

ISLAM STANDS ON THE SIDE OF WORLD PEACE AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

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The Narrative of Peace and Justice in Islamic Governance

The appropriation of a civilisational context of Islam or “Islam Hadhari” in Malaysia is based on the Islamic reality of a comprehensive human, social and national development and importantly, as a reference of the magnanimity of the Muslim polity to the rest of the world. Amongst its objectives are to produce individuals with spiritual, intellectual, moral and competitive strengths, as well as the innovation and competency to solve challenges with reason and practicality under the guidance of wisdom and peace. The principles of this policy includes a government which stands for justice and integrity, a balanced development of the economy, quality of life, a people with a sense of freedom, championing the rights of women and minority groups, moral and cultural strength, environmental conservation as well as military capabilities. The narrative of a polity which stands for justice is prevalent throughout the Quran. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Nahl(16): 90 and Surah Al-Ma’idah (5): 8.

‘Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may receive admonition’.

‘O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to make you

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swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety, and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do'.

The promotion and movement towards a global peace culture, as something which was promoted just recently in Yayasan Perdana's Global Peace Forum (15-17 December 2005), begins with governance that stands for justice and integrity. As stated in an IKIM (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia) publication on Islam and tolerance more than a decade ago, the Islamic world-view is built upon the universal principles of unity, justice and benevolence that is consonant with the very nature of the human soul with the aspect of unity making it sensible to declare that all men are but one single nation despite differences in faith or ideology¹. The postmodern writer, Neil Gaiman, utilises an epigram on the matter of one nation,

'The boundaries of our country, sir? Why sir, on the north we are bounded by the Aurora Borealis, on the east we are bounded by the rising sun, on the south we are bounded by the procession of the equinoxes, and on the west we are bounded by the Day of Judgment'²

It is based on these differences that the principle of tolerance, at worst, or the principle of accommodation, at best, is adopted. At worst, Malaysia is a paragon of this principle of tolerance in the form of her consociational politics in resolving potential conflict by way of a consensual multi-ethnic power-sharing system. At best, governance that extends itself beyond tolerance with accommodation implies benevolence as a measure of performance and this broadens itself past the notion of social contract in dispensing just rule. Through this stance of Islam, tolerance cannot be applied to acts of injustice, be it towards Muslims or non-Muslims. The accommodating and benevolent attitude of the Malay-Muslim as a value

1. See Syed Othman al-Habshi and Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan, eds., *Islam and Tolerance*, Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 1994

2. See Neil Gaiman, *American Gods*, New York: William Morrow, 2001, p. 3

and ideal reflects upon the Islamic world-view that governs political agency as a necessity for legitimate rule in terms of ontology and praxis. It is dissimilar to the obtuse and pragmatist reification of the terms of political discourse as *realpolitik* in relation to consociationalism as a management of multi-ethnic relations and conflict resolution in the context of tolerance. It is the stance of Islam on accommodation, peace and justice that propels the political will of Malaysia toward consociationalism as a practical mechanism of the modern democratic process for the implementation of consultation or *shura* in her democracy, also bearing in mind the ontological status of Islam in her political legitimacy. Individuals should transcend the mundane and ignorant identity stratification, perceptions, traits and traps of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, colour, creed, wealth, interests and influence that limit the universality of Islamic values for an integrating polity. In such a process and upholding of certain ideals and values, there is no place for violence.³

‘Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what we bestow on them for sustenance’
(Surah Al-Shura: 38)

Peace and justice is not peculiar to Islam. In Muslim history, the second Caliph, Umar, in 638 allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem after a period of exile. In 1187, Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi gave access to places of worship and holy sites as well as protection to Christians and Jews upon reclaiming Jerusalem. Al-Andalus was also an exemplary centre of civilisation between 711 and the fall of Granada in 1492 for her Abrahamic communities.⁴ In the here and now, surely we must strive for Malaysia to be such an example if it is not already so, looking past the political rhetoric of Islamic legitimacy. Presently, democracy and democratisation has become a contentious concept which is associated with the theory of

3. Mohamad Fathi Othman, “Modern Democracy and the Concept of Shura” in Syed Othman al-Habshi and Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan, eds., *op. cit.* 1994

4. Chandra Muzaffar, “Tolerance in the Malaysian Political Scene” in Syed Othman al-Habshi and Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan, eds., *op. cit.* 1994

political development as a hegemonic ideological tool of the sole super-power. Humanity is in the age of globalisation where material and cultural relations between developed and developing countries is based on economic and technological security and superiority as defined by the West's own political and ideological terms. The information age is also that of skewed representations at the expense of an autonomous narrative of Islam that reliably represents the aforementioned universality of Islamic values. The issue of representation is of grave concern and will dominate the remainder of this paper.

