

Muslim Democrat

www.islam-democracy.org

Published by the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), Washington, D.C.

Volume 4, No. 2, July 2002

In This Issue:

- 1 *Muslims Are Huge Fans of Democracy*
- 2 *CSID Conference on Democratization & Political Violence*

- 4 *Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations*

- 5 *USIP-CSID symposium on Islam & Democracy*

- 6 *Western Democracies and the new anti-semitism*
- 7 *Call for Abstracts: CSID Workshops in Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon*
- 8 *The Difficulty of Extremist Groups in Adapting to Changes*

Muslims love Democracy

by Dr. Siraj I. Mufti
CSID Member

In the post-September 11 generated atmosphere, many in the West and especially the politicians, accused Muslim societies that they hated democracy and rejected Western political values. Recently a survey conducted in nine predominantly Muslim countries has blown this myth to shreds. This survey was conducted by two political science scholars, Pippa Norris of Harvard University and Ron Inglehart of the University of Michigan (<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris.shorenstein.ksg/ACROBAT/Clash.pdf>).

The survey as reported by the Washington Post, on April 28, 2002, shows that “many Muslims are huge fans of democracy - and may even be slightly more gung-ho about democratic values than citizens of Western countries.” Thus Norris concluded that “the basic ideas of democracy are virtually universally accepted around the world” and in Islamic countries it is viewed as “the only game in town.”

Nowhere else in the world is this observation more clearly evident than in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the last general elections held on June 8, 2001 long queues of men, women and the young waited for hours and the polling booths had to be kept open until midnight for voting. Of a total population of 65 million and 42 million electorate, 67% turned out - exhibiting a phenomenal participation by any criterion. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000, Robin Wright admits that the driving force behind the revolution of 1979 “has proven durable and in the end adaptable enough to allow Iranians to go out and get for themselves”, i.e. get empowered. And that this process has contributed “to the spread of public empowerment around the world.”

The revolution particularly excelled in imparting public education. She states, “in the late 1970s, only half of Iran’s youth between the ages of six and twenty four was literate; two decades later, the number had grown to 93% - even though the population itself had doubled. Students also remained in school longer. The number of university graduates soared from 430,000 in the late 1970s to more than 4 million in the late 1990s. “The numbers are especially astounding for females. Last year, young women secured 60% of the places in the universities and, at present, 20% of the university staff is women.

Wright also acknowledges that Iranian women are politically active. Iran has a 270-seat parliament: in 1996, 200 women ran for its seats and 14 won. In 1999, 5,000 women ran in local elections, and 300 won. In 1997, four women ran for the presidency. Currently, there is a woman vice president, a member of cabinet, a political advisor to the president, one deputy

Continued on Page 7

Democratization and Political Violence in Muslim Societies

On April 6-7, 2002, the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID) held its Third Annual Conference on the theme “Democratization & Political Violence in Muslim Societies” just outside Washington, DC, at the Sheraton Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Scholars of Islam and social and political sciences from around the world attended the conference to discuss the situation of the Muslim world with regards to politics, religion, violence and the relationship with the West.

“We are... inviting the best minds of the Muslim world,” said CSID executive director Radwan Masmoudi, while introducing the lunch banquet’s keynote speaker, Tariq Ramadan, a well-known scholar based in Geneva. Speakers came from 10 different countries, including Canada, Nigeria, Turkey, Germany, France and the U.K, as well as several universities and cities around the country. The central thrust of many of the lectures focused on what the Muslim world needed to do; both to develop its own societies and to reduce the political violence that has so damaged its reputation.

The conference got off to a lively start on Saturday morning with Panel One, the theme of which was “Islam & Political Participation: Ideals, Actors, & Processes” and which was chaired by Charles Butterworth of the University of Maryland, College Park. Two lecturers in the first panel used the example of the four caliphs who succeeded Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in leadership of the Muslims at the inception of Islam to prove that democratic methods of succession and governance were necessary for the Muslim world and in line with Islamic teachings.

Asma Afsaruddin of the University of Notre Dame explored links between early



Laith Kubba, Akbar Ahmed, and Ali Mazrui were keynote speakers at the dinner banquet

Islamic discourse of the Khulafa’ al-Rashidun era and modern Islamic conceptions of leadership. “Muslims should indeed make a habit of studying their history” to reenact the principles of Islamic governance, said Afsaruddin, explaining that the four “Rightly-Guided Caliphs” sought to win the people’s support, by the example of moral excellence, and did not impose their will upon their followers. “The historical record clearly belies the assertions” of those who say Islam and democracy are incompatible, she said.

Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad of the Minaret of Freedom Institute focused on the cases where democratic decision-making in government enhanced law and order in early Islamic history. Ahmad described how an “anti-correlation” between democratic governance and political violence at the time of the same four Caliphs suggested the necessity of democratic methods in Islamic governance.

Wanda Krause of the University of Guelph, Canada, discussed the underestimated role played by non-governmental political actors in the Middle East. Moataz A. Fattah of Cairo University closed the

panel with an overview of empirical evidence about Muslims’ attitudes towards democracy.

