

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

The Democratic Muslim State: A Possibility Theorem

Ranjit Sau

'The West has given us a particular form of modernity, it partakes of its history and points of reference. Another civilization can, from within, fix and determine the stakes in a different fashion. This is the case of Islam.' --- Tariq Ramadan.

orthopraxy (behavioral correctness) and defined 'correctness' in terms of economic transactions, thereby giving life to the Islamic economics, sustaining the umma. Wherever they were, whether as majority or minority, Muslims have to treat Islam as their way of life, in every aspect, not merely as a system of faith and worship.

For centuries, Islam had represented the greatest military power on earth. In the medieval period, between the sixth and fifteenth centuries, Islam was the leading civilization in world, with its great and powerful kingdoms, industries, commerce, creative science, and letters. Its geographical expansion came in three main waves of successively: Arabs, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks.

Since the eleventh century, after the conquest of Mongols, Persians, and Turkish armies, Arab lands had been controlled by foreign powers. Most of the region was ruled by the Ottoman Empire for centuries. By the late eighteenth century, as Ottoman power waned, European colonization set in, and for the next 150 years Arabia fell under the shadow of Western hegemony. It is a story of about one thousand years of foreign domination over Arab lands.

Now, Africa and the Middle East are in the midst of transformation articulated through people's protests and demonstrations against the autocratic regimes of, for instance, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. Causes of and factors behind this turmoil may be better understood in terms of three dimensions --- economic, social, and political, as people aspire for a descent life process, humane governance, and inclusive justice and law. An elementary question is: What are underlying contradictions, i.e. the internal and external conflicts that are to be addressed?

Contradictions

Yemen is the only state on the Arabian Peninsula to have a republic form of government --- a *presidential democracy* with a bicameral legislature. Under the Constitution, an elected President, an elected 301-seat Assembly of Representatives, and an appointed 111-member Shura Council share power. The President is the head of the state, and Prime Minister the head of the government.

The president is elected by popular vote from at least two candidates endorsed by at least 15 members of the Parliament. The prime minister is appointed by the President and must be approved by two-thirds of the Parliament. The Presidential term of office is seven years, and the parliamentary term of elected office is six years. Suffrage is universal for people of the age of 18 or older, but only Muslims may hold elected office. Ali Abdullah Saleh has been the first elected President of Yemen in 1999, and re-elected in 2006. Although the Parliament is elected, Mr. Saleh has an almost complete lock on power and at times he ignores laws the Parliament passes.

The text of *Sharia* is the prime source of Islamic law, with many court cases being debated according to the religious basis of law and many judges being religious scholars as well as legal authorities. The Muslim population is as follows: Sunni (52 percent) and Shia (46 percent).

Yemen is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Arabia, with 65 percent employment rate, *dwindling* natural resources, and *increasing* population. It has one of the world's highest birth rates; the average Yemeni woman bears six children. Although this is similar to the rate of Somalia to the south, it is roughly twice as high as that of Saudi Arabia and nearly three times as high as those in the more modernized Persian Gulf states. Yemen is still a largely *tribal* society.

In February 2011, a number of protests and rallies against the government occurred, and clashed with police and pro-government supporters. Mr. Saleh is a strong American ally, and the American Embassy in Sana has encouraged the protesters and the president to engage in dialogue --- a recommendation the demonstrators have so far refused. Yemen

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

has traditionally looked to Cairo for guidance and probably do so again. But the template of a successful Egyptian transition to democracy will prove harder to apply in Arab monarchies. These monarchies have been more resistant to change, although pressure is mounting against hereditary rulers from Morocco to Oman, and even in Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain had been familiar, in the antiquity, to the long-distance traders of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa --- as early as the times of Mesopotamian civilization. Indian copper was taken by sea to the island of Bahrain for exchange of commodities brought by a special group of traders. The patronage in the earlier period was from the great temples like that of Nammu at Ur, from whose stock the stores were obtained as well as finance. A good deal is known from the Babylonian end of insurance, risks, loans, division of profits as well as the monopolist *alik Tilmun* merchants of Bahrain. The Indian merchants exported cotton cloth, fine goat-wool cloth, and textile.

Bahrain, a tiny island, has a well effective civil society compared with other Gulf countries. It is a cosmopolitan trade hub and was the first of Gulf monarchies to develop oil in 1932. Its first modern school for boys opened in 1919 and its first girl school in 1928. It has practiced the principles of elected representation since 1926. Modern labour movement began in 1930s. The country won independence from England in 1971. Two years later an elected parliament was established, since the suffrage of women, and dissolved within two years by royal decree. Most of the thirty members were leftists or independents who had begun calling for land reform and questioned U.S. military presence which had come after the British left.

King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa promised reform when he came to power in 1999. He unilaterally made a constitution, and a parliament with 80 members of which 40 were appointed parliamentarians with greater powers than the 40 elected ones. In effect there was little trace of reforms.

Bahrain has a Shia (Shiite) majority with a Sunni kingdom. As the country's leaders struggled to hold back a rising popular revolt against their absolute rule and the royal family's discrimination against the Shiites in politics, employment, housing, and human rights, Washington's posture toward the Shiite majority which is spearheading the opposition, could prove crucial to future relation with this strategically valuable Persian Gulf nation. United States is torn by the desire to preserve relations with autocratic leaders and by the danger of further alienating Arab public opinion by failing to promote democracy. The royal family has long worried that Bahrain's Shiites could be agents of Iran, although demonstrators have emphasized their loyalty to Bahrain and their commitment to religious pluralism, chanting that Sunni and Shiite are one.

Troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) crossed into Bahrain on 14 March 2011 under the aegis of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, and Oman) to help quell unrest there, a move Bahrain opposition groups denounced as 'an overt occupation of the kingdom of Bahrain and a conspiracy against the unarmed people of Bahrain'. The protests are part of the regional turmoil against autocracy but are fed in Bahrain by tensions between the majority Shiite population and the Sunni royal family and elite. It has caused deep concern in Saudi Arabia which has a restive Shiite minority in the eastern, oil producing region.

The Khalifa family has ruled Bahrain for two centuries. Bahrain is home of the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet and a crucial American ally. The Obama administration has supported the Khalifa family through the unrest, in contrast to its effort to remove the leaders of Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt. It worries that Iran, which is overwhelmingly Shiite, could exploit the unhappiness of Shiites in Bahrain.

'We want a new constitution, fair and free elections and a government elected directly by people', Mohammad Mattar, an engineer and member of the Waad pro-reform movement, said. 'These are not sectarian demands, but political ones. We want a *constitutional monarchy*, a clear relationship between the ruling family and society. But the security forces are creating a sectarian divide'.

Saudi Arabia has many of the conditions that have led to the demonstration in Tunisia and Egypt --- the political and economic problems associated with a youth bulge. However, unlike other countries in the region it has considerable deeper resources and strategies that it can draw upon to stave off a serious threat in short term. The so-called 'Day of Rage' did not pass off on 11th March 2011, because the Shiites, about 10 percent of the population, gave willy-nilly a sectarian tinge to what otherwise could have been a national movement for reform.

King Abdullah is popular amongst his subjects. His family, the Al Saud, are numerous and deeply rooted; they have been ruling for more than three centuries, since at least 1740s. They have enormous means at disposal to co-opt the citizens and to provide jobs for young and restless population. The royal family has relied on a new social welfare package and religious persuasion. King Abdullah announced, in view of the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, 36-billion-dollar projects for social control that will provide unemployment assistance, offer more affordable housing for families,

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

and make pay raise for state employees. By mobilizing the official clerical establishment, the government is using religious justification to mute calls for demonstrations. Leading imams of the country's highest religious body are denouncing protests as un-Islamic. A week before the 'Day of Rage, cleric Saad al-Buraik called for 'smashing the skulls of those who organize demonstrations or take part in them'.

Over the last eight years the security forces have been scrubbed of those who were obviously sympathetic to Al Queda. Although more than 2,000 Saudis have signed three petitions calling for reform, Saudi Arabia's opposition groups have not overcome deep religious, regional, and ideological divisions that characterize the country's political landscape. Still, the Saudi leadership is clearly nervous. Saudi Arabia does not appear to go over the edge any time soon. However, there are increasing calls for change, like political liberalization, more elections at the local, provincial and national levels, and greater political participation. Should those reforms take roots, they could upend the status quo and lead toward the kind of turmoil now ongoing at the Middle East. As it continues along a carefully laid path of modernization, seeds of revolt may mature as easily as they could wither.

It is often said that loyalty to Wahhabism is deeply engrained in Saudi Arabia's conservative culture. But conformity to Wahhabi tenets are being enforced by the government in public places, taught in school, and upheld in religious courts. Would most Saudis behave the same way if they had choice? Support for Wahhabism does not necessarily amount to political loyalty. In fact, the historical effectiveness of Wahhabism in solidifying loyalty to the Saudi dynasty has weakened because of the proliferation of rival Islamic currents, like the Muslim Brotherhood which revived the potential for religious defiance doctrines since the 1920s. Saudi politics is influenced by a mix of religious and political ideas on the one hand and the economic distress, the youth bulge, and the impact of modern communication on the other. Recently the Saudi sphere of influence has retreated in places like Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and the Palestinian territories, and disappeared altogether in Iraq. Iran has been successful not only in dismantling Saudi regional hegemony but in also penetrating Arab and Muslim civil society. From the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hezbollah to the Muslim diaspora organizations in European capitals, Iranian influence is paramount.

