Unprepared, Unwilling and Unfit: 
The Muslim in the Age of IT

Dr. Naheed Zia Khan

This paper attempts to reflect on the state of preparedness of around one third of the world population, the Muslim community, to survive in a milieu where two strongest of the universal natural laws, namely, might is right and survival of the fittest are being further nourished and nurtured by the psychological warfare of the age of Information Technology (IT). This paper argues that, notwithstanding the rhetoric of universal brotherhood and unity, the Muslim community is as diverse and divided as ever, both internationally and within the individual states which either claim to be or are looked upon as Muslim countries. The author sites witnesses from the history book to maintain the position that universal brotherhood and unity of the so-called Muslim Umma has always been red herring, and it was the heterogeneity, and the tolerance and understanding of heterogeneity, which favored the dawn and rise of Muslim civilization in the past. The author argues that the politico, socio and cultural milieu of the Muslim empires was in conformity with the law of survival of the fittest where, in the universal scheme of evolution, the natural selection favors heterogeneity rather than the homogeneity, both between and within the communities. The paper attempts to reflect on the current situation of Muslim population of the planet Earth which was bad enough in the aftermath of the previously glorified Afghan Jihad, but it has been made worse since 9/11. The author urges the Muslims to
socially educate themselves in the Newton’s third Law of motion (action is equal to reaction but in opposite direction) and not to be carried away by the lethal psychological warfare of the media. Finally, it is suggested that rather than wasting time, effort, energy and resources on futile rhetorical efforts to unite and form a collective forum under the umbrella of the religion, the Muslim communities ought to understand the principles of political realism which are successfully shaping the old religious allegiances into secularized regionalism of the new world.

Introduction

The structure of the present world is a global system of Western design. Muslims of the contemporary world are manifestly vacillating between adjustment to the ongoing change and resistance to the needed accommodation. The politicization of this resistance leads to a politics of revolt, which may be as well be subtly engineered or implanted externally, against various symbols of hegemonic structures of the West. The 9/11 disaster, Bali bomb blast and many other terrorists attacks around the world are the cases in point, providing an incessant supply of the lethal weapons of psychological warfare through the international electronic media to a world audience which are increasingly becoming uninterested in the implicit causes of the explicit events. This paper argues that the planet earth of the 3rd millennium is a shrinking world, where no country is too far and no economy too remote. The majority of the Muslim population of the world is homed by the developing countries and, across much of the developing world, the struggle to survive is the order of the day. The analysis is divided in three parts. Part I reflects on some of the intricacies of the age of globalization which is underscored by the ‘interdependence’ as opposed to ‘independence’ of the nations. Part II critically reviews the interaction of the socioeconomic, political and cultural phenomena prevailing in the so-called Islamic world. Finally, Part III makes an effort to argue that in many ways the modern world still has a lot more to learn from the cross-cultural understanding and bridging of different cultural traditions.

If the last quarter of the 20th century is identified with the beginning of the Information Technology revolution, the 1990s may rightly be called the decade of globalization. The concept is also high in the popular consciousness of the new millennium. Every other person has heard of it and has an opinion on it. However, the heat which has been generated on the globalization controversy very often fails to shed any light on the topic itself. That said, perhaps the most important aspect of globalization is that it is not an isolated phenomenon, rather it has reduced the sense of isolation felt in much of the developing world. Indeed, even in the poor countries, it has given many people access to knowledge which was simply unimaginable in the recent past of the humankind. That said, the quality of life in the developing world depends on identifying the role that science and technology will play in its future. This will determine whether the developing countries will become part of the emerging knowledge-based global economy or driven in its backwaters.

At the turn of the 3rd millennium, the world has witnessed ever fastest pace of the scientific and technological change which is international in its scope and has become knowledge-driven instead of market-driven in its operation. Development in the present century will depend ever more on skill acquisition, adaptation and utilization of knowledge. If knowledge is central to national development, it must be created, transferred and effectively managed in the developing world. The world business environment is undergoing a major transition with local economies grouping themselves into regional ones and individual businesses going global.