Jamal Barzinji of the International Institute of Islamic Thought chaired Panel Two, which was themed “Western Democracies and Authoritarian Muslim Regimes: Understanding the Relationship”. Awwalu Hamisu Yadudu of Bayero University in Kano, Nigeria, analyzed the Sharia controversies in contemporary Nigeria. Mohamed Mestiri of the Center for Civilizational Studies in Paris discussed the complex and varying effects of globalization on the prospects for democracy in the Muslim world. Mestiri suggested that the Muslim world needed to adapt a form of democracy to its own nature and become a democratic world partner without needing to be exactly the same as Western societies.

“The universal value of democracy belongs to the whole of humanity, but we are speaking of different expressions,” he said, explaining that Western democracy was conceived on the basis of absolute individual freedom and secularism. “We need to think deeply about... how we can base unity on diversity,” he said, rejecting the priority of economic power in the current mode of globalization in favor of democracies based on human rights.

Savas S. Barkcin of Bilkent University in Turkey pointed out the problematic assumptions underlying many discussions of Islam & democracy. Barkcin described the divergence between what Western governments proclaim as liberal democracy and what they actually support in Muslim countries that have only a semblance of democracy - “they usually escape with a face-lift,” he said. Western governments support what he called a “messianic

liberalism... the primacy of power politics rather than democratic ideals at work.”

Fred Dallmayr of the University of Notre Dame laid out the consequences of the September 11 tragedy for the USA, the Muslim world, and international peace. Dallmayr talked about how the Islamic world could become “a politically responsible member of the world community” in light of lessons learned after September 11. “Certainly there are ways of reconciling the Islamic religion with democracy... it’s a matter of developing them on the ground,” he said. Dallmayr suggested that the Muslims world would have to look at its own version of secularism, explaining after audience members questioned this that he did not mean total separation of the state from religion, but simply a country where “the clergy is not in control of political power.”

The 2002 Hesham Reda Memorial Lecture and Keynote Luncheon Address was delivered by Tariq Ramadan of the College of Geneva in Switzerland, whose address was entitled “Muslims in the West: A Bridge to Democracy”. Ramadan, a prominent advocate of interfaith dialogue and the need for spiritual renewal among Muslims, called on

“Certainly there are ways of reconciling the Islamic religion with democracy... it’s a matter of developing them on the ground,”

people of conscience to reexamine lazy assumptions and double standards that hamper both dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims and the successful integration of Muslims into Western societies. Ramadan, spoke about the need for Muslims to separate themselves from the definitions imposed on them by others, while at the same time being more honest and frank with each other and with their neighbors - erasing the “double language” that divides how they speak among themselves from how they speak to non-

Muslims.

“We have to promote a critical discourse about violence,” Ramadan said, explaining that Muslims needed to think critically themselves about the words being used in association with Islam, such as violence and terrorism, which are imposed by the dominant civilization, of which Muslims are also a part.



Prof. Tariq Ramadan, gave the Hesham Reda Memorial Luncheon keynote speech.

The last panel on Saturday, Panel Three dealt with “Human Rights in the Muslim World: Meanings, Movements, and Obstacles” and was chaired by Lou Cantori of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Mashood A. Baderin of the University of the West England in Bristol, UK spoke on the need to identify possible mechanisms within Islamic law for the promotion and practical enforcement of human rights in Muslim states. Arwa Hassan of Transparency International in Germany went over the implications of the experiences of various civil society organizations in the Middle East. Avis Asiye Allman, an independent scholar, compared and contrasted the ideology of the AK Party to past Islamist parties in Turkey. Riham A. Khafagy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign chronicled ways in which the governments of Turkey and Jordan have alternated between restricting and co-opting Islamist parties.

The final event of Day One was the Banquet Dinner, the theme of which was “U.S. Policy towards Democracy in the Muslim World”. The banquet’s keynote speakers were Prof. Ali Mazrui, Binghamton University, Chairman of CSID; Dr. Laith Kubba, National Endowment for Democ-

racy; and Prof. Akbar Ahmed, Ibn-Khaldun Chair & Professor, American University. Prof. Mazrui compared contemporary politically-based forms of racism from race-based terrorism from 19th century America.

Day Two of the conference began with Panel Four, chaired by Antony Sullivan, on “Political Violence in the Middle East: Causes and Consequences”. Kamran Asghar Bokhari of the University of Texas at Austin gave historical background on the concept of jihad and compared and contrasted its contemporary interpretations by neo-traditionalist Muslim groups. Najib Ghabbian of the University of Arkansas explored the widely differing readings of Islam’s view of violence. Mohyeddin Kassar of the University of Illinois, Chicago, analyzes the social and cultural consequences of the fact that—unlike Islamic societies of the past — today’s weak post-colonial states cannot guarantee their citizens safety. Ahmed Ali Salem of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign ended the panel by analyzing the roles played on the international stage by various Islamic movements.

Panel Five was chaired by Radwan Masmoudi, the Executive Director of CSID, and had as its theme “Fighting Terrorism and Protecting Democracy”. Theodore P. Wright of New York State University at Albany uses the case of the marginalized Muslim community in India to show that the normal benefits of a democratic political system are contingent on the successful integration of minority communities into the society at large. Robert Crane of Crescent University discussed non-violence in the context of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Louay Safi stressed that Islam is an essential partner for developing a democratic and peaceful world because it stresses the fundamental values that make a democratic and pluralist society possible, namely equality, freedom, justice, interracial and interreligious solidarity.