No sooner than a convoy of 150 armed troop carriers and 50 other lightly armed vehicles crossed the bridge linking Saudi Arabia to the tiny kingdom of Bahrain, the Iranian government branded the move 'unacceptable', threatening to escalate a local political conflict into a regional showdown with Iran. 'The presence of foreign forces and interference in Bahrain's internal affairs will further complicate the issue. People have some legitimate demands and they are expressing those peacefully. We expect that their demands be fulfilled through correct means. It should not be responded to violently.' Iran's state-run media went so far as to call the troop movement an invasion.

So far, Saudi Arabia has successfully stifled popular protests with a combination of showing multi-billion-dollar social benevolence and the warnings from the foreign minister to 'cut any finger that crosses into the kingdom'. Its military adventure into Bahrain demonstrated that the Saudis were willing to back their threats with firepower. Saudi officials have made no secret of their deep displeasure with how the United States handled the ouster of Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, charging Washington with abandoning a longtime ally. They show little patience with the message about embracing 'universal values', including peaceful protests. Washington had so long looked upon Egypt and Saudi Arabia as two strategic allies in the Arab land. But now tension among them has intensified.

The narratives of Saudi Arabia, its adjacent Yemen, and Bahrain, and other Arab countries reveal a historical tendency. First, *economic* condition makes a difference between survival and decay of a country, between a descent life process and hardship of the people. For example, Saudi Arabia's rich monarchy dominates over centuries the nation while the poor suffer; the affluent autocrat of Libya holds on at least for the moment, but the less wealthy despotic regime of Egypt succumbs to the people's protests. Second, *religious* sectarian discrimination determines the economic and social ordering. Third, the youth are the harbinger of *progress*: a class or group 'which plays the leading role in the advance of a ... [society] in one period is unlikely to play a similar role in the next period, [because] it will be too deeply imbued with the traditions, interests, and ideologies of the earlier period to be able to adapt itself to the demands and conditions of the next period' (Carr, 1961: 154). These three forces --- economic, social (religious), and progress --- interact simultaneously.

The Economy: A Long Break

For four or five centuries --- from eighth to twelfth centuries --- Islam was the most brilliant civilization in the Old World. This 'golden age' lasted, broadly speaking, from the reign of Mamun, the creator of the House of Science in Baghdad (at once a library, a translation centre, and an astronomical observatory), to the death of Averroes, the last of the great Muslim philosophers, which took place at Marrakesh in 1198.

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

By about AD 750, Islam had largely attained its greatest geographical extent. Throughout the Empire, a vast economic system took root and bore fruit. It established a market economy, a money economy and a progressive commercialization of agricultural goods, not all of which were consumed on the spot, the surplus being sold in towns and adding to their general prosperity. This enterprising economy explains the development of numerous industries --- iron, wood and textiles (linen, silk, cotton, and wool) --- as well as the enormous spread of cotton-fields in the East. 'Capitalist' is not too anachronistic a word in this context.

All this activity had countless repercussions. The money economy shook the foundations of a society comprising mainly of lords and peasants. The rich became richer, and arrogant; the poor became poorer still. The growth of irrigation techniques increased the demand for peasant slaves. Warriors had sunk into the delight of wealth and luxury, otherwise known as civilization, which the iconic historian Ibn Khaldun, an Arab nobleman from Andalusia, later described as 'evil personified'.

In the twelfth century, after quite extraordinary triumphs, 'Saracen' civilization was suddenly checked. Even in Spain scientific, philosophical and material progress barely continued after the last decade of the century. The suddenness of this change poses a number of questions. Why did not Islam have the resilience to produce a second 'golden age'?

Timur Kuran, in his book, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*, poses the question --- Why the modern economy took shape in northwestern Europe and not the eastern Mediterranean. The typical answer would contrast western flexibility with Muslim rigidity. The Islamic world failed to free itself from the fetters of religious custom. Islam opposed innovation, it is often claimed, so the Muslim social structure resisted adaptation and advancement.

Many Arabs think that Western colonialism was the cause of the region's economic backwardness. Based on the data of ancient business records, Timur Kuran argues that what held the Middle East back wasn't Islam as such, or colonialism, but rather various secondary Islamic *legal* practices. For example, one impediment was inheritance law. Western systems most commonly passed all property intact to the eldest son, thus preserving large estates. In contrast, Islamic law stipulated a much fairer division of assets (including some to the daughters), but this meant that large estates fragmented. As a result, private capital accumulation faltered and could not support major investments to usher in an industrial revolution. Islam partnership was a vehicle for businesses. But partnerships dissolved whenever any member died, and so they tended to include only a few partners --- making it difficult to compete with the European industrial and financial corporations backed by hundred of shareholders.

A scripture of great importance in the Middle Eastern daily life was the *Sharia*, also known as the *Islamic Law*, which covered all human activity, including commerce and finance. Kuran's theory of the 'Long Divergence' rests on the premise that it was the lack of *institutions* such as banks, and share or bond markets that hindered economic advancement of the Arab world: it is said that the doctrines of Sharia had prohibited the use of such business devices, in the first place.

But, how did the Sharia do it? The four sources of Sharia are: Koran, *Sunna*¹ of the Prophet; *Isma*², and *Quyas*³. Over one hundred and fifty years after the death of Mohammad, the legendary Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid, encouraged systematic anthology of the traditions set by the Prophet and his companions, which were to be emulated by the believers in order to acquire the interior attitude of perfect submission. This literature is given the name of the *Hadith* and the *Sunna*. Four legal schools ---Hanafi of Iraq, and Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali of Syria --- wrote the Sharia, during the eighth and ninth centuries. By the tenth century, in the closing years of the Arab Empire, the ulema decreed that the composition of Sharia was complete, Islamic law would no longer require further elaboration of fresh principles and rules by the process of *Isma* or *Quays*, the ulema proclaimed. This event is remembered as the closing of the *gates of Ijtihad*⁴ i.e. the suspension of independent juristic reasoning. The Gates of Ijtihad have remained closed ever since, and the believers obeyed the Sharia as a divine message, immune of any further elaboration or adaptation irrespective of social, economic or political situation (An-Naim, 1996: 19-29).

How did the Sharia come to spread so overwhelming influence? The Abbasid caliphate witnessed two somewhat inconsistent developments both of which were results of deliberate policy. On the one hand, the Abbasids implemented religious achievements through the state machinery, thus removing the gulf which had largely separated religion from the Umayyad state; on the other hand, they hastened the process of the intellectual awakening of Islam by officially patronizing wholesale translation of Greek philosophy, medicine and science into Arabic. The pure intellectualism that resulted from this activity reacted on the religion of Islam and produced the famous rationalist

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

movement of the Mutazila. The leaders of Muslim orthodoxy, representing the old tradition, at first suffered at the hands of this rationalist movement. But gradually, the orthodox ulema brought all education under their control.

The ulema --- (singular: alim): the learned men, the guardians of the legal and religious traditions of Islam --- able to enforce and realize unity of mind and bring about a cohesiveness of the Muslim community. The mainstay of this entire system was Sharia, the Islamic Law, backed by dogmatic theory. Sharia dominated the entire outward life of Muslims; and this system, more than anything else, made for Islamic solidarity, despite tremendous differences in the cultures of the lands through which Islam continued to spread throughout the medieval times. Since Sharia comprehended all facets of human life and individual, social and political conduct, it ensured the unity of the Muslims even after attacks of the Mongols who sacked Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate, in 1258 (Rahman, 1979: 4-5).

Among the scholars, role of the *historical* Sharia in Islamic public law is a controversial subject. An-Naim (1996: 34) argues that 'so long as Muslims continue to adhere to the framework of historical Sharia, they will never achieve the necessary degree of reform which would make Islamic public law workable today.' Tariq Ramadan (2004: 34-35, 79, 80) accepts the Koran and the Sunna as sources of Islam. To him, the historical Sharia is 'the work of human intellect', hence not a store of divine command.

In the matter of Islamic practice, Koran is the authentic point of reference because the rites are sacred and not subject to human intervention. In the wider area of human and social affairs the established methodology is the exact opposite: everything is permitted except that which is explicitly forbidden by the text. Thus, the scope of exercise of reason and creativity is immense, and people have complete discretion to experiment, progress, and reform as long as they avoid what is forbidden. The basic, inviolable core of timeless principles consists of three doctrines relating to respectively: faith, practice, and spirituality. The first and most important element of Muslim identity is *faith* --- faith in the oneness of God. It is the purest expression of the essence of Muslim identity beyond time and space. It is naturally embodied in religious *practice* (prayer, *zakat*, fasting). Closely connected with these two realities (viz. faith, and practice) is the fundamental dimension of *spirituality*, which is the remembrance of God. In a word, the timeless three elements of Muslim identity and culture are: monotheism; the practice of prayer, *zakat*, and fasting; and the remembrance of God. This is ordained in the scripture. Beyond this, reason has its full freedom, in the perception of Ramadan.

Economic underdevelopment of Arabia in the medieval times may be better explained as a consequence of *internal* colonialism. In 1243, the Mongols overran the Seljuk army in Anatolia, but the Mongol power itself proved ephemeral, lasting in Asia Minor for a mere generation, leaving an opening for the Turkmans. Fighting among themselves the tribal leaders established and ruled over some ten ghazi principalities. One of these, the principality of Osman, was destined to grow into a great power, the Ottoman Empire founded in 1299, to endure under his dynasty for more than six centuries. The accession of Suleiman to the Ottoman caliphate in 1520 coincided with a turning point in the history of the European civilization. The darkness of the late Middle Ages, with its dying feudal institutions, was giving place to the golden lights of the Renaissance, to be followed by the sweep of the Enlightenment. Suleiman had been acknowledged with manifold appellations: the lawgiver, the magnificent, the Ottoman Prince of the Renaissance. He was himself an enlightened caliph-sultan, yet he could not take his empire to the road towards Enlightenment and democracy.