The Relevance of Power in the Narrative of Peace and Justice

It is significant for me to involve power as central in the evaluation of Islam as an autonomous culture or way of life and its ability to define society and history, including the socio-political implications of knowledge and its production in the discussion of Islam as paradigm in relation to values, rights, identity and resurgence.

The perpetual engagement and reliance on the West as the "Other" by Muslims is based on Laclau's interpretation of the Gramscian concept of hegemony (on power and representation) as a wholesale range of theoretical and ideal constructs and institutions through which satellite cultures imitate and reflect this trans-national and cultural hegemony as a post-colonial and nation-building discourse.⁵ I also utilise Connoly's 'essentially contested concepts' where pluralising truth systems or paradigms, maintain the essentialism of cultural and identity base despite the acculturation and appropriation of Western socio-political thought and institutions due to the duality of Islam and the West as competing universal (therefore hegemonic) schemes with multifarious actors.⁶ Perceived knowledge, interpretation and acts in the name of Islam become enmeshed as political entity and representation within the socio-political context. As mentioned earlier, the narrative that Islam stands for world peace and global justice is based on Islam not just as a tolerant but an

5. Ernesto Laclau, "Power and Representation" in M. Poster, ed., *Politics, Theory and Contemporary Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993

6. William Connoly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993

accommodating system. However, the reality of such universal values in relation to reconciliation and difference is a socio-political issue of governance rather than a theological discourse.

Socio-political Islam and Islamic Social Sciences

The understanding of *selbstverstandnises* or self perceptions, *lebenswelt* or the world of common experience and sedimentation - and how they relate to 'hegemonic articulation' affirms the competing and reconciliatory dimension of rational space in socio-political vocabularies guided by the interpretation of value systems and process of sedimentation and dispels the idea of impartial intellectual activity in civil society or even as part of the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic political order by circumscribing ideals, values and praxis in society.

To a certain extent it leads to a form of religious anomie as socio-political fact and unstable dialectic whose meaning is confined as socially relevant and politically reliable knowledge through a constant recreation and competition of the management of truth and ideals. At the same time, I explicitly emphasise these manifestations as limited representations of revealed Islam itself. This permits Islamic social sciences to function as a deliberate and dynamic critique of Islamic representations as flawed representations between power and knowledge.

This formulates the nature and public perceptions of Islamic discourse as contested political space between dominant and dissenting representations. This concerns Islam as the value system, its authenticity and legitimacy in relation to the Government, opposition and civil society as articulating sources in the context of the State, its organs and institutions, for example the Federal Constitution, and Malaysia's plural religio-ethnicity and identity. Discourse theory cements Islamisation as an integral process of the Malay polity and identity and explains it as a strategy for ontological security and culture of knowledge that affect Islamic institutions in the Malaysian environment.

Islam functions as a cultural component of political power and as a cultural solution. As a feature of cultural politics, the discourse of Islam can be appropriated by both the State and dissenters as political capital,

policy and rhetoric for legitimacy as representations but not corollary to the production of reliable and relevant knowledge in relation to the theology of Islam and Islamic social sciences as an academic process. It creates a disparity in the contemporary socio-political narrative of Muslims but consistently reinforces the value-based narrative of Islam in the Malaysian polity.

