

WITHOUT LENIN AND LOCKE : THE IMPACT OF ISLAMIC RESURGENT ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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Contemporary international politics is essentially the function of the interaction between the West and its global strategic environment. The Western mind always has been the directing force. The Lockean idea of the Commonwealth with its inherent war and peace attributes, and the Leninist conception of the world with its emphasis on capitalism and class conflict, are but different manifestations of the Western post-Enlightenment universalism.¹ Colonialism and imperialism were mainly European preoccupations, and even with the best of intentions, as encapsulated in the Kipling's version of the "white man's burden", European nations had emerged as predatory states whose activities led to the subjugation of the non-Europeans. The League of Nations to all intents and purposes was also a Western creation meant to salvage Judeo-Christian civilization, while the United Nations, a post-World War Two concoction, was undergirded by the Anglo- Saxon desire to maintain its pre-eminent position. Even the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), that made its bid for power and prominence in the nineteen- sixties and seventies, had to contend with the prevailing bloc politics and could survive only at its dispensation. Islam and the Muslim world likewise have been defined

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1. See also Chris Brown, "History Ends, Worlds Collide" in Micheal Cox, et. el (eds), *The Interregnum Controversies in World Politics, 1989 – 1999*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pg. 43.

by "others"; their roles have been circumscribed by the exigencies of the time, and at the height of the Cold War, they were tolerated for their strategic value and courted as such. The "others" conspired to make Islam and the Muslims relevant or irrelevant in the changing configuration of power. From their vantage position, scholars of international relations, either of the realist bent or idealist disposition, by and large saw the unfolding scene in a similar perspective.

The events surrounding the resurgence of Islam and the accompanying euphoria in the Muslim world in the last three decades of the 20th century have the potential for putting a brake on this unilinear path of international relations. While initially, the momentous transformation did not appear earth-shattering in terms of its impact on Western civilization, it was already enough to dispel the earlier notion about development models. The peripheralization of religion as a concomitant feature of modernization and the stereotyping of religion as the opiate of the people proved to be at variance with the rise of religiosity within Islamdom. Islam was increasingly perceived as an antagonistic religion that militated against modern Western society. In the context of the Communist East, the proliferation of Islamic activities within the bosom of its communities was "a negation of optimistic and stimulating materialistic teaching... (for) it prevents its believers from being active and conscientious builders of communist society".² Islam was thus seen to be more than a belief-system -a civilizational paradigm. The globalization of liberal democracy and capitalism that coincided with the demise of communism had to compete with the universalism of Islamic values. For at least one scholar of world politics, the untoward, if not unnatural development, has challenged "the authority structure of the international system", the so-called "Westphalian synthesis",³ and bodes ill for the secularization of international relations. The pronouncement that history has finally come to an end looks premature.

2. See Geoffrey Wheeler, "Islam and the Soviet Union" Asian Affairs, Vol. X, Part III, October 1979, p. 246

3. For more details, see Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations", *World Politics*, October 2002.

Four overlapping waves of development that engulfed the Muslim world over the last thirty years have converged to produce this destabilizing effect on international relations. While the Islamists and the Islamically-inclined did not necessarily intend to undermine old realities, their very rhetoric and actions nevertheless have helped to galvanise the forces at work, even inciting the apathetic ummah (Muslim Community) into action and energizing some of its members to join the upheaval. The movements were perceived as defining while being defined.

The four types of not unrelated developments are: first, the religious revival in such Muslim majority countries as Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and Malaysia; second, the religious revolution in Iran; third, the religious re-awakening in Afghanistan; and fourth, the religious transnationalism associated with Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Unsurprisingly, while the espousal of Islamic cause or causes was virtually uncoordinated, it was the perception of the "others" more than anything else which fostered a united view of resurgent Islam, so much so that the Muslim world is now seen as a monolithic whole bent upon destroying the rest. Obsessed by the growing challenge (often described as the 'Green Peri!'), the West has become somewhat blinded to the positive contributions that Islam has made even in the recent past, notably during the Cold War, when they teamed-up for a global crusade against communism. The non-Muslim world's vision of current global terrorism springs partly from this belief.

The Islamic Idea of Progress and Religious Revivalism in the Muslim World

A number of factors accounts for the religious revival in the Muslim world. These range from the Muslim desire to resurrect the Islamic past that is modeled on the Medinan state of the Prophet's era, to their disdain of the West, including the various secular ideologies associated with it. In fact, depending on the context, their religious responses have been different, so much so that their reactions merit different descriptions: some reactionary and conservative, others modern and moderate, and some others radical and revolutionary. However, one common theme which runs through, but

is hardly spelt out, if at all, by students of contemporary Islam, is the Islamic idea of progress itself.

Partly out of prejudice, partly out of ignorance, but mainly because any return to religion is considered anti-development, ideologues of progress in the West and the high priests of Western scholarship generally view Islamisation as a negation of the historical process. Armed with the conviction that progress constitutes "the gradual expansion of human power", with reason overtaking revelation, they see the unfolding events in the Muslim world as in conflict with their belief in the laws of development. For the Western protagonists of change, progress should, and must take the form of the fulfillment of individual freedom and the realisation of a full democratic life, or as a class struggle with the communist state as the end-point, and that will necessarily be a move away from the theological past.