Military Theocracy: The Turkmans had shared with the Mongols the same wilderness of the Mongolia, wherefrom they migrated west. Between the two tribes, a lot more was common: descent, manners, and ethos. The law code of the Mongol Empire, Yasa, was attributed to Genghis Khan himself. It was a narrow military system. The Turkish Ottoman state adopted the Mongol Yasa. The military spirit pervaded all spheres of the empire: economic, social, political. 'Every labor was servile except the profession of arms' (Gibbon, 1788: 1333) Agriculture, industry, commerce were unbecoming of Muslim pride, but meant for inferior others, the infidel.

The Ottomans adhered to the ethos of their old ideal, seeing themselves as manning a frontier state, dedicated to the jihad against the enemies of Islam. As the dominions inevitably approached their limits, addition of territory slowed, the soldiers missed their pays, the economy collapsed, as if in an encore of the Arabs' fate, discussed above. This military theocracy guided itself by the principle of 'government by God', much as it was with the Byzantine Empire. Over it, through the medium of a highly organized bureaucracy, the sultan exercised his absolute rule. As one appointed by the Almighty, he and he alone was the supreme temporal and spiritual authority. The Janissaries, being converted slaves, were outsiders with no landed interests, became an independent force solidly behind the sultan. Their fortune too would fluctuate with imperial procurement of territory.

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

Since Osman's times, Muslims alone were obliged to join the army, and thus were alone eligible for the tenure of land. It was distributed as a reward for service and provided a source of recruitment in the form of military fiefs, free of taxes. Feudal though it was, this Ottoman system of land tenure through military fiefs differed essentially from the feudal structure of Europe, in that land holdings were small and above all seldom hereditary. For all land was the property of the state. Thus at this stage, there was to arise in Ottoman dominions no landed nobility, such as prevailed throughout Europe. The sultans retained absolute ownership of the soil they had conquered. Moreover, as they continued to conquer, more holdings became available as rewards for more soldiers. Within the framework of this system Orkhan organized a regular standing army, a professional military force on a permanent war footing, of a kind not to be found in Europe for a further two centuries. The Ottoman army was now ever ready, never to be caught by surprise.

For long, the distribution of land had remained decentralized, administered by provincial governors. This led to abuses in the form of frequent and irresponsible changes in the ownership of land, which had already become a general practice. This in turn infringed the prerogative of the sultan, who in theory, as God's representative, was the owner of it all. Suleiman centralized the transfer of large fiefs, that must be now referred for approval to the central government in Istanbul, otherwise to the sultan himself. Local governors, however, retained their assignment to handle the cases of small fiefs only. The flaw in Suleiman's land reforms would soon become evident. As time passed, the allocation of large fiefs depended less on the justice of claims to them than on palace intrigues and corrupt dispense of favors. There grew up a new class of big landlords who were often officials, courtiers, and servants of the palace and indeed often from outside it, moreover as a rule absentees living in the cities. By corrupt means it became possible for a single person to accumulate any number of fiefs, and build up a big landed property.

These absentee landlords promptly ran their private estates as ranch for raising horses and livestock, and thus drastically altered the traditional agrarian pattern of land use throughout Anatolia. Peasants lost land, in desperation flocked to the cities for a living. Famine stalked the land. The economy faltered. The agrarian arrangement and the military theocracy of Ottoman Empire did not allow the rise of landed or urban classes who could have upheld universal human dignity and freedom. Thus the prospect of the Enlightenment and democracy was foreclosed. The 'Athens syndrome' revisited: the more the believers tried to purify their piety, the more derided and deprived felt the slaves and the women.

Suleiman would be remembered as a magnificent lawgiver. He sought not to create a new legal structure, but to bring the old up-to-date, adapting the laws generally in line with the new conditions of new times, and an immensely enlarged empire. He at once specified, codified, and simplified a confused system of custom and practice. This he did building still on the two main foundations of Ottoman government: (a) the ruling institution, namely, the secular and executive establishment; and (b) the Muslim institution, namely, the religious and legislative establishment. United beneath the apex of the sultan's absolute rule, they represented, in terms of their functions, a rough equivalent of the Western distinction between the state and the church.

Suleiman skillfully got the ulema co-opted into the fold of his administration. Sharia received a more exalted status than in any previous Muslim state, and it became the official law of the land for all Muslims. The Sharia courts were given a regular form. The ulema thus turned into an official government corps, creating a moral and religious link between the sultan and his subjects. As government officials, the sultan could, and did, control them by threatening to withdraw their subsidies. Thus, under the Ottoman Empire, the ulema would become emasculated; deprived of their political edge, they became conservative and opposed any change. The ulema's influence with the people covered major sectors of Ottoman society, making them resistant to the idea of change at a time when change was inevitable.

After Suleiman's reign, the curriculum of the madrasas became narrower: the study of Falsafah was dropped in favor of greater concentration on *fiqh*. While the caliph's court was still open to new ideas coming from Europe, the madrasas became the centre of opposition to any experimentation that had derived from European infidels. The ulema opposed, for example, the use of printing for Islamic books. Left behind in the old framework, the ulema would become unable to help the people when Western modernity swept the shores of the Muslim world. After the death of Suleiman in 1566, the Ottoman Empire would limp on for over three centuries to be a casualty at the rampart of World War I.

In his book, *The Long Divergence*, Timur Kuran laments the paucity of economy-friendly institutions in Arabia when the Western economy began to move forward full-speed. He blames the rigidity of Islamic law for economic backwardness of Arab lands at the medieval times. Tariq Ramadan has a different view of this phenomenon. He says the historical Sharia was a man-made device, not a divine rule. It was the ulema who closed the Gates of Ijtihad thereby

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

ossifying Sharia within one century after it was written by four groups of jurists. The economic underdevelopment was basically a result, not of the historical Sharia as such, but of the prevalent socio-political folly.

'The instrument for deriving law and other social institutions, called *quays*, i.e. analogical reasoning, was not perfected to the requisite degree. The imperfection and imprecision of these tools was due, in turn, to the lack of an adequate method for understanding the Koran itself. There was a general failure to understand the underlying unity of the Koran, coupled with a practical insistence upon fixing on the words of various verses in isolation. Laws were often derived from verses that were not at all legal in intent' (Rahman, 1982: 2-3). The laws of Sharia were affected negatively. Appropriate comprehension of the methodological principles of interpretation --- the science of hermeneutics --- is necessary to understand the Koran in its totality and thereafter to formulate the laws of Sharia.

Society, Community, Umma

'To be free is nothing, to become free is heaven itself'. --- Fichte.

Freedom in Arab History: Arab Islamic history provides both actual and practical experience of particular significance in the matter of freedom and its opposite, coercion. The fields of jurisprudence, ethics, logic, and scholastic theology (*kalam*), the philosophy of Sufism and the open social space claimed by nomads and tribes, strongly indicate the presence of the concept of freedom in the Arab Islamic historical experience. Jurisprudence links the validity of acts to freedom. Ethics and theology link legal obligation to responsibility, to individual free will and human choice with regard to divine will. There were, however, differences in how this relation was perceived, as demonstrated by the dialects of the Jabriya, Qadariyya, Mutazila, and Ashaira. Nomadic way of life was a symbol of 'breaking free from all contrived fetters', of 'unimpeded life', of 'space for living' and 'space for action'. Sufism is a personal, spiritual experience where the Sufi breaks away from external constraints, and pressures --- nature, society, the State, and legislation --- and experiences absolute freedom outside the realm of natural and man-made laws, away from oppression and slavery.

Text of the Holy Koran stresses: 'There is no compulsion in religion' (2: 256); 'You have your own religion and I have mine' (109: 6), 'God has the Most Excellent Names. Call on Him by His Names' (7:180) --- thus allowing the free practice of religion and belief in the land of Revelation, particularly among the Jews, Christians, and Sabians. In literary and cultural circles, debate on religion and articles of faith between Muslims and Christians were free and rich, and it extended to other creeds and school of thought.

The historic period of the great Arab renaissance (third and fourth Hijra centuries, i.e. ninth and tenth centuries AD) witnessed obvious expression of moral, social, and cultural freedom representing 'the age of liberation', the renaissance of the time. Economic freedom manifested itself through the recognition of property rights, free trade and profit making, sometimes on the basis of a 'text', and sometimes driven by the very logic of economic and daily activities. Economic activities in Arab Islamic history reflect a *capitalist* economic pattern. This was solidified by the expansion of the Islamic state to include vast territories whose prosperous economic relations were firmly based on the rule of freedom.

Freedom in the modern sense of the word was introduced into Arab culture after contact developed between modern Arabs and Europe, particularly France. The Egyptian scholar Rifaa al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) was the first to refer to the idea of freedom to connect it with 'justice and equity' in the Islamic heritage. He considered freedom a condition *sine qua non* for the progress and civilization of the nation. His Moroccan contemporary, Ahmed bin Khalid al-Nasseri, however, declared that 'the notion of freedom invented by the *ferenji* (foreigners of French) is, undoubtedly, the work of heretics.' Khyr al-Din al-Tounsi (1825-1889) associated freedom with a number of related rights and referred to personal freedom, political freedom, and citizen's participation in managing the affair of the State as well as freedom of press. Throughout the twentieth century, Arab culture represents a strong desire, a vital need, a major demand, and a powerful slogan promoted, most notably, by the proponents of 'free thought' as well as those of 'national independence'. The call for freedom seemed to represent a break with the past among the individuals, groups and parties that sought it; it was an aim to be pursued for the sake of life itself and for the future.

