Islamic Resurgence and Western Reaction

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Islam is an ideology and a world religion with more than one billion adherents spread around the globe (Kettani 1986).[1] Muslims are a majority in more than forty-five countries from Africa to Southeast Asia. Their populations continue to grow, as do the Muslim populations in the former Soviet Union, China, India, Europe, and the United States. Islam seeks the evolution of a social structure based on the concept of the unity of mankind and comprised of individuals who are living moral and spiritual lives. It seeks to build a trans-national society in which such narrow loyalties as color, race, and so on are negated, in which complete submission to the will of Allah is displayed, and in which Muhammad is the model to follow in daily affairs and is recognized as the chief interpreter of revelation.

Denny (1993, 345) introduces Islam as "a vigorous, complex amalgam of peoples, movements, and goals, and not the monolithic, centrally coordinated, hostile enterprise that outsiders sometimes assume it to be." Muslim society is further characterized as having the capacity to resolve any changes, new situations or problems facing the *ummah* through the application of ijtihad. In the ever-changing sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions, it is ijtihad that prevents fossilization and precludes the development of stereotypes within Islam. With ijtihad, Islam has the inherent capacity to address and respond to change while still following the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Thus the term "fundamentalism," with its non-Muslim origin in early twentieth century Protestant Christianity, has no place in, and is therefore irrelevant to, the Islamic schema. This is not only because of the specifically Christian heritage and nature of the term, but also because of the derogatory and negative undertones that have been attached to it. The term "Islamic fundamentalism" is, in fact, an oxymoron, for one cannot be a Muslim if one does not adhere to the fundamentals of Islam. Denny (ibid., 345-46) writes:

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[1] The total number of Muslims in the world was about 1,029,427,000 in 1982. See M. Ali Kettani, *Muslim Minorities in the World Today*, 241.

The term fundamentalism has been widely used since the 1970s to characterize various forms of Islamic revivalism. The term originated in America early in the twentieth century, where it was applied to ultraconservative Protestant Christian literalists and inerradentists who propounded a list of "fundamentals" that all true Christians should follow. Because of the American Protestant origins of the term, many observers, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, believe that it should not be applied to Islam.

Nevertheless, there are orientalists and area study specialists who persist in using this term to characterize the wave of Islamic resurgence sweeping the contemporary Islamic world. Some, like Esposito (1988, 162), use it guardedly, preferring "Islamic resurgence" and "Islamic revivalism." Others, like Middle East historian and expert on Islam Bernard Lewis, use the term frequently and argue forcefully for its suitability. According to Lewis (1988, 117-18):

> It is now common usage to apply the term "fundamentalism" to a number of Islamic radical and militant groups. The use of this term is established and must be accepted, but it remains unfortunate and can be misleading. "Fundamentalist" is a Christian term . . . . [A]ll Muslims, in their attitude to the text of the Qur'an, are in principle at least fundamentalists. Where the so-called Muslim fundamentalists differ from other Muslims and indeed from Christian fundamentalists is in their scholasticism and their legalism. They base themselves not only on the Qur'an, but also on the Tradition of the Prophet, and on the corpus of transmitted theological and legal learning. Their aim is nothing less than to abrogate all the imported and modernized legal codes and social norms, and in their place to install and enforce the full panoply of the shari'a—its rules and penalties, its jurisdiction, and its prescribed form of government.

Although there has been no distinction between Church and state in Islamic history, Caesar and God have not been allocated different domains and no priesthood or clergy is recognized by Islam. Lewis (ibid., 3), however, equates the ulama and mullahs with the Christian clergy and concludes:

At the present time, the very notion of a secular jurisdiction and authority—of a so-to-speak unsanctified part of life that lies outside the scope of religious law and those who uphold it—is seen as impiety, indeed as the ultimate betrayal of Islam. The righting of this wrong is the principal aim of Islamic revolutionaries and, in general, of those described as Islamic fundamentalists.

Another British academic expert on Islam, W. Montgomery Watt, analyzes the recurrent phenomenon of Islamic resurgence and offers a novel view: the contemporary Islamic resurgence has resulted from the "ulama's desire to enhance their power and social prestige" (Watt 1988, 43). He fails to mention, however, the Muslims' reaction to western colonization, which played a major role in the formation of the current Islamic resurgence, and the extent of economic and political exploitation of Muslim countries by the new imperialism of western multinational corporations.