After Panel Five, a luncheon was held in honor of CSID Founding Members, Fellows, and Members of CSID’s Board of Directors.

EVENTS & CONFERENCES

Is Globalization a Dialogue of Civilizations?

CSID Executive Director, Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, joined a gathering of internationally renowned religious, cultural and political leaders in a conference on “*Is Globalization a Dialogue of Civilizations?*” More than 500 people attended the conference and the “Global Town Hall Meeting”, in Binghamton, New York, on April 12-13, 2002.

In different three hour sessions devoted to conflict and dialogue between civilizations, participants debated topics such as the religious intolerance, origins of terrorism, economic imbalances between developing and developed nations, the role of the United States as a super-power, and the importance of women in bringing about social change. Participants also responded to questions from the audience.

Participants in the conference included Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Nobel Prize for literature; Lord Ahmed of Rotherham, the first Muslim appointed to the British House of Lords;

General Yakubu Gowon, the President who held Nigeria together during the Civil War



A view of the Binghamton Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations

in his country; Thomas Michel, Coordinator for Inter-Religious Dialogue for the Society of Jesus at the Vatican, and many other prominent figures representing various nationalities such as India, Malaysia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Tibet. Religions represented included Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Ali A. Mazrui, Chairman of CSID and

Director the Institute of Global Cultural Studies, which sponsored the event, said that the conference was precedent setting in the manner in which it joined together the debate over the process of “globalization” and over the “clash of civilizations” in a manner that has not yet been. Although the conference was planned long before September 11, 2001, the events of that day have made the issues addressed particularly urgent.

Chandra Muzaffar, President of the International Movement for a Just World in Malaysia argued that “multi-ethnic, multi-religious communities need dialogue,” that without such dialogue the results could be disastrous, and that when communities “isolate themselves from each other, tensions tend to rise.”

While overall the conference stressed the need for greater dialogue and understanding, it did not shy away from difficult issues. Radwan Masmoudi, Executive Director of CSID stressed the need to respect the civil rights of Muslims and Arabs in the United States and other Western countries. Ousseina Alidou, from Rutgers’ University and Nkiru Nzegwu from Binghamton University stressed the need for greater enfranchisement of women. ■

USIP-CSID Symposium on Islam & Democracy

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID) organized a joint symposium on “*Islam & democracy*”, on Tuesday, June 18, 2002 in Washington DC. The *standing-room-only* event was very successful, and included *four* presentations:

Muqtedar Khan of Adrian College:
The Compatibility of Islam with Democratic Principles

Mahmood Monshipouri of Quinnipiac University: Human Rights and Islam

Neil Hicks of the Lawyer’s Committee for

Human Rights: *What Can the U.S. Do to Promote Democracy in the Muslim World?*

Laith Kubba of the National Endowment for Democracy: *Problems Confronted by Democratic Movements in the Muslim World.*

The event was Co-Chaired by David Smock, Director, Religion & Peacemaking Initiative, U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), and Radwan Masmoudi, Executive Director of CSID. The questions and answers period lasted for over 75 minutes and included very interesting discussions and debates. A special USIP report will be



More than 100 people attended the USIP-CSID symposium on Islam & democracy

issued soon to summarize the main points of the symposium. Papers are posted on the CSID web site (www.islam-democracy.org), and the whole program may be viewed on: www.usip.org/oc/cibriefing/islam_democracy_cib.html ■

Think Tank Outreach to U.S. Hispanics and Muslims

CSID was invited to participate in the Atlas Foundation's (www.atlasusa.org) Second Annual Atlas Liberty Forum, held in Philadelphia on April 10-11 in advance of meetings of the Heritage Resource Bank and the Philadelphia Society.

Grover Norquist (Americans for Tax Reform, Washington DC) gave an opening address on how he formed a grassroots "center-right" coalition of voting blocks that, in respect to their top priority issue, seek protection from government intrusion. Think tanks, he asserted, need to take a similar approach to find common ground with Muslims and Hispanics - segments of the U.S. population that are growing in size and becoming important swing blocks in elections. This will require working with individuals and organizations that have credibility in the local communities.

In the panels that followed, each speaker made the case that the values of a free society are consistent with those of the vast majority of Muslims. The Qur'an champions the price system, free trade, and tolerance, lectured Antony Sullivan, a senior fellow with The Fund for American Studies (Washington DC). Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad discussed the work of his Minaret of Freedom Institute (Maryland) in correcting mistaken impressions Muslims have about free markets, and that Westerners have of the religion of Islam.

Radwan Masmoudi, director of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (Washington DC), emphasized how the five million Muslims in the U.S. could play a pivotal reformist role for Islam, addressing the corruption and authoritarianism characteristic of virtually all



A view of the Atlas Liberty Forum panel on Islam

modern Muslim states.

Atilla Yayla (Association for Liberal Thinking, Turkey) echoed this sentiment, and added that Westerners should not have illusions about the governments of even those countries that make useful short-term allies, such as Turkey, where many classical liberal values are not commonly respected. ■

Prospects for Democratic Change in Iraq

CSID participated in a workshop on "Prospects for Democratic Change in Iraq" organized by the Iraq Institute for Democracy on May 24-25th, 2002 at American University. The seminar was co-sponsored by the Center for Global Peace and Freedom House. Both Iraqi and non-Iraqi specialists (Europeans and Americans) were invited to discuss how to facilitate democratic change in Iraq, and scenarios for political reform in Iraq.

