

WHO NEEDS AN ISLAMIC STATE?
(Second edition)

Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi

Malaysia Think Tank London
United Kingdom

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By Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi

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For Maha

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SECOND EDITION

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About The Author

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Dr El-Affendi was member of the core team of authors of the Arab Human Development Report (2004) and is member of the Advisory Board and a contributor to the 2005 report 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World'. He is also member of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, member of the Board of Directors of Inter-Africa Group, and a trustee of the International Forum for Islamic Dialogue, and the Yemen Heritage Centre. Since September 2006, he has also been member of the Washington-based Sudan Peace Council. Previously, he worked as a pilot (1976-1981), a magazine editor (1982-1989), and diplomat (1990-1994).

Educated at the Universities of Khartoum, Wales, and Reading, Dr El-Affendi is author of *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan* (1991), *Revolution and Political Reform in Sudan* (1995), *Rethinking Islam and Modernity* (2001), *For a State of Peace: Conflict and the Future of Democracy in Sudan* (2002) and *The Conquest of Muslim Hearts and Minds: Perspectives on U.S. Reform and Public Diplomacy Strategies* (2005). He has also contributed to many leading journals, and is contributor or co-author of works including: *The Routledge Encyclopedia of*

Philosophy (1998), Social Science and Conflict Analysis (1993), Islam and Justice (1997), Islam and Secularism in the Middle East (2000), Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century (2003), Understanding Democratic Politics (2003), American Power in the 21st Century (2004), Islamic Democratic Discourse (2006), and The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought (2006).

His books have been translated into Arabic, Malay and Turkish.

Preface

This second version of *Who Needs an Islamic State?* contains a new Introduction and two appendices. In Appendix I, Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi provides a response to Dr. Anis Ahmad's review published in the Muslim World Book Review in 1993. Appendix II contains a detailed and very important update by the author on the thoughts and ideas he first presented in 1991, when the first edition of this book was published.

We are also delighted that Professor Ziauddin Sardar has written a new foreword for this book.

My first encounter with this book was in September 2006, when Ziauddin Sardar handed me a free copy after one of his talks in London. I started reading it on the train from Kings Cross, on my way home to Luton. I was so mesmerized; I spent the whole evening reading it, and finished the whole book just before Fajr the next morning. I remain awed by Abdelwahab El-Affendi's ability to be constructively critical in such a short treatise.

Debates about the notion of an Islamic State are taking place everywhere. As someone who has been a member of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) since the early 1990s, I too have been taking part in such debates. My personal journey evolved in different stages. At first, I became convinced that the *jihad* to create an Islamic State is an obligation on all Muslims. While holding on to that belief, I started asking what an Islamic State actually meant. With all the emphasis on *wala'* (obedience) in contemporary Islamic movements, I then went on to question how can we ensure

an Islamic State does not become just another authoritarian state.

This text by Abdelwahab El-Affendi provided answers to many of the questions I have been asking myself. El-Affendi quoted Al-Ghanoushi that the modern Islamic movement is “just another actor within the liberal democratic state” and that the role of the Islamic movement should be limited. For Ghanoushi, “the Islamic movement had neither a monopoly in the interpretation of Islam, nor in dictating morality”.

El-Affendi passionately argues for a liberal democracy – one in which the citizens are able to actualise Islamic values into a new more viable democratic model. He believes Muslims should be aiming for a polity that is not intrusive or coercive. To El-Affendi, “the central value governing the Islamic polity and giving it meaning is freedom”.

This book is a must read for all those interested in Islamic political theories, regardless of where they live. As a Malaysian living in Britain, I found the arguments presented by El-Affendi relevant to both Malaysia and Britain. Islam is a liberating religion. We hope this book will encourage more discourse on how to ensure the liberating aspects of Islam is brought to the fore.

Wan Saiful Wan Jan
Director General
Malaysia Think Tank London

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Introduction to the Second Edition (2008)

A book is a curious thing. You write one, and then it takes over, assuming a life of its own. The idea of this book has been at the back of my mind for many years, but it was my old friend Zia Sardar who bears the primary responsibility from making this idea a reality. When he and Merryl Wyn Davies decided to launch the Contemporary Islam series at Grey Seal Books, I was chosen as their first victim. I was to write a very short book on a subject of my choice on a contemporary Islamic theme, and do that to a very tight deadline and in an accessible language. I was more than happy to oblige, and the vexed topic of the “Islamic state” was my natural choice.