Resurgent Islam entails, among others, a return to the past, the appropriation of past values, the incorporation of past laws and the glorification of past models. The Ikhwanul Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood) founded by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928, and the Jamaati Islami (Islamic Party) started by Abu Ala Maudoodi in India in 1941, forerunners of contemporary Islamic revivalism, battled for the resurrection of the Shariah, and their application in modern contexts. By exploring the previous Islamic way of life and comprehending the validity of Islam in the world, they called attention to the need for the enlargement of the role of Islam in both private and public domains of life, a rejection of modern ideologies, and the propagation of an Islamic solution to nation-building. By invoking Islam as a total system, they not only were reaffirming their faith in God and were making religion as a focus of identity, but they were also pitting themselves against the powers-that-be. With their growing popularity, especially among the young, and their stoical determination to lead an Islamic life in spite of the odds and challenges posed by modern living, the stage was set for a major confrontation with governments, and what they stood for, including in the realm of foreign policy.

The Ikhwanul Muslimoon's espousal of Islamic ideology found resonance in Syria, Jordan, Sudan and the Palestinian West Bank where local branches were established to carry the Koranic message and to project the messianic vision. By bringing a fresh perspective to their Islamic idealism, the Jamaati Islami not only managed to stir the religious feeling of the Pakistani and Indian Muslims, but was also able to draw a large number of Muslims outside the sub-continent into the mainstream of Islamic consciousness. Once recast in the Islamic mould, they too began to express millennialist sentiments, struggling to graft fundamentalist values onto their societies in the process. There occurred a wholesale transformation of their basic attitude towards life: they embraced Islam in full and enjoined others to do the same, they sought the purification of Islam from non-religious accretions, and they championed the cause of Muslim unity. Politically, their thinking was in the direction of an Islamic state. To them, Islamization would bring about a desirable state of affairs. Likewise, by returning to the original message and in their search for cultural identity, the Islamists too began to show growing disenchantment with Western civilization, together with its principles of liberalism and freedom. The Western paradigm of development in short became a source of antagonism.

Other Muslim countries such as Turkey, Algeria and even Malaysia were also affected by the Islamic resurgence. While they all experienced different levels of Islamization, the Islamic idea of progress was well embedded in the struggle of the Islamists concerned, and was inherent in their demands, notwithstanding the different socio-political and socio-economic contexts. The Islamization of symbols and the actualization of Islamic objectives that featured in their works point to their "adaptive responses" to their political and economic surroundings. Overall, their vision of progress ran counter to the rationalism and the humanism of the Renaissance, the technological and scientific advancement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the economic growth of the twentieth century, all of which are well manifested in the policies and the practices of the ruling parties. It is in this context that the empowerment of Islam was seen as anathema, if not subversive, to the existing order, and by extension to its external relations.

The ideologization of Islam and, relatedly, the possible adoption of a holistic view of foreign policy, proved uncongenial to both the Western-backed governments and the Western world as a whole. In fact, even within the constraints of the existing political order, several of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations were already influencing the direction of their countries' foreign policies. In its own way, Ikhwanul Muslimoon had already been interacting at the international level, right from the start. Part of the ideological basis of its struggle was to extricate Muslims everywhere from all forms of foreign domination, bring about Islamic unity, and ensure the pre-eminence of God's laws.

The Islamists' conception of the world was both a response to the conflicting relations between the West and the East, as manifested in the ideological clash between the capitalist and the communist blocs, and a desire to see the liberation of the Muslim ummah from the clutches of both powers. For Syed Qutub, Ikhwan's foremost ideologue, it was going to be a struggle between Islam and the rest, for after all both Western capitalism and Eastern communism were materialistic, and hence shared the same worldly goal. Since Ikhwanul Muslimoon's immediate concern was the Israeli occupation of Palestine, its members also undertook to join other Arabs to fight the Jewish state, in the name of Islamic struggle and progress. At the same time, in view of its stand on Muslim unity, especially its idea of the Caliphate, the organization was also seen as usurping the role of the Egyptian government as the torch bearer of Arab nationalism.

With the West still mired in its confrontation with communism, and with Egypt caught in the politics of the Cold War, the Islamic resurgence did not receive much attention abroad. The United States was preoccupied with Nasser's leftist leaning, especially after he undertook to secure Soviet aid to build the Aswan Dam. The one country that showed great concern over the development of Islam in Egypt was Israel. In fact, resurgent Islam was tolerated for its potential as an ally of the West in its showdown with communism. This became all more evident after the rise of Anwar Sadat who in turn made use of Islam in an attempt to bury once and for all the influence of Nasserism, and bring his country into the Western orbit.

For its part, the Jamaati Islami generally was operating within the confine of the nation-state. The organization, under the inspiring leadership of Abu Ala Maudoodi, was able to make serious inroads in Pakistani society, engaging in a broad range of activities, and was embroiled in domestic politics. The enforcement of Islamic rules or the establishment of theocracy that became its central concern drove it into confrontation with the governments from time to time.⁴ In attempting to live up to the idealized past, Jamaati Islami had to go from "revolution to revolution," (to borrow Professor A. Rashid Moten's description). Its impact on regional security environment became discernable in later years, when Islamists in Central Asia especially, under the spell of Abu Ala Maudoodi, fought their way for the enthronement of God's laws and in the process forged a new allegiance in the international relations of the region.

Within Egypt's neighbourhood, where Ikhwanul Muslimoon was able to carve out a place in society, and where it was joined by other home-grown fundamentalist organisations, the Islamic wave was also raising anxiety and causing disquiet all round. The fear that the Islamists would impose their civilizational values predominated, and became a rallying cry. Granted that the Islamic forces in Sudan, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and Malaysia were responding to different histories and political situations, their promotion of Islamic personality, their problematic relations with modernity and secularism, their idea of government and, above all, their perception of Muslim unity based on collective memory of the past were disconcerting to the foreign policy-makers one way or another. Beyond that, the possibility that the countries concerned were developing in a fundamentalist direction and adopting an activist foreign policy also proved worrisome to their neighbours.

