding on conflictive issues in critical dialogue with political and religious stakeholders (at the same time *subjects* and *actors*) and allows for an objective and empathic analysis that is acceptable to all actors. The process creates space to learn, exchange and build trust, and it can identify practical entry points for conflict transformation. Bringing together academics, policymakers and community leaders, this approach could be applied in the West to address sensitive issues around Islamic traditions, such as dress codes, ritual slaughtering, places of worship or family norms, and can prove to be

a powerful means to counter manipulation and populism.

Tools for transformation of conflicts with a religious dimension should also be mobilised, as described by Simon Mason,[15] Abbas Aroua,[16] J.N. Bitter[17] and Jonathan Benthall.[18] On conflicts about expression of faith in the public sphere, we have seen that religion acts as an identity marker rather than as a core issue. The parties to the conflict each have their own *worldview*, a cultural system of beliefs and values, in which they root their *attitudes and actions*. A dynamic interaction exists between the two levels, and religion is therefore a 'worldview that is flexible, even as it remains coherent over time'.[19] Religious systems evolve constantly with internal re-adaptation between worldviews and actions, and this can lead to noticeable tensions and uneven degrees of coherence. This 'intra-dialogue' is influenced, whether constructively or not, by external factors.

Conflict with religious dimensions can oppose clashing worldviews, diverging actions, or reveal a tension between one's worldview and the other's actions. Roughly simplified, the French headscarf debates illustrate a case of disagreement on actions rather than on values: French officials call to ban headscarves in the public space (action), because they consider it against gender equality and work opportunities for Muslim women (values). French Muslims defend the right to wear the headscarf, because they consider that it protects women's integrity and enables them to lead an active life. As with positions and interests in mediation, we recommend a 'connect-disconnect' exercise between worldviews and actions, a 'back-and-forth translation of meaning from the religious to the political'.[5] This helps parties grow aware of the dual aspect of the disagreement and enables accurate framing of the dialogue and negotiation.

It seems fairly unethical and unproductive for one to question the other's religion based on one's own understanding (i.e. to step in between an individual and his/her worldview), because religion represents an absolute—albeit evolving—truth for an individual. The goal of the negotiation should therefore not be to agree on values, 'but to negotiate means of peaceful coexistence between parties that are compatible with their

values'.[5] This is particularly true for tensions on religion in the public space, where a pragmatic focus must be put on living together.

We need to re-centre the concept of citizenship on full participation in society rather than on ethnic or religious homogeneity.

In the same line, I would argue that debates on national identity cannot be constructive but only polarizing at this stage. It seems unlikely to achieve satisfactory clarity on what is the *French worldview* (rooted in universal human rights or in Christianity?), let alone the *French Muslim worldview* (evolving, very diverse). This is why we need to re-centre the concept of citizenship on full participation in society rather than on ethnic or religious homogeneity. Negotiation where stakeholders invent the practical answers to the challenges of coexisting in pluralist societies is the best way forward to build a shared vision of society that overcomes faith and culture boundaries. Transparent and inclusive processes of diapraxis (dialog through practice) will help not only to find solutions but also to build mutual respect and trust.

— *Florence Laufer is programme director at the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva.*

EMBRACING YOUR NEIGHBOUR: PLURALISM AND ISLAM

BY SAJJAD RIZVI

Can Islam embrace pluralism?[20] It would be a bland world indeed in which everyone wore the same clothes, spoke the same way, had the same tastes and thoughts. We intuitively know that it is good to differ in matters of taste. Reasonable disagreement is a basic state of life and I would argue one that ought to be embraced—and I include religious people embracing difference as well. While I do not adhere to the notion that conflict in our contemporary world is primarily religious in nature, I am also not convinced that religious people can provide a theological solution to conflict.[21] Conflicts, like much else in life, are neither monocausal nor monosoluble. But clearly, people of faith do need to articulate reasons for co-operation, for mutual respect and compassion to live fruitful and fulfilling lives in this world.

Knowledge and Truth

Reasonable disagreement is the norm in the world; each of us is capable of providing a rational account for our beliefs, and we take our claims seriously.[22] For many, this is the basic reason why we ought to hold a relativistic concept of truth and to embrace pluralism.[23] A pragmatic approach to truth could be useful: The Qur'an's recognition of difference as a basic social fact, which is of no consequence, only privileges the moral as a mark of distinction and not the epistemological.[24] Similarly, the famous poet Rūmī expresses this perspectival pragmatism and lack of understanding through the famous Buddhist parable of the blind men and the elephant. Mutuality actually assists us in understanding—and pragmatism may well be the best approach to epistemic pluralism.

