

Muslim Democrat

www.islam-democracy.org

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

Volume 4, No. 3, November 2002

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TURKEY LEADS THE WAY

By Radwan Masmoudi

The recent and surprise election victory in Turkey of the conservative Justice and Development Party constitutes good news for democrats in the Muslim world. Moreover, it suggests what future trends throughout the Islamic world may be.

Clearly, the majority of governments in the Arab and Muslim world are out of touch with their people and have become increasingly oppressive and unpopular. Out of despair, anger and frustration, legions of Muslims, especially the youth, have turned to the minority of fundamentalists as a way to feel proud, strong and secure.

However, most of these radical, extremist movements have until now failed to improve the economic and social predicament of anyone, nor have they offered any real hope of doing so. Repression of all Islamists by non-democratic Arab regimes, and lack of maturity on the part of many Islamists themselves, have resulted in an outburst of violence which those regimes have used to justify further repression and crackdowns. Is there any way out of this terrible cycle of violence?

The answer coming from Turkey is yes — and that answer lies in more, not less, democracy.

Ten years ago, a moderate Islamist movement won the first round of a democratic election in Algeria. The Algerian military, with encouragement from France and a green light from the United States, intervened and prevented the second round of voting, which would almost certainly have brought moderate Islamists to power. Rather than respect the will of the people, the Algerian army removed an elected president and embarked on a campaign of military repression that has proven to be an abject failure. Worse, repression has radicalized an Islamist movement that formerly was primarily moderate. Today, civil war is still raging in Algeria. More than 200,000 innocent civilians have been killed to date, the economy is in shambles and fundamentalist parties are still strong.

The principal lesson to be learned from the sorry case of Algeria is that authoritarian regimes, over time, simply cannot succeed. After so many failures and so much bloodshed, the Algerian government seems to have finally learned this hard lesson. As a result, it is today



trying to reform itself. However, old habits die hard and the damage that has been done to Algerian society has been devastating.

The experience of the Taliban in Afghanistan also constitutes an exemplary lesson. Its attempt to adhere to out-dated interpretations of Islam and to force those interpretations on an entire population was stupid, destructive and anti-Islamic. The Taliban regime has been a disgrace to all Muslims, and has been a wake-up call for many religious people.

The fact is that when a government tries to rule in the name of religion or God, terrible things are likely to happen. Freedom and dignity are often the first victims. Self-proclaimed religious regimes have time and again demonstrated their inability to provide social stability or achieve economic development because their methods simply do not work. Furthermore, since such regimes insist that they are unaccountable to anyone — except God — there is no mechanism to provide criticism and correct mistakes.

Caught between secular and religious extremisms, the world's 1.3 billion Muslims are struggling to find a middle ground. They are looking for a government that respects their religion but does not force it down their throats. Like non-Muslims and people everywhere, they desire governments of the people, by the people, and for the people. What Muslims most emphatically do not desire are governments led by tyrants who insist that they are always right, and that anybody who opposes them or even disagrees with them is a traitor or a disbeliever. The truth is that the vast majority of Muslims today want governments that honor the basic teachings of Islam — love, respect for others, justice, tolerance, compassion and peace — and are at the same time modern, effective and efficient in solving a myriad of economic, political and social problems.

In the Muslim world, history has proven that radical secularism does not work. Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and of course Saddam Hussein in Iraq instituted radically secular regimes, and the results



WINNING SMILE: Recep Erdogan, leader of the AK Party, expresses gratitude shortly after announcing victory at the polls Monday.
MURAD SEZER/AP

are long since in. Each of these rulers became a secular dictator. Bourguiba ordered his subjects not to fast in Ramadan, Nasser made war on all Islamists and Saddam has made war on everyone. All of them proved to be spectacularly undemocratic, and all were or are confronted with a strong religious backlash.