Thus, in reaction to the growing Islamic consciousness that had engulfed them, Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria began to turn more and more to the West for assistance. Following the Islamists' electoral victories in Algeria in the early nineties, the country began to embrace the Western

4. See Charles J. Adam, "Maudoodi and the Islamic State", in John L. Esposito (ed), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, New York : Oxford Univeristy Press, 1983

cause all the more and was rewarded with economic and military help to contain and crush religious revivalists. Threatened by the Islamists' onslaught, the Kemalists in Turkey felt necessary to confront the Islamic party, so that the country could continue to develop in the image of the West, and also that its chance of joining the European Union would not be jeopardized. Pakistan, hard-pressed by the spawning Islamic activities at home and abroad, arising partly from the role played by the Jamaati-Islami, devised various ways of responding to the rising Islamic sentiments so that it could retain Western favour. In the West Bank, the Israeli army was forced to fight a running battle with the Palestinians who had come under the spell of Ikhwanul Muslimoon and had been operating under The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) or the Islamic Jihad. In the former republics of the Soviet Union, the Islamic revival was also haunting Moscow, and Islamism was seen as an "ideological substitute for Marxism-Leninism". Russia found common ground with the West in its confrontation with the religious groups that revolted against the state. Altogether, the spectre of Islamic ideology with its borderless appeal had provoked many countries to confront Islamic groups in advancing their national cause.

The West's response to the upsurge in religiosity in its traditional areas of security concern was equally illustrative of the impact of resurgent Islam on international politics. France understandably was disturbed by events in Algeria, and with already two million Algerian migrants in Europe, the prospect of another wave of refugees flocking to the continent looked daunting. The United States, which gave both moral and material support to Algiers, was also driven to check Islamic expansionism in Sudan by denying aid to the country. Khartoum's refusal to join Operation Desert Storm worsened US-Sudan relations. By 1995, five years after the collapse of communism, NATO's Secretary-General, Willy Claes, was ready to pronounce Islamic militancy "as the gravest threat to Western security" since the end of the Cold War.⁵ The increase in Islamicity exhibited by a growing number of Malays in Malaysia, and

5. See "March of the Militants", *Far Eastern Economics Review*, 9 March 1995

the government's involvement in the promotion of Islam by way of assimilating and absorbing Islamic teachings in the administration of the country raised eyebrows in Australia, and prompted the Age to describe the phenomenon as "a revolution at our doorsteps". Across the Causeway, Singapore had been watching developments in Malaysia with mounting concern. Whether the various strategies adopted by these countries were meant to shore up the economic liberalization policies of the market-oriented economy, or to stem the tide of the religious revivalism so that it would not once again reach "the gate of Vienna and the shore of Spain", is debatable. But clearly, the Islamic waves originating from those Muslim-majority countries could cause a disruption in international relations once Islam became a frame of reference in their foreign policies. With the Iranian revolution casting a shadow over the Muslim world, the situation looked all the more precarious. In the words of one observer, "The intricate network of diplomatic, economic, military and political systems which has held the world in balance, however uneasily, for the past 30 years seems more at risk... than at any time since World War Two".⁶

Iran, Afghanistan and the Struggle for World Domination

The Islamic expression of the Iranian revolution and the Afghan religious struggle are variations on the same theme, with the Islamists glued to the same idea of progress and riveted on the very imaginary society as envisaged by Hassan al-Banna and Abu Ala Maudoodi. It is also part of a continuum. Although both events flourished under different circumstances, they were all divinely-inspired and had as their goal the actualization of the same ideal—the Islamic state. To both the Iranians and the Afghans concerned, the past was indispensable as a guide and a referent, and the future is inevitable, although it had to be worked out using the instrumentality of men. In other words, they too aspired to create a future in the image of the past through the medium of the present. Since both the events appeared on the same globalized scene, their impact on international

6. Peter Wilsher and Foreign Staff, "Fire in the East, Fear In The West", *The Sunday Times* (London), 25 November 1979

relations was wide and far-reaching. The Iranian Revolution for one worked against the liberal approach to international relations, while the Afghan religious struggle initially adversely affected the Marxist-Leninist scheme for ordering relations among states, and then later offset the regional and international order that was long in the making.

Iran was never in the picture as a source of international Islamic inspiration until the Khomeini-led revolution swept the country culminating in the downfall of the US-backed Shah and the establishment of an Islamic republic. Whilst the Ayatollah's struggle was reminiscent of the past ulama revolt, beginning in the seventeenth century, its brand of Islam hardly endeared it to members of the Ummah who were of Sunni orientation. Shi'ism as a religious force developed in isolation, confined mainly to the Gulf region and certain areas of the Levant, a world within a world.

The ascendancy of Khomeinism not only directly impinged on US-Iran relations, but, more importantly, had had a bearing on the international relations of the Muslim world as well as on world politics as a whole. Khomeini's Islamic message reverberated across the Middle East and beyond. For example, overwhelmed by the events in Iran, the Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq, openly displayed his feeling. "Our hearts beat as one with those of our Iranian brethren on the auspicious occasion of their realization of their noble dream".⁷ On account of the appeal to Muslims everywhere. Khomeini's idealism helped in overcoming the age-old divide between sunnism-shi'ism in many parts of the Muslim world. Iran under the Shah had been an "island of stability" in the eyes of Washington, but the Islamic republic represented the rule of the "mad mullahs" not only for the United States but also for its Western allies, especially after Iran's foreign policy assumed a radical form.