The Iraq Institute for Democracy is based in Erbil, Iraq. Reports of the workshop will be translated into Arabic and distributed widely in Iraq, and will be displayed on their website. The Iraq Institute for Democracy will once again use these papers as teaching materials for



Radwan Masmoudi, speaking at the Conference on Democratic Change in Iraq.

Democracy-Building sessions in Erbil, Duhok and Suleymania and among members of Friends for Democracy-Iraq, the pan-Iraqi grassroots organization based in Erbil.

During his presentation, Dr. Masmoudi counseled against a war on Iraq. "A war would be counter-productive because it will increase the regime's popularity in Iraq and would inflame the Arab world. The Iraqi people are sick and tired of this brutal regime and if we provide them with real and meaningful support, they will move quickly to remove this regime and install a democratic regime in its place." He added that: "If the U.S. wants to be taken seriously as an advocate of democracy, it must demand it not only in Iraq, but also in the region beginning with our biggest allies. Our current policy of supporting dictators will only foster extremism, violence, and radicalism, which in the end is not in our -or their- national interest." ■

WESTERN DEMOCRACIES AND

THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM

By Ali A. Mazrui

Chair, CSID

The state of Israel was created partly as a permanent asylum for Jews who might otherwise suffer persecution in other parts of the world. The Zionist movement was originally conceived as a quest for a piece of land without people to accommodate people without land. As it turned out, Palestine was hardly “a piece of land without people”. Millions of Arabs have remained displaced to accommodate Jews from elsewhere.

Political Zionism was intended as a defense against anti-Semitism. Fifty years after the creation of the State of Israel, has Zionism now become a cause of new forms of anti-Semitism? Is the state of Israel becoming a cause of hatred for other Jews around the world?

This appears to be the conclusion that has been reached by the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. On the last day of February 2002 Dr. Jonathan Sacks urged strong action to prevent “violence and bloodshed” against Jews in England.

He argued that the Israeli-Palestine conflict had sparked off levels of anti-Semitism not seen in Britain since the years of the Holocaust. He referred to an increasing number of attacks on synagogues and “virulent anti-Israel campaigns on some English University campuses, which have left many Jewish students fearful for their safety”. [The Times (London) March 1, 2002, page 2]

The Chief Rabbi complained that the leading liberal newspapers in Britain such as The Guardian, The Independent and The Statesman had started publishing opened articles questioning Israeli’s right to

exit. According to the Chief Rabbi, the websites of The Independent and The Statesman had become what he describes as a focus of anti-Semitic discussion.

At the University of Manchester, England, Jewish students claimed to have been spat upon and denounced as “Nazis” and “baby butchers” during a bitter dispute at the students’ union about whether Israel should be declared an apartheid-state.

Rabbi Sacks claimed that until recently he had never experienced anti-Semitism in Britain. But he saw new evidence that anti-Semitism was returning not only to Britain but also to other parts of Europe.

“The fact that I have chosen to speak indicates the depth of my concern. We know from all of history that words turn into deeds, prejudice into violence, and eventu-

“It must be crystal clear that Sharon’s blind rage policy daily leads Israel to more insecurity, not less...”

ally violence into bloodshed... You cannot deny people the right to criticize any nation-state [such as Israel]. But what we are seeing goes beyond that, and has become an attack on Jews, not just the state of Israel ... That Jewish students on campus should have to go in fear is unacceptable.” [The Times (London) March 1, 2002]

In the correspondence columns of The Guardian (London) there have been many letters about whether negative reactions to

Israeli policies are leading to a revival of European anti-Semitism. One pained statement came from David Grossman as early as October 22, 2001. He said:

“I am highly critical of Israel’s behavior, but in recent weeks I have felt that the [British] media’s hostility to it has not been fed solely by the actions of the Sharon government. A person feels such things deeply, under the skin, I feel them with a kind of shiver that percolates down to the cells of my most primeval memories...” (1)

In Black Africa, where Israel had many friends, there is new questioning. John Nagenda has said the following in a Uganda newspaper:

“The Israelis latterly scored over 300 Palestinian deaths to less than 20 against them, but still insisted that it was Arafat and his Palestinians who were the aggressors. Where is God?”

“It must be crystal clear that Sharon’s blind rage policy daily leads Israel to more insecurity, not less... By Bush giving *carte blanche*, the American President is a bad, not a good friend of Israel”. (2)

By giving Israel *carte blanche*, the United States was also a bad friend to world Jewry. Is the U.S. feeding into global anti-Semitism?

In the final analysis, blind U.S. policy, which is uncritical to Israel, is dangerous to American lives - as well as to Jewish safety. ■

1) “Diary”, The Guardian, October 22, 2001. Cited in a letter by Arnold Wesker, The Guardian (London) March 1, 2002.

2) “Sharon’s Blind Rage is Leading Israel to Hell,” The New Vision (Kampala), February 23, 2002

minister in each of the ministries of culture and health, one university chancellor and many director generals in different departments of the government.