Ontology of persons

One of the fundamental features of modern life is the desire to be true to oneself, to be free to determine one's own ideas and courses of action as an expression of who we are.[25] Each of us possesses a basic autonomy to choose and assert our will, unencumbered by processes of coercion—thus, negative liberty becomes one of the foundational myths of our time. One problem with such autonomy is that it could lead to a collectivity of selfish persons unaffected by others and unthinking in their pursuit of their will—subjectivism and emotivism gone mad.[26]

> An ethics and public theology of mutuality needs to be more than placing one's beliefs in the same basket as others and engaging in rational debate in the public

The converse of this liberal autonomy is the communitarian insight that in fact we are people embedded in contexts and communities and that our personhood, identity and ability to exercise moral agency is deeply attached to those contexts in which we find ourselves.[27] The danger with this position is that we see individuals purely in terms of their membership of such groups and therefore consider both religious and political relationships to exist between those groups: The personhood of the individual is therefore dissolved in an extended corporate personhood of the community.[28] Autonomy and selfhood are multilogically determined and socially embodied. We need a philosophy not so much of the 'I' but of the 'We' in which the 'I' does not dissolve but is nurtured and nurtures the moral impulses of the 'We'. Muslim societies need to appreciate the need for balancing the individual and the community in these terms and to deal with the non-Muslim other at both of these levels as well. The theological traditions

of Islam address the individual as a person with obligations to fulfil moral agency (taklīf), but they also address persons as believers with mutual ties and obligations (ayyuhā l-ladhīn āmanū) and as humans (ayyuhāl-nās).

Religiously inspired humanism

So where does religion impinge in this public sphere upon the ontology of mutual personhood? Religious ethics often concern the moral psychology of persons: Our selfhood emerges and is negotiated in the public sphere, and our morality is enacted based on what we are. If modern, post-Enlightenment ethics is primarily concerned with the value one ascribes to the act, then most religious ethics is concerned with the person. Both scripture and the philosophical traditions of Islam discuss the modes of human becoming, the life of a self that comes into existence with a body to define the person, and the human traverses and develops in an almost unlimited manner in this world existence and continues the process of renewing and becoming with the death of the body, with its resurrection and with the further resurrections and lives of the self in the afterlife.

Why does a believer read the Qur'an? The act of reading the Qur'an is a 'reading act' that has both lectionary and illectionary aspects. The illectionary has the force of reading as a spiritual practice in which the words and utterances strike the heart and have the effect of self-transformation, leading one to realise one's mutuality.[29] The lectionary is the consistent reading of the exhortation to the good: for the human rooted in a religious consciousness to do good, to seek good and to cooperate for and in the good.[30] The good cannot be achieved by the individual or even just by a small group but rather through mutuality and cooperation: The Qur'an exhorts competing with one another for the good in the context of recognition of religious diversity.[31] This religiously inspired humanism is about activating the human imagination to see the other as the self.[32]

Political theology and accommodation

Humanism requires states to recognise and embrace religiously inspired public policy and to accommodate 'theocratic communities' within the public sphere as long as they agree to certain ground rules, whether identified as the Rawlsian 'original position' or within the rubric of the overlapping consensus within deliberate rational, public discourse required of thinking citizens.[33] An ethics and public theology of mutuality needs to be more than placing one's beliefs in the same basket as others and engaging in rational debate in the public: It must also allow for the practice of faith, of ritual engagement and of sharing of experience that far too often we find uncomfortable.

— *Sajjad Rizvi is Associate Professor of Islamic Intellectual History, University of Exeter.*

CONCEPTUAL VIEWS ON INTEGRATION PROCESSES AND ISSUES OF MUSLIM CITIZENS/RESIDENTS IN THE WEST

BY PROF. ABDELLATIF BENCHERIFA

Discussions of the political, cultural and inter-individual relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, widespread and baffling as they are nowadays (when issues of tolerance, mistrust, violence, cultural clashes etc. prevail), have been determined by a set of value assumptions and, at times, prejudices that imbricate politics, religion and culture and are not always adequately and/or explicitly formulated. In western countries, among others, the focus discussion topics that dominate the scene involve the question of how Muslims living in the West do actually express both their religious beliefs and their cultural specificity.