However, contemporarily, even the minimal textbook definition of globalization involves the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders [Holm and Sorensen, 1995, p. 11]. This definition essentially stresses that globalization is not simply an economic phenomenon. The contemporary process of globalization is fast immersing the developing countries, termed by the Global Emulating Modern South (GEMS), in the whirlwind of Westernization, with all the difficulties increasingly to dominate almost all spheres of the social life in the new millennium. The global focus extends almost everywhere in business, sport, politics, fashion, environment, music, law, and cultural
identity. Nonetheless, the global economy, characterized by massive transnational flows of capital and labor, looms large in this process. So too do the global patterns of communication with new electronic technology, transmitting messages and coordinating cashless financial transactions instantaneously across borders, obliterating any limits to communication set by distance or political boundaries. Geography has, in this sense, been pronounced dead. Within what has become to be called the global village, global products and services, produced by global companies, are purchased by consumers in virtually every country and region. These processes, along with the massive international migration of the people during the last century, have contributed to the idea of a global culture, in which identity is increasingly determined by transnational developments rather than within the nation-state.

The challenge thus is dealing not simply with a profound process of change, but also with issues that vitally effect moral and political concerns about general welfare, the good life, and the good society. That said, the precise nature of the fateful phenomenon of globalization remains rather vague and unresolved since great emphasis has also been placed on the limits set to globalization by counter-trends. It is argued that there is coexistence of trends towards globalization on the one hand, and quite contrary trends towards tribalism and divisive cultural fundamentalism on the other [Barber 1991, 1995].

Its internal contradictions apart, globalization has certainly helped humankind to do away with what Blainey (1966) calls a tyranny of distance separating many regions from each other. Geographical separation in the past encouraged cultural parochialism and, in some cases, isolationism. This is contrasted with the compression of time and space [Harvey 1989]. World time based on the dominant Western calendar is ubiquitous, leaving Chinese, Orthodox, and Islamic calendars to perform limited cultural and religious functions, while the tyranny of distance has been obliterated by a communication revolution which, together with air transport, has clearly shrunk the world.

However, a highly controversial byproduct of these developments is the social scientific understandings of globalization. It is fraught with formidable problems. On the one side, there are theories of globalization, who turn out to be mostly Western, while on the other, the GEMS countries’ participants are still struggling to make sense of the opportunities and constraints that theorists associate with the globalization process.
Table 1. Religions of the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Followers (millions)</th>
<th>Share of world population (% of the total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>33 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>20 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion*</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>15 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>13 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese folk religion</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Asian religions</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal religions, Animism</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamanists</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha’i Faith</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jainism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinto</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicca</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ.htm

Unfortunately, barring Turkey, which happens to be a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), all of the countries considered as part of the Islamic World (OIC), all of the countries considered as part of the Islamic World, belong to the category of developing countries. Development and progress are the basic needs of the Islamic world, the needs in relation to which its nation states are so defined and classified in the World Development Report and in the Human Development Report. Majority of the states in the Islamic world in many ways still belong to the traditional society of the Rostow’s scheme of the stages of growth. In traditional societies, the very concepts of development and progress are lacking. Improvement, according to traditional ideas, is achieved by trying to conform to a model or pattern. This model is usually given external to the individual and the society either in space or in time, or in both. The effort towards improvement is thus basically an attempt at imitation. The modern idea of development, a process of growth and maturing in a linear fashion, allowing the innate qualities and aptitudes of an individual or a society is usually absent in a traditional hierarchical set up. Virtue, in society, means the acceptance and observance of tradition; departure from it is the major social offence.

However sporadically, some light at the end of the tunnel has usually been there in many of the nations of the Islamic world. For example, even in the 15th-century Namik Kemal, drawing inspiration from the political and economic liberalism of the age, complained that:

If there is anything we want we first wait for the government to provide it, and then for God. There must be no doubt that government is neither the father nor the teacher, neither the tutor nor the nursemaid of the people. What right have we to compel the government to act as our nursemaid? And for that matter, it is not God’s duty to improve the world, nor are the prosperity of a country or the education of a nation necessary to Him.