However, nothing had prepared me for the reaction that followed. I must confess here straight away that although it has been my intention to stir some serious debate, I did not set out to court controversy. It was my belief, and it still is, that all I did was to point out some obvious facts which too many people had ignored for too long. Neither did I set out to stake out a position (let alone project an image) of being a “liberal” or “moderate” Muslim, since I share Farish Noor’s dismay (and that of many others) at these fashionable appellations.¹

¹ Farish A Noor, “Why I ain’t no ‘moderate’ Muslim,” *Malaysiakini*, August 3, 2004, at:

The enthusiastic reception the first edition of this book received in Western and academic circles, although welcome, was not my primary objective. My primary target was the Muslim leadership, in particular in Islamic circles, whom I wanted to disabuse of some serious misunderstandings of Islamic history and norms. Some of these readers thought otherwise though, and believed that I was promoting what amounted to heretical ideas. It is funny that many of these, given the tumultuous developments of the last decade and half, now see it in a different light. A lot can happen in sixteen years.

(2)

It could be said, not without justification, that it was not a good idea to include such a strong criticism of the mainstream Islamic movements and their authoritarian tendencies in a book directed primarily at Muslim audiences. But it was pointless to do otherwise. It is unfortunate that what was in my opinion a rather fair and constructive (and, also on hindsight, far too mild) criticism should have prevented the followers of these movements from benefiting fully from the ideas it tried to promote. I have not made those criticisms lightly, for I have been examining the literature of these movements and following their activities for nearly two decades before making those remarks. Since then, developments have confirmed most of the points I made here.

The coming to power for the first time by a modern Sunni Islamic movement in Sudan has turned out to be an unmitigated disaster, precisely because it so readily

<http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/28866> (accessed November 9, 2007).

succumbed to authoritarian tendencies and failed to heed the exhortations offered in this book to prioritise democracy. The point has been made forcefully here that Muslim communities should give the highest priority to freedom and democracy and seek to escape the straitjacket of the modern nation state through more creative formulas. And the disaster is the more tragic due to the fact the Islamic movement in Sudan has been more open (in its theoretical formulation at least) to democratic norms and ideas than most other movements.² The experiments of Hamas and other groups were no less disastrous. I therefore stand by these criticisms and reiterate that they may not have been strong enough.

(3)

It may be unfair to blame Islamists for the lack of democracy in the Muslim world, since they are more often than not the victims of despotism rather than its perpetrators. However, even a victim has choices, especially when the victim happens to be the leading opposition movement, whose actions can have a decisive influence on political developments. This can be illustrated by the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which is currently the most important opposition force there, but has not played the leading role it should have in helping progress towards a democratic transition. This is mainly because it has not succeeded in winning over other opposition groups to build a united democratic front against the regime. In this sense, the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral successes have made it more vulnerable as a target of the ruling regime. It has also become an obstacle to democracy, as it has been unwilling and unable to bid for power (fearing a local and an

² See Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan*. London: Grey Seal Books, 1991.

international backlash against it if it succeeded); and at the same time unable to build an effective opposition coalition since most opposition groups remain suspicious of its ultimate intentions. In the process, the Brotherhood's limited success has provided the ruling regime with a pretext for its tenacious resistance to democratisation, arguing as it does that democracy will bring to power the "anti-democratic" Islamists.

The situation has been more or less the same almost everywhere else, with the misguided anti-democratic rhetoric of the Islamists providing many a despot with an alibi and a pretext to oppose democratisation. There has been a couple of exceptions, the most significant one being of Turkey, where a faction of Islamists broke away from their colleagues in 2001 to form a more moderate pro-democracy party, the Justice and Development party under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and was swept to power the following year. It has since been very active in democratising Turkey and winning greater support at home and abroad for it. At least, this is one group which heeded the call to make democracy the absolute priority. I cannot claim direct credit for this, of course, although I must say that this book has been translated to Turkish in 1994 and has been widely read and commented on, I have been told.