Furthermore, Watt (ibid., 71) derives "Islamic monolithism" and "Islamic fundamentalism" from the traditional Islamic outlook and reliance on the Qur'an and the hadith and the idealization of Muhammad as the perfect model for Muslims to follow. He concludes that Muslims cannot adjust adequately to life at the end of the twentieth century. In perceiving Islamic fundamentalism, "he fails to integrate the historical reality of the western exploitation of the Muslim world into a coherent analysis. At times his analysis . . . lacks a dynamic reflection on the process of modern history" (Abu-Rabi' 1992, 243).

It is our contention that the term "Islamic fundamentalism" has been used deliberately to distort and misrepresent the contemporary reality of Islamic resurgence. Furthermore, its use reflects the characteristic western attitude towards Islam and Muslims, which is still influenced by the Crusades. It also suggests that there is no structural or semantic identity between the Christian fundamentalist movement and the contemporary Islamic resurgence. Finally, the way in which it has been employed by some western scholars and popularized by much of the western media essentially represents a stereotype with all of its pejorative and disparaging connotations (Momin 1987, 36).

Is Islam, as depicted by some western scholars and the press, really a danger to world peace? Is Islam heading toward a global intifadah? Is Islamic resurgence a regional phenomenon? Does the western polity want to give Muslims the right to live as Muslims, as it has done for Jews and Christians? Should scholarly works regarding Islam and Muslims begin and end with the assertion that "Muslims are

Muslims" and cannot be changed?[2] Should the autocratic rulers of the Middle East and elsewhere, because of their status of being allies with the West, be allowed to negate the basic democratic rights of Muslims? Is the upheaval and resurgence of Islam a danger to the West's civilization, cultural heritage, and security? How the West deals with Islam could very well be the critical determining factor as regards future world peace. Everything in our future could depend on the reconciliation between Islam and the West. The gloomy alternative is continual wars and eventual devastation.

Jerrold D. Green, looking for the "twain" in Kipling's famous oft-quoted statement "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," finds them "meeting every day on college campuses, in exchanges with foreign universities, in study-abroad programs and in foreign language studies." He further statess that "it is absurd to argue in this day and age that different cultures and societies cannot understand one another" (Green 1992, 12).

Both East and West are coming closer together, according to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asian Affairs Edward Djerjian. He stated in several lectures in 1992 that

> the cold war is not being replaced with a new competition between Islam and the West. It is evident that the crusades have been over for a long time . . . . The United States government does not view Islam as the next 'ism' confronting the West or threatening world peace. (Bin Yousef and Abul-Jobain 1992, v).

However, in order to more accurately predict any possible future, we must first study the past and evaluate the relationship that has existed so far. On the basis of such a review, it should be possible to determine certain ramification for the future.

From the very advent of Islam, Muhammad and the Qur'an have been subjected to severe criticism by Christian priests and propagandists, who might be called the "original orientalists." The Prophet was denigrated and maligned, endowed with deformities, given such insulting names as "Mahound," accused of being an imposter, an epileptic and even a Christian heretic (Benaboud 1986, 309-10). The French orientalist Carra de Vaux writes: "Muhammad for a long time had a very bad introduction in the West and every immorality and superstition was ascribed to him" (al Tihāmī 1985, 22). One of the

2 See, for example, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* , 1978, 312-20.

earliest English translations of the Qur'an was made in 1649 by Alexander Ross, who based it on the French version of Andre du Ryer. Although Ross' effort was an indifferent translation of an inadequate work that no scholar ever recommended, it was reissued many times. In 1806, Henry Brewer reprinted it in America. In the introduction, Ross writes (Jeffrey 1958, 17-18):

> Good reader, the great Arabian Imposter now at last after a thousand years is by way of France arrived in England, and his Alcoran or Gallimaufry of Errors, (a brat as deformed as the parent, and as full of heresies as his scald head was full of scruffe), hath learned to speak English . . . . so many coun- treyes be blinded and inslaved with this misshapen issue of Mohamet's brain; being brought forth by the help of no other midwifery than of a Jew and a Nestorian, making use of a tame pigeon (which he had taught to pick corn out of his ears) instead of the Holy Ghost, and causing silly people to believe that in his falling sickness (to which he was much subject) he had conference with the Angell Gabriel.