For Muslims, secularism means that the state and the government are neutral in personal religious matters. What Bourguiba, Nasser and Saddam have done is not “secular,” as Muslims understand that term, but radically anti-religious. Each of those rulers has given secularism a bad name. In a recent visit to Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon, I was surprised to find non-religious parties and organizations mostly refusing to associate themselves with secularism for fear of being seen as anti-Islamic. In the Muslim world, secularism carries a virulently anti-religious meaning in a way that it does not in the West.

In Turkey today, we at last have a group of Muslim conservatives who are trying to

develop a version of secularism that is acceptable to Muslims. Theirs is not the anti-religious sort of secularism that has been practiced in many quarters of the Muslim world, but an Islamically acceptable secularism, which says that the government belongs to the people and that religious practices and views should not be enforced by the state. Members of the Justice and Development Party and their leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, refuse to call themselves either Islamists or secularists. Rather, they call themselves Muslim democrats, and have adduced the influence of Germany's Christian Democratic Party on their views. The recent, overwhelming victory of the Justice and Development Party at the polls may be the harbinger of a new day not only in Turkey, but elsewhere in the Islamic world.

There are many Muslim democrats, and they are everywhere in the Islamic world. Such democrats are sincere and

..to develop a version of secularism that is acceptable to Muslims. Theirs is not the anti-religious sort of secularism that has been practiced in many quarters of the Muslim world.

genuine Muslims. They are proud of their religion and its teachings. At the same time, they realize that Islam, like any other religion, should not be forced on people. Religion is a matter of choice, and is always open to varying interpretations, schools of thought and degrees of piety. Muslim democrats do understand that it is against the will of God to try to force anyone to practice a faith, or to interfere with the way that any religion is practiced.

Furthermore, Muslim democrats

believe that the Qur'an is indeed the word of God, but that it is interpreted and practiced by people and not by saints. They comprehend that there is always room for differences of opinion, and that no one can claim to represent God on earth. Muslim democrats are therefore willing to abide by the rule of the majority and respect the rights of minorities.

Today, more than ever, there is a need to adapt the ideals and principles of Islam to the ever-changing needs of society. This process, achieved through the use of reason on which the Prophet Muhammad himself placed such great emphasis, is well rooted in Islamic jurisprudence but has not been practiced for the last 500 years. It is not a coincidence that the Muslim world has been lagging behind other cultures for the last several centuries — after being one of the most open, most developed, and most tolerant civilizations for a thousand years before that. When one closes one's mind, or begins to blindly imitate others or previous generations, one is surely destined to regress.

There is no question that Islam and democracy are compatible. Likewise, there is no doubt that a new, modern and democratic interpretation of Islam is needed to solve the endemic problems of the Muslim world. The European Union has played a positive role in nudging Turkey toward real democracy. Americans need to understand what ought to be one major lesson of the September 11 attacks: namely, that support for dictators and oppressive regimes in the Islamic world is a recipe for disaster.

Today there is a pressing need for the United States to support genuine Muslim democrats everywhere, who will prove among our most important allies in the on-going quest for a more stable and more prosperous world.

Dr. Radwan Masmoudi is founder and president of CSID. This article was published by [Forward.com](http://www.forward.com) and [Beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)

American Muslims and Scholars denounce Terrorism

On September 9, 2002, CSID along with several prominent American Muslims, organizations, and scholars issued the following statement denouncing violence and terrorism, especially in the name of Islam, a religion of peace and justice. The statement was issued on the eve of the first anniversary of the tragedy of Sept. 11, and was signed by 205 prominent American Muslims, and scholars of Islam from all over the world.

As American Muslims and scholars of Islam, we wish to restate our conviction that peace and justice constitute the basic principles of the Muslim faith. We wish again to state unequivocally that neither the al-Qaeda organization nor Usama bin Laden represents Islam or reflects Muslim beliefs and practice. Rather, groups like al-Qaeda have misused and abused Islam in order to fit their own radical and indeed anti-Islamic agenda. Usama bin Laden and al-Qaeda's actions are criminal, misguided and counter to the true teachings of Islam. We call on people of all faiths not to judge Islam by the actions of a few.