Interpretations of Islam

In the context of discourse theory, interpretations are as subjective as they are conditioned by their environment and the dominant discourse of the time as a "crisis of representation"⁷ where competing narratives figure prominently as symptoms of 'will to knowledge' or 'will to power' in the debate over pure and political knowledge.⁸

The construction and articulation of an argument in socio-political inquiry depends upon the knowledge of how the same facts might be used to construct and articulate a different argument that require both sides to familiarise themselves with each other's terminologies and procedures as the actual basis of cross-cultural encounters. The partiality of knowledge and interpretations, 'where the right to interpret as well as the interpretations themselves are disputed' form an ongoing discourse of varying essentialist positions.⁹

I stress here that there is a marked difference in the way tradition is activated: 1. tradition, once a product of human choice, now suppresses further choice and initiative and that 'the issue of authenticity cannot arise in traditional society, where tradition commands respect precisely because it is unexamined'.¹⁰ Another problem is validation, and this applies to all

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7. George E. Marcus and M.J Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Movement in the Human Sciences*, University of Chicago Press, 1986
 8. See Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross Cultural Encounter*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996; and also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Book, 1978
 9. Hastings Donnan and Martin Stokes, eds., *Interpreting Islam*, London: Sage Publication, 2002, p. 8
 10. Robert D. Lee, *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity*, Boulder Colorado: Westview, n.d, p. 16

traditions, where each community or group interpretation and application cannot be expected to be authenticated by each other¹¹ and thus find essentialism inescapable; 2. On the other hand, rethinking tradition requires an appreciation of cultural authenticity and autonomy. Traditional systems are a source of solutions unique to its value parameters as a particular, potential and historical civilisation that can be applied onto modernity as a sociology (here it implies variety) of Islam that can engineer an autonomous identity but inclusive society.

The post September 11 world has reinforced negative stereo-types of Muslims as extremists at the expense of a transvaluation of identity. This distorted perception reduces its authenticity as merely a pre-modern reactionary offspring to modernity. The realisation that the foundation of an authentic logic of development of Islam must be free from the vestiges of a Western based system and values has led scholars to affirm the idea of cultural resistance where tradition is a step forward and has to be distinguished from traditionalism. Tradition can also be activated as 'the summation of the absolute frame of reference provided by the axioms of a civilization that remains enduringly relevant and conventions that has developed into history with its own distinctive "gaze"¹²

Tariq Ali writes at length about the historical context of American-Euro imperialism and that as an "Empire", they have developed a parochial culture of ignorance and consumerist paradise (a form of ahistoricism) and dependency in the pursuit of its political economic interests through an ideology of humanitarian intervention and democratisation as political development at the expense of autonomy among developing countries.¹³

The search for Islamic authenticity does not necessitate the elimination of other systems as counter possibilities although it contains its own critique of them. The criticism of Western modernisation theories

11. *ibid.*, p. 194

12. See Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture*, London: Pluto, 1998, p. 273

13. See Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalism: Crusade, Jihad and Modernity*, London: verso, 2002

establishes the necessity to doubt this formal system and its sub-forms in relation to the "Other". For example, pluralism as Western directed without equal representation; postmodernism and its fragmented discourse on religion still projects a superior (Euro-American) Christianity with its Reformation; techno-science, global capitalism, nationalism and democratic idealism as instruments of subjugation; postmodernism as a neo-universalism and neo-colonialism that appropriates marginal cultures within a Euro-American episteme and aspiration while local cultures replicate and reflect contemporary cultural hegemonies. In short, it refers to systemic injustice in the terms of political discourse.¹⁴

The Differend

The problem of arbitrating differends, which are phrases in dispute due to the pluralising concept of language and truth systems where there is a lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments, has always been a stumbling block in systems that promote universal values.¹⁵

In her article, Roxanne L. Euben concludes that the modernist, Islamist and Islamisation of Knowledge approaches as examples of complex cultural syncretism between Western ideas and reinterpreted Islamic tradition where the dominant Western epistemological model has set the terms of discourse for Islamic thinkers, even for those who seek to reject or redefine them. It involves a protracted discourse of Islam across time, socio-political and cultural space and the correspondence between the social sciences and theology as moral inquiry. In questioning given markers of identity and ways of knowing through cultural interpenetration, perspectives from the centre or the periphery of both the West and Islam are themselves synergetic in a long drawn out discourse of identities and traditions that are evolutionary, dialectical and essentialist all at the same time.¹⁶ The question of justice in this context becomes self-

14. See Ziauddin Sardar, *op. cit.*, p. 198

15. See J. F. Lyotard, *The Differed Phrase in Dispute*, George Van Den Abbeele (trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998

16. Roxanne L. Euben, "Contingent Border, Syncretic Perspectives: Globalization, Political Theory and Islamizing Knowledge", *International Studies Review*, (4) 1, 2002, pp. 23-48

referential rather than a universal ideal. It becomes that of “whose justice?”