Iran's new foreign policy was premised on the belief that the Islamic republic was to function as the bearer of the divine message. As Khomeini proclaimed it - "to put Quranic law in power from one end of

7. Foreign Affairs Pakistan, Vol. VI, February 1979, pg. 27

the earth to the other."⁸ In recreating the ideal of the past, and in living up to the challenges of the present, Teheran introduced a new modus operandi into international relations. It was more than a form of "third worldism". Neither governed by the West nor by the East, Iran adopted an independent foreign policy that drove fear into the hearts of many.

The struggle for the here and now, and not just the hereafter, had given ideological coherence to the Iranian revolution. On the one hand, adapting to its local context, the Islamists became hostile toward the United States and its ally, Israel, and at one stage branded the former as "the Great Satan". The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was one of its early victims. In this regard, whoever emerged victorious in the anti-Shah struggle, whether Islamists or leftists, democrats or revolutionaries, would necessarily be anti-American by virtue of being the supporter of the Peacock Throne. At the regional level, Teheran's profile and power projection was perceived as another Shah-like attempt at seeking regional hegemony, something that drove Saddam Hussein to go to war with Iran, and caused the neighbouring sheikdoms to gang up in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). Countries known for their Western-leaning policies like Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, either created new collaborative partnerships or reinforced old ones, in order to forestall any possible similar revolution at home. Moreover, Islamists who have been reared on the diet of anti-Westernism too have been drawing from a reservoir of Iranian antagonism of the West.

The United States cemented its relationship with Turkey, increased its support for Algeria, and formed new alliances with several Central Asian republics in order to rein in Iran's expansionist design. On the other hand, there were Muslims around the world who were captivated by the Iranian revolution, and who saw Teheran as the centre of an Islamic Comintern, and Iran as a future super (albeit, spiritual) power.⁹ And there was also the Iranian leadership that made no secret of its intention to export the

8. See Nawi Al-Ghazali (ed), *Khomeini's Guide to Islamic Revolution*, Beirut, 1980, pg. 3

9. See also *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 29 December 1979

revolution to "the four corners of the world". In the words of its president, Rafsanjani, Islam was "the secret key in liberating the oppressed peoples from the domination of the powers".¹⁰ Iran was able to cultivate a mystique of ummatic power, much to the liking of Islamists everywhere, but very much to the dismay of the pro-Western regimes that saw a new relationship was fast evolving. The prestige imparted by the Iranian revolution in fact also caused the new Central Asian republics that are still aligned to Moscow to close ranks in the face of the spread of the Iranian revolution. By defining security in Islamic terms, Teheran indeed was able for a while to drive home its foreign policy belief. The Afghan experience stood at another end of the spectrum, and introduced a new twist into international relations.

Arguably, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The implosion that brought about the collapse of the communist superpower put a stop to Moscow's struggle for world domination. As Ali Mazrui notes it "Soviet intervention was to boomerang in Moscow's face -with global implications".¹¹ It also opened the way for the triumphant march of Islam, when first, the Mujahedeen, and later, the Taliban, took turns to re-enact the drama of past Islam.

Islam's rise to power in Afghanistan already constituted a momentous development within the boundary of that land-locked state. Whether the new government was fashioned in the mould of Hekmatyer, or was led by an Amirul Mukmunin (Commander of the Faithful) in the person of Mullah Omar is a moot point, for it signals the resurrection of the Shariah all the same. For Muslims seeking a model Islamic state, the establishment of the Islamic republic was a welcome prospect. The Islamists in their quest for worldly victory looked back to the "Golden Age of Islam", and, in the course of their battle for the establishment of God's laws, went all out against materialist ideologies. Many among the admirers of the "New Afghanistan" became new-born Muslims, following their encounter with

10. See Islamic Republic News Agency, 5 April 1982

11. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Resurgence of Islam and the decline of Communism", *FUTURES*, April 1991, pg. 276

their co-religionists in that country. More importantly, Afghanistan became the training ground for Islamic fighters from all over the world that later led to negative response from the West.

Afghanistan was to the United States what Vietnam had been to the Soviet Union. Both were part of the Cold War rivalry, and both were involved in the proxy wars of the superpowers. But here the similarities end. Muslim fighters from across the globe converged in Afghanistan to wage *Jihad* against a godless enemy. According to one estimate, more than 30,000 of them joined the so-called "Islamic International Brigade" to do their battle for God. Many of them were ordinary followers of the faith, imbued with the idea of liberating a Muslim land from the clutches of the unbelievers, or were simply translating their religious teachings into practice. Trained by the Americans, equipped with sophisticated weapons siphoned from Western armouries and funded by pro-Western Muslim states such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the Mujahedeen became the vanguard of the West and simultaneously the torch-bearer of Islam. All sides might have had their own agendas, but their combined effort helped the Afghans to defeat a superpower. If Afghanistan turned Frankenstein following the victory of the Taliban, it was also a Saladin for the thousands of jihadists (holy warriors) from Chechnya, Indonesia, Bosnia, China, not to mention the various Arab states themselves.