This brief note argues for a conceptual framework that pays particular attention to both the vertical, time-bound (i.e. historical) dimension and the vertical one (i.e. spatially defined by the areas where Islam does exist). In pragmatic terms, such a relativistic framework may have the ability to highlight the unquestionable facts and allow for the distinction with the unverified views and assessments; ultimately, it would authorise a better and certainly optimistic perspective for internalising the religious distinctions (and their implications) within western countries.

The conceptual framework is based on three fundamental premises, which need to be taken into consideration.

First, the prevailing discussions of the status of Islam and Muslim residents in the West, as well as their relational implications, seem to be based on absolutistic, if not totalitarian, views (where Islam as a religion appears to be anti-western cultural elements and a threat to them). Viewed from the perspective of an academic treatment, this is simply misleading. It is argued that based *comparatively* on the lessons from historical observation, the West does not seem to attach the appropriate importance to the dimension of **historicity** in the cultural and social change in the land of Islam; Islam is certainly one of the major old-world monotheist religions with fourteen hundred centuries behind it. Incorporating *the very historical dimension* would simply show that: (i) the way Islam appears *today* is not similar to what it was in the past; Islam has been (and still is) evolving, as are Muslims; (ii) In this, the general trend of Islam evolution compares to that observed in other monotheistic religions, though not in comparable speed or intensity. This evolution of Islam is '*time staggered*' yet essentially *similar* to what the two other monotheist religions experienced (earlier in time). It is however argued that, ultimately, the results should at the end be similar. That is, there is no absolute deterministic fatality in today's reality of Islam. The argument is about an inevitable closeness of change, which the current discussions either overlook or marginalise.

Second, Islam is first and foremost about a religion, of course (i.e. a personal experience that involves the private life sphere). As a result of the abovementioned *historicity dimension*, the ultimate stage of the evolution shall consist of the limitation of Islam strictly speaking to this individual, existential sphere. In fact, the rise of so-called political Islam in the last quarter of century should not lead to blurring the view of the kind of Islam that prevailed (and is still prevailing) from this perspective, which is about this individual sphere and experience. The practice of Islam in Islamic countries, with a few exceptions, is that of a quest of spiritual aim, as much individually as the collective societal processes allow. *Shari'a* and common laws

live together, side by side, with an objective distribution of areas of application. Morocco and North Africa are good examples of this. In relation to Muslims in the West today, it is interesting to note that the first generations of migrants in the West were characterised by a *peaceful, non-conflict-oriented Islam*—if not all of them, at least the largest, *docile majority* (as it has been called). The early Moroccan migrants of the 1950s and 1960s in France, the Netherlands and Belgium as well as the early generation of Turks in Germany in about the same period are good examples of this distinction.

Third, the issues of integration of Muslim citizens and/or residents living in western countries do not necessarily have to be related in a linear, mechanical way to Islam in Muslim countries. As it is well documented, most of today's Muslim citizens/residents in the West are born in, have grown up in, and have known only their homeland in the West. Fresh migrants from Islamic areas rarely are associated with the set of issues that involve their coreligionists from 'indigenous' generations. The diversity of contexts of Islam in Islamic countries prompts the necessity of taking the nature of Islam and Muslims in the West just as a type of culturally and geographically self-defined type, one that exists among other types! A locally grown chemistry is more likely to account for this specific, rather than built-in, deterministic fate of Islam as a religion.

Next, let us turn to the intricate web of determinations in the issues of integration of Muslims in the West.

The issue of Islamic practice and tradition in relation with the question of integration of Muslims dominates in the current debate in the West. A careful investigation—say, for example, a statistically conducted one—may reveal that indicators of integration aspects are more prevailing among Muslims of the West than what the media and the public discussion sphere reveal; there seems to be a *fashionable* bias towards those non-integration indicators despite their secondary statistical weight (just as a delayed train is discussed more than the many trains that strictly adhere to their schedules). There are already data indicating that the largest proportion of Muslim citizens/residents in the

West exhibit a value system that is far closer to the ideal-typical one of the West than is the case within the Islamic countries and societies themselves. The statistical observation may not result in 100% being integrated, but should it be 100% in the first place? Viewed as a social-historical process, integration is actually working! On many traditional stereotypical issues (e.g. sexual freedom, abortion, gender equality, divorce, ascription etc.), results corroborate this fact. In Islamic countries (say Morocco), seasonal trips of so-called migrants of second and third generations show that their members do not have many cultural and behavioural similarities left, compared to the standards of their (supposed) country of origin (as perceived in these countries). The change is gradual, in line with the historicity dimension; it is bound to grow and intensify with time. True, it is also argued that there are faster changes within western cultures at the same moment; could it then be that the gap is unbridgeable?