‘The prevalent Western values thus tell Muslims that it is our (their) business how they (Muslims) treat other Muslims; and at the same time they tell them it is not their (Muslims) business how other Muslims choose to live’¹⁷

A global empire is forming, one that depicts itself as the champion of freedom and democracy – featuring unequalled military might that is utilised for economic expansion, protection of investment interests, commerce and markets of its capitalist system and the culture of consumerism. At the same time, the neo-conservative, far-right and Zionist elements in Washington ensure that the horrific September 11 attacks justify the USA’s responses in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now possibly Iran and Syria – all of which also guarantees Israel’s joint dominance (Muzaffar in *Utusan Malaysia* 4 December 2005). The skewed understanding of religion, ideology and values that drive foreign policy as state sanctioned activities or terror activities by extremist networks is unnecessarily promoting the self-fulfilling prophecy of a clash of civilisations.

Hegemony and the Politics of Representation

‘The language of politics is not a neutral medium which conveys ideas independently formed. It is an institutionalised structure of meanings which channels political thought and action in certain directions. Those who simply use established concepts to get to the facts of political life, those who act unreflectively within the confines of established concepts, actually have the perceptions and modes of conduct available to them limited in subtle and undetected ways. Such conceptual blinders impede the work of any student of politics, but they are particularly corrosive of efforts to explore radical perspectives on politics. For to

17. Michael Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 170

adopt without revision the concepts prevailing in a polity is to accept terms of discourse loaded in favour of established practices.¹⁸

Connolly defines as 'appraisive' the discrepancy occurring with the application and analysis of a generally shared system of value achievement and 'cluster concepts'. A cluster concept is a multi-faceted concept which is determined not just by mere definition but also through various criteria, which are themselves complex while the agreed and contested rules of application are open enabling interpretation that invites endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of the users. While politics itself is one such concept, it is also the mode in which different ideological groups express that contest.¹⁹ By acknowledging the contestability of a particular network of concepts is not to question the universal criteria of reason but to affirm both the conflicting and reconciliatory dimension of rational space in socio-political vocabularies. Connolly also states that the internal connection between concepts imperfectly shared in a way of life and the contending standards, judgements and priorities which help constitute that life with the human subject, being an ambiguous achievement of modernity and bound to the realm of socio-political control.²⁰

The theory of hegemony is expanded to include trans-national set-up or global-domestic scope by taking into account the complex impact of Pax Americana on satellite polities through the information revolution and 'informational capitalism' that among other things 'set the terms of ideological and cultural signifiers which give reproductive meaning to that amalgam of power relations'.²¹ This is especially problematic for an autonomous and competing system such as Islam because of the dialectical course of convergence and confrontation with the reification

18. See William Connolly, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2

19. *ibid.*, pp. 10-40

20. *ibid.*, pp. 225-243

21. See John Hillely, *Malaysia, Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, Zed Books, Londn: 2001, pp. 276-278; M. Castell, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture: The Trilogy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998; Christopher D. Hunter, "From Cultural Hegemony to the Culture of Code", paper presented at the International Institute of Communication Annual Conference, September 25-28, 2000.

of the capitalist culture embedded in state and civil society, the ethical-political issues concerning its adherents globally and the representation of Islam itself. This hegemonic representation occurs with what Hilley term as 'agenda-setting discourse' established in democratic polities and extended to trans-national space where "necessary illusions" are cultivated in public consciousness through a strategic manipulation of counter-hegemonic debate and independent critical thought where upheaval and controversy are maintained within the bounds of political and civil consensus.