For the United States, and to a considerable extent, several pro-West Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, the Mujahedeen and Taliban victories were a prospect turned gloomy. The Party of Islam that emerged from the ravages of war with the Soviet Union not only took to forming an Islamic republic but also turned its back on the West. The United States and its allies, having created the circumstances for the triumphant exit of Islam, were now at loggerhead with the emergent Afghanistan. Later, after having catapulted the Taliban to power, Pakistan had to contend with an unsavoury situation after the West condemned the regime and later bombarded the country with massive fire-power. For the Afghans who had wrested their homeland from the Soviet Union, or who fought to overcome their own co-religionists in the civil war, they were also in training for a bigger objective. And for the many Muslims who flocked to the country to serve the cause of *Jihad* , and were radicalized by the events,

Afghanistan was another step in a journey of a thousand voyages. The Americans and the rest who were involved in the war efforts were there as mid-wives.

Saudi Arabia, Religious Transnationalism and the Organization of Islamic Conference

Strictly speaking, the religious transnationalism associated with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy was unrelated to the Islamic revival of the seventies and eighties, and neither was the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) which partly sprang into life in the late sixties. However, both manifested the Muslim desire to re-enact the Islamic past, and their aspiration to overcome contemporary difficulties by resorting to religious solutions. The Islamic idea of progress was never far from the minds of the Saudi foreign-policy makers and the OIC founders. Following the world-wide Islamic resurgence, both Saudi Arabia and the OIC were either roped into the process, or were subject to mounting criticisms and even physical attacks from the Islamists who demanded more "Islamness" out of them. On both counts, Saudi and OIC's involvement raised the Islamic profile and created greater saliency for resurgent Islam in the context of international politics.

The promotion of Islam had always been one of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy objectives. The country emerged not only as the custodian of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, but also by drawing on its riches, was able to finance Islamic projects abroad. These included the funding of mosques, the training of religious preachers and the convening of international Islamic conferences. Saudi Arabia worked its way through several Islamic organizations such as the World Muslim League and the Islamic Development Bank. Almost immediately, Saudi transnational religious activities bore fruits when Islamists of various political backgrounds began to benefit from Riyadh's outreach. But Saudi Arabia was also pro-West and anti-communist and that made it a natural ally of the United States during the Cold War. Whilst resurgent Islam was not yet an issue, there developed a commonality of interests between them, and both joined in a united commitment to contain international communism.

The OIC which worked on a different plane derived from the same Islamic source and was targeted at a similar religious goal. It was an extension of the earlier *ummahism*, a general feeling of oneness and a developed sense of belonging among Muslim people, that had animated and energized them throughout history, especially during moments of crisis. The desecration of al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in 1969 triggered this very *ummahism*, and led to the re-appearance of pan-Islamism in the form of the GIG.

By invoking *ummahism*, as a basis of brotherhood and fraternization, and as a focus of transnational loyalty, they actually were rising to the challenge of the time-Muslim disunity in a world of nation-states. The *ummahism*, of the OIC was premised on the belief that Muslim all over the world could once again live as one people. Participants at the Rabat Conference -now referred to as the First Islamic Conference -resolved to make Islam a creed that could once again bring "their peoples closer together" and foster "understanding between them". Their devotion to the "struggle of all Muslim peoples with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence, and national rights" and their concentration on the liberation of Jerusalem also pointed to a regionalization of the international process. The GIG too was geared towards greater solidarity and cooperation "in the economic, scientific, cultural and spiritual fields" in the name of Islam.¹²

The liberation of the *ummah* was at also the core of the OIC struggle. On the one hand, it was question of extricating the Muslim peoples from their predicament and freeing them from the constraints of the nation-state or modernity, while on the other it was the issue of bringing them into the mainstream of Islamic life and developing and sustaining a unitary perspective of international politics. Both point to the resurgence of Islam as a way of life. By making religion a directing force, the OIC manifested a desire to reconstruct the Islamic past, to rebuild the Islamic presence, and to redirect the future.

12. See Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Charter and Declaration/Communiqués of the Islamic Summits, Jeddah (n.d), pg. 19

Saudi Arabia's role in the promotion of pan-Islamic solidarity in the context of the DIC was pivotal. In fact, King Feisal's efforts initially led to the convening of the First Islamic Conference. Using its burgeoning oil profit, Riyadh bankrolled a series of DIC meetings and even funded its General Secretariat. The Saudi monarch in this regard had long been in the forefront championing the cause of the Palestinians, and had appropriated funds for the various other organizations that worked toward the emancipation of Islam's third holy place. Now with the creation of the DIC, Saudi Arabia had become more vociferous in articulating its concern over the plight of the Palestinians in particular, and the predicament that had befallen the *ummah* in general. The regime attained greater prominence by launching its anti-Israel campaign. By approaching the Palestinian issue in religious terms, it was able to engage the loyalty of Muslims everywhere. Like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan too was in the thick of early DIC activities. That had to do partly with its Islamic background, although prior to its participation in the movement the country gravitated towards the West. Pakistan also was inclined to live with the new reality of international Islamic politics following the decline of Pan-Arabism.

Armed with the conviction that Islamic solutions could be applied to conflicts faced by Muslim nations, the GIC had also attempted to bring peace to some thorny international political situations. While retaining its interests in the Palestinian issue, and continuing to show its revulsion towards Israel, the GIC had to contend with new international crises that unfolded in the wake of its creation. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan prompted Muslim leaders to call emergency meeting of the OIC. They demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghan soil. Although OIC members that were close to Moscow were quite reluctant to condemn Moscow for its intervention in Afghanistan, the organisation was able to sustain its mood of confrontation and for some time member-states were able to show some semblance of Islamic unity in the face of the aggression. In fact, the new Afghanistan under Babrak Kamal was denied membership of the OIC. Pakistan, which was drawn into the conflict partly because of its proximity to Afghanistan, and partly because of its anticommunist stance, was very involved in getting the OIC to play an effective role in the Afghan affair. With Islamically-inclined President Zia-ul-Haq at the helm, the country was equally desirous of projecting an

Islamic image. Therefore, not unexpectedly, the Pakistan leader was later chosen to address the thirty-fifth session of the UN General Assembly on behalf of the OIC.