Indeed, throughout the 20th century and now into the new millennium, there’s been an ongoing struggle in the nations of the Islamic world between a few who believe in self-help, self-government and the effective sovereignty of the people, and the many who want the continuation of the age-old tradition of inert following and obedience at all levels of social and political organization. So far the latter have prevailed in many of these nations. In all certainty, they are going to prevail until such qualities as initiative, enterprise and self-reliance become the popular values in Muslim societies, along with pragmatic apportioning of the dogmatic discipline, uncomplaining endurance and unquestioned obedience.

The Muslims of the present world largely tend to overlook the dynamic character of the Grand Design in which every phenomenon is constantly changing. The organic phenomena are inherently more prone to change and the change is also a lot more visible. In the 19th century, the Marx’s thought extended the reproductive system of the living organism to the universe of ideas which in the paradoxical scheme of the Grand Design are the intangible counterpart of the tangible objects. In the universe of the latter where an organism stops reproducing and going forward, the inevitable retrogressive process follows characterized by a sustained decadence of the species to its eventual extinction until it is reduced to a fossil. The similar processes are operative in the universe of ideas, where, under the Marx’s
scheme every thesis is inviting its antithesis and the struggle between them gives birth to the synthesis which itself is a thesis in its own right, genetically rooted in the original thesis, inviting its own antithesis in an eternally ongoing divine scheme of the survival of the fittest. Marx applied this scheme to explain his dialectical materialism which has perhaps lost its appeal after the failed experiment of the humankind with the socialist system. But the scheme itself remains an eternal truth which the humanity, when reluctant to accept it, learns in a hard way: may it be the Protestant movement of the medieval Europe; French Revolution or the Russian Revolution; or the undocumented and/or unacknowledged revolutions, very often disguised in theological outfits, of the distant past. This scheme is a mirror image of the scheme of the Grand Design in the biological world. The social, political and economic structures in the human society are the creations of the humankind reflecting a tiny flicker of the art of the Master Creator. All human creation has always derived its inspiration from the providence and its growth and sustenance requires continuous reformation of the positive laws governing all spheres of human life. In the world of the tangible such a reformation is manifested in technological development, while the parallel sociological development happens to be its intangible concomitant. Tibi (2001) maintains that the medieval Islamic rationalism was consonant with modern rationalism. No wonder, the Islamic world prospered during that era, documented as Dark Ages of the European history, fraught with the decadent stronghold of the Christendom. Unfortunately, the medieval Islamic rationalism did not travel forward into the future and the failure to reform the positive law in Muslim communities has allowed the natural law to take its inevitable retrogressive course.

All kind of structures in the human society owe their existence to ideas. The social, political and economic structures are organic entities and they live, grow and develop till the ideas are reproducing. For the birth of the new ideas it is very important that the societies learn to take care of the antitheses and the syntheses are protected and accommodated. The infants in the universe of the biological species. In the absence of such an atmosphere, the universe of ideas eventually becomes barren and infertile, the societal structures complete their natural life cycle. Increasingly become shallow, feeble and unsustainable with age, and ultimately turn into fossils.

The above analysis has been made by the author to argue that the Muslim communities in the contemporary world are complacently turning their back to the responsibility of reforming their societal structures which have become old with age and are threatened with nearing fossilization stage of decadence. The irony is that the Muslims profess to be more religious than all other communities of the world and yet they have demonstratively failed to appreciate the spirit of Islam which is a living and forward looking faith. Table 2 provides a worldview of the public commitment to religion in 39 countries. The commitment appears to be spectacular in two general dimensions: underdevelopment of the nation and Muslim majority population of the nation. The commitment is generally low in the Western world and in parts of the worlds which have remained in the socialist rule or under its influence. What message is conveyed by these figures? Apparently, religiosity is not conducive to development. A deeper analysis, however, may lead to a different conclusion. Religiosity is not conducive to development and sustainability where the religion rules the societal structures with the references frozen in time and space, rather than allowing to follow the changes which are dynamic and forward looking. This is the spirit of the reformation and a marked distinction of the medieval Islamic thought. This distinction, however, was reduced to ashes in the subsequent centuries. Nonetheless, there’ve been a select few sparks in these ashes who’ve been trying to revive the dynamism of the system. For example, the 20th century great poet and thinker of East, Iqbal, has vividly expressed the divine message in two of his verses translated below by this author:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Adults (%)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Adults (%)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Adults (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>U. S. of America</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent released on December 19, 2002.