Returning to the issue of global cultural hegemony, Hunter criticises the traditional concept of the United States of America's cultural hegemony,²² referring to Cultural Domination²³, McDonaldisation²⁴ and McWorld²⁵ as obsolete and based on the false foundation that satellite cultures are inert and feeble, and that the substance of the source culture is pervasive and carries a singular meaning, that is informational capitalism, and produces naïve anti-Americanism at the expense of understanding the more subtle 'culture of code'. Hunter explains this culture as encoding U.S.A. values and norms into the hardware and software of the internet which presents new challenges for other cultures. While it is possible to reinterpret, integrate, adjust or reject foreign content for local consumption i.e. oppositional reading or "reading against the grain", the culture of code:

'Embeds U.S. norms about contentious global policy issues like privacy right, copyright protection, and free speech into the very architecture of global computing systems'²⁶

22. *ibid.*

23. Herber Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, New York: International Art and Press, 1976

24. George Ritzer, *Potmodernism Social Theory*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1997

25. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Changing the World*, New York: Times Books, 1995

26. See Christopher D. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 4

Now there is a notable consciousness of the transcultural hegemonic impact of the knowledge industry and the monopoly over the earlier mentioned application and analysis of a generally shared system of value achievement and cluster concepts active in the ethical-political dimension of polity that are manifested in its cultural institutions. Hilley cites the works of and in addressing the agenda-setting discourse of intellectual agencies and the media where representations are generated by collective understandings between corporate figures, policy-makers and scholars with the overriding feature of a Western ethical-political perspective.²⁷ These institutions and their interests provide the problematic discourse paradigm of mainstream academia at the expense of addressing the Muslim population's internal multiplicity and disagreements.²⁸

This reverts back to the concept of neutrality that Connolly was dealing with and how academic neutralists do not transcend the politics of discourse. They instead perform a reification of the terms of political discourse by establishing or revising shifts in the criteria of essentially contested concepts and its network that determines how perspectives are successfully communicated and culturally institutionalised as an ethical-political element in a hegemony or in this case, a transcultural intellectual hegemony.

Ernesto Laclau discusses at length the relationship between power and representation. In his discussion of the features of modern political theory and *realpolitik*, political intervention occurs at the social level and requires its radical transformation through the understanding of social totality which explains the framework and network of power that supports political action.²⁹ This is problematically accomplished through 'limited historical representation', where the distinction between the rational subject and real (knowledge) is irreconcilable at the expense of

27. For further details of these works see S. Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, Cambridge University Press, 1990; R. Holub, Antonia Gramsci: *Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*, London: Routledge, 1992; Edward. W. Said, *Covering Islam*, London: Vintage Book, 1997

28. John Hilley, *op. cit.*,

29. See Ernesto Laclau, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-296

collective totality. Representation, which is necessary in the self-constitution of totality, requires a hegemonic universal class, that is, an imposing limitless historical actor that converges with political action by eliminating alienation in other forms of representation. The predicament this gives rise to is the relativity of power in the experience of the oppressed and history where historical rationality itself belongs to hegemonic discourse.

A polity's constitutive quality is recognised via 'floating signifiers'³⁰, evident in political discourse where actors articulate their agenda for peace and justice which are unaccomplished and not exhaustive while the actors themselves are contested over the criteria of this unity rendering the substance and utility of the term itself to be determined or constituted by the rivalling forces.

The application of theories of hegemony, the differend and essentially contested concepts on critical social sciences and history demonstrate the various ideological and religious interpretations and orientations in societies where both the state and religion are crucial elements of identity. Muslim states that negotiate and control their religious legitimacy through official institutions should not censure internal religious opposition which supposedly cause instability to the working political consensus of a moderate national religious identity. This can adversely reinforce the active and partial representation of Islam as an international and domestic threat in the West at the expense of an exhaustive representation which include radical, moderate and liberal interpretations on contemporary issues of democracy and other forms of government, religious plurality, rights and self-determination.

'Too often academia, government and the media have focused on crises and headline events and then a violent radical fringe and, failing to see the forest for the trees, have not sufficiently studied both moderate political and non-political movements and organisations. This trend (and deficiency) has been reinforced by the realities of the market place.

30. *ibid.*, p. 287

Publishing houses, journals, consultancy firms, and the media all too often pander to that which captures the headlines and confirms fears of extremism and terrorism and reinforce stereotypes'.³¹

The realist perception is based on the untenable achievement of a consensus of values and interests in society and the acceptance of its plurality. The critique of politics and society, that reliable knowledge as an ideal and prescriptive is not coincident with socially relevant knowledge reflects the convergence of Islam and modernity in praxis which goes beyond instrumentalism, but also on the other hand does not explain instances of instrumentalism involving Islam. The convergence of Islam and democracy in a plural society is representative of the conciliation of interests with specific value orientation with regards to alternative conceptions of moral society. The notion of "universality of values" should be perceived as a transcultural narrative which bridges the gap between these alternative conceptions of moral society.