Freedom from an Islamic perspective, at first glance, would appear that contemporary Islamic thought is not particularly connected with the question of freedom in its practical sense, concentrating, essentially, on the old question of whether human actions are the doing of God or man. The Islamic thinkers defend and justify their thesis that Islam guarantees freedom of opinion. They show that the text of the Book and the Sunna 'recognize freedom of opinion' and that 'political freedom is but a branch of a bigger and more general origin' (AHDR, 2004: 56).

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

In the 1950s, the notion of Arab nationalism came to be embodied in political movements and in regimes as in Bathism in Syria and several neighboring countries, and Nasserism in Egypt. These movements made freedom one of their basic tenets. In fact, it is one of the three cornerstones of Bathism credo (unity, socialism, freedom), and a major element of democracy in Nasserism. Yet, the 'revolutionary' nature of the movements and the surrounding conditions of international, regional and local struggle and conflict made the leaders of those movements postpone implementing the principle of freedom in favor of other principles: Arab unity in the party's ideology (Bathism) and socialism in Nasserism.

'The majority of Arab thinkers today are moving in the direction of renaissance which combines the principle of freedom and justice with the additional principle of social and economic development, although they may differ as to which principle should come first. This trend should be entirely compatible with an Arab order of good governance of humane nature, based on freedom, creativity, justice, welfare, dignity, fairness and the public good' (AHDR, 2004: 58-61).

Towards Freedom in the Arab World: 'The individual is free only in a free society within a free nation' (AHDR 2004:8). The Arab region is hampered by three key deficits that can be considered defining features: the *freedom deficit*, the *women's empower deficit*, and the *human capabilities/knowledge deficit* relative to income. The issue of freedom can be seen in several perspectives: its dimensions, legal and political structures, its regional and international, and the future vision. The scope of the concept of freedom ranges between two poles. The first is the 'narrow' definition that restricts freedom to civil and political rights and freedoms. The second is the 'comprehensive' definition: it incorporates not only civil and political freedoms, including freedoms from oppression, but also the liberation of the individual from all factors that are inconsistent with *human dignity*, such as hunger, disease, ignorance, poverty, and fear.

Freedoms in Arab countries are threatened by two kinds of powers: (a) undemocratic regimes, and (b) tradition and tribalism, sometimes under the cover of religion. These twin forces have combined to curtail freedom and fundamental rights and have weakened the good citizen's strength and ability to advance.

The Political Architecture: --- The modern Arab state, in the political sense, runs close to this astronomical model, whereby the executive apparatus resembles a 'black hole' which converts its surroundings social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes. This increasing centralization of the executive is guaranteed in the constitutional structure of certain states, which vests wide power in the head of state. The latter becomes the supreme leader of the executive, the council of ministers, the armed forces, the judiciary, and public services.

In addition to the absolute powers of the executive body, there are additional mechanisms that increase the concentration of power in its hand. For example, the so-called ruling parties (where they exist) are, in reality, simply institutions attached to the executive, since party officials (or electoral candidates) are designated by the president, who is also regarded as the party leader. In practice, this means that the parliament is a bureaucratic adjunct of the executive that does not represent the people whose mistrust in it continues to grow.

Further more, the executive uses the ordinary and exceptional judiciary to eliminate and tame oppositions, rivals and even supporters who step out of line. This is linked with what is known as 'unspoken corruption' where close supporters are allowed to exploit their positions for unlawful gain, while 'enforcement of the law' against them remains a weapon to ensure their constituting and total loyalty.

The key support buttressing the power of the executive is the intelligence apparatus, which is not responsible to the legislature or to public opinion, but is directly under the control of the president or king and possesses powers greater than those of any other organ. The security apparatus has substantial resources and intervenes in all the powers of the executive, particularly in regard to appointment decisions and legal regulation of associates, to the point where the modern-day Arab state is frequently dubbed 'the intelligence state'.

Arab states vary in their embodiment of these general traits, particularly in the margin of freedom that is considered unthreatening. However, what they have in common is that power is concentrated at the tip of the executive pyramid and that the margin of freedom permitted (which can be swiftly reduced) has no effect on the state's firm and absolute grip of power. Some regimes now bolster their legitimacy by adopting a simplified and efficient formula to justify their continuation in power. They style themselves as the lesser evil of two evils, or the last line defense against chaos and the collapse of the state. This formula is what some have dubbed 'the legitimacy of blackmail'.

The 'legitimacy of blackmail' has been eroded by the growing realization that the absence of any effective alternative is itself one of the outcomes of the politics that block all avenues of political and civil activity, and so prevent

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

other alternatives from materializing. Hence, the survival of 'the black-hole State' has become more dependent on control and propaganda; on marginalizing the elites through scare-and-promote tactics; on striking bargains with dominant global or regional powers; and on mutually supportive region blocs to reinforce the status of the ruling elites against emerging forces.

The Social Structures: --- The crisis in political structures is reflected in Arab societal structures that consist of embedded links in an interconnected chain constricting freedom. Starting with the child's upbringing within the family, passing through educational institutions, the world of work, and societal formation, and ending with politics --- both internal and external --- each link in the chain takes its portion of freedom from the individual and delivers her or him to the next, which, in turn, steals a further share. 'The most important limit to *human development* is early infant development; other theories of morality (Kant, Bentham) start with beings that are fully developed morally and practically'.

In varying degrees, the family, the primary unit of Arab society, is based on *clannism*, --- the authoritarian paternalist system and the family --- which implants submission, and is considered the enemy of personal independence, intellectual daring, and the flowering of a unique and authentic human entity.

Clanning flourishes, and its negative impact on freedom and society becomes stronger, whatever civil or political institutions that protect rights and freedoms are weak or absent. Without institutional supports, individuals are driven to seek refuge in narrowly based loyalties that provide security and protection, thus further aggravating the phenomenon. Tribal allegiances also develop when the judiciary is reluctant or the executive authority is reluctant to implement its ruling s, circumstances that make citizens unsure of their ability to realize their rights without the allegiances of the clan.

Once children enter school, they find an educational institution, curricula, teaching, and evaluation methods which tend to rely on dedication and instill submissiveness. This learning environment does not permit free dialogue and active exploration and consequently does not open the doors to freedom of thought and criticism. On the contrary, it weakens the capacity to hold opposing viewpoints and to think outside the box. Its societal function is the reproduction of control in Arab societies.

For all its deficiencies and flaws, education, particularly at the higher levels, remains a vital source of knowledge, enlightenment, and leavening for the forces of change. Even so, outside the academy the world remains harsh on the young. After a student graduates, and when fate or chance ends the period of unemployment, s/he steps onto the lowest rung of a rigid, restrictive hierarchy, especially if the job is with the civil service.

If the repressive situation in Arab countries today continues, intensified social conflict is likely to follow. In the absence of peaceful and effective mechanism to address injustice and achieve political alternation, some might be tempted to embrace violent protest, with the rise of internal disorder. Disaster can be averted.

The Umma: One of the most important acts with which Prophet Mohammad began his life in Medina was the writing a missive --- the *Constitution of Medina* --- in which he formally set out the relationship between Muslims and others in Median society. This is probably one of the earliest documents in history to appraise the relationship between government and people on the basis of citizenship, rather than any discriminatory basis --- religion in this case (AHDR 2004:62).

The umma of Madina comprised of eight Muslim tribes and an equal number of Jewish tribes. Article 25 of the *Constitution of Medina* reads: 'The Jews of Banu Awf are a community (umma) along with the believers [Muslims]. To the Jews their religion (*din*) and to the Muslims their religion' (Article 25). Article 37 commands: 'It is for the Jews to bear their expenses and for the Muslims to bear their expenses. Between them is sincere friendship and honorable dealing, not treachery' (Watt, 1956: 221-23). The Constitution of Medina, written in year 622, is an epitome of religious freedom, human dignity, equity, if not a sign of democracy.⁵

Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimun) is the biggest and the most powerful religious organization of Egypt. Hassan al-Banna founded the Ikhwan organization in Egypt in 1928, with the aspiration of resurrecting the office of the Caliphate in order to restore the world of Islam in its pristine glory, that is, as it was in the seventh-century Medina. So convincing is its faith that Brotherhood has spawned offshoots in Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Libya, and Somalia in Africa; Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine in the Levant; across the Gulf States and further afield in places such as Pakistan.

The single most influential writer in the Islamic tradition, at least among the Sunni Arabs, is recognized to be Sayyid Qutb of Egypt. Qutb of was born in 1906, the same year as Hassan al-Bunna. In 1959 he enrolled in the Muslim

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

Brotherhood (though al-Banna had been assassinated by then). And Qutb became the movement's leading thinker --- the Arab world's first important theoretician of the Islamist cause. Gamal Abdel Nasser and a group of other military officers overthrew the Egyptian king, announced a nationalist revolution along Pan-Arabian lines, and turned to the Brotherhood for popular support. Nasser's Revolutionary Council and Qutb's Muslim Brotherhood did not go along. The strongest affirmation of Qutb was: 'There is no God but Allah'. Nasser jailed him several times. In 1966, Qutb was hanged.

The son of al-Banna, Said Ramadan, was an ideologue of his father's organization, persecuted and exiled from Egypt for forty-one years until death. His doctoral thesis, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity* (Cologne University, 1959), presented a synthesis between, (a), the fundamental positions of Hassan al-Banna on the subject of the Sharia, and law, and, (b), political organizations, and *religious pluralism* --- a manifesto of eternal open-mindedness, never once the slightest sanction of violence. Said Ramadan rejected the idea of 'an Islamic revolution.'