So long as national interests did not collide with ummatic and pan-Islamic politics, members of the OIC were able to commit themselves to the running of the organization and the promotion of Islam. The euphoria that surrounded its birth and early development continued to grow so long as Israeli occupation of Arab lands was able to stir the imagination of the member-countries. Otherwise, the OIC too was subject to the gyration of international politics, and hence its contribution to Islamic progress could be sacrificed on the altar of national interests. In fact, its role in the Afghan struggle was marred by partisan disagreement when pro-Soviet OIC members and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were not willing to commit fully to pan-Islamic stand against the Soviet aggression.

The end of the Gulf War also meant greater international fluidity. The GIC suffered all the more with the new configuration of power. In the world of nation- states, where even hopeful consensus produced by the United Nations often failed to produce concrete results in the management of crisis, Muslim leaders exhibited similar ambivalence when came to dealing with Muslim states. Its failure to bring peace to the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf crisis was telling of its weaknesses in the face of intra-GIC challenges. Likewise, in the Bosnian crisis, in spite of its much-talked about impact on the ummah, the civil war in the Balkans had only drawn "a disgracefully slow and niggardly response"¹³ from many Muslim countries.

Although the GIC was not hijacked by the forces of Islamic revivalism, it nevertheless had to develop its own dynamics to stay relevant, or run the risk of being swept aside in the convulsion caused by the resurgence. In fact, at one stage, its very existence was questioned when a prominent Islamist formed a rival organization called The

13 Akhbar S. Ahmed, "New Metaphor in the New World Order, *Impact International*, 12 March- April 1993, pg. 23

Popular Arab and Muslim Conference to champion the cause of Muslims in Myanmar, the Philippines and Kosovo. All said and done, the GIC remained an obtrusive presence from the perspective of the West, even though so far it had not been able to frame a coherent response to many of the problems faced by Muslim countries. Basically, there was the fear of a common Islamic policy coalescing outside its domain, and the West for one would not permit the time-honoured international system to be unhinged by the rise of Islam. With the Cold War over, the job of dislodging the Islamists from their position becomes much easier.

Post-Cold War Muslim Predicament: The New World Order, Islamic Radicalism and Global Terrorism

The West emerged the victor, the sole victor, with the collapse of world communism. The end of the Cold War has ushered in a new era for the Western civilization.

The last decade in particular witnessed, first, a wider United States policing role in international relations; second, greater political and economic unity among Western European nations; and third, increasing globalization of democracy, as championed by virtually all of them.

Now no longer held hostage to the Cold War, the West is in a better strategic position to discipline other governments. While it could not engage the communist countries or movements without risking reprisal from either Moscow or Beijing, it now could deal with Muslim nations and Islamic movements with impunity, turning them into "feasts of the predators." The United States, in particular, by virtue of being the omnipresent political and economic force, is poised to play a larger role in the new international environment. It could design strategies to bring about changes in other countries, or project its power to make them wedded to the international status quo. Russia, concerned over its 20 million Muslims, who constitute majorities in seven of its provinces, was driven into collusion with the West. "Islam which has proved itself more durable and adaptable than Lenin expected", is a growing spectre that haunts and continues to haunt. The eruption in Chechnya was already too much for

Moscow to stomach. Lately, it renewed its ties with Tajikistan and Kyrgystan by establishing bases in the two countries with a view to "neutralizing" terrorist and extremist groups. The anti-Islamist campaign of the West joined with the anti-separatist struggle of Moscow.

Conversely, the much-vaunted Islamic resurgence that had begun to reshape several Muslim societies is fast replacing communism as a formidable threat in Western perceptions. At best, the development, while encouraging Islamic sentiment, has also propelled the West to try and subordinate Islam to its cause. At worst, by popularizing Islam as an ideology and by dramatizing the universality of their religion, Muslims in force have made themselves a sworn enemy of the democratic globalists and the liberal capitalists - a kind of 'bogey-adversary in world politics'.¹⁴ Interestingly, while the Islamists were painting an upbeat picture of their jihadist movement, the West was also making great play of the negative influence of the Islamic resurgence.

Now, Islamists in many Muslim-majority countries are either on the defensive or on the run, but the fear arising from the resurgence has far from evaporated. Members of Ikhwanul Muslimoon under pressure from the Egyptian government entered the democratic process by joining forces with others in various political parties to make their voice heard. Those belonging to Jamaati Islami either joined other opposition groups, or simply melted away in the national milieu, at a time when Pakistan as a nation was constantly under watch for developing its nuclear capabilities. After all, the country started as a homeland for Muslim, and was very much shaped by an Islamic outlook. The Islamists of Jordan, of their own volition, chose to participate in the elections, and won substantially. The Islamists of Turkey likewise entered the political fray by forming their own parties, beginning with the Milli Salamat and, ending with Refah. The Islamists of Algeria were not so fortunate in their gamble for power. Having won the elections, the results were annulled and they were denied their seats. What ensued was a running battle with the security forces, and with the connivance of the West the country was

14. See Ali A. Mazrui, op.cit. pg. 279

“calmed” at a price of more than 100,000 deaths. In Syria, they were confronted and butchered by the thousands in the Hom massacre when the government resorted to force to overcome the Islamist challenge. While in the West Bank, they were continuously being terrorized by the Israeli regime in their struggle for self-determination. The Iranian revolution probably had overreached itself. The romanticization of Islam that accompanied the Afghan struggle had given way to an unknown future after the Taliban was overcome by outside intervention. By and large, with governments focusing their rage on Islamists, it becomes easy for other groups to mobilize anti-Islamic sentiments among the people as a whole.