A poll released on December 19, 2002, for whom religion is important.
A human being ought to realize the gift of the creative will to the extent that God Himself wishes to seek its consent in matters of destiny.

In many other verses, Iqbal has lamented the decadent state of affairs in the Muslim communities. Four of the verses by him are given below, again translated by this author:

This era is in search of its own Abraham since the world's become an idol house......there is no god but God.

The worshipers are pretending to worship God, while hiding idols in the sleeves. I have the divine order to call........there is no god but God.

Unfortunately, the deterioration has continued into the present times, and more so because there is so much to lose in the illusory appearance of the modern world if one is stripped of the divine gift of the wish to be on the winning end of the eternal reality. Indeed, the first two of the above four verses should be reinterpreted as:

This era is in search of its own Abraham since the divine message, there is no god but God, itself's been reduced to an idol.

III

The centrality of the context of the Islamic history in reforming the societal structures of the countries homing majority of Muslim population is undeniable. However, it does not mean imposing the details of the past on the present. Although the present ought to be imbued with the spirit and certain values and traditions of the past, it must be in harmony with its own religious, historical and intellectual undercurrents.

Change is brought about by many factors, but tension is usually built when a traditional society is faced with challenges posed by the world outside. The international hegemonic struggle has put many of the Muslim communities of the contemporary world at the defensive, causing a feeling of political and spiritual defeat at a time when their traditional ideological rivals in the past appear to be invincible and omnipresent. Most disturbing of all is the course that the ongoing war on terrorism has taken in Afghanistan and Iraq, while there has been little debate and analysis of the underlying covert and overt hegemonic motives. Unfortunately, the plight of the Afghan and Iraqi citizens has not elicited a warm and sympathetic response from the influential quarters of the global village. The media is stretching the human imagination to the limits where the myths are being made to turn into tangible reality through the lethal game of psychological warfare. In author's opinion, the hegemonic strategy is based on an orthodox approach to the power of human imagination: literacy is a late comer to history and to disregard the image is to disregard the human imagination itself. The cruel and tyrannical media warfare, precision bombing and machine-gun bullets of the hegemonic self-righteousness are threatening the survival of the planet a lot more than the alleged bombs of Islamic fundamentalism. The ricochet of these bullets can be heard all too clearly in the chauvinistic tones of the leader of the most powerful nation on the globe, and in the rhetoric of those for whom the value of precious human blood is no more than an apology on the misinformation of Iraqi dossier. The directors and producers of the stage drama in Iraq are not committing acts of political courage; they are committing an act of supreme political folly. At best they are throwing away valuable material and human resources. At worst they are actively strengthening the influence of the very tyrants they pretend to oppose.

The times are dangerous. It is alarmingly warranted that the nations of the world value the common ties of humankind and take a more balanced and considered view of the conflict resolution strategies. In order to keep the threat perception alive, the global electronic media, widely controlled by the hegemonic power, is perpetuating an identity of terrorism increasingly overlaid by demonological fantasies. To find such hateful stereotypes revived not by one of their traditional enemies, but by their patron ally of the Cold War years, is especially hurtful for the Muslims. Their feeling of outrage, abundantly highlighted on the same media, is in most cases utterly genuine and quite independent of the alleged influence of terrorists.

Religion is being accorded renewed status in the academic, social and political spheres of the new century. Religion in substance is a religious belief and an ethics. However, the politicization of religious symbol facilitates making use of religion as an ideological tool embedded in domestic, regional and international conflict. The global electronic media is not letting any opportunity go to paint the politically legitimate claims of many of the oppressed Muslims communities around the world with the skillful brush of Islamic fundamentalism.
The directions, commentaries and role play near such perfection that even the liberal Muslim audience hardly feel any hesitation to take everything for granted, scarcely bothering to find out that political Islam is an ideology and not the intrinsic religion of Islam.