We believe in justice and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. We are convinced that security for Israel can only be achieved by justice for Palestinians. Today, a modicum of justice requires the establishment of an independent Palestinian state through the exercise of Palestinian self-determination. We believe that the continued occupation of Palestinian territories, and Israel's repeated disregard of international law, have made life in the occupied territories unbearable. We say most clearly, however, that the killing of innocent civilians, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, is always wrong and is forbidden in Islamic law and ethics. Illegitimate means can never be justified by a desirable or noble goal.

On this first anniversary of the tragedy of September 11, we call on all people of conscience to denounce violence and to work peacefully for the creation of a better world. We also urge our government leaders to work for peace, justice, liberty, and democracy around the globe.

For a complete list of the signatures, please go to:

http://www.islam-democracy.org/terrorism_statement.asp

RAMADAN MUBARAK

May God (Allah) accept our good deeds, forgive our sins and shortcomings, and help us build a more peaceful and a more tolerant world. We especially pray for the poor, the hungry, and the oppressed, so that they may find peace and the blessings of Allah.



Erdogan/Gül Team Pass First Critical Test

Avis Asiye Allman

Independent Scholar & CSID Fellow

It was November 3, election night in Turkey. At AK party central headquarters in Ankara, the celebration had begun. Outside on the streets, a large screen reported the voting results by regions. Quite early in the evening, it became apparent that only two parties would pass the 10% threshold. AK party would be able to form a single party majority government.

Starting around 9 p.m., the men in the streets began dancing to the theme music of AK party. The party flags waved as the men danced in circles with joy and passion in their hearts. Surrounding the men and off to the sides, the women also



In front of the AKP headquarters on election night, men

danced and waved flags, perhaps a little more muted in physical terms, but certainly not in spirit.

At midnight, on a large screen, AK party chairman, Tayyip Recep Erdogan, addresses the crowd live from Istanbul. Formally acknowledging the extent of the AK party victory, the crowd goes wild with cheers, shouts and more dancing. Tayyip reflects

the popular will of the unemployed and working poor of Turkey. He gives them hope for a better future.

Shortly afterwards, Abdullah Gül, AK party deputy chairman and second in command, addresses the crowd from Ankara. In total contrast, the crowd goes suddenly silent and serious. Everyone is listening intently to what Gül is saying. One senses the people instinctively understand the man addressing them will be their next Prime Minister.

The victory clearly belongs to AK party leader, Tayyip, but he cannot claim his victory since he was disqualified from the election. Only an elected deputy can become Prime Minister. The people of Turkey want Tayyip as their Prime Minister. The will of the people demand an immediate solution. Somehow the laws must be changed, so Tayyip can claim his prize.

Tayyip, his loyal AK party deputy leaders, the Muslim business and media community struggle to overcome the emotion and the passion of the issue. The party system- the central executive board crunches away to find the right solution. Finally, Tayyip goes to President Sezer with his first choice for Prime Minister, Abdullah Gül, a political man experienced in foreign relations, economics and the Turkish central bureaucratic system. Perhaps, the only question for the deep secular community lies in the fact his wife is headscarved. What about the official functions? A

headscarf remains sensitive at this high level of government.

President Sezer showed remarkable wisdom. He ignored the headscarf sensitivity and accepted Tayyip's first choice. A path towards reconciliation and dialogue has been opened by Sezer's decision paving the road for constitutional



...and women were celebrating.

changes which will allow Tayyip to take his rightful place as Prime Minister.

In the meantime, Turkey has a

“President Sezer showed remarkable wisdom. He ignored the headscarf sensitivity and accepted Tayyip’s first choice.”

powerful, qualified duo team to lead it into the future.