It is disturbing to note that those orientalists who were still writing after the end of colonialism, having moved from textual and philo- logical research to area studies, retained the same set of assumptions and ideological commitments in their "objective studies." A great deal of contemporary social science research, including the so-called area studies relating to Muslims and Islamic movements, are undertaken by American and European scholars and often bears the traditional orientalist, over which, in turn, hangs the unmistakable shadow of the Crusades (Momin 1987, 39).

It is probably not correct to say, as Momin (ibid., 39) does, that the contemporary Islamic resurgence is a postmodern phenomenon. In fact the concept of Islamic brotherhood and the Muslim yearning to return to social values of the early days of Islam have always re- sulted in upheavals of Islamic feelings. The ousting of the colonial powers from the lands of Islam was an expression of the Muslims' intense desire to lead their own lives in their own lands and in accord- ance with the principles of Islam. The Islamic resistance and reformist movements of the last two centuries—Jamāl al Dīn al Afghānī in Egypt, 'Abd al Qādir in Algeria, Muḥammad Aḥmad in Sudan, Muḥammad 'Ali al Sanūsī in Libya, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Ḥasan in Somalia, Imām Shāmil in the Caucasus, Ya'qub Beg in Turkistan, and

Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd in India—are different manifestations of the same resurgent feeling.

Muslim resistance to colonialism can also be seen in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern history. Appearing first as traders, the Europeans gradually earned enough profits and, with their superior weapons as well as through other means, they were able to acquire territory and establish governments. Those Ottomans, Mughals, Safavids, and other local potentates who gave facilities to these European traders eventually became so weak, disorganized, and divided that they could offer little resistance to the insatiable appetites of the Europeans. While several Muslim rulers collaborated with them in the hope of retaining their status and position, it was the ulama, the Sufis, and the "fundamentalists" who came out of their spiritual shells and, seeing in the westerners' machinations a danger to Islam and its continued hegemony in their lands, fought the Europeans. Thus inspired, they roused the faithful to stem the tide of Christian "heathenism," which, they believed, was threatening to engulf the Muslim world.

These freedom fighters were conscious of the fact that they were men of God and so acted in strict conformity with the Qur'anic teachings and the traditions of the Prophet. However, their inability to regroup after the elimination of their leaders and their military inferiority vis-à-vis Europe proved disastrous. Moreover, the colonial powers had weakened all potential resistance through force and graft. In many cases, they won over those secular minded Muslims who were enamored with western scientific and technological achievements. The ulama failed to counter the systematic intellectual indoctrination by the West, and so the rebellion died (Zakaria 1988).

Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson (1974, 52) writes:

> Christianity was made out to be by its very nature favourable to progress and Islam to mean cultural stagnation and backwardness. The attack upon Islam became as fierce as it could be and the arguments of the Middle Ages were revived with up-to-date embellishments. The Islamic religious orders, in particular, were presented as a network of dangerous organizations animated by a barbarous hatred of civilization.

However, contemporary Islamic revival has assumed worldwide proportions since the 1970s. According to Momin (1987, 52):

> It is inspired by the belief that Islam is capable of offering a viable alternative to the existing ideological systems, and that

it is destined to play a crucial role in the shaping of the con-
temporary world. It has two distinctive, but complementary,
dimensions: political-ideological and cultural-religious. At the
political-ideological level, Islamic resurgence was directed,
during the post-World War II era, at the overthrow of western
colonial rule. It also found expression in the disenchantment
of the Muslim masses with radical socialism and western-style
modernization. Thus, Islamic resurgence symbolized the con-
viction, as well as the endeavour, on the part of Muslims in
various parts of the world to build a post-modern society on
the edifice of Islamic ethos. A significant stimulus to Islamic
resurgence came from the success of the Algerian revolt
against French colonial rule. The Iranian revolution in
1978-79 provided another filip to it. Yet another morale
booster came from the transformation of the world market
during the early part of the 1970's and the subsequent as-
sumption of control on oil prices by the oil producing com-
panies in the Gulf region.

In an elaboration of this theme, Momin (ibid., 41) continues to
assert in his assessment of contemporary Islamic resurgence that

[a]t the cultural-religious level, Islamic resurgence has found
expression in the assertion of an Islamic cultural identity. Seen
in the contemporary perspective, the tidal wave of Islamic re-
surgence is sweeping across Islamic and Arab lands; its rever-
berations are also being felt among the Muslim minorities in
Asia, Africa, Europe and the United States. The awakening
witnessed in the Islamic and Arab worlds during the latter half
of the present century has accentuated the Muslim conscious-
ness against economic exploitation and political dominance,
as well as cultural intrusion and ideological brainwashing.