A former professor of philosophy and Islamic studies at the College of Geneva and at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, and now at Oxford, Tariq Ramadan, is revered by some as 'a Muslim Martin Luther,' also named among the *Time's 100* most important innovators for the 21st century. *Washington Post* (29 August 2004) considered his book, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, as 'perhaps the most hopeful work on Muslim theology in the past thousand years.' Tariq is the son of Said, and the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the grandfather who had founded and nurtured the Muslim Brotherhood in the first place. It is, at this juncture, worth listening for the Arab people and the rest of the world what Tariq Ramadan has to say about Islam and the Muslim society. The palpable evolution of Islamic thought within so short a period as three generations --- from the al-Banna and Qutb era, to the age of Said Ramadan, and then to the times of Tariq Ramadan --- is a meaningful development. It shows that there is a dynamics of religious conceptions across times, space and experience. 'The totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs, from the most causal matters of geography and history of the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even of pure mathematics and logic, is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges. Or, to change the figure, total science is like a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience' (Quine, 1980: 42).

'True Muslims' are those, according to Sayyid Maududi, who merge their personalities and existence into Islam. They subordinate all their roles to the role of being Muslim. But, he laments, only a few were completely immersed in Islam. The others, in his estimate, were but 'partial Muslims;' they led lives that had no touch of religion whatsoever. Their likes and dislikes, daily transactions, business activities, and social relations had nothing to do with Islam, being based on personal considerations and self-interest. By relegating the faith mostly to the private domain of life, they had weakened their community and fueled the ascent of infidels.

Muslims perform two categories of piety, namely, orthopraxy (behavioral correctness), and orthodoxy (doctrinal correctness). Traditionally, Islam had insisted more on orthopraxy than on orthodoxy. As a case in point, the regular recitation of sacred texts was generally considered more important than comprehension of their meaning. Even in non-Arab lands, the call to prayer and the prayers themselves were almost always in Arabic, a language few understood. Contemporary Islamists consider Ataturk's directive that the call to prayer in mosques of Turkey be in Turkish, rather than Arabic, an attack on Islam itself; the directive was rescinded after Ataturk's death. It is significant that no major Islamic language has a word meaning orthodox.

It was in the ritual of orthopraxy that Maududi would find a way to identity formation. He anticipated the thesis on 'religious privatization': as in the West religion got pushed from public to private domains, it became less of an influence on individual religiosity and lifestyles. Now, aware of this negative impact of religious privatization, Maududi proceeded to bring the religion into open. With the advance of capitalism, market penetrates every sphere of one's life, including home. Choices are to be made in respect of job, daily shopping, investment, retirement, and so on. What else could be a more conspicuous platform than economic activities where one's identity can be displayed regularly and prominently, drawing the recognition of fellow believers and repelling *infidel* contamination? Should one's economic transaction be bestowed with Islamic virtue and Arabic authenticity, it would be a combination of Islam and economics, in short, Islamic economics.

To day, the umma is an imagined community of millions of Muslims spread all over the world, at the moment with little or no interconnection. Now the common idioms of Islamic economics will facilitate improving mutual understanding, and as they interact more with one another, minimizing their relations with outsiders, less vulnerable will they be to the *pollution of mind* by other cultures. Islamic economics will thus be instrumental for *cultural separation*.

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

The umma, with Islamic economics, will be a unified common market of all Muslims. By contrast, Timur Kuran insists: 'Although there exists Muslims who favor cultural isolation and protectionism, they do not speak for the rest.'

The early history of Islam would shed light on, Maududi continues, how to sanctify economic activities. Sufism had arisen in the eighth and ninth centuries in parallel with, and in protest to, the *Sharia* which was considered by some believers to have reduced Islam to a set of purely exterior rules. In order to correct that trend, Sufism strived to reproduce within man that state of mind and heart which made it possible for Mohammad to receive the revelations in the first place. It was man's interior-*islam* that ought to be the true foundation of law, not the dictates of professional jurists. Sufism thus aimed high. Among several scholars, Al-Gazzali (d. 1111) was most successful in reconciling the *Sharia* with the interior-*islam*. He showed the inner, sufistic meaning of canonical duties which are binding on every believer of the faith. Through his theology, all *Sharia* rules about eating, sleeping, washing, hygiene and prayer --- apparently every mundane chore of daily life --- were given a devotional and ethical interpretation, so that they were no longer simply external directives, but enabled believers to cultivate their perpetual consciousness of the divine. *Sharia* became a way of achieving the interior-*islam*. Maududi followed Al-Gazzali's path.

Citing the imperative of orthopraxy, Maududi advised Muslims that they needed to make a point of keeping their religiosity continuously in public view. In every domain of activity, they had to be conscious of how their behaviour differed from that of others, making themselves easily distinguishable as Muslims. Economic functions are carried out mostly outside home. Therefore, it could serve the cause of heightening Islam's visibility. For example, if Muslim traders were to follow Islamic contracting procedures, and if Muslim consumers were to make choices in ways distinctly Islamic, then as a result Islam would gain salience, enabling new generations to grow up in an environment where Islam appeared highly relevant to everyday decisions. Bringing economics within the purview of religion was central, then, to Maududi's broader goal of defining a self-contained Islamic order. If work enjoyed religious meaning, and work and worship were perceived as a continuum, the modern Muslim would have a unified personality, rather than a bifurcated one.¹¹ In effect, Maududi invoked the ritual of

These dictums of Maududi have little correlation with the verses of the Holy Koran: 'Had God pleased, He could have made you one community; but it was His wish to prove you by that which He has bestowed upon you. Vie with each other in good works' (5:49). 'Wherever you are, emulate one another in good works' (2:148). It's a universal doctrine of peaceful co-existence, and competition, neither isolation nor protectionism. One of the earliest statements of the modern economics has been revealed in the Koran. 'You shall sow for seven consecutive years, leave in the ear of the corn you reap, expect a little which you may eat. There shall follow seven hungry years which will consume a little of what you stored. Then will come a year of abundant rain, in which people will press the grape' (12:47). This verse narrates how the economy functions--- you sow, wait for the production process to run its course, meanwhile you survive on your savings, and finally a bounty comes forth in the form of output.

Here is another Koranic verse, it refers to dairy farming, horticulture, industry, and medicinal effects of certain products of nature. 'In cattle too you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink: pure milk, pleasant for those who drink it. And the fruits of the palm and the vine, from which you derive intoxicants and wholesome food. Surely in this there is a sign for men of understanding.' 'Your lord inspired the bee, saying: "make your home in mountains, in the trees, and in the hives which men should build for you. Feed on every kind of fruit." From this belly comes forth a syrup of different hues, a cure for men. Surely in this there is a sign for those who would take thought' (16: 65-69). This verse clearly indicates that investment in the cultivation of bees is an important branch of the economy. It also implies that investment has productivity, a real return in the shape of output. This is a remarkable aspect of the economy which enables you to reap more than what you sow.

Some families store their savings as jewelry of gold, silver or precious stones. Such an act is known as hoarding. Unlike making beehives or sowing for crops, hoarding does not bring any return; it remains as it is without producing anything extra. But hoarding is unproductive. The Koran does not approve hoarding: 'To those who hoard up gold and silver, --- proclaim them a woeful punishment' (9:35). Here is a sign for you to invest wealth in productive agriculture, horticulture, and industry. This is 'Islamic economics', if you will.

Economic achievement of Arabs in the Middle Ages is less impressive in comparison with their military prowess. One of the factors behind economic underdevelopment is relatively excessive expenditure of resources to conquest of territory and less consideration for economic production. To maintain a vast empire has been, always in history, rather costly. For centuries, Arabs had eked out their inadequate resources by means of ghazu raid, i.e. ambush. But Islam had put a stop to this practice because the tribes of the umma were not permitted to attack one another. What

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

would replace the ghazu which had enabled Muslims to scratch out a meager living? The second caliph, Umar, who succeeded the first caliph Abu Bakr, realized that the umma needed order. The unity of the umma would be preserved by an outwardly directed offensive, thereby avoiding domestic turmoil. Under Umar's leadership the Arabs burst into Iraq, Syria and Egypt, achieving a series of astounding victory. Caliph Umar thus perhaps unwittingly inaugurated an unprecedented episode of Muslim conquest: ghazu, an age-old desert venture that Abu Bakr had used to divert rebels' attention away from the umma, now turned into a state policy of empire building. Soon, the Islamic law, Sharia, would come to bestow upon it religious sanctity.

The extension of ghazu abroad as a means of buying domestic peace has its own peril. As a source of financing imperial expeditions, it has a limit. Once launched, it tends to press for its own continuance; then, if stopped, the empire would fall into economic crisis. Absent the cultivation of internal economic provision, the imperial momentum may not run for long. Each annexation of territory brings in its trail further commitment of expenditure, for new troops are to be recruited, trained, stationed in distant garrison towns, and provided with supply; hence more ghazu abroad. It is compulsively self-propelling project, subject to a forced termination only by a decisive failure at the battlefield on foreign shores.⁶

Democratic Muslim State

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, founded in 1932, was based on the Wahhabi ideal. The official view was that a constitution was unnecessary, since the government is based on the literal reading of the Koran. But the Koran contains very little legislation and it had always been found necessary in practice supplement it with more complex jurisprudence. The Saudis proclaimed that they were the heirs of the pristine Islam of the Arabian Peninsula. And the ulema, reading out the Sharia, granted the state legitimacy; in return, the kings enforced conservative religious values. Now, in protest, Ramadan (2001:51) challenges: 'There exists, very explicitly, a contradiction in terms between dictatorship and the application of the Sharia'.

Women were shrouded from the view and secluded, even though this has not been the case in the Prophet's times, and traditional punishments such as the mutation of thieves, are enshrined in the legal system. Most Muslim states and organizations do not consider that fidelity to the Koran requires these pre-modern penal practices. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, from the very early date condemned the Saudi's use of Islamic punishments as inappropriate and archaic, especially when the lavish wealth of the ruling elite and the unequal distribution of wealth offended far more crucial Koranic values (Armstrong, 2002: 161-62).