Unfortunately, the global media is not the only culprit. Its efforts are being highly augmented by a vast majority of orthodox Muslims, involuntarily becoming accomplices of the hegemonic power because of their concealed attitudes, ignorance and, most importantly, complacently unperceptive beliefs. They believe, for example, that Islamic law is immutable; they view it as the all embracing essential culture, valid without further accommodation for all times, places and peoples. They identify the true Islamic behavior with the social and cultural practices of the 7th century Arabia and early Muslim empires, thus help set the natural law of the Grand Design on its back ward course. In author's opinion, the approach of the orthodox Muslims nears essentialism in that it tends to overlook the intrinsic dynamic spirit of enlightening divine message conveyed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and also his incessant struggle and sacrifice, for improving the plight of humanity, that spanned over 23 years of his preciously short life. 

Islam is an organic religious system. It offers regulations for all spheres of life as an organic whole. Islamic law is post-Qur'anic and constructed, but it was and still to this day is perceived as a lex divina. In early Islam it had the character of a lex talionis, taking the place primarily of the ancient Arab, pre-Islamic customary legal norm of repaying an offence with a like punishment. What was new that the Muslim community now carried out the act of punishment, rather than the injured party taking justice into its own hands. After the Muslim conquest of the non-Muslim people of other lands and the unfolding of the process of civilization within the pax islamica, a lex talionis was no longer sufficient for the regulation of the social interaction. Hence, a legal system was evolved between the late 7th and the 9th centuries. In addition to the Quran and Sunna as primary sources, the legal techniques of analogy deduction, qiyas, and consensus doctrorum, ijma, also evolved as secondary possibilities for defining laws. If neither the Quran and Sunna nor these methods provided legal answers to problems of development the independent legal reasoning, ijtihad, which was often stretching of a point in individual cases, was permitted. During the medieval ages, when economic prosperity engendered a social structure with which a sacral legal system could hardly be expected to cope, various methods were evolved for separating ijtihad, politics, and shari'a, the legal system [Schacht 1979].

Contrary to the historical evidence on the progressive and forward looking organic social systems of the medieval Islamic societies, the orthodox Islamic legal experts of present times overwhelmingly tend to remove the organic system of Islam from the possibility of adapting to changed conditions [al-Ashmawi 1983; Tibi 1998]. During the last two centuries, the inability of the Islamic world to adapt to the technological-scientific age, which followed the Renaissance of the decadent European Christendom, had been responsible for winding up the Mughal Empire in India and pushing back the Ottoman Empire into its Turkish heartlands by the superior European armies. The military weakness of the Muslims led them to adopt first the European institution of the modern army, the cultural borrowing inevitably followed since the pre-modern Islamic cultural patterns were in crisis in the technological-scientific age. The following quotation by Tahtawi (1843), the first Muslim Imam to go to Paris, was indicative of the looming crisis:

When it is said of someone in France that he is a scholar, that does not mean that he is versed in religion but that he is familiar with other sciences. It is not difficult to see the superiority of these Christians over others in the sciences, and consequently also that in our countries many of these sciences do not exist at all [p. 150].

Tahtawi was the first Islamic scholar in the 19th century to recognize the conflict at issue; the conflict still remains to be resolved, almost all these sciences are in a deplorable state in the countries of Muslim majority population, while the world has moved into the age of Information Technology revolution. Although a reconciliation with modern thinking has been set in motion, much still remains to be done. Watt and Welch (1980) maintain that some paths that have been taken have proved to be dead ends. This author finds a few of these dead ends particularly alarming in the backdrop of the international economic and political relations discussed below.

The world is increasingly being divided into regions. The regional trading blocks are becoming more and more deepened and widened around the globe. The European Union (EU) has already reached a stage approximating to the trading relations usually found within a
country rather than between the countries. The existence of regional economic groups, particularly in European and American continents, pose a range of theoretical, empirical and organizational questions for countries of Muslim majority population who depend on the European countries and the US of America for a significantly high share of their international trade. There has been no effective regional grouping so far between countries of Muslim majority population.