The growth of democratic tendencies in the Muslim world has also brought about an expansion of Western values, especially after the Islamists have been defeated. The Western concept of progress with its concomitant promise of prosperity is now subscribed to by an increasing number of Muslims in several Muslim majority countries where Islamists had once planted their roots. The promotion of democracy and free markets invariably drew them into the Western capitalist discourse. There is even a growing inclination among them to deem their past achievement as backward, and to equate Islam with a threat to civilization. The Islamic struggle generally exacted a low emotional commitment from Muslim rulers themselves. Muslim nations are enjoying less latitude, now that they have lost their strategic value, and for some it is a matter of their reaffirming partnerships with the West. For Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, with the Islamists' threat still looming, and with Iran-Sudan connection becoming a security challenge, the logical step was to cement their ties with Israel. They are forced to live with the emergent dominant world-view. The Westphalian state system will remain a translatable ideal so long as the non-Westerners, including Muslims, can be included in the new set-up. The bigger OIC, unlike the enlarged Europe and the expansionist NATO, remains subservient to the Western dominated world order.

The liberation of several Muslim regions of the former Soviet Union was epoch-making, but so far it has failed to reinforce the aspired Muslim world order. Their re-appearance at first augured well for Muslims, including the Islamists among them, who saw their presence as a plus-factor in the post-Cold War world of nation-states. Rich in history,

populated by peoples steeped in religious tradition and blessed with abundance of natural resources, they were seen as a motivating factor in the struggle for Islamic progress. Meanwhile, in the march towards nationhood, some are projecting and advancing their peculiar histories and cultures; others are indulging in tribal and ethnic rivalries; while some others have chosen Western-type democracy and are fast embracing Western values. Communism might have been consigned to the past, but Islam as a way of life is yet to a rigorous cultural force in the societies concerned.

Things are no better at the international level. While the increase in Islamism in several Muslim countries has been dealt with severely, thereby precluding the possible rise in the number of Islamic states in international relations, the existing Muslim nations have not fared any better. The ummatic tradition of the past has had little relevance on their behaviour and on the pattern of their interactions, even when the GIC had been operating on the international scene for more 30 years. The ummah lacked integrative power. In spite of the changed structure of international politics, the respective Muslim countries chose to continue with their old foreign policy approach even when dealing with fellow Muslim countries. The universalist strain of Islam as embodied in the GIC had not caused Muslims to close ranks, even in the face of common adversary. The differences between certain Muslim nations even outweighed their differences with non-Muslim nations. The Gulf wars that embroiled several Middle-Eastern Muslim countries were classic examples of Muslims at war with themselves. Their doctrinal differences, paradoxically, largely accounted for the perpetuation of the anarchic nature of international relations among Muslim states. *Pax Islamica* is still a dream. They failed to emulate European countries when it came to fostering greater unity. The European nations are experiencing progressive integration even without a divine-inspired ideology to guide them and bolster them.

The promulgation of the New World Order therefore coincided with the decline of Islamism. The emergence of the non-Muslim world order has come at the expense of the Muslim world. It has also resulted in the diminution of the role of Islam as a civilizing force. It is a recipe for confrontation. Circumstances have conspired to produce greater

radicalism among Muslims. Some resorted to terrorism to make their presence felt.

Basically, the radicalization of Islam is the result of the Islamists' failure to realize their dream under normal conditions, after Islamization is not allowed to take its natural course. It is more than just their hope being tempered by reality; they were not immune to despair. Having suffered violence, they become more violent in some cases. Some embraced martyrdom. In a sense, Muslim terrorism is a delayed action, after they were suppressed by the powers-that-be (as in the case of Egypt) or they were denied their role in governance (as in the case of Algeria) or after they were unable to redress their grievances through legitimate means (as in the case of Turkey) or after their right to return to their homeland was violently opposed by the occupying force (as in the case of the West Bank). The struggle for power or Position indeed had overflowed into violence once the authorities evoked Islamic opposition. This led to the so-called Islamic terrorism, and the Islamist were set on the journey of destruction. Subscribers of the Western idea of progress generally view this world as the alpha and the omega, in the Satean mould of being and nothingness, but for the jihadists, this world is only part of the other world, the world in waiting. To them, it is all gains, win or lose, in the here and now. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism, the Islamists also became the logical target not only in the context of domestic politics but also in international relations. By manufacturing the Islamic threat in order to bolster the national spirit, or by making political capital out of the failure of the Islamists in many parts of the world, it only helped to fuel anti-West discontentment. By enframing all of them as terrorist, or by making Islam look like an implacable foe, Muslims as a whole became suspects in the global search for "the invisible enemy". Even the Moros of South Philippines and the Patanis of South Thailand also appeared on the radar screen as terrorists in view of the converging perceptions, when in reality their struggle predated Usama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. "The unfortunate consequences of the talks about Islamic terrorism are the promotion of further antagonism... (and) hostility towards Muslims and Arabs worldwide".¹⁵ While scholars of international

15. Talal Asad, "Some Thoughts on WTC Disaster," *ISIM Newsletter*, 9 January 2002, pg. 1.

relations are in no way on ground zero on terrorism, the post-Cold War Islamic challenge has led to the demonization of Muslims world-wide. The globalized context consequent upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the eclipse of communism are matched by the globalization of Islam.