Reading the Holy Text: 'Surely in these there are signs for thinking men' (13:3); 'Surely in this there is a sign for prudent men' (16:15); 'We give signs only by way of warning' (17:16); 'Surely in that there are veritable signs' (23:29).

The Koran was revealed at a *given moment of history*, in a *certain context*, and presented first to the *intelligence* of women and men of faith. The Revelation of a Book, or a Text, would have no meaning if intelligence, human reason capable of grasping its meaning were not taken for granted. There can be no revealed Text unless there is *human intellect* up to the task of reading and interpreting it.

The Koran includes various kinds of teaching. The verses can be classified into two categories: some are about the *absolute* principles which are eternal, unchangeable; the others contain *relative* principles which change depending upon the material context. The former set of verses lay down Muslim rites and practices: prayer, fasting, and so on. In this case, the Text calls the mind to look beyond space and time, and to orient itself towards the Almighty. The second group of verses is quite different in nature, dealing with social matters which are transient (Ramadan, 2004:21).

For the first thirteen years of his mission, between 610 and 622 AD, the Prophet was instructed by the Koran to propagate Islam in and around Makka through exclusively peaceful means in accord with the principle of complete freedom of choice. Thus, verse 16:125 of the Koran instructed the Prophet to 'invite [all people] to the faith of your lord with wisdom and good preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: For your Lord knows those stray from His path and those who are guided ones.' Verse 18:29 also instructed the Prophet to 'tell [them] that is the truth revealed by your Lord; let them who wishes to believe do so, and he who wished to disbelief do so.' Numerous other verses of the Koran of the Makka period instructed the Prophet in similar manner.

A distinction between the messages of the Koran in the Makka period and those of the Madina period has been observed by the scholars of Islamic thought. The message of Makka emphasized the fundamental values of justice and the equality and inherent dignity of all human beings. For example, the Koran during the Makka period always addresses the whole of humanity, using phrases such as 'You children of Adam', and 'You people'. Moreover, all humankind was

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

described in terms of honor and dignity, without distinction as to race, color, gender, or religion. Thus in verse 17:70, God tells how He has 'honored the children of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; giving them food and pure things of substance, and preferred them over many parts of Our [His] Creation.' This is a *universal* perspective of reading the Book.

The content of the message shifted with the Prophet's migration to Madina⁷ to become more specifically addressed to the Muslims as a community of believers who were authorized by the Koran to use force, first in self-defense and retaliation for the injustice done to them by the unbelievers, and subsequently spreading the domain of the Muslim state. The overlap between the two stages of Makka and Madina led to a gradual rather than abrupt change in the content of the message. The Makka and Madina texts of the Koran differ, not because of the time and space of revelation, but essentially because of the audience to which they were addressed' (An-Naim, 1966: 53-57). This analysis provides the second view-point from which to comprehend the Holy Koran. This perspective is in terms of *universal*, and *selective* (the 'believers' in this case).

Third, there is a multiplicity of comprehensions of the Book within the Muslim community. 'It is essentially the *ways of reading* the Koran that distinguish the various trends of thought among Muslims, both Sunnis and Shiis' (Ramadan, 2004: 22; italics added). Beyond the dualistic and simplistic divisions set up between the 'extremists' and 'moderates', it is a diversity of intellectual capabilities and the degrees of accrued knowledge about logical argument that exert fundamental influence on the reader's conception of the message. The diversity of readings exists with circumstantial divergences, across the Sunni as well as the Shii traditions, and they are more or less representative and entrenched deeply on the continents, religion, or country. 'Here we have a key that allows us ... to understand the differences, the justifications, and the *possible points of convergence among the various lines of thought*' (italics added). Based on this finding, Ramadan seems to be confident about the *necessity* for the Muslims of various traditions to communicate with one another and work out the logic and reasons of difference of their understandings of the Book. This study of Ramadan suggests that under the circumstances there is a *necessity* for the Muslims to communicate among themselves their various traditions, and to arrive at a common ground for peaceful social coexistence. This by itself is, however, not yet *sufficient* for the Umma.

Reading the Sharia: Sufism, the mysticism of Sunni Islam, seeks God in the depths of *human beings* rather than in current events. By the early ninth century it had become synonymous with the mystical movement that was slowly developing in Abbasid society. Sufism was also a reaction against the growth of jurisprudence, i.e. Sharia, which seemed to some Muslims to be reducing Islam to asset of purely external rules. Sufis wanted to produce within *themselves* that state of mind that made it possible for Muhammad to receive the revelation of the Koran. It is this *interior islam* that was the true foundation of law, rather than the *usul al-fiqh* of the jurists. Where established Islam was becoming less tolerant, seeing the Koran and the Sharia as the only valid scripture of Muhammad's religion as the only true path Sufis went back to the spirit of the Koran in their appreciation of other religious traditions as well (Armstrong, 2002:74).

'As long as Muslims continue to adhere to the framework of the *historical Sharia*', Abdullahi An-Naim (1996:34) says, 'they will never achieve the necessary degree of reform which would make Islamic law workable today'. Muslim scholars have attempted to confront the challenges of Western domination and influence through an assertion of an Islamic identity since the mid-nineteenth century. In that tradition, the recent and contemporary proponents of Sharia have proposed their models of a modern Islamic state as the basis for the fulfillment of the right of Muslims to self-determination. An-Naim thinks: 'these Sharia models will create extremely serious problems in practice'.

Of particular interest in the present context is the principle of *Naskh* (a process of the abrogation or repeal of the legal efficacy of current verses of the Koran in favor of other verses). The principle of Naskh is accepted by the vast majority of Sunni jurists and schools of thought and is clearly at the foundation of many principles and rules of Sharia. As a matter of Sharia, an abrogated or repealed verse of the Koran was to remain abrogated to maintain consistency. From that point of view, positive Sharia law developed on the basis of the *subsequent* revelation of the Madina period may amount to abrogating *apparently* inconsistent revelations of the earlier Makka period⁸. Given such a matter of complexity, An-Naim (1996: 21) wonders: Is it possible for contemporary Muslims to *reconsider* the process of abrogation? Is it permissible to take verses that have been previously abrogated as the new basis of Islamic law and to that end deem the previously enacted verses to be *abrogated* from the legal point of view? It is imperative to do so if we are to resolve the problems raised by the modern applications of the Islamic law --- the Sharia.

Reading Science: The Muslim community had bypassed the flairs of Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and modernity. Ramadan now unequivocally urges the Muslims to produce a true intellectual revolution in the sense

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

intended by Kant when he spoke of the Copernican revolution.⁹ 'When the Renaissance, humanism, and Reformation worked together in the West to start the process of secularization and to set free the power of reason that has become more and more autonomous and scientific, Islamic civilization seemed to freeze. Grippled by the ethical teaching of Islam, increasingly incapable of renewing the dynamic link between the moral frame of reference and the autonomy of reason, and feeling that they are in danger vis-a-vis the dynamism and expansion of Europe, the ulema were bound to the supreme authority of religion and preferred to sacrifice 'the other knowledge' [i.e. natural science], rather than the norms of religion.' 'Behind this sustained nostalgia and idealized dream a deep malaise lies hidden, because we do not know, we no longer know, how to reestablish the connection between religion and science such that religion's ethical teachings give science a dignified finality [status] without perverting its implementation or impeding its advances.'

Now, to explore how to reestablish the connection between religion and science, one could do it virtually by comprehending the universal messages of the Makka period of the Prophet as opposed to his subsequent contemplation on the Madina state. Distinction should be made, in the case of the society of Madina, between the fundamental principles on which it was established (e.g. the rule of law, equality, freedom of conscience and worship) on the one hand, and the form in which that society historically appeared, on the other. Faithfulness to principles cannot involve faithfulness to a particular historical model, because times change, societies and political and economic systems become more complex, and in every age it is in fact necessary to think of a model appropriate to each social and cultural reality. For example, although the principles of democracy are identical, the models of democracy in Europe and also in the United States vary widely.

Finally, 'Muslims must engage, within their own areas of competence in groundbreaking specialization in all areas of contemporary knowledge, and far from being intoxicated by that knowledge and changing it into a new idol of modern times, they must make their contribution to the ethical question that it raises.' The scientific challenges facing the new Muslim presence that seeks to act from within, not from the margins of society and science, are to master the rule and methods of the various humanities and pure sciences, to discuss hypotheses and applications, and to put forward new perspectives. And at the same time, they must have 'knowledge of the West, its history, and the social, cultural, political and economic dynamics that constitute what one may call its specialty.' All this would involve full participation in *democracy*. Once the Muslims imbue democratic freedom and the knowledge of natural and social sciences, their worldview might change substantially, an anxiety once expressed by the medieval ulema'.

When Will 'It' Be?

Maghreb, in Arabic, means 'where and when sun sets'. It includes Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, all part of both Africa and Arabia. Proximity to Europe in physical map, colonial history, and economic ties, renders the Maghreb a special neighbor of Europe. It is this region where the Arab world's recent political upheaval first began --- Tunisia.

Four Maghrebi countries gained independence from their colonial masters in the 1950s and 1960s. All of them made major headway in economic and social development since then. All suffered under absolute monarchy. And all had rampant *unemployment among the youth* (above 20 percent). They could not keep up with their growing population.