(4)

And then there was 9/11. I cannot say I saw that one coming, but I almost did. In a number of articles in the magazine *Arabia* in 1985, and again in a journal article in 1998 (this one also commissioned by Zia), I have expanded on some views expressed in this book on Islam being the focus of dissent in the post-Cold War era.³ The idea, as

³ See Abdelwahab El-Affendi, "Islam and the Future of Dissent after the 'End of History,'" *Futures*, vol. 31 (1999), pp. 191-204.

briefly outlined here, is that Islam plays the outsider to a world order that has the West at its centre, warning that attempts to counter this “Islamic threat” through destabilising policies could have serious consequences for international peace and security. The implication is that unless and until Muslims are included in the emerging world order as full partners, the world will remain in turmoil. That prediction has more than been borne out by events.

This said, however, I need to accept that this is the section of the book that I would have done more work on. For one thing, I appear to have idealised the Muslim *umma* too much, and made too many assumptions about its unity and its moral credentials. I stand by the prescription that the *umma* should strive for moral leadership to the world and offer an alternative model of life to the rampant consumerism and obsessive centralisation of power which characterise the Western-dominated modernity. But the gap between that ideal and the reality of Muslim life keeps growing. As far as Muslim countries and peoples have made their impact in the modern world, they have been far more materialistic and consumerist than even the most profligate industrial nation, only without contributing as much to the production of what they consume. Rather than attain independence vis-à-vis the hegemonic powers, their dependency on the outside world has increased. We sound a lot sillier today when we claim that the Muslims should be a light unto mankind, and show exemplary conduct and moral leadership. Now it would be more realistic to just say we wish that Muslims should stop blowing themselves up and get innocent people killed in the process.

One cannot lose hope, however. The continuing difficulty of integrating Muslim communities into the world order is not to be blamed on Muslims alone. And

while South Africa's apartheid, one major instance of injustice which we see as indictment of the dominant world order, has now been abolished, many injustices affecting the Muslim world continue to be upheld, and many more have since been perpetrated. The continuation of these imbalances will remain a spur for change, hopefully for the better. But our prescription still remains that these injustices should not be faced by equal wrongs, following the Quranic injunction of doing good to those who wrong us. It may be too idealistic to uphold the more elevated prescription that Muslims should not fight merely to redress injustices of which they were victims, but to be more concerned with putting the world aright. Nevertheless we must reiterate that the quest for the moral high ground is for Muslims not just a requirement of a higher moral order, but an imperative of survival.

(5)

As mentioned repeatedly in this book, the main target audience of this conversation is the thinking Muslim audience. However, as we have also been emphasising here, given that we do not live on this planet alone, others would be listening in as well. So whatever we say must be convincing to our interlocutors from outside the community, and also reassuring for them. This convergence of the Muslim dialogue around modernity and the conversations of Muslims with other communities on the planet are both inevitable and desirable. It also poses numerous problems, though.

One endemic problem is the tendency to "play to the gallery", so to speak, with Muslim participants being engaged more in posturing rather than real conversation. This is not restricted to the so-called "moderates" who want to prove to the West how nice and imperialism-friendly they are, but also to that larger segment which seeks to

show the Muslim masses how valiant and uncompromising they can be. Both these tendencies make a genuine conversation impossible.

A more fundamental symptom of the problem is the apparent stalemate which characterises the Muslim part of the conversation, with the result that the same questions which men like Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) have been asking over a century ago (and which had even then been nearly a century old) are still being debated today, with no satisfactory answers being offered; and this in spite of a lot having changed since then. Today, Muslim intellectuals, especially those living in the West, are no longer marginal outcasts or outside spectators in the central debates of our time. Many are full members of the academic communities, and a few have become leaders in their fields. Some have even been credited with significant contributions to reforming the dominant Western academia and correcting some of its biases (as was the case with the many contributors to the debate on Orientalism). However, a persistent problem of bridging the ever-widening gap between those engaged in the debate over Islamic issues and the wider human concerns continues to defy solution.

In this book, we have tried to take advantage of this important shift to merge the parallel debates once and for all. We wanted to show that being a modern political scientist and being a Muslim intellectual need not lead to a split personality. On the contrary, one's Muslim background should enrich and enhance his capabilities and critical edge as a competent political scientist, while being a fully qualified political scientist should bring new insights to his understanding of Islamic history and current political problems.