Essentially, Islam is not inherently hostile to the West, or to others, but as pointed out above, Islamists may resort to violence, if and when their opponents stand in the way of Islamization. With their back to the wall, they have revolted. Now, with the United States and its allies' involvement in many Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, the action has further empowered the Islamists, leading some into the mainstream of global terrorism. It is in this context that the "International Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders" was formed by Usama bin Laden, and jihad was declared by him. Once the conflict became open-ended, with the two sides railroaded into perpetual confrontation, it is difficult to determine where Islamic moderation ends and Islamic extremism begins.

Conclusion: The Internationalization of Conflict or The Globalization of Universal Islamic Values?

Resurgent Islam, for sure, has made a major, although not lasting impact, on international politics. It is now in retreat. I began this lecture with an assertion about the Western-dominated international system. All said and done, it still remains so, and Muslim countries, whether of fundamentalist leaning or secular-modern inclination, are forced to operate by the same rules that emanated from Westphalia. The world might have done away with Marxism-Leninism, but the world has not been able to dispense with Hobbes-Locke, whose thesis about "ordered anarchy" remains germane as ever.

Nevertheless, Islam as a religion, as a way of life and as an ideology, is here to stay. With more than 1.2 billion adherents of the faith, and with them constituting a majority in about 50 countries, it remains a potent force in international politics. Unlike the communists who were immersed

in their ideology for less than 100 years, the Muslim have been adherents of a religion of more than 14 centuries. So like their Christian counterparts, these followers of Islam have also transformed their belief system into a way of life. The Islamic expression, under varied conditions, will necessarily point to the Islamic idea of progress spoken earlier.

So, the question is whether to allow for a wider internationalization of conflict, or to proceed with the globalization of Islamic universal values. The demonization of Islam, the recycling of old prejudicial snapshots of the Muslim people in order to dilute the appeal of their religion, and the like, will only produce intractable conflicts that the world has witnessed in passing decades. The Islamists will stand by the claim that Islam is their goal and the only solution to their ills. They will be forced to remain on the warpath, if they continue to be placed in the political and security straitjacket as evidenced in the recent past. As the authors of *Distorted Imagination* succinctly put it, "to make a quarter of mankind voiceless appendages to their own history and identity is to invite conflict. To consign a fourth of humanity to the dustbin of erroneous history is a lunatic action that invites catastrophe".¹⁶ An embattled Islam is a dangerous option for the West, and a threat to its long-term strategic interests. In the end, it is the reaction to the reaction that will shape world politics. Instead, by taking a long view, by recognizing the enduring importance of their religion, there might be a general improvement of international relations. The post-Cold War Muslim predicament is unlike post-World War One Europe, when nations overwhelmed by ideological considerations and equipped with sophisticated killing machines were railroaded into collision. Even Islamically-inclined Muslim nations may work toward an amicable adjustment and conform to the generally accepted standard of international behaviour. Recently, the world of Muslim states has turned anarchical not so much because they were prone to disorder, but because they were driven into this course partly through the machination of outside forces.

16. Ziauddin Sarder and Merry W. Davies, *Distorted Imaginations: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair*, London : Grey Seal, 1990, pg. 4

Thinking the thinkable also means accepting the fact that there are peoples who belong to different ages but happen to live in the same century. To act otherwise, i.e. by imposing conformity with the prevailing political belief, would invite further troubles and could cause contemporary international relations to slide into the much-heralded clash of civilizations. Any attempt at reconfiguring of interests along that line is also undemocratic.¹⁷

The empowerment of Islam with its attendant attributes could bring about a transformation at both societal and international levels. With Islamic fundamentals governing human relations, Muslims and non-Muslim within the Islamic polity and Muslim and non-Muslim nations in world politics, would be better off when it comes to translating their ideas into practice.

At one level, Muslim nations together can constitute a world of their own, the way the Europeans are now coalescing, subsisting as a sub-system in the general international system and operating as an equal vis-a-vis the non-Muslim world. International relations amongst them become the sum total of interactions between Muslim governments and societies. Beyond that, the globalization of Islamic values could provide a favourable context for human interaction at the general international level, to the extent that it constitutes a cauldron for the germination and growth of a common moral and ethical approach to world politics. The Islamic socialization involved could endow greater meaning to concepts like international security and world peace, human rights and global ethic. With Islamic transnational institutions interwoven in the fabric of international relations, both Muslims and non-Muslim nations stand to benefit from the improved atmosphere of international relations.

Granted that Islam and the ummah are accorded a place in the proposed world order, there may emerge a win-win situation that would benefit all sides. Globalization might be highly detrimental to the

17 For a meaningful insight into the need for a better understanding of international relations, see Vendulka Kubalkavo, "Reconstructing the Dicipline: Scholars as Agents" in Vendulka Kubalkavo et. al. (ed), *International Relations In a Constructed World*, London: ME Sharpe, 1998

developing countries if it is a one way process, and if it is allowed to run rampage as is happening right now. But in 'the aspired new world order', where there is recognition of cultural differences, both Muslims and non-Muslims could operate in the same global space without infringing on each others interests. It will be a mutually-enriching encounter between the various globalizing processes.

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