In 1950s Egypt, the populist President Gamal Abdel Nasser began the practice of subsidizing daily bread in exchange of social peace, loyalty from the society. By the late 1970s, Western powers pressed upon Arab countries, in the name of economic prudence, to stop the 'subsidy burden'. Cairo's 'bread intifada' was followed by eruption of protests across the region: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Jordan whenever rulers tried to lift food subsidies. For the next three decades the United States provided Egypt with 4.6 billion dollars of loan and grants to facilitate buying cheap American wheat. Iraq of Saddam Hussein, Jordan, Yemen, and many other Middle Eastern countries were not deprived of foreign largesse. For the US it was a small price to pay for keeping friendly dictators in power. Many Arab regimes neglected their agricultural sectors. And the cheap wheat came at high cost to the Middle East: *Unemployment*.

A poll conducted by the AHDR-2002:30 reports that the most common concern of youths was job availability. Remarkably, 61 percent of order youths expressed a desire to emigrate to other countries, clearly indicating their dissatisfaction with current conditions and future prospects in their home countries. The younger group expressed slightly less of a desire to emigrate, with 45 percent indicating their wish to do so.

On the other hand, 'Some Arab countries, especially in the Gulf, have also become home of substantial expatriate population, reflecting a combination of the oil boom and domestic labor shortages. The number of foreign workers in the six Gulf countries increased five-fold from 1.1 million in 1970 to 5.2 million in 1990. By 1990, foreign nationals constituted over two-thirds of the population in the Gulf States. In Saudi Arabia, non-Saudis accounted for 25

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

percent of the 1999 population' (AHDR-2002:36). In a word, the middle-class youths of Arabia are not yet capable to withstand competition for top-level jobs, while they are not inclined to accept low-rank services. They are in the midst of a dilemma.

This narrative tells us at least two things. One, a democratic state has to be self-reliant in economic output, and equitable in distribution of the national income among all citizens. Second, a state is not an isolated island, but a living organization closely surrounded by foreign powers perusing their own national interests. A democratic country needs, for its existence, independent social, economic, and political strength.

The internal landscape of Muslim society is uneven, if not sometimes volatile. 'There is no longer any need for me to use violence against those who gave us our freedom and allowed us to be part of political life', said Abboud al-Zomor --- the former intelligence officer who supplied the bullets that killed Precedent Anwar el-Sadat. 'The ballot boxes will decide who will win at the end of the day'. In its drive to create a perfect Islamic state, his Islamic Group was once synonymous with some of the terrorist attacks in Egypt. But recently released after a long confinement in jail, Zomor is now leaping around the democratic bandwagon, alarming those who believe that religious radicalisms are seeking to put in place strict Islamic law --- the Sharia --- through ballots. He and other Salafis, or Islamic fundamentalists, rhapsodize about founding political parties and forging alliance with more mainstream Muslim Brotherhood to maximize the religious vote.

The Salafi movement is inspired by the puritan Wahhabi school of Islam that dominates Saudi Arabia, whose grand mufti churned out a fatwa condemning the Arab uprisings, as a Western conspiracy to destroy the Islamic domain. But, an array of philosophers exist under the Salafi umbrella, ranging from apolitical groups that merely rhapsodize on the benefits of being a good Muslim to the Al Qaeda. The Salafi model is based on medieval Islamic caliphates where minorities were protected but had to pay a tax for the privilege, and were barred from the military and many government posts.

In seventh-century Iraq, the Mutazilites dominated the intellectual scene and continued its influence for about another century. They developed a rationalist theory (*kalam*) which emphasized strict unity which the integrity of the umma was supposed to reflect. Mutazilites, in congruence with the view of Quadarites, stressed the *freedom* of human will, and the *equality* of all Muslims. And they provided a very open framework and way of reading the scriptural sources. Some thirteen centuries later, much the similar rationalist idea emerged in Europe through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which it turn, gave rise to the liberal 'rationalist' Islamic thought.

The liberals were the defenders of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's secularization project in Turkey, for example, and the complete separation of the religious arena from the ordering of public and political life. In the West, the supporters of liberal reformism preach the integration/assimilation of Muslims. They do not insist on the daily practice of religion and hold essentially only its spiritual dimension, lived on an individual and private basis, or else the maintenance of an attachment to the culture of origin (Ramadan, 2004:27).

Thus, the dialectics of 'thesis' and 'antithesis', between fundamentalism and liberalism, has historically come into action. A 'synthesis' of the two is expected sooner or later. In the case of Christianity a similar process was observed. Luther nailed his ninety-five reasoned theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on the morning of October 31, 1517. The Reformation began. One hundred and fifty years bloody years later, almost half of Europe was Protestant. Finally, 'the clash between Catholicism and Protestantism illustrated the old maxim that religious freedom is the product of two equally pernicious fanaticisms, each canceling the other out' (Zakaria, 2003:41-42).

The largest concentration of Muslims are to be found in a broad belt extending from North and West Africa, through the Middle East, and Central Asia to South and Southeast Asia. The Arab world is an important part of the world of Islam --- its heartland; but only a small part of the word of Islam in numerical terms, less than a quarter, i.e. 22 percent, of the global Muslim population. The Middle East is surrounded by the Western and the Eastern democratic countries. Some Muslim countries --- a *Muslim country* has, by definition, at least 70 percent of its population professing Islam --- are on the road of democracy, or already there. Some are doing well. Among Arab countries, Lebanon, with its profusion of religions and sects, has long had a democracy of a kind, albeit by sectarian quotas and an armed militia, Hizbullah. Iraq has at least elected a genuine multiparty parliament. Outside the Arab world, in Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia, Islam and democracy are cohabiting fairly comfortably. Many devout Muslims among the Arab protesters, including members of the Brotherhood, cite Turkey as a model: theocracy does not appeal to the youngsters on the Arab street.

Concluding Remarks

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

At first the Arabs, who had no experience of imperial government, relied on the expertise of non-Muslims who had served Byzantine and Persian regimes. But gradually the Arabs began to oust the *dhimmis* from top posts. By the next century, the Umayyad caliphs conquered an empire. It transpired that absolute monarchy was the only effective way of governing a pre-modern empire with an agrarian-based economy, and that it was far more satisfactory than a military oligarchy, where commanders usually compete for power.

The Umayyad caliphs governed a vast empire, which continued to expand under their rule. In order to preserve peace the caliphs had to become absolute monarchs too. There lay a *dilemma*. On the one hand, the empire called for absolute monarchy, but on the other, how would monarchy cohere with the radical *egalitarianism* of the Holy Koran? The Sharia, completed by the ninth century, resolved the stalemate: religious rites were so organized as to make the believers concentrate on the practice of faith, while the monarch would perform his job sitting on the throne --- one man so privileged that rich and poor alike were vulnerable before him.

At the moment at least three strong forces are active in Arabia: (a) external --- interests of the Western powers; (b) internal --- frustration of the jobless youths; and (c) internal --- conflicts among religious demands. These three may determine together the possibility or otherwise of achieving democracy.

(a) Most Muslims live in the southern hemisphere in conditions which are often pitiable. As many as 85 percent of the 1.5 billion faithful are poor, and 60 percent are illiterate. Almost all countries with a Muslim majority are under the yoke of dictatorship or regimes which do not know the changeover of political power. Monarchies, bourgeoisies and military despoil the wealth of their population by making them pay the cost of their lifestyle, and of heavy expenditures in armaments or for strategic alliance. Everywhere the people suffer from injustices of governments that, for the majority, have chosen repression as a means of interior policing, terror and torture in jails, or summary executions. Acknowledging this situation in Muslim countries the priority is to mobilize energies in order to free Muslim countries from their oppressors.

Western capitalism is now under considerable stress, it requires expanding global markets to sell its products. Capitalism, 'by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all nations into modernity. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the *capitalist* mode of production. In a word, it creates a world after its own image'.¹⁰ Capitalism would now do the same with Arabia, as people's revolution proceeds.

An increasing number of people will be needed to take part in various scientific and industrial projects. As more of the workers become literate and skilled, they demand a grater share in the decisions of government. If a nation wanted to use all of its human resources to enhance its productivity, it had to bring groups who had hitherto been segregated and marginalized. Religious differences and spiritual ideas must not be allowed to impede the progress of society. 'The key is not to begin with religious freedom, but political and economic reform. The entire emphasis on transformation of Islam is misplaced' (Zakaria, 2003: 150).

In history, the key to making Christianity, for instance, compatible with modernity was not to get the church to suddenly accept liberal interpretations of theology. It was to modernize economy and society until the churches had to adapt to the world around them.

(b) Throughout the Islamic world in the 1970s and 1980s urban population grew, in part due to migration to the cities. The impetus provided by the oil price hikes faded in the 1980s; but population growth was a continuing motor force. The proportion of youth (that is, those fifteen to twenty-four years of age) in major Muslim countries rose significantly and began to exceed 20 percent of the total population. In many Muslim countries the youth bulge peaked in the 1970s and 1980s; in others it will peak early in the twenty-first century. For years to come Muslim population will be disproportionately young populations, with notable demographic of teenagers and people in their twenties. In addition, the people in this age cohort will be overwhelmingly urban and have at least secondary education. This combination of size and social mobilization has significant political consequence.

(c) Muslims perform two categories of piety, namely, orthopraxy (behavioral correctness), and orthodoxy (doctrinal correctness). Traditionally, Islam had insisted more on orthopraxy than on orthodoxy. As a case in point, the regular recitation of sacred texts was generally considered more important than comprehension of their meaning. Even in non-Arab lands, the call to prayer and the prayers themselves were almost always in Arabic, a language few understood. Contemporary Islamists consider Ataturk's directive that the call to prayer in mosques of Turkey be in Turkish, rather

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

than Arabic, an attack on Islam itself; the directive was rescinded after Atatürk's death. It is significant that no major Islamic language has a word meaning orthodox.