On September 17, 1796, George Washington- first President of the United States, delivered his farewell address to his cabinet. “*The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the constitution which at any time exists till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.*”

Secularity in Islam

Prof. Abdulaziz Sachedina
CSID Director

One of the underlying presuppositions in Western democracies is to separate the realm of religion from the state. By secularizing the domain of religion, this goal is achieved in the public square. Yet, it must be clarified that the efforts are geared towards disestablishment of the institution that purports to represent “divine interests” in society and tries to impose these interests by seeking a privileged position in the working of the state. The model adopted today in the West is founded upon this experience of the constant “church” interference in the working of a pluralistic Christian society, with numerous sects and denominations claiming the right to speak on behalf of The Church of God. Democratic freedoms can be guaranteed only when the public square is free of this internal religious wrangling among competing claims of salvific efficacy of a particular tradition or brand of religiosity.

Let us take a close look at Islamic tradition and its ability or lack of it in handling this

situation in the Byzantine and Sassanian empires, which provided the Muslim empire with its model of managing the competition between the “spiritual” and “temporal” spheres. First of all, it is important to remember that Islam dismantled priesthood and human claim to represent divine entitlements (*haqq Allah*) through the administration of sacraments. The Prophet shunned any priestly functions or “church” leadership as part of his commission. This fact became the cornerstone for the institutionalization of “secularity” in the Shariah itself. The Shariah carefully divided the jurisdictions into two major parts of Muslim praxis: (1) the God-human relationship (the *Ibadat*) in which the state had no power to enforce and provide sanctions if the obligations were not carried out and (2) Inter-human relations (the *Muamalat*) in which the state had the obligation and with it the power to enforce the collective will for the betterment of corporate life in all its dimensions. Whereas the former (*Ibadat*) was strictly speaking the domain of God, the latter (*Muamalat*) was

the domain of human activities in society. In *Ibadat* Muslims were required to make the “intention” of *qurbatan ilallah* (to draw close to God), hence, rendering all their acts of *Ibada* for God only. In *Muamalat* Muslims were required to observe justice and fairness in their dealings with one another and with the larger human societies. However, let us keep in mind that both relationships were conducted as part of one’s total commitment to God’s will on earth. And, yet, the freedom of religion and conscience was recognized in the matters of God-human relationship. This “secularity” to a large extent was responsible for the relative success of Islamic civilization in fostering some sense of “citizenry” that democracy requires as its prime goal in a civil society.

If we enter the question of democracy from the point of “secularity” that is observed in the normative Islamic teaching in the Qur’an itself, then we can, perhaps with necessary confidence assert that democracy (that accountability of governments to the governed, regardless of their religious affiliation) in its essential meaning can be part of the political program of Muslim societies. It is important to remember what the Prophet said: “A government (mulk) or authority with disbelief shall last, whereas a government with injustice shall not.”

Judaism and Islam in Yemen

Introductory remarks by Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, President of CSID, at the “Judaism and Islam in Yemen” conference, organized on Sunday, Oct. 27, 2002 by the Institute of Semitic Studies at Princeton University, and co-sponsored by CSID.

It is a pleasure to be with you today in this conference concerning Muslim-Jewish relations in Yemen. In these very difficult and trying times for both Jews and Muslims, not only in the Holy Lands but throughout the world, it is especially important to remind ourselves that relations between Muslims and Jews need not be this bad or this tense.

True and careful study of history will reveal that not only in Yemen, as we will hear today, but also in North Africa, in Muslim Spain, in Turkey, and throughout

the Middle East, Muslims and Jews have lived together in peace and harmony for hundreds of years. So, if we have done it in the past, we can certainly do it again in the present and in the future.

We Muslims, Christians, and Jews are all believers in the same God, and Arabs and Jews are both Semites. In that sense, we are all truly children of Abraham. So, my dear brothers and sisters, let us be united in worshiping only one God — our creator — and in being fair and just to each other. Let us remember that an injustice against a single human being is an injustice against us all, and an affront to God, our Creator. God has placed us in different tribes and peoples and has given us different languages and religions so that we may know each other, may relate to each other, and may compete in goodness and in service to each



other and to God.