The focus on groups that exhibit non-integrative features of western culture needs a better explanation and in fact begs the question of why this is so. Why is the change either slow or discriminated? Should the treatment of this question necessarily imply some kind of built-in Islamic set of inevitable fate? Many actually argue, based on evidence, that there is much to be done in the areas of tolerance, polarisation and stigmatisation; biases against Muslim minorities; poverty etc., which have their explanatory share in this situation. A comparative approach within western counties might help verify such a view: The case of Muslims living in the Americas (US, Canada, Southern American States) is far different from their situation in Europe and is in line with the previous explanation. There, despite the relative lateness of mass migration of Muslims, no problems of such magnitude as in Europe are found. It is at least important to attach a proportionate importance to the very migrant policies at stake in the European countries to account for this situation.

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MUSLIMS IN A LIBERAL PUBLIC SPHERE[34]

BY MALEIHA MALIK

Since 9/11 and 7/7, the topic of Islam and Muslims '*and* the West' as well Islam and Muslims '*in* the West' has become prominent.[35] Comparative analysis between the USA and Europe is important, but it needs to be related to the specificity of each historical, social and political context.[36] We need to examine commonalities between nation states to exchange best practices and also because anti-Muslim sentiment in western liberal democracies has a transnational character.

Challenge the orientalism and racism that misrepresents practice.

In the USA, a strong national identity is perceived to be available for all 'newcomer' Americans who wish to adopt it. The challenge is to extend constitutional protection and democratic politics to include those groups who were historically excluded or who are now marginalised because of prejudice in the present.[37] In Europe, national identity depends on complex factors such as history, race and language. These seemingly immutable criteria make it more difficult for Muslim 'newcomers' to become integrated into European nation states.

Europe and the USA have liberal democratic systems for regulating Islam and Muslims. The US constitution safeguards freedom of religion and equal protection for American Muslims. The European Convention on Human Rights protects freedom of religion, but its unified framework co-exists with significant diversity in the way in which Muslims are integrated into the European public sphere. In the UK, the Islamic headscarf has, mainly, been unproblematic. Yet, across the channel in France, the Islamic headscarf has been the subject of heated public debates and legal regulation.

In the USA, the Islamic headscarf has not caused the same controversy as it has in Europe. But there have been other manifestations of anti-Muslim prejudice. One example is the mobilisation against a mosque at Ground Zero by 'Stop the Islamisation of America'. Another example is the American 'anti-shari'a movement' that has led to anti-shari'a legislation in Florida and other state legislatures. The political mobilisation against Islam and Muslims has also had a transnational aspect. The French headscarf controversy has had influence beyond the territorial and jurisdictional limits of France in other countries such as Canada.[38] Geert Wilders and Anders Gravers (Stop the Islamisation of Denmark) travelled to the USA to support the American political mobilisation against building a mosque at Ground Zero. This export–import of anti-Muslim prejudice across nation-state boundaries requires a precise analysis of integration in a transnational context.

European and American Muslims can be more easily integrated if two strategies are simultaneously deployed. First, it is important to eliminate the orientalism and racism that distort our understanding of Islam and Muslims in the public sphere.[39] Second, Muslims need to be included in deliberative discourses within mainstream political institutions as well as civil society and the media.

Debates about integration often focus on how Muslims should adapt themselves to liberal democracy. But liberals should also undertake introspection. They need to challenge the orientalism and racism that misrepresents practices such as the Islamic headscarf or mosque minarets as a threat to the nation rather

than as legitimate public manifestations of Muslim religious difference.

Liberal principles can still be applied to what, at first sight, seem to be intractable religious differences.

Liberals also need to re-examine their own political tradition. Liberal democracy is often presented as a rational consensus in which all participants agree on key values such as freedom of speech or gender equality. Yet even if consensus on liberal values is impossible, liberal principles can still be applied to what, at first sight, seem to be intractable religious differences. There are a number of routes into this more complex form of politics. More specifically, it requires three important adjustments.