During the last two decades, many area study scholars and
specialists working in league with the new imperialist establishment
have published a number of books and articles on the concept of
"Islamic fundamentalism." The resulting assessments and conclusions,
in turn, have been spread widely among the western public by the
mass media. Of these, one of the most inflammatory was Lewis's lec-
ture, entitled "Islamic Fundamentalism," which was given as the pres-
tigious Jefferson Lecture of 1990, the highest honor accorded by the
American government to a scholar for achievement in the humanities.

A revised version became "The Roots of Muslim Rage," the lead article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which, for that particular issue, featured a scowling, bearded, turbaned Muslim with an American flag in his glaring eyes.

Esposito, reviewing this piece in *Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, says that the article contains two other illustrations designed to depict Islam's relationship with the West: the first shows a serpent, marked with the stars and stripes, crossing the desert (America's dominance of or threat to the Arab world), and the second shows a serpent poised, as if to attack, behind a Muslim at prayer. Like other sensational stereotypes, pictures meant to be provocative and to attract the reader feed into our ignorance and reinforce a myopic vision of reality. Muslims are attired in "traditional" dress, bearded and turbaned, although most Muslims (and most "fundamentalists") do not dress or look like this. This reinforces the image of Islamic activists as medieval in lifestyle and mentality (Esposito 1992, 173-74).

Criticizing this depiction, Esposito (ibid., 174) further comments:

[T]he title "Roots of Muslim Rage," sets the tone and expectation. Yet would we tolerate similar generalization in analyzing and explaining western activities and motives? How often do we see articles that speak of Christian rage or Jewish rage? In a similar vein, the nuclear capability of Muslim countries such as Pakistan has often been spoken of in terms of an "Islamic bomb," implying the existence of a monolithic Muslim world threatening Israel and the West. Do we expect Israel's or America's nuclear capabilities to be described in terms of a "Jewish" or a "Christian bomb?" Some Muslims have described Israeli bombings of Beirut as the result of "Jewish boys dropping Christian bombs"—a description which most in the West would find inaccurate and offensive . . .

There is a lesson to be learned from the failure of talented analysts who continued to warn of the dangers of a monolithic communist threat while the Soviet Union was in fact an economic basket case, breaking apart from within. Partial analysis which reinforces comfortable stereotypes and western secular presuppositions must be transcended, if we are to avoid the ideological pitfalls and biases of a political analysis driven by an exaggerated threat.

It is interesting to note that Lewis never discusses Zionism in parallel with Islam (as if Zionism were a French and not a religious movement) and asserts that Muslims and Arabs cannot be objective. He writes: "[The historian's] loyalties may well influence his choice of subject of research; they should not influence his treatment of it . . . . Finally the historian must be fair and honest in the way he presents his story" (Said 1978, 319). Lewis applies his methodology and traces the roots of "Islamic fundamentalism" in the distinction between the political attitudes of Islam, Christianity and Judaism:

> Moses led his people out of the house of bondage and through the wilderness, but was not permitted to enter the promised land. Christ died on the cross. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, suffered neither of these fates but, on the contrary, achieved worldly success during his life time, becoming a ruling head of state . . . . This means that from the very beginning of Islam, from the life time of its founder, in the formative memories which are the sacred, classical and scriptual history of all Muslims, religion and the state are one and the same. This intimate connection between faith and power has remained characteristic of Islam in contrast to the other two religions. (Kepel 1985, 11-12)

After establishing a "lust of power" in the memory formation of Muslims, he divides Muhammad's career into two stages. In modern parlence, he argues that the Prophet was an opposition leader and a critic of the Makkan regime and, after the hijrah, a statesman and the ruler of Madīnah—a government in exile. From this base, he fought Makkah until he achieved victory and conquest (ibid., 15). He further concludes that, in the minds of the political aspirants in the Muslim world, both roles—sovereign and rebel—are still very much alive.