For Muslims, the production of their discourse on Islam involves a designated identity considered by the person as a core identity which is sociologically reduced and labelled as a role, for example, the Islamist or secularist as what is known as 'identity frames'. Du Preez also refers to them as 'identity traps' because the person is sociologically defined within the attributed frame rather than being viewed as a system of identities which is trans-situational, self-conflicting but also evolving and adaptable.³²

I utilise the category of ideology in the context that the socio-political action of Muslims (groups and individuals) is merely representative of Islam and not theological Truth and as a stable and prescriptive value system, which would risk denoting revealed Islam and religion as socially manufactured. It is the Muslims (groups and individuals) who functionalise Islam as ideology and praxis in the realm of socio-political

31. John L. Esposito, "Clash of Civilization? Contemporary Image of Islam in the West" in G.M Munoz, ed., *Islam, Modernism and the West*, New York: I.B Taurus, 1999

32. See Peter Du Preez, *The Politics of Identity: Ideology and the Human Image*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980

reality because the nature of the social or human sciences is solipsistic with regards to the individual and the collective. Here I reiterate that men are fallible representatives of the Transcendent and reliable knowledge.

The Transcultural Narrative of Islam and the Universality of Islamic Values

The acknowledgement of transculture is thus in favour of a communicative cultural pluralism with culture perceived as being inherently political. This determines the outcome of the interaction between value-based and theoretical Islamic discourse and the specific *habitas* of Muslim communities. However, the postmodern and post-Western ethos thrusts the contested classification of religion in relation to the Islamic paradigm, knowledge industry and development as constituents of cultural autonomy and identity politics with competing narratives and rhetoric in the proliferation of terminology through a refined nomenclature and conceptual structure. As such, the phenomenon of resurgent Islamic scholarship and Islamic movements from the pragmatic liberal perspective is supposedly an empowering process of deconstructing and reconstructing the features and understanding of Western modernity imposed upon the different narrative but also accommodating and tolerant values of Islam. The fact is that the universality of Islamic values and the stance of Islam on the side of peace and justice can only be achieved through mutual understanding and respect and acceptance of the diversity of beliefs. The diversity of beliefs pluralizes the concept of language and truth systems where there is a lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. To reiterate, the notion of "universality of values" should be perceived as a transcultural narrative that bridges the gap between alternative conceptions of moral society.

'If it had been the Lord's Will, they would have all believed - all who are earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind against their will, to believe! No soul can believe, except by the will of God, and He will place doubt (or obscurity) on those who will not understand'

(Surah Yunus: 99-100)

I will end this paper with an anecdote. On the morning of 7 July 2005, I was on my way to London to apply for my new born son's passport at the Malaysian immigration office. I turned back to Birmingham upon hearing of the series of explosions which took place in London which, as it turned out, claimed the lives of 52 people. Later that day, I went over to my friend's place in the outskirts of Birmingham for dinner. We spoke about football, movies, terrorism and the London bombings that occurred that day. My friend stopped our conversation to remind me that I had not performed my *solat* for Maghrib. I went to his room to do my *solat*, continued our conversation over coffee and left. More recently during Ramadhan, he stopped by my house in Shah Alam enroute to Thailand. He expressed interest to visit the beautiful state mosque in Shah Alam the next time he visits. It is now December. I have to remind myself to send him a Christmas card. I often wonder about the friendship that we share and the casualness upon which we interact with each other. I think of two things. One, despite each other holding on to different conceptions of moral society, we are able to accommodate each other based on an equal platform of communication, on which neither assumes moral superiority over the other. There is no injustice in our friendship because there are no vested interests and no historical consciousness of our identities, meaning that we base our relationship on a clean slate based on the perennial values of peace and justice which we derive from our respective beliefs and upbringing. Hence, there is peace between two men. Two, global justice precedes world peace. The collective injustices mankind has inflicted upon itself in the name of belief or ideology is a far heavier baggage which we carry. The world needs an example of how Islam stands for peace and justice. Malaysia can be the example in re-appropriating the narrative of Islam towards a constructive and civilisational discourse for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.