First, liberals should accept that the goal of political dialogue is not solely to seek a rational liberal consensus, but also to foster a complex democratic political identity amongst all citizens. For example, it is more important for all citizens—non-Muslims and Muslims—to have an open public debate about free speech and the Danish cartoon affair than to reach an iron-clad agreement that free speech is an absolute value or that it was correct to publish the cartoons.

Second, liberals should welcome the introduction of debates about religious 'difference' into the public sphere rather than relegating them to the private sphere. For example, rather than treating the commitment of some Muslims to ideas such as the 'Caliphate' or 'Islamic state' as a barrier to public participation, liberals should encourage Muslims to explain and debate these ideas openly with all other citizens.

Third, liberals should accept that an individual's political identity can sometimes draw on transnational allegiances and transcend national boundaries. Accordingly, the fact that Muslims strongly identify with a worldwide community

of believers should not be automatically problematised as incompatible with their membership as equal citizens in a national political community.

These three adjustments generate a 'pluralist' rather than a 'muscular' liberalism. This shift can open up political space to a productive disagreement about ideas rather than enforcing a strict liberal consensus. This approach treats 'difference' in the realm of ideas as an advantage rather than a problem, and it prevents democratic politics from becoming a sphere within which liberalism is entrenched as the received dogma. This version of liberal politics also enables established concepts such as gender equality or free speech to be debated in ways that are similar to the 'free marketplace of ideas' envisaged by classical liberals such as J. S. Mill.

Pluralist liberal politics is valuable not only because it is more inclusive than a 'muscular' liberal-consensus, but also because it strengthens liberal values as it defends them. For instance, debates about the Islamic headscarf have led to a heated discussion about the status of women. This public debate has, in turn, led to British and American Muslims, especially Muslim women, explaining their ideas about women's rights. It has also led to non-Muslims articulating and defending their central political commitment to gender equality. In this way, the problematising of values such as freedom of speech or gender equality has been, and can be, a catalyst towards Muslims and non-Muslims understanding new ideas as well as strengthening democratic politics.

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SEEING BEYOND NESTS OF MEANING: EXTENDING OUR SENSES OF RESPONSIBILITY

BY HILARY E. KAHN, PHD

Photo by H. E. Kahn

'There are no surer sources of disdain than ignorance and the sense of the inevitable naturalness of one's own way'.—Martha Nussbaum, 1997

Barriers of understanding are reified in public and personal discourse, too often without question, deliberation or critique. We rarely dissect our prejudices, even when higher education and media professionals recognise their responsibilities to break down conceptual obstacles and promote dialogue and understanding between cultures, ethnicities, classes, political groupings and religions. Too often handcuffed by public practice or gagged by ignorance, advocates for understanding and dialogue need appropriate pedagogies and engaging platforms to explore identities, recognise the extension of our responsibilities and educate through multiple lenses.

Transcending difference is based on a fundamental ability to see oneself in others, to perceive one's reflection in difference and to recognise that there is nothing whatsoever natural about one's own way. It necessitates a critical ability to question assumed categories,

challenge stereotypes, recognise the contextual attachment of cultural significance and always bring ideas about the world and otherness back to oneself. Knowledge is not enough. Ideally, understanding of difference should encourage individuals to progress from sympathy to empathy and then beyond towards responsibility. This extension of commitment is achieved through a variety of means and skills, through dialogue, reflection, engagement, collaboration, experiential learning and critical and visual literacy, for example. However, ultimately, it rests on an essential ability to dissect identities, recognise processes of social reproduction and question the too often unchallenged concepts and identities we rely on and replicate through academic and public practices.

This necessitates that people view the world as relational rather than substantialist,[40] where meanings and objects are recognised as constituted processes. This shift in emphasis, from substance to interconnections, is particularly important for those educating toward global engagement and responsibility. Not surprisingly, global learning and interfaith understanding require re-defining identities as complex interconnections. Both are based on challenging categories of knowledge production and questioning territorialised notions of identity. Both recognise that cognition alone is not enough. They both require a paradigm shift where we explore and dissolve the constructed polarity between local and global.