Unfortunately, however, while Muslim masses are highly enthusiastic about democracy, current rulers are its worst violators. Consider for example Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, who grabbed power through a coup and was given, under the law of necessity, a three-year transition period by the high court to end corruption and return the country to normalcy. Now, he wants to hold on to power for another five years, but instead of facing his people in elections through legal constitutional avenues, he devised a scheme of "referendum". Accordingly, no candidate was to run against him, all opposition was gagged and its leaders and workers detained or not allowed to even convene a meeting. Furthermore, public funds of this heavily indebted country were used to run his campaign, as well as to hire persons and transport amiable persons - government servants were forced to go - for voting; thus turning the whole exercise into a mockery of democracy. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that there were gross violations in the voting that had no verifiable lists, and was marked by frequent use of fake identity cards and stuffing of ballot boxes in a rigged "referendum".

Whereas before September 11, Musharraf was pressured, from inside and outside, to restore democracy, after September 11, Western governments are now mum, lodging no criticism at all. This provides further evidence of the general observation that the West loves compliant dictators and autocrats, and exposes the hypocrisy with which it views the Muslim world.

It is critical for Muslims in general, and American Muslims in particular, to mount massive, organized and effective outreach efforts to promote real democracy in the Muslim world. This would obligate the politicians to adopt policies that are just, fair and equitable towards Muslims. It would not only be in conformity with the Western ideals of freedom and democracy, but also durable in their larger interests. ■

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy
Workshops in Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Deadline for Abstracts: August 20, 2002

In October 2002, the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), in partnership with local groups, will be organizing three workshops, one each in Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon. The purpose of these workshops is to bring together 20 to 30 political thinkers, leaders, and activists in each country to discuss the obstacles to democracy and develop a common platform and agenda for democratization. The workshops seek to bridge the gap between democracy advocates - both secularists and Islamists - and develop an acceptance of democratic process as a way of resolving political disputes and differences, while rejecting violence and repression. The 2-day workshops will be organized in Rabat, Morocco, Beirut, Lebanon, and Cairo, Egypt.

In addition to local participants in each country, CSID invites interested individuals (scholars and activists) to participate in this project by submitting a 1-page abstract of a paper (250-400 words) addressing one of the following questions:

"Who speaks for Islam?"

"Can Islam and democracy coexist?"

"How to implement Shura in a Modern Society?"

The abstract must be submitted by **August 20, 2002**. The abstracts should be in Arabic, for that is the language to be used in the discussions. Accepted abstracts will be compiled and circulated among the selected participants by August 31, 2002.

The workshops will function as follows:

1. On the first day of the workshops, 3-4 well-known scholars and Muslim political thinkers (from the U.S., Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East) will give lectures (30 minutes each), followed by discussions on democracy and human rights in Islam.
2. During the second day, 20-30 participants, selected based on their abstracts and experience, will have 5-10 minutes to make a brief presentation. A platform for political dialogue and rejection of violence and oppression will be developed, discussed, and adopted by the participants.

This project is funded and supported by CSID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). To receive more information and an application form, please send an e-mail to: radwan.masmoudi@gte.net, or visit www.islam-democracy.org

The deadline for submitting application forms and abstracts is: **August 20, 2002**. They may be e-mailed or faxed to CSID at: 704-846-0629

The Difficulty of the Religious Extremist Groups in Adapting to Changes

By Najah Kadhim
Executive Director
International Federation for
Islamic Dialogue (IFID)

The violence used by minority militant Muslim groups, as means to an end, in the recent past have challenged Muslim scholars and interested observers to find an adequate or satisfactory interpretation of this phenomena. September 11th, noted for its notoriety and magnitude, has brought the problem of Muslim militancy to the surface and placed it under the international microscope.

All societies have been the victims of extreme forms of violence. In the past, violence and extremism was perpetrated under the guise of nationalism and communism. Today Islam is used to disguise it. This is clearly reflected in the fact that it is a timeless social phenomenon which moves through the fabric of all human societies: Africa (Rwanda), South America (Columbia), South East Asia (East Timor) etc. The Arabs are no exception to this.

If the collision, in the Muslim world, between the government

“This armed conflict between the fighting groups normally results in the killing of the innocent and leads to a disintegration of the social fabric of the society”.

and the opposition ends there will be a collision between the opposition themselves starting with the larger groups and ending with the smaller groups. This armed conflict between the fighting groups normally results in the killing of the innocent and leads to a disintegration of the social fabric of the society. Recent examples can be found in Somalia, Algeria, and in the pre-Taliban periods in Afghanistan.

The justification and pretext of silence about the subject of violence in the Arab world is only representing the apparent

problems that float on the surface of society. We find in the depth of a society that is stagnant and backward the absence of the self critical approach and of the availability of mechanisms for checks and balances or the presence of institutions to diagnose the defects and attempt to isolate and counter the weakness.

The self-critical approach in developed societies would represent the remorse of the nation and its intuitive feeling which enable it to try and discover the causes of this phenomenon and isolate them.

There are few institutionalized avenues for rectifying wrongs. This is partly due to the hegemony of the concept of the state in the Arab framework and an imbalance in society-state equation. In fact, the concept of the state in most Muslim countries developed from the tribal concept that is covered with a very shallow veneer of civilization.