My dear brothers and sisters, we are very saddened over what happened to Jews in Germany during the Second World War. The Holocaust was a crime against humanity, and we deeply regret that we, as Muslims and as Arabs, were not in a position to help or defend Jews against those horrible crimes. But, remember please, the Holocaust took place in Europe, not in the Arab or Muslim world. Our history with you as Jews, as Children of Israel, and as followers of our prophet Moses, is a history of love, of compassion, and of mutual respect. When the Muslims were defeated in Spain in the

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CSID Organizes Workshops in

Morocco, Egypt, and Yemen

Introduction

When CSID set off last February to establish a Muslim Democrats Network in the Arab Region, we did not anticipate the excitement and level of engagement it would generate. We found Islamists and secularists alike endorsing democracy enthusiastically. They all, however, warn against cookie-cutter approaches to democracy, and call for a form of pluralism that accounts for local identity, culture, and faith, and educational reforms that teach democracy and tolerance as a way of life.

Although groups that we in the West identify as “secularists” endorsed secularism in as much as they opposed theocracy, they consistently hesitated to be identified as such. In the three countries we visited they preferred to be called nationalists, liberals, or leftists. Secularism in the Arab World seems to carry a stigma they would rather avoid.

At the conception of this project, CSID realized that the calamity of the September 11 terrorist attacks shocked Muslims all over the world. It underscored the dire conditions in the Arab World and the urgent need for democratic reforms in Muslim countries. There are Islamists who favor a modern interpretation of their religion and liberal attitudes on dialogue and development and they are increasing

in numbers. Yet, they lack the coordination and support necessary to project this view in Muslim countries. Although these liberal “Islamists” are perceived to be part of the main body of the Islamic movement, their viewpoint receives neither support nor encouragement from traditional and/or political groups. Moreover, liberal Islamists who share with secular democrats a wide range of concerns



Some of the participants in the Casablanca workshop.

including the lack of democracy in Muslim countries and the abuse of religion by radical elements, have not yet developed a meaningful public dialogue to address these widespread concerns.

Muslims in Europe and America have been contributing to the democracy debate in Muslim countries. In addition to their knowledge of Islam and acquaintance of Muslim concerns, they have also experienced liberal democracies and argue in favor of democracy, human rights and

pluralism. The Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), an American non-profit membership based organization, believes that promoting a debate between liberal Islamists and other democrats on an interpretation of Islam, which is modern and compatible with universal human rights, pluralism and democracy, will strengthen democrats in their struggle against extremism and authoritarianism.

With financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy, CSID selected three Arab countries that had a tradition of multi-party system, and a distinctive Islamist and secular tradition. Morocco, Egypt, and Yemen presented the best opportunity and cooperative local partners. CSID embarked on the project with the following objectives:

- To foster cooperation among democrats in the region.
- To promote an interpretation of Islam, which is modern and compatible with universal human rights, pluralism and democracy.
- To provide a platform for democrats, both Islamists and secularists, to address mutual concerns about democracy and Islam.

CSID, in partnership with local organizations, held three, two-day workshops on the theme of, “Compatibility of Islam and Democracy.” The workshops provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, sharing experiences, and developing a strategy to address shared concerns in Muslim countries. In Morocco, CSID coordinated the workshop with Dr. Mokhtar Benabdalloui, and the Citizenship forum, an organization working on civic education in Morocco. In Egypt, CSID co-organized the meeting with Mr.

Bahieydeen Hassan, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights, a leading advocate for democracy and pluralism. In Yemen, CSID worked with Mr. Ahmad Al-Soufi, and the Yemeni Institute for Development of Democracy, a leading NGO that is respected by government and opposition alike.

The workshops participants included leaders from the government, opposition and civil society. In Yemen, for example, attendees included Dr. Abdulkarim al-Iryani, former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and current Secretary General of the General People's Congress (GPC), Yemen's ruling Party. Attendees also included Mr. Jarallah Omar, Deputy Secretary General of the Socialist Party, Mr. Abdulwahab al-Ansi, Deputy Secretary General of the Islah (Reform) Party, the main Islamist party, Mr. Mohammad Qahtan, head of Islah