Doreen Massey[41] suggests we consider a set of Russian *matryoshka* dolls. We too often see our positions in the world through a similar metaphor. We have our well-ordered nests (i.e. selves, families, communities, nations etc.) that

expand out in clearly defined concentric circles of meaning. There are some real pedagogical and intellectual problems with such a simplified, yet too often replicated, vision of the world. One has to do with the persistent emphasis on the smallest dolls as the iconic and purist point of care and responsibility. This is where commitment is reified as the strongest and where responsibility is typically anchored between a parent and child and distilled to one territorial unit, such as a house. Even though global movement and diaspora calls this localised definition of care and responsibility into question, it still nonetheless persists in practice and analogy.

If we want people to begin to think beyond their homes, families and communities, then people everywhere must extend their perceptions of where commitment resides. They must see that responsibility extends beyond their immediate area. They must understand how entities (whether a person, political group or nation) are constituted in relation to others.

That a dissection of conceptual entities is related to recognising a responsibility beyond a specific location is not a coincidence. Doreen Massey[42] reminds us that responsibility derives from the same relations in which our identities are created. If we can articulate those complex webs in which we are defined, then we may also be able to begin to pull upon and activate responsibilities beyond the smallest *matryoshka* dolls. If we begin to see ourselves as spread beyond immediate places, then it is a small step to construct political and emotional relationships to others. It is a manoeuvrable shift to embrace commitment beyond yourself and your specific context of being.

What do we need to do? We must help people engage with a different type of geography of identity, where identities are boundless and not so easily constrained by geography or physical or political or academic borders. If we are to get the general public to think beyond their homes, beyond their families and beyond their communities, then we must help them think relationally about themselves and extend their definition of where commitment resides. They must begin to see how entities are only surfaces that mask the complexities that actually provide

their meaning. We must help them enter into that intricacy and chip away at established categories about selves, nations, geography, communities and identities.

We also must challenge the type of ideology that opposes the global and local. Once people begin to learn that the local is not in opposition to but rather integral to defining the global, then they can also recognise that the global can be intervened. They can begin to see that they can make a difference. The can envision the world and their position within it.

Lastly, we need to provide the skills to embody but also step beyond relativism. We know how important it is to live and work by a spirit of relativism. However, relativism can also be a pedagogical impasse, because too often—by instilling an ethos of relativism—we teach that people cannot make judgments about other cultures. We teach them that the world is full of isolated silos of significance and that it is difficult if not unethical to take universal or global stands.

How can we build globally responsible citizens if we cannot take a stand? People too often get caught in relativity, and we need to help them find a way out of this. I am in no way saying we discard relativistic thinking, not whatsoever, but we do need to recognise when it is abused and when we must move beyond it. We need to help others recognise when they have acquired enough information and multiple perspectives to make a committed and educated judgment. This is also our responsibility when encouraging global engagement and interfaith dialogue. It is only in this way that we can transcend differences, recognise interconnections and together begin to chip away at the many impasses that divide our worlds and our ways of thinking about them. However, knowing about this responsibility is not enough. More important is what we do with it.

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RETHINKING MUSLIM/NON-MUSLIM RELATIONS: STARTING WITH THE MUSLIM IN THE MIRROR

BY M.H. VORTHOREN

Speaking about Muslim/non-Muslim relations, in my experience, the focus tends to be on the general ignorance, misunderstanding, unwillingness to understand, anxieties or, worse, a 'bad intent' to misrepresent Islam and Muslims among non-Muslims. At least, that is my experience when speaking to Muslims about this issue, which has been framed in this way, it has been said many times before but I will say it again, especially since the events of 9/11.

> There is a lot of ignorance, misunderstanding, anxieties and all of that.

And it's true: There is a lot of ignorance, misunderstanding, anxieties and all of that. I regularly give tours in mosques, and all the 'classical questions' and stereotypes come up again and again. Many people are surprised that women are allowed to enter the mosque at all, are struck by the fact that Muslims also believe in God, angels and prophets who are familiar to them from the biblical history, find it new to hear Muslims condemning acts of terrorism and are quite dumbstruck to hear Muslims talking about God as merciful, forgiving and loving. And these are the people who show an active interest by taking the step to visit a mosque, which many others do not do. Many questions and misunderstandings arise from the mixing of social issues with religious groups, the 'Islamisation' of societal problems. Boys with a Moroccan origin are involved in criminality? It must have something to do with Islam. Women with Turkish roots do not speak Dutch? Well, they are Muslims. Parents from Pakistani origin are not involved enough in their children's school education? Probably for religious reasons.