The EU has never proclaimed itself a 'Christian club' in any of its gestures, symbols, deliberations and rules, and yet the population of its 25 member countries happens to be overwhelmingly Christian in body, spirit, history and origin. The strategic significance of the increasingly greater widening and deepening of EU has made the US of America to widen and deepen the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) accepting a poor relation, Mexico in the immediate family. However, the family again remains overwhelmingly Christian. The trend has triggered widening and strengthening of the economic ties in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), implicitly headed by Japan.

The countries in almost all of the regional organizations discussed above have common ties of tradition, religion, culture and geographic proximity. However, these ties are hardly ever allowed to surface and the business deals are pretend to be conducted in an objectively pragmatic manner. This is contrasted with the only regional grouping of the countries under the religious umbrella to the Organization for Islamic Conference and Development (OIC). But, unfortunately, while the deputies and ministers of the EU members countries meet to discuss and decide sensitive public policy issues, the deputies in the OIC gatherings congregate for the party time disguised in the rhetoric of Pan-Islamism, a red herring which has never been caught and cooked even in the glorious Muslim past.

On the political and military front, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is again not a liberal and egalitarian design since its member countries are also overwhelmingly home to the Christian population of the world, with the exception of Turkey which happen to be there because of the geo-strategic 'default line'. For the better part of the 20th half of last century, Warsaw Pact and NATO have been entangled in long years of Cold War which ended in the demise of the former and which frequently emboiled the countries of Muslim majority populations in civil wars, bloody border conflicts and recurrent skirmishes: the wars in the Middle East, the Afghan war and Iran-Iraq war, during the 1980s, are only a few cases in point. The political counterpart of NATO in the Muslim world is perhaps the Arab League. The League's charter includes a cultural treaty and a defense treaty. However, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the 1990, its ongoing legacy and the recent atrocities in the Dafur region of Sudan fall on the face of both these treaties.

Finally, the Muslim communities of the world must realize that the contemporary world has been shaped along the European and Western lines which are overwhelmingly Christian in body and spirit, in modern and secular in rhetoric, gestures and symbol. This completely contrasts with the Muslim communities who are all rhetoric, gestures and symbols, but demonstratively lack the true spirit of Islam where the actions are required to speak much louder than the words.... the actions which improve the welfare of the masses on this earth with normative interventions ensuring pragmatism, consistency, continuity and sustainability.

Conclusion

One of the most important questions faced by the world today is the possibility of an intercultural dialogue to help enhance the religious tolerance and understanding of diverse views and ways of modern life. There are sound reasons to endorse the skepticism of the Muslim world to the proclaimed liberalism and egalitarianism of the West. That said, the rhetorical Islamism is also out of tune in the age of Information Technology revolution. It is reasonable and legitimate to argue for an alternative to the current world order, but prudence, political realism and pragmatism must not be overlooked. When it comes to globalization, structures and institutions are at issue which are unwittingly confused with a cultural threat in the revivlisits agenda of the political Islamists. The structures and institutions survive and progress with ceaseless efforts at creating the knowledge which in the contemporary world is overwhelmingly a Western product. Unless the Muslim communities effectively break into the heavily guarded columns of scientific and technological knowledge and claim their property rights, they cannot possibly manage the lofty architectural wonderland so casually claimed to be aimed by the de-Westernizing political Islamists. The author's position is amply endorsed by the evidence from the Islamic history because the work of Farabi, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina all reflect the Greek impact on Islamic thought. It is this
Islamic heritage which in its turn had an impact on the European Renaissance [Watt 1962; Huff 1995]. Tibi (2001) rightly maintains that the view for divorcing Islam from the earlier cited epistemological implications of cultural modernity occurs to be based on a one-sided understanding of the intellectual tradition of classical Islam. Finally, the author strongly believes that responsibilities of the individual countries, where majority of the population is Muslim, in terms of their internal dynamics and external interfaces with an increasingly globally environment will determine the strength of the Muslim world in collectivity.