Lewis makes another interesting classification in the contemporary body politic of Islam:

> One is the dichotomy between official Islam and popular Islam. The first kind is expressed in governmental and diplomatic pan-Islamism, manifesting itself through summit conferences, inter-Islamic banks and development organizations, regional co-operative projects and the like. The second produces more radical forms of pan-Islamic activity, operating through underground movements . . . . These movements seek to achieve a renewal of society by ending the rule of

alien infidels and domestic apostates, and returning to what they see as a pure and authentic Islamic order. (Ibid., 18)

A clear picture of the "prospects and dangers" of "political Islam" can be seen Weaver's "The Trail of the Sheikh," in which she depicted Shaykh 'Umar 'Abd al Raḥmān—the supposed force behind the bomb-ing of the World Trade Center—in the most sensational way and based on her self-conceived assumptions rather than any empirical evidence: "[T]he frail blind cleric, aided by an international support network, is fuelling the fundamentalist revolution against the state he has defied for twenty five years" (Weaver 1993, 71). After investigating his past and his influence in Egypt, she concludes:

[T]he greater threat to the interests of the United States lies not in some act of terrorism here but, rather, in the possibility of a violently militant Islamic government's coming to power in Egypt—a threat that could be as formidable as any we have faced from Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran or Saddam Hussien in Iraq. (Ibid., 71)

In the peculiar air and tone of the article, she tries to make the shayks's acquaintance with Gulbadin Hikmatyar (a former ally of the United States and, at present, a "ruthless and fanatic" Afghan leader) something suspicious. She seems to be very concerned about the "infiltration" of the Muslim Brotherhood into Egypt's armed forces, governmental offices, trade unions and foreign service. She visits Egypt regularly, and her fears regarding this country, which has the most populated and nervous bourgeoisie of the Middle East, are depicted fully when she states: "There is also a tangible fear, which I had never known before, that Egypt, with nearly sixty million people—one third of the Arab world—could lose its struggle against militant Islam" (ibid., 76-84).

In the history of Christianity, the "political and heretical leaders were often identified with Anti-Christ" (Armstrong 1992, 23). It seems that the phenomenon of "Anti-Christ spotting" is still operative, if not at conscious level then at least at the subconscious level, of various contemporary western area study specialists. However, it seems to be in a different, but still dangerous, form: it is directed against states rather than individuals or heretical leaders of the non-Christian world.

This view can be seen in Judtih Miller's "The Challenge of Radical Islam." The author, who is a political analyst, a writer for the *New York Times*, and a fellow at the Twentieth Century Fund, insists on

promoting human rights in the Middle East rather than holding elections, which could oust autocratic regimes backed by the imperialist nations. In her analysis of the political struggle in the Middle East, she supports the call of Bernard Lewis not to apply "pressure for premature democratization" and claims that holding free elections immediately in Egypt, for example, where the Muslim Brotherhood is the best organized, will lead to militant Islamic regimes that are, in fact, inherently anti-democratic (Miller 1993, 51). She further argues that "America's mindless, relentless promotion of elections immediately is likely for now to bring to power through the ballot box those who would extinguish democracy in the name of Allah" (ibid., 53). As a result, those Islamist regimes that would come to power after such an election would be more repressive and less tolerant than the existing ones (ibid., 55). After reminding the Clinton administration of America's long-standing commitment to the security of Israel and other allies, she concludes: "[I]n the aftermath of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, the United States must acknowledge now that Islamic fervor nurtured overseas in bound to come home" (ibid., 56).

It is surprising to note that such analysts, area study specialists, and journalists as Weaver, Miller, and Lewis are still portraying Muslims and Islamists as a serious security threat to western interests while, at the same time, they ignore the extermination of hundreds of thousand Bosnian Muslims at the hands of Serbian nationalists, who are backed by Eastern Orthodox Church. They never talk about the Hindu extremists of the Bharatiya Janata Party or the Gush Emmunim, the Jewish fundamentalists who work for Greater Israel. Their attacks of what they term "political Islam" have generated protest and counterstudies from some Muslims: for example, AbulJobain's "The Western Pen: A Sword in Disguise?" and Bin Yousef's "Islamists and the West: From Confrontation to Co-operation" defend their view of Islam as comprising both religious and political aspects of life. They also lodge a strong protest against western scholars and members of the media have made Islam identical with terrorism (Bin Yousef and AbulJobain 1992).