Problems with mostly social and economic causes that are caused and/or experienced by people who also happen to be Muslim are soon pictured as 'Islamic' problems. It often happens in the media. At a very basic level, I have often had discussions with journalists who had written about 'Muslims' as opposed to 'Dutch' people, without even thinking about it. I had to explain to them that that is a strange and in fact incorrect categorisation, as many people would fit into both, the one being a religious identity, the other a nationality. Through framing like this, the message is given time and again that the two are mutually exclusive, which is of course nonsense, as is proven by hundreds of thousands of Dutch Muslims every day. Even the intentional effort to present Islam and Muslims negatively is clearly present. With the third largest political party in the country, the so-called Party for Freedom (PVV),[43] having based its success on a very explicit anti-Islam agenda, there is no sense in denying that. From this perspective, I absolutely believe that it is important to educate people, both the general public and specific groups of professionals, like journalists and teachers, more about Islam and Muslims, their diversity and about the shared history and common present. SPIOR as an organisation, and I personally try to make a contribution to that in different ways.

Having said that, I would like to focus more on the Muslims themselves in this picture, because, like with every story, there are at least two sides to this one as well. Furthermore, if we keep on stressing the problems on the side of 'the other', there is a risk of getting stuck in a victim role, which is disempowering. Because if 'they' do not know, do not understand and do not even want to, what can 'we' do? Well, a lot—and not only can

we, but we also should do that much more. Three points are in my opinion important in this respect.

First, if we should educate non-Muslims about Islam, shared histories, common values etc., Muslims themselves should be educated about that no less. The ignorance, misunderstandings and stereotypes are as abundant among Muslims as they are among our neighbours of other beliefs. For many young Muslims, their religious identity in late years has become almost a sort of a 'protest identity'—they strongly position themselves as Muslims and legitimise their opinions and behavior from this perspective, whereas they actually know very little about it and in this way sometimes end up giving justifications by referring to Islam while their conduct may actually have nothing to do with Islam or even be contrary to it—which brings me to my second point:

Muslims should be much more self-critical about real problems within their own communities. As a tree is known by its fruit, so a religion for many people is known by its believers. It will simply not do to keep saying that Islam supports women's rights and full equality if at the same time girls are not given the same opportunities as boys. It will not do to state proudly that Islam stands for personal autonomy and individual responsibility if at the same time young girls and boys are forced into marriages by their parents and/or other relatives. Actions speak louder than words. Negative stories about Muslims in the media, however one-sided and not nuanced and disproportionate they often may be, are (mostly) based on real problems in which Muslims are involved, one way or the other. And yes, we should explain that it is not a problem caused by Islam and that it also happens among other groups etc., but at the same time, we should acknowledge that there are issues to deal with and find a way to deal with them. Islam may actually be an effective 'tool' to use to change things. SPIOR, for example, has done a lot of preventative work against forced marriages within Muslim communities by educating both youngsters and parents that those are actually forbidden by Islam. This turned out to be an eye-opening message. By doing this work within the

communities and communicating it to a broader audience, the message of common values has real substance.

Lastly, I think it is of vital importance to understand that when talking about Muslim/non-Muslim relations, it is not just about rational arguments and the right information. Those should definitely be out there, but relations are, in the end, about people's hearts. So we should find ways to touch hearts. This starts by taking each other's feelings seriously. There is a lot of anxiety about Islam and Muslims that we cannot resolve by merely saying, 'It's not rational, it's not reasonable, history shows otherwise' and more like that. We should genuinely try to understand those anxieties, not simply dismiss them but understand where people are coming from and meet them there. And when I say 'meet', I also mean that literally. In my experience, the best way to build relations and touch people's hearts is to have actual face-to-face encounters, whether it is in the neighbourhood, at school, at the workplace, in the mosque or in the church or synagogue. In my experience, many good things happen already, but much more needs to be invested in this. Too many people still, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, shape their picture of 'the other' by what they hear *about* them, not *from* them, and that is quite often not the correct or at least an incomplete picture. Oh, and when we do meet, let's not forget our sense of humour—that is one of the best antidotes against fear!

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RETHINKING MUSLIM & NON-MUSLIM RELATIONS: A PERSONAL RESPONSE

BY SHEILA B. LALWANI

Sarajevo, 2009. The translator who accompanied me on a research trip to this capital city pointed to a woman dressed in full black chador. Many women who cover—though certainly not all—had been victims of the mass sexual violence that took place during the 1992–1995 conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

'*Everyone knew what happened to them, but nobody wanted to talk about it*', she said.