End Notes

1For an elaborate discussion of the controversies of globalization, see Khan (2002).
2According to one estimate, about $1.5 trillion a day are flowing across borders as foreign exchange transactions. Only one to two percent of these transactions are related to trade or foreign direct investment. The remainder is for speculation or short-term investments that are subject to rapid flight when investors’ perceptions change [see, Khor 1998, P. 2].
3International migrants number about 100 million, or about 2 percent of the world’s population. Often they also send economic resources back to their homeland. Worldwide, such remittances are estimated to be about $67 billion [See, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1997, P. 10].
4The dichotomy at work here is abundantly propagated as the clash between what Barber calls McWorld and Jihad. The former stands for the global networks of capitalism and electronic communication, an amalgam so to speak of McDonald’s and Micro Soft, while the latter refers to for Lebanonization, in which cultures stand opposed to each other driven by ‘parochial hatreds’. In author’s opinion, the approach underlying such dichotomy needs to be appraised carefully in that McWorld characterizes purely Western symbols, while Jihad is an Islamic phenomenon which is widely misunderstood in the West because it is deliberately misinterpreted by the global electronic media. Jihad does not mean ‘Holy war’ but rather ‘effort’, ‘endeavor’ or ‘hard work’ [see, Tibi 1996, pp. 128-45]. Ironically, the implicit paradox in this case suggests that globalization is a purely Western phenomenon at odds with the non-Western world. The global electronic media coverage of the identity of terrorism is indeed a very strong case in point.
5Rostow’s described the evolution of the modern human society on a linear scale of five stages of growth, namely, traditional society; pre-requisites for development; take-off into self-sustained growth; drive to maturity; and the age of mass consumption (see, Rostow 1956).
6This ideal model is usually situated in the past, in terms of a mythology, 
7Evolution or master philosophy, or a semi-historical golden age. Given this perspective, all change is deterioration, a falling-away from the sanctified past [see, Lewis 1998].
8Lewis (1998), however, describes the queer equation of the modern world with the traditional society. According to him, political, ideological and commercial salesmen of the modern world try to market the old wares by dispensing them as new: while, on the contrary, in traditional societies new ideas and doctrines can only be made acceptable, if at all, they are presented in a manner representing the return to the pure and ancient tradition [P. 181].
10The Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was the founder of the Semitic religious tradition. According to the theological sources, his father was an idol worshipper and idol maker, while he demolished the idols, found God with his incessant prayers and built Khana Kaba (the center of worship for the Muslims) in Mecca.
11For example, The distinguished Journal of International Affairs, Millennium, published by the London School of Economics, devoted its 2000 special issue to the topic of religion and international relations.
12In author’s opinion these attitudes are the deep rooted legacy of the imperialism in the past millennium. The majority of the Muslim population of the planet belongs to the non-Arab lands. The intrinsic divine message of Islam is for all places, all people and all times. Unfortunately, the Arab rulers gradually reduced it to imperialism in the conquered lands. For example, it is deeply rooted in the psyche of many of even highly educated Muslims that Arabic is the language of God and it is required that a Muslim must not make even the minutest mistakes of Arabic while reciting the Holy Quran. This author has found none of that kind of suggestion in her thorough study of the Holy Quran. Similarly, when a non-Muslim was entered to the faith in the conquered lands, his/her name used to be changed to an Arabic, Turkish or a Persian name; three main languages of the Muslim empires. The European were late comers in the hunt for hinterland, they learned many valuable lessons from their Muslim imperial rivals and predecessors. The most important of them being the sustenance and deepening of the role through the language and culture of the imperial ruler, the fundamental defining features of the contemporary era of globalization [see, Khan 2002]. No wonder, the native African, South American and Asian Christian usually have a European part of their names. Leave alone the rich members of the community, even the very poor Christian Bride in the country of the author wears a white bridal veil and all do her bride maids.
13The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was established on 25 September 1969 on the occasion of the first Conference of the Muslim World which was held in Rabat - capital of Kingdom of Morocco. Presently, OIC consists with 55 members comprising of: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria,
Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen (http://www.arab.de/arabinfio/oic.htm).

THE ARAB League was established in 1945. It has 22 members: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

[http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league.htm.]

References