In as far as a fair measure of success has been achieved in realising this goal, I take it to be a clear refutation of the

“Islamisation of knowledge” thesis put forth by the late Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and others. There can be no such thing as “occult” Islamic knowledge which is accessible only to the believers. There is knowledge on one side, and ignorance on the other. This said, however, one need not privilege modern political science with occult qualities either, crediting it with being a privileged and elevated form of knowledge. Like all discussions related to social issues, the theses of political science (and even many of the economy) are themselves part of the social reality they describe. In spite of their protestations, these theses are infected with ideology and riddled with prior (and often not fully examined or even fully conscious) assumptions. In no way, therefore, are we setting up modern political theory as a standard by which the other debate on Islamic politics should be judged and to which it should conform. However, we have a dual objective here: improving social science by introducing insights from the debate on Islamic governance, and raising the level of the Muslim debate by introducing insights from the modern social science.

Modern democratic theory is a subtle combination of philosophical presuppositions, ideological orientations, factual observations and predictions and fond hopes. However, in conjunction with modern experiences, it sheds a vital light on some of the vexed questions of good governance and stable and equitable social orders, questions which have exercised the human intellect (and the Muslim mind) for millennia. The fact that stable democracies have existed for decades and continue to prosper and deliver tangible benefits to the people concerned cannot be ignored in favour of a solipsistic imprisonment within the centuries-old debate on the caliphate, which has all but lost its relevance. Nor is there any need to drive oneself in circles in search for convoluted legitimations for democracy from

Islamic sources (by citing shura, ijma', etc.). For it is self-evident that democratic rule is eminently preferable to despotism and other forms of one-man or clique rule, and that the values underpinning it are in total harmony with the values of Islam, which are in turn no more and no less than the human values of justice, fairness, decency and rational conduct. Islam has not come up with values of its own distinct from those adhered to by decent human beings over the ages. Nor has it brought new and unfamiliar definitions for these values. Like Christianity before it, Islam's contribution was to be more demanding in exacting conformity to noble values. Thus one was not only required to not commit aggression, but also to forgive those who wrong him. When the Prophet was driven out of his hometown of Mecca by the threat of imminent assassination, he left instructions that all his debts should be paid in full. No one would have blamed him if he refused to re-pay the rascals who wanted to murder him. However, it does not take a believer to judge that this was the calling of a higher morality.

In the Quranic account of the story of the world's first murderer, Cain, he is depicted to have been in great distress, not only because of his crime, but also because he had no idea how to dispose of Abel's dead body. The story continues: "Thereupon God sent forth a raven which scratched the earth, to show him how he might bury his dead brother's body. [And Cain] cried out: "Oh, woe is me! Am I then so incompetent that I could not do what this raven did, and bury my brother's body?" and was therein smitten with remorse." (Quran, 5: 31)

And the moral of the story is this: if God can teach mankind through the observation of how animals behave, there is surely a lot to learn from how other human beings conduct themselves. And when we can see clearly from the

human experience that democratic governance solves a lot of problems which had plagued human (including Muslim) societies for millennia, the proper reaction is not go back to al-Mawardi and other outdated texts to find out if these self-evidently good systems are “compatible” with Islam, but to exclaim with Cain: Woe be us! Are we so incompetent as to not even be able to have our own functioning parliaments and working democracies?

(6)

The modern debates on the “Islamic state”, we reiterate, has been conducted against the background of two unprecedented and interconnected developments. The first was the advent of the colonial era which saw the bulk of Muslim lands subjected to invasion and control by alien powers. The second, which was a corollary of the first, was the collapse of the caliphate and the conversion of Islam into a stateless religion for the first time in its history. It did not matter that the caliphate had for centuries been no more than a fiction, for it has remained a reassuring fiction, making its demise very traumatic for Muslims. The disappearance of the caliph as a formal religio-political authority has opened the way for the rise of Islamist groups and other “freelance” actors to assume the role of self-styled religious authorities. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, as religious authority in Islam has always been fluid and contested. However, the problem is that most of these movements appear to favour an authoritarian vision of the state, which I have criticised here.