John O. Voll (1991) made an extensive study of the *Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and the Sudan*. He hopes that, due to the fundamentalists' emphasis on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, religion and politics in both countries will not be separated. Moreover, the reliance on ijtihad ensures that the Islamic resurgence of 1970s and 1980s will be a continuous dynamism of Islamic tradition interacting with political, social, and economic developments. How-

ever, in the last part of his work, he warns that the regimes' oppressive measures toward Muslim "fundamentalists" will be counterproductive and even dangerous for the rulers if there is no provision made for restoring the democratic rights of the masses. He opines that the "fundamentalists" have been successful, to a greater degree, in Egypt and Sudan as regards the Islamization of politics and daily life.[3]

According to many western commentators, Islam and the West are on a collision course. Islam is a triple threat: political, demographic and socioreligious. For some, the threat is intensified by the linkage of the political and the demographic (Esposito 1992). For example, Patrick Buchanan seems quite concerned: "For a millennium, the struggle for mankinds' destiny was between Christianity and Islam; in the 21st century, it may be so again. For, as the Shiites humiliate us, their co-religionists are filling up the countries of the West" (ibid., 175). His uneasiness can be seen further in his complaint:

> Now, Islam is again resurgent. Clearly, Islam is in the ascent in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In the West, devout Muslims are having children, while in our secular societies, the philosophy of Planned Parenthood takes hold and the condom is king." (Ibid., 175)

Here, he sounds like a medieval religious minister who shows his worries without taking into consideration the fact that eastern parents have even more children in the East. He also has not considered the multicultural character of American society, in which every citizen can have as many children as desired, or that a large percentage (perhaps one-third) of Muslims in the United States were born in this country and represent the full spectrum of ethnic and racial origins. In addition, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States today (Haddad 1986). Almost the same has been said by David Barrett about Christianity's declining numerical strength. According to him, the world's Christian population has slumped from 69 percent in 1900 to only 45 percent in 1982. By 2050, the number is expected to decline to 38 percent (Momin 1987, 43).

It is, however, encouraging that some political scientists and journalists have warned against depicting Islam as an evil force or as a monolithic religion while many of their colleagues still pursue the

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[3] Ahmad Bin Yousef and Ahmad AbulJobain, *The Politics of Islamic Resurgence*: Through western Eyes, 8-43.

path of sensationalism. For example, Edward Mortimer (1982, 407), foreign affairs editor of the London-based *Financial Times*, writes:

Muslim attitudes towards non-Muslim powers are guided by experience . . . [They] are in some degree anti-American. Resentment against the West is probably more widespread in the Muslim world as a whole . . . because up to now more Muslim countries have had direct experience of western imperialism.

About the dynamic character of Islam, he says:

To identify religion with the status quo and to condemn change as irreligious is hardly peculiar to Muslims. It can be argued, indeed, that Islam is more adaptable than other religions to many kinds of change. The Koran appeals constantly to man's rational faculties. It urges him to seek knowledge. It contains no dogmatic account of the creation of the world or the nature of the universe which later scientific discoveries would have to challenge. Even in the political sphere, its insistence on righteous government and social justice and its sanctification of activism generally give more comfort to the revolutionary than to the conservative . . . . Islams' involvement with politics is much more fundamental and all-encompassing. The Muslims' duty is not merely to help the needy, but to build a good society in which God's law will prevail. (Ibid., 401)

About the overall concept of Islam and visualizing it in the historical perspective, Mortimer concludes that "[Islam] as an everlasting submission to God's will, in fact it could far more accurately be characterized as a permanent revolution" (ibid., 38). Regarding the present scenario in Middle East and Islamism, he opines that

[S]tatements or insinuations from European leaders or observers to the effect that Islam (or 'fundamentalism,' a term which is sometimes used almost synonymously) has replaced Communism as the main threat to the West are not merely baseless, but dangerous and even potentially self-fulfilling. (AbulJobain 1993, 10)

He not only opposes xenophobia, but stresses that democracy should be allowed to play its course in the Middle East. In an inter-

view, John L. Esposito, professor of religion and international affairs at Georgetown University and director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, commented on Christian-Muslim relationship: "I believe that the West is characterized more by a wave of a neocolonialism, and less by a reemergence of the Crusades." As for media perceptions of Islam, he states:

> Western coverage of Islam disregards the diversity, universality, and cultural richness of this religion, trying to distort the full picture, to include Muslim attitudes and activities. It places the entire faith within a single mass, implying that Islam is a monolithic, rigid entity. The tactics employed are selective, choosing only those aspects of Islam and Muslim life that comply with established stereotypes. As a result, western audiences continue to categorize Islam within a narrow framework and associate it continually with negative images. (Bin Yousef and AbulJobain 1992, 26)

The Muslim response to the West's deadliest weapon—"antifundamentalist" propaganda—has been diverse. Muslim intellectuals retaliated with counterarguments alleging that the propaganda was a conspiracy against Islam and the Muslim world, and the autocratic regimes in Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia used it as a lever to crush internal opposition forces struggling for democratic rights. The Israeli authorities and the Serbs tried to use it as a pretext to accelerate their anti-Muslim campaigns. They appealed to their allies—as if the Muslims posed a real danger. Rulers of some Muslim countries protested to the western press that they were not "fundamentalists" in order to avoid any misfortune associated with the "fundamentalist syndrome."

On the other hand, Rachid Gannouchi, one of the leaders of al Nahdah (the Tunisian Islamic movement), and his counterparts in almost all Muslim countries, criticized the West for patronizing autocratic regimes in the Middle East and for following double standards with respect to Eastern Europe and the Muslim world: "Bosnia, unlike Kuwait, does not contain precious oil wells that demand immediate, decisive western acts of bravery. Since no tangible spoils will be gained, the neofascist Serbian genocide of the Muslims will find no "lines drawn in the sand" (Gannouchi, 49).

As for the danger to western nations, Leon T. Hadar, who has served as a former bureau chief for the *Jerusalem Post*, a teacher at the American University School of International Service, and an adjunct scholar in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, says:

The danger for the western nations, in particular the United States, is that misperceptions will cloud their judgement of and produce counterproductive policies towards Islam and the Middle East. Instead of viewing Islam as a monolithic force, western analysts and policy makers should recognize that it is a diverse civilization, divided along cultural, ideological, religious, ethnic and national lines. Even the term "Islamic fundamentalism" should perhaps be modified to reflect the different movements and groups that are lumped into that category. Moreover, neither Islam nor Islamic Fundamentalism is, by definition, anti-western . . . [T]he anti-American attitudes of Islamic groups and movements in the Middle East are not directed against Christianity or western civilization per se. They are instead a reaction to U.S. policies, especially Washington's support for authoritarian regimes and the long history of U.S. military intervention. (Hadar 1992, 35)

Hadar stressed almost the same point when he criticized those who are searching for imaginary Muslim monsters:

Islam is neither unified nor a threat to the United States. Were America to let these phobias drive its foreign policy it would be forced into long and costly battles with various, unrelated regional phenomenon. In the Middle East, the principal battle ground of this struggle, it would place America in the position of maintaining a corrupt, reactionary and unstable status quo. In short, such a policy would run against the long-term interests of the peoples of America and the Middle East. (Hadar 1993, 27)

In a further elaboration, he writes that: "Far from being a unified power that is about to reach again the gates of Vienna and the shores of Spain, Islam is, in fact, currently on the defensive against militant anti-Muslim fundamentalists" (ibid., 31).

As mentioned by Gerrold D. Green (1992, 31), "ignorance cuts both ways." One region's ignorance of the other's realities and aspirations will harm both, and understanding the other's viewpoints will make the twain meet. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, it is in the interest of both East and West to embark on a new era of human relationship based on justice, morality, and mutual understanding. The world's scholars, policy makers, and politicians should adopt a common agenda for political and economic freedom for all nations as

well as the restoration of democratic rights and the right of self-determination for all nations and peoples. Only this agenda can restore humanity's shaken confidence in the United Nations. It is not out of place to remind those who think in terms of "Crusaders vs Jihadists":

> We, the adherents of the Abrahamic faiths (Jews, Christians and Muslims), are neighbors so interdependent that our livelihood, our prosperity, our happiness and security are extremely difficult—if not impossible—without mutual cooperation. This truth is for us self-evident. To deny it on the level of theory may be considered academically, but it does not interest us. For any of the three communities to deny it on the level of action is certain to lead to disaster for all. (al Fārūqī 1986, 88)

It is hoped that the unbiased study of Islam and the West's increased awareness of it will result in a better understanding between the Islamic and the western worlds. As regards mutual respect and tolerance between people of different religions, we read: "Say: O People of the Book! Come to an agreement on that which is common between us and you" (Qur'an 3:64).

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