She waited a minute before she discussed the efforts of the local Muslim community to address the crimes that had been committed against members of their community. The cab slowly rolled to a halt. She prepared to exit the taxi.

'*They really tried to help them*', she said.

During that same week, sexual violence and mass rapes occurred against women elsewhere in the world. A debate raged on in Afghanistan concerning the purported right of husbands to rape their wives. Other instances of women being stoned to death for suspected sexual misconduct also made the headlines that year. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, rapes were also systematically carried out against women and girls. The victims were Christian, Muslim and from local relations.

Despite global calls to combat sexual violence in conflict zones and persecute perpetrators, this form of violence has occurred again and again and again. Outside of conflict zones, statistics show that one in four women will be sexually assaulted at some point in her life. From a journalistic perspective, rape is so common that newspapers rarely report them anymore.

In this essay, I point to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia to make a larger point that to

strengthen Muslim and non-Muslim relations, focusing on shared concerns may provide a useful platform to address shared global concerns.

War rape is in fact as old as war itself but only received mention largely in passing.

Sexual Violence in the Former Yugoslavia

During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1995, special camps and locations in major urban and rural centres were established with the specific purpose of sexually assaulting women.[44] The majority of these women were Muslim, and the assaults were seen as a method of ethnic cleansing. Catherine MacKinnon called the rapes in the former Yugoslavia an instrument and tactic of war. These crimes were carried out systematically and in specific regions, such as camps in Eastern Bosnia.[45]

War rape—typically considered as part of collateral damage—considers sexual assault committed by soldiers, other combatants or civilians during armed conflict a method of psychological warfare intended to humiliate and demoralise the enemy.[46] Women—on account of race and religion—were herded into abandoned buildings, burned-out homes, vacated hotels and so forth and held captive by soldiers and members of the opposition.

The European Community led a fact-finding mission to the former Yugoslavia in December 1992 and found that soldiers had sexually assaulted twenty thousand women.[47] Exact statistics are unlikely to ever be known, but the most precise figures indicate that an estimated twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand people—overwhelmingly women and girls—were victim

to targeted sexual violence. Muslim women and girls were overrepresented.[48] The majority of victims experienced multiple rapes, and some of the rapes were later broadcast. The Bosnian Reporters Network indicated that the ages of the victims ranged from 12 to 65.

Reacting to the Tragedy

The Muslim community had no choice but to address these crimes and issued opinions that were victim friendly, compassionate and supportive, challenging conventional views of Islam and Islamic law.

A fatwa that was issued made it clear that the women were victims. 'Many Muslim women have become a target for the scavenging wolves of humanity, who do not fear Allah or any deterrent. Any woman who, despite doing her utmost to resist these thugs and their ilk, is raped is not guilty of any sin, for the situation is beyond her control, and anyone who is forced to do something is not guilty of sin, even in cases of *kufr,* which is worse than adultery, as Allah says: "Except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith"'.[49]

It is unclear the ground-level impact that the *fatwa* had, but the *fatwa* established the mosques of Bosnia as safe havens for women. That *fatwa* was not issued in a vacuum: There are other instances of Islamic scholars, jurists and religious leaders throughout Islamic history who have come to the support of victims of sexual violence.[50]

Verses in the Qur'an and historic evidence speak to the unfortunate reality that gender-based violence has been practiced against women during armed conflict since the beginning of warfare in many religious traditions. In embracing the victims of mass rape, the Bosnian Islamic community was able to demonstrate compassion through religion. The *fatwa* itself is nonbinding, but its existence builds a larger case for Islamic law as flexible to the needs of people, especially women.

The crimes committed against women and girls in the former Yugoslavia were eerily similar to those committed in other conflicts. War rape is in fact as old as war itself but only received mention largely in passing. The issue of sexual violence gained greater attention during the struggles for independence in Bangladesh and East Timor.

The actions on the part of the Islamic authority in Bosnia-Herzegovina underscored an important reality in sexual violence during conflict: The crimes committed against women are not just the problems of women. In rethinking Muslim and non-Muslim relations, bypassing these categories and moving into areas of shared concerns might prove useful in stemming global violence and building stronger relations along the way.

Everyone—Muslim and non-Muslim—would be better served that way.

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HOW DO WE BREAK
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INDIVIDUALS CREATING
CHANGE CAN HAVE
EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT.

ENDNOTES

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