I would like to make here a slight amendment to my double critique of the concept of the Islamic state as an authoritarian structure and of the authoritarian tendencies of Islamic movements. I have called here for a more realistic and illusion-free conception of the caliphate, and recommended the abandonment of the concept of the

Islamic state in favour of a concept of the “state for the Muslims”. In view of the failure of both the attempts to restore the caliphate or build a viable modern Islamic state, I believe it may be necessary to work towards a more modest objective: *the creation of a leading Muslim state*.

The function of such a state would be to play a role similar to that being played by the United States as a leader of the West. This is much less ambitious than a caliphate and falls well short of the building an EU-type union of Muslim states, but could lead to it eventually.

It is precisely the failure of such a state to emerge which is responsible for the currently endemic instability in the Muslim world, since the instability comes in part from the competition between rival Arab and Muslim states for such a role, and the obstacle to effective cooperation this creates. Several candidates present themselves, with Malaysia and Turkey currently leading the pack. The qualifications for this role are that the country should be a viable democracy, a strong and self-reliant economy and a vibrant cultural life.

(7)

I am aware, though, that we continue to have this uncontrollable urge to go back to history and seek vindication there. In a sense, this urge, as Ludwig Wittgenstein once said about the urge to philosophise, is some form of malfunction, like an itch which one is compelled to scratch. It does need some treatment rather than indulgence. There is a revealing anecdote recounted about an exchange between the Islamist thinker Hasan Turabi of Sudan and a member of the traditional ulama class during the deliberation of a committee of which both were members, and which was tasked with reforming and Islamising the laws in Sudan in the 1970's. According to the story, whenever Turabi offered a suggestion for a legislation that was unfamiliar to the learned man, the latter would ask

Turabi for evidence that this was an orthodox view, demanding: “In which book has this view been expressed?” Turabi would duly oblige by giving the citation and reference. But at one point, he became so irritated with the persistent questioning that he answered: “This was in one of the books which the Mongols threw into the river.”⁴

I am of a mind to similarly refer those who cannot see the self-evident advantages of democracy to the large volume of extinct Islamic books. Only that I believe even if all the books the Mongols dumped into the Tigris were to be recovered, they will not contain any answers for the questions posed, since classical Islamic literature has been characterised by its poverty in this area. However, I am inclined to indulge this urge, which I must confess to sharing, one more time. That is why I have added an appendix to this book dealing at length with the issue of the *khilafa*. Its focus is an attempt to offer a “realist” evaluation of the institution, in contrast to the persistent idealisation (and allied gross misrepresentation) which characterised classical readings and most revivalist reinterpretations. However, my “realistic” reading must be distinguished from other readings, such as those of Ibn Khaldun and many contemporary Orientalists, which adopt a rather cynical view in this regard.

My discussion of the “Damascus Model” in Appendix II follows the same approach adopted in this book: it attempts to bring new insights into the nature of the Righteous Caliphate and the limitations of that model through a more holistic view that takes account of the bigger picture. It does

⁴ It is known that when the Mongols stormed Baghdad in 1258, millions of books were burned or dumped into the river Tigris as an act of vandalism, causing many valuable references to be lost forever.

not only examine the moral, political and theological debates and the questions of legitimation and justification, but also looks at the practical problem facing states in pre-modern times. Thus it does not just dwell on the contrast between the Righteous Caliphate and the Umayyad “usurpation”, but goes deeper to examine the structure and “architecture” of the two models, and also compares them with other historical models to put their problems and limitations in the wider perspectives.

The outcome should not be to undermine or dismiss the Righteous Caliphate model, nor to glorify the Umayyad model as many have done, but to see both in a realistic perspective which enables us to derive useful and valuable lessons from both experiences. One has to see the strengths of what I called here the “Damascus Model”, which did not emerge after the collapse of the Medinan Model, but has actually co-existed with it. And it was a model that was more adapted to the exigencies of the period, and in particular to the demands of imperial expansion.

(8)

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to a few people for bringing this work to realisation. I would like to acknowledge some, starting with Wan Saiful Wan Jan whose initiative it was to republish this book, thus giving me the opportunity to revisit and update it. I also reiterate here my thanks to Zia Sardar who commissioned this book in the first place, and to Merryl Wyn Davies for editing in.