The elimination of the other or looking down upon their ideas, or if you like an environment of dwindling ideas, would create a social movement within the boundaries of vacuum.

The absence of clear Muslim leadership and the silent voice of the majority people as well as the stagnant social background would lead to the growth phenomenon of inward looking, intolerant and puritanical religious groups. These extremist religious groups, sociologically speaking, like other minority extremists would not accept the scientific logic or the language of dialogue and debate. There is no language other than the language of destruction and annihilation of the other and the desire for total power that rejects any deviations. Further, the imposition of absolute reality means there are no allowances for the variable, the new or the unknown since all decisions have been taken and all the problems have been resolved within the context of a rigid ideology.

There is no room for the middle ground. Extremists find it difficult to adapt to changes and absorb the new. This often leads to a violent reaction as a form of possible behavioral response for surrounding changes.

Striving for Veritas at Harvard

By *Jim Guirard*
TrueSpeak Institute

In his recent commencement speech at Harvard University, Muslim-American graduate Zayed Yasin explained the true Qur'anic meaning of "jihad." Correctly, he described it as "an individual struggle for moral behavior" and as "the determination to do right, to do justice even against your own interests."

But in his sincere search for truth-in-language, Mr. Yasin failed to suggest what other Arabic and Islamic word should be substituted as an accurate label for al Qaeda's terroristic, hate-filled warfare against America. That urgently needed term is *Hirabah* — an ancient Islamic word perhaps not even known to this young man but clearly identified by several Islamic scholars as the proper antonym for so-called "jihad" of the suicidal, killing-of-innocents variety.

Among these are Prof. Roy Mottahedeh of Harvard, Prof. Khalid Abu El-fadl of UCLA, Prof. Muqtedar Khan of Adrian College and Prof. Sherman Jackson of the University of Michigan. In the fall 2001 issue of *Muslim World*, Dr. Jackson concludes: "*Hirabah*, as it turns out, is the most severely punished crime in Islam, carrying mandatory criminal sanctions."

Historically, the word was used to describe the ruthless transgressions of marauders who would race in on horses and camels to pillage, slaughter and terrorize. The only distinction is that today's terrorists conduct their own "war against society" with explosives strapped to their bodies or at the controls of truck bombs or speeding jet liners, instead.

In further search for rhetorical truth, we must reject outright al Qaeda's deceitful use of such other self-congratulatory words as *mujaheddin* (holy warriors) and "martyrs for Allah" — and to substitute the harsh Qur'anic word *mufsidoon* (evildoers). Note that this is the word — evildoers — which President Bush has been using throughout, rather than "Muslim extremists" or "Islamic radicals."

Completing this anti-Islamic picture of unholy *Hirabah* waged by evil *mufsidoon*, the broader truth is revealed in the answers to just three more questions:

* Are such evildoers most likely destined for maiden-filled Paradise or for demon-filled jahannam (eternal hellfire)?

* Is their suicide bombing true to *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law), or is it sinful *tajdeef* (blasphemy)?

* Is their violence reflective of a peaceful and compassionate Allah as He is proclaimed by the Qur'an, or is it inherently *shaitaniyah* (satanic)?

Clearly, the only effective response to al Qaeda's false mantra of "Jihad by *mujaheddin* destined for Paradise" will be traditional Islam's admonition of "Do not wage *Hirabah*. Do not become *mufsidoon*. Do not be cast into *jahannam*." ■

The Shortcomings of the Rationalist-Constructive Ideal in Turkey

By *Fatma Bostan Unsal*
Georgetown University

In its annual survey, **Freedom in the World**, which is an evaluation of political rights and civil liberties in the world, by **Freedom House**, Turkey was put under partly free group. According to the survey, Turkey falls behind 120 countries in political rights and civil liberties. Among these countries, there are such countries as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Croatia, which have become democratic after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition, Turkey's economy shrank by 9.4%, and the rate of its total debt to GNP is 135%. As an example of extent to which basic human rights are violated, the students who signed a petition to their rectors that they wanted to take Kurdish courses as a second language were arrested, tried and some were sentenced. Others were dismissed or urged to say that they were forced to sign the petition.

The main reason for this situation is the rational-constructive ideal of the founders of the Turkish Republic. From the early days of the Republic, and despite official discourse such as "sovereignty belongs to the nation", legitimacy was not derived from the public opinion or social consensus.

For the founders, there was a legitimacy problem. After the war of Independence, the new ruling elite wanted to replace the Ottoman Empire with a new political entity. Islam had entrenched itself so thoroughly in the social, legal and political systems of the Ottoman Empire, those who looked for political change had to look outside of the Islamic framework. So they chose the ideology of "westernization" and they tried to construct a new society based on it. What the ruling elite wanted was not to carry out the democratic process, but a tool to construct a new society according to the new elite's ideals.

Military coups (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997, post modern coup), forced reforms (outlawing the fez, substituting the hat in its place, replacement of Arabic alphabet with Latin one, change of holidays and means of measurement, etc), the limitations on freedom of expression (such as the headscarf ban in public spheres and the detention of authors and political leaders according to 312 Article of Turkish Penalty Code) are some of the examples of that policy.