'Each apostle We have sent has spoken only in language of his own people, so that he might make his precepts clear to them' (14:4). 'We have revealed the Koran in the Arabic tongue so that you may grow in understanding' (12:1). 'Had We revealed the Koran in a foreign tongue they would have said: "If only its verses were expounded! Why in a foreign tongue, and he an Arabian?"' (41:43). 'We have revealed the Koran in the Arabic tongue that you may understand its meaning' (43:1).

Language is perhaps the most distinctive and defining element of human society. The Arabic language is the distinctive feature that distinguishes the Arab identity. 'The teaching of Arabic suffers from an acute crisis, both in curricula and methodology. The problem of teaching the Arabic language is not detached from the state of classical Arabic at large. This language today is no longer the 'language of conversation'. It is rather the language of reading and writing and their manifestations (religious sermons and political, administrative or social addresses). Moreover, it is the language of the educated and intelligentsia. It is not a vehicle of discovering one's inner self or outer surrounding. The problems of classical Arabic starts when one enters school, where it is taught as a concept or an independent subject' (AHDR-2003: 125).

The content of orthopraxy is essentially a model of rote memorization. Today, only one-in-five native Muslim speak Arabic, i.e. eighty percent of Muslims do not.¹¹ Injunction of the Prophet is that the believers should have access to read and comprehend the scriptures in their own tongue (12:1; 14:4; 41:43; 43:1). Evidently, nowadays an overwhelming majority of Muslims are deprived of that opportunity.¹²

Of the three forces cited above, the first two --- (a) external pressure from Western powers, and (b) internal youth movement --- are likely to help move Arabia in the direction of capitalism and socio-economic change. The third one --- insistence of theological dogma --- might press along a contrary path. This contradiction reflects a historical dialectics of thesis and antithesis that tends toward a stalemate or a synthesis. This is a stylized theoretical exercise subject to historical and local factors.

Human beings are engaged in two elementary activities, namely, propagation of the species, and production of the means of subsistence, conducted respectively at two sites: family, and factory. Families get together to make a *society*; factories to organize an *economy*. In order to administer them, a *polity* comes into existence. These three branches of our social existence--- society, economy, and polity --- have their laws of motion. Polity is agile and flexible; economy moves slowly; society is lethargic. They are, however, interconnected and interdependent; together they constitute a system which is governed by certain rules. What might be to the advantage of one branch of the system may not be compatible with the all three; and vice-versa. In history, once the polity and the economy step forward, society -- culture, tradition, thought --- comes to join the movement in tandem.

Notes

[1]. *Sunna* is a collection of writings about the habits and religious practice of the Prophet Muhammad, recorded by his companions and family, so that Muslims can approximate closely to the archetypal figure of the Prophet, in his perfect surrender (*islam*) to God.

[2]. *Isma* is the 'consensus' of the Muslim community that gives legitimacy to a legal decision.

[3]. *Quyas* means analogy: inference that if two or more things agree with one another in some respects they will probably agree in others.

[4]. *Ijtihad* means exercising independent juristic reasoning to provide answers when the Koran and Sunna are silent.

[5]. In Madina, relations between Muslims and Jews, however, deteriorated by year 628. 'To suggest that Mohammad was unaware of the wealth of the Jews would be a serious underestimate of his intelligence. To make this sole reason, however, for his attacks on the Jews is to be unduly materialistic. The wealth of the Jews was certainly of great benefit to him and considerably eased his financial position, and the prospect of financial betterment may have influenced the timing of his attacks on the Jews. But the fundamental reason for the quarrel was theological on both sides. The Jews believed that God had chosen them especially, Mohammad realized that his prophethood was the only basis of Arab unity. As so often happened in the history of the Middle East, theology and politics were intermingled' (Watt, 1956: 220).

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

[6] In this story of self-compelling nature of the ghazu regime, students of economics might have seen a sort of multiplier-accelerator process at work. Let Y denote the territorial size of the empire, C the consumption demand for subjects' subsistence and maintenance of the military, and I the investment demand on account of the military, all measured in territorial unit. And a , and m are parameters. The model has three equations: (1) $Y = C + I$; (2) $C = aY$; (3) $I = m \cdot (\text{annual change in } Y)$. It generates an exponential growth path of Y at a constant rate over time which shows the dynamic equilibrium of the empire. The system will decline and fall as soon as it hits a constraint on the supply-side, i.e. the ghazu campaign to capture territory is defeated. Let subscript t stand for time. The three equations of the model can be rewritten as follows: $Y_t = C_t + I_t$; $C_t = aY_t$; and $I_t = m \cdot (Y_t - Y_{t-1})$. Growth rate is defined as follows: $g = (Y_t - Y_{t-1})/Y_{t-1}$. From these equations it follows that $g = s/(m - s)$, where $s = (1 - a)$. For illustration, suppose that $s = 0.2$ and $m = 4.2$; then $g = 0.05$. It means the territory of the empire must increase every period at the rate of five percent. This is a demand-driven model assuming that supply adjusts to the demand; in other words, new territories are made available by conquest. In case supply falls short of demand, the empire would become bankrupt --- soldiers would not get their pay, bureaucrats will be deprived of their share, and so on. The empire would collapse.

[7] 'The verses of the early suras [i.e. revealed in Makka] are charged with an extraordinarily deep and powerful 'psychological moment'; they have the character of brief but violent volcanic eruption. A voice is crying from the very depth of life and impinging forcefully on the Prophet's mind in order to make it explicit at the level consciousness. This tone gradually gives way, especially in the Madina period, to a more fluent and easy style as the legal content increases for the detailed organizational and direction of the nascent community-state. This is the certainly not to say either that the voice had been stilled or even to say either that its intensive quality had changed: a verse [of the Madina period] declares. ... But the task itself had changed. From the thud and impulse of purely moral and religious exhortation [in the Makka period], the Koran has passed to the construction of an actual social fabric' [in Madina], (Ramadan, 1979: 30).

[8] The abrogation or repeal of some verses and 'enactment' of others was not done, of course, by a formal legislature, but the results were the same as formal repeal and enactment in the modern sense of these terms.

[9] The orthodox theory of the universe ascribed to Ptolemy was that the earth was at rest in the centre of the universe, while the sun, moon, planets, stars, all heavenly bodies, revolved round it, each in its own sphere. According to the new theory, named after Copernicus (1473-1543), the earth, far from being at rest, has a twofold motion: it rotates on its axis once a day, and it revolves round the sun once a year. While it was thought that the sun and moon, the planets and fixed stars, revolved once a day about the earth, it was easy to suppose that they existed for our benefit, and that we are of special interest to the Creator. The Copernican theory would erase that delusion of man. It became increasingly difficult to believe that such a remote and small planet as the earth could have exceptional importance in the cosmos of innumerable galaxies. So long, man in traditional theology had shined in the reflected glory of the earth. Now, mere considerations of scale suggested that perhaps we were not the purpose of the universe. And, if we were not the purpose of the universe, it probably had no purpose at all. Copernicus thus brought a revolution in our thinking (Ramadan, 2004: 53).

[10]. This statement is an abridges quotation from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1872.

[11] The number of native speakers of Arabic is: 320 million, but total Muslims population in the world is: 1,500 million. So, only 21 percent of Muslims speak Arabic.

[12] The Old Testament of the Bible was originally formed in Hebrew Scriptures; the New Testament in common Greek. In the year 404-405 it was rendered in Latin. Such a copy came into England in the late sixth century. From then on it was translated into Saxon and Gaelic, native tongues of the British Isles. The Bible was rendered into English in 1382, and elsewhere into local tongue. Hermeneutics --- the methodological principles of interpretation of scriptures --- enabled the Christians to practice orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy with fuller comprehension.

Bibliography

Listed are all references indicated in the text as well as those whose influence is present in the text although not referred to directly.

AHDR-2002 (*Arab Human Development Report*): *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, New York: United Nations, 2002.

Islam and Muslim Societies

- a social science journal

- AHDR-2003: *Building a Knowledge Society*, New York: United Nations.
- AHDR-2004: *Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, New York: United Nations.
- AHDR-2005: *Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, New York: United Nations.
- An-Naim, Abdullahi Ahmed, 1990: *Towards an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Armstrong, Karen, 2002: *Islam*, New York: The Modern Library.
- Braudel, Fernand, *On History*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Carr, Edward, 1961: *What Is History?*, New York: Random House.
- 2004: *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Gibbon, Edward, 1737-1794: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, abridged by Hans-Friedrich Muller, New York: The Modern Library, 2005.
- Koran*, translated by N. J. Dawood, New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Kuran, Timur, 2011: *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Quine, Willard, 1980: *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rahman, Fazilur, 1979: *Islam*, 2nd ed., Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- 1982: *Islam and Modernity: Transforming of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Ramadan, Tariq, 2001: *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity*, The Islamic Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland: www.IslamicBookstore.com.
- 2004: *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sau, Ranjit, 2004: *Reason, Passion, and Power: Some Notes on Iraq*, Kolkata: K P Bagchi.
- 2005a: 'Modernity, Islam, and 'A Triple Liberation'', *Islam and Muslim Societies*, 1(1), University of Lucknow.
- 2005b: 'Freedom, Justice, Human Dignity: An Arabian Quest', *Islam and Muslim Society*, 1(2), University of Lucknow.
- 2006a: 'Rise and Fall of the Muslim Empires', *Islam and Muslim Society*, 2(1), University of Lucknow.
- 2006b: 'Economic Growth in the Theory of Islamic Economics', *Islam and Muslim Society*, 2(2), University of Lucknow.
- 2009: *The Foundation of Democracy in India*, Kolkata: K P Bagchi.
- Watt, W. Montgomery, 1956: *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zakaria, Fareed, 2003: *The Future of Freedom*, New York: W. W. Norton.

(Ranjit Sau is retired professor from IIM, Calcutta, Email: ranjitsau@gmail.com)