Abdelwahab El-Affendi
London, January 2008

Introduction

(From the First Edition, 1991)

The problem with the current discourse on the political aspects of Islam has consistently been the divide between clarity of thinking and sincere emotion when this important issue is addressed. Sincere Muslims are too cautious when reviewing Muslim political heritage and tend to treat it as sacred, while the sober analysis of that heritage is usually undertaken only by non-Muslim academics or by anti-Islamic elements seeking to discredit Islam. Such condemnation has, in turn, generated ferocious Muslim reactions which sought to defend the whole of our heritage - the good, the bad and the ugly - an approach that by necessity lapses into apologetics and confusion.

It has become absolutely necessary now to put an end to this vicious cycle of confusion and emotional traps. Muslims must now undertake on their own account a critical reassessment of our Islamic heritage which does not abandon the absolute commitment to the ideals that shaped it, but at the same time does not imprison itself within its shortcomings nor treat these shortcomings as sacred.

This work is a modest attempt to open up the debate. It attempts to combine the virtues of the critical outlook, which has hitherto been the preserve of the opponents of Islam, with a firm commitment to the Islamic ideals. It also seeks to present the major elements of the debate in a style accessible to all, which pre-supposes that the Muslim point of view will be presented in terms intelligible to Muslims

and non-Muslims alike. The arguments are designed to be convincing to, and by consequence open to refutation from, non-Muslims as well as Muslims. It therefore links the debate on the Islamic state to the other contemporary debate on the nature of the modern state.

My point of departure is what I call 'the Khaldunian paradox'. The fourteenth-century Muslim thinker Ibn Khaldun addressed the problem of tension between ideal and reality in Muslim political life and attempted to resolve the issue by adopting that realism which has become the hallmark of the modern mind. He subjugated the ideal to reality and right to might simply by announcing that the Muslim ideal of the Righteous Caliphate was unattainable in our imperfect world. We have, therefore, to be satisfied with what we can get. What is attainable should be sought not in the commands of the Prophet or the actions of super-human individuals, but in the iron laws of social life which allow ideals to be implemented only if they are backed by adequate force.

The science of history is the science of how to acquire and manipulate power in order to approximate the ideal demands of our ethical system which the limits posed by the logic of power permit. This idea of Machiavelli and Hobbes, which is at the core of most modern political thinking, is the negation of the Islamic point of view that seeks to subordinate the reality to the ideal. This work traces the development of this idea and attempts to present the alternative Muslim viewpoint. It sketches the development of traditional Muslim political thought to the contemporary debates on Islam and the state and on Islam and international order.

How Muslims should govern themselves has been debated for fourteen centuries, the modern debate on the nature of the state has continued for about five centuries,

and Muslims have spent the last century trying to reconcile Islam with the modern international order. One is aware of the difficulties inherent in the rather ambitious, not to say impossible, task of offering a brief survey of all three debates, and a critical assessment of some of their more salient conclusions, especially if one also tries to offer a personal perspective on the issues involved. If this work does not achieve its objectives in a satisfactory manner, my hope and excuse are that its shortcomings will provoke others to criticize, refute or complement it, to the benefit of all thinking Muslims and, in the end, of all humankind.

This work has not been written solely for the benefit of Muslims. It is time that we Muslims realize that we live in a global community, and that our ideas and beliefs are under scrutiny from the whole of humanity. When we think or write, we must bear in mind our fellow humans on this crowded planet. Without sacrificing our Islamic specificity, we must consider the shared premises of the current global culture, which we do from a perspective of opposition.

The Muslim self-assumed role as the conscience of humanity dictates that we clearly spell out our beliefs in a language intelligible to the whole human race. This role has been enhanced by the collapse of communism, which failed in its attempt to assume that role in the past. The Muslim voice is now the only dissenting voice in a fast homogenizing world. However, the communist demise, which stemmed from internal hypocrisy, has important lessons for Muslims. With no communist tyrannies, Muslims occupy the bottom point on the scale of democratic freedom and respect for human dignity.

Muslim claims that Islam is an education to mankind are, with justice, a laughing matter, which is why we Muslims must be harshly critical of ourselves and our history. I have been unsparing in my criticisms of all these

aspects of the Muslim condition, hoping to shock many into serious rethinking. My fear is not of being proved wrong, but of not evoking a dialogue ferocious and serious enough.