But now, as we learned from social research and the practical results of the Turkish experience, there is no point on insisting on constructing a new society according to some fancies. Even the communist regimes, which were totally isolated, could not construct a new society. The culture and values of a society are stronger than impositions through propaganda or terror. Feudal, traditional elements intermingled with misunderstood religious sayings are obstacles for implementing democratic processes but they are eliminated only by natural, spontaneous free research and discussions. And that process has already started. ■

Unholy Wars: Terror in the Name of Islam

by John L. Esposito

Reviewed by Muqtedar Khan

John L. Esposito, Unholy Wars: Terror in the Name of Islam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 196. Hardback, US \$25.00.

John Esposito is easily one of the world's most preeminent scholars of Islam. His voice carries authority not only in the West but also in the Muslim World. In keeping with his stature as an important commentator on Islam, Esposito has responded to the attacks of September 11th, 2001, by writing a very important book. - Unholy Wars: Terror in the Name of Islam.

In Unholy Wars, Esposito systematically addresses the political antecedents to the 9/11 attacks on the US by Al-Qaeda, the international terrorist organization masterminded by Usama Binladen. Esposito examines the recent history of US relations with the Muslim world and explains how a global sentiment of anti-Americanism has emerged in the Muslim World. He shows with great clarity how economic conditions, political underdevelopment, the shadow of Israeli occupation of Palestine and the continued presence of US supported authoritarian regimes in the Arab world have led to the festering of a deep seated resentment and anger towards the US. In a very systematic way Esposito succeeds in unraveling the layered complexity of global politics and explains how the phenomenon of global terrorism articulated in the language of Islam has emerged as a counter hegemonic force to pax Americana.

The book begins with the story of

Binladen and his rise from a shy youth to the preeminent ideologue of Jihad International. In Esposito's narrative this mythical demon is humanized and it becomes easier for even the uninitiated to understand the choices that Binladen made and the historical and geopolitical circumstances that shaped his destiny.

In chapter two, Esposito writes a revealing genealogy of Jihad. He shows how and why this very important Islamic concept has now become a central pillar of Muslim consciousness and self-understanding. He also argues that the very word *jihad* is complex as well as contested. Going as far back as the Kharijite movement in early Islam, Esposito traces the different meanings that various Muslim scholars and groups have given to the principle of Jihad. He makes it clear that Jihad has shaped Muslim politics and its meanings have also been shaped by Muslim politics. It becomes clear how different Muslims can have such differing understanding of Jihad. For example Esposito points to how the present grand mufti of Egypt considers suicide bombing as martyrdom while the present grand mufti of Saudi Arabia declares it unIslamic (p. 100). He follows the genealogy of Jihad with a comprehensive survey of global Islamic militancy covering the entire spread of Islam from Indonesia to the US. The survey establishes how the different understanding of Jihad has shaped the various tactics adopted by Islamic movements and Islamic militants.

Esposito also addresses the loud claims

of neo-conservatives in America who claim that Islam itself, not just radical Muslims, is inherently incompatible with the cluster of values which some pretentious westerners call Western and liberals call universal. Esposito disabuses the notion that Islam and capitalism, Islam and democracy and Islam and human rights are incompatible. He also examines in great depth the struggle for women's rights in Muslim societies today.

Finally Esposito focuses on what must be done next. He raises the issue of "root causes" (p. 160) and makes no bones about stating that unless Muslim grievances are addressed wisely and the economic and political conditions that engender terrorism ameliorated, globalism terrorism will continue to plague the West and authoritarian Muslim regimes. He however stops short of making any specific policy recommendations with regards to how the US may specifically deal with Iraq or Hamas or Saudi Arabia's linkage with Wahhabism. The role of this book is to provide an understanding of the context - political and historical - that motivates Muslim terrorism and how these so called Islamic warriors implicate Islam in their dastardly tactics.

Nevertheless Esposito does not pull any punches in making it clear that Islam is a global force and will remain so for a long time to come. He also seems to suggest that Islamism may well grow rather than ebb. He fears that the shortsighted vision that is guiding the so called war on

Continued on Page 12



Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy

P. O. Box 864, Burtonsville, MD, 20866

Phone: 202-251-3036

Fax: 704-846-0629

www.islam-democracy.org

Board of Directors

Chair: Ali A. Mazrui

Vice-Chair: John L. Esposito

Abdulwahab Alkebsi

Taha Jabir Alalwani

Nimat Hafez Barazangi

Jamal Barzinji

Charles Butterworth

Louis Cantori

Muqtedar Khan

Radwan Masmoudi

Abdulaziz Sachedina

Louay Safi

Tamara Sonn

Anthony Sullivan

Svend White

Executive Committee

Radwan A. Masmoudi

Executive Director



Svend White

Secretary



Mahir Haroun

Treasurer



Ismail Obeidallah

Event Coordinator

The views and opinions expressed in the *Muslim Democrat* belong to their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of CSID, or its Board of Directors. We welcome comments and letters from our readers, and will publish them subject to space limitations and editorial changes. Please e-mail comments and letters to:

editor@islam-democracy.org

CSID Membership Form 2002

Name: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tel.: _____

Fax.: _____

E-mail: _____

I would like to join CSID as:

Student Member \$20

Member \$50

Fellow \$100

Newsletter Subscription \$20

Institutional Member \$200

Founding Member \$1000

Lifetime Member \$2500

I also would like to volunteer for the following positions:

A Director

Newsletter Editor

Journal Editor

Program Volunteer

Fund raising

Book reviews

Membership drive

Local seminars

Other _____

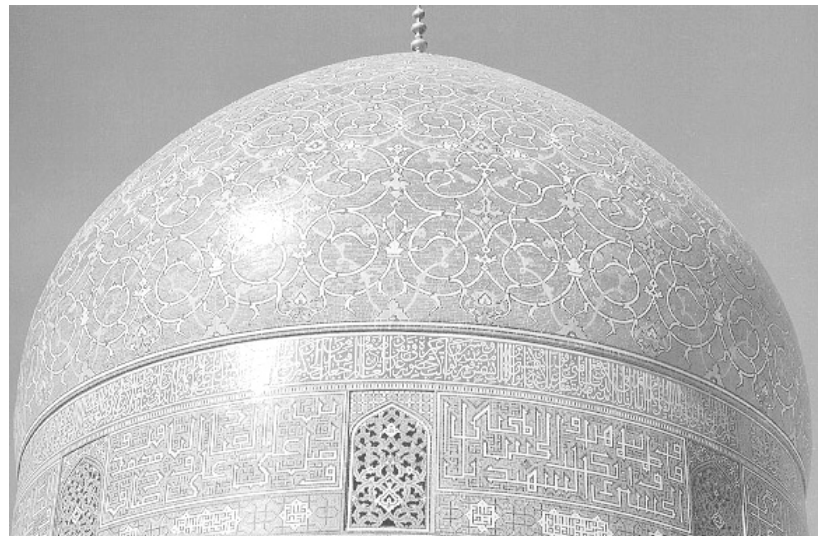
Please include my name in the CSID directory Yes No

I would like to make a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

Tax-deductible Donation to **Hesham Reda Memorial Fund** \$ _____

Comments and/or suggestions:

please send membership form, with payment, to: CSID, P. O. Box 864, Burtonsville, MD 20866



Objectives of CSID

- ❖ Promote democracy in the Muslim world.
- ❖ Promote a better understanding and a common platform between supporters of democracy and human rights and the proponents of the “Islamic State” in the Muslim world.
- ❖ Encourage and foster dialogue between Islam and the rest of the world, especially the West.
- ❖ Encourage American Muslims to partake in the American political system and to become full active members of the American democracy.
- ❖ Discourage fanaticism, radicalism, violence, and oppression in the Muslim world, whether in the name of Islam or in the name of secular and Western values.
- ❖ Encourage the development of Islamic political thought based on modern principles of democracy, human rights, political freedom, religious and cultural diversity, and tolerance.
- ❖ Support the efforts of those individuals, groups, and governments in the Muslim world who espouse the ideals of democracy and human rights.
- ❖ Encourage attempts in the West, and particularly the United States, to play a positive role in promoting democracy in the Muslim world and establishing a constructive dialogue and engagement with the Muslim people.
- ❖ Advocate dialogue and constructive cooperation between the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and promote a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Middle East.

Cont. from Page 10

terrorism that seems to rely on military options more than diplomacy and social change may well prove to be counterproductive. Instead of eliminating terror, he fears, it may engender greater anti-American and anti-Western sentiment and lead to more bloodshed and global instability.

As a student of Islamic revivalism and Muslim politics I cannot but help noticing a subtle shift in Esposito’s position. In *Islamic Threat* the major thrust of his argument was that Islamic revivalist movements are responding to modernity and western ideologies from a position that is culturally authentic and are deeply influenced by their faith in the universality and divinity of Islamic values. He concluded that Islamic movements posed a civilizational challenge, in terms of advancing alternate social and political paradigms, and not a threat to the West. But in *Unholy Wars* he seems to recognize that *Jihad* international has benefited from the globalization of Islamic movements and the fervor and consciousness they developed. He now recognizes the threat of radical Islam to the West and to Islam itself. What has happened between 1992 and 2002 to Islamic movements who seem to have forgotten about the *ijtihad* (intellectual) dimensions of *islah* (reform) and *tajdeed* (revival) and have allowed themselves to be consumed by a heretical understanding of *Jihad*?

Esposito speaks to the West as well as Muslims. This aspect of his discourse in captured so elegantly in the following quote:

“If Western powers need to rethink, reassess foreign policies and their support for authoritarian regimes, mainstream Muslims worldwide also need to more aggressively address the threat to Islam from religious extremists” (p. 158).

John Esposito’s *Unholy Wars* is a masterful rendition by a scholar in his prime. It is a definitive response to several of the vexing questions posed by the shocking attacks on the Pentagon and WTC. Journalists, academics, students, policy makers and attentive people who care about the ramifications of 9/11 cannot afford to not pick up this book. Once they pick it up, they will put it down only to reflect on the issues it raises. ■

CSID Needs YOU:

- ❖ Renew your membership or become a Member
- ❖ Make a *Tax-deductible* donation
- ❖ Invite others to join
- ❖ Organize local events and fundraisers

Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy

P. O. Box 864
Burtonsville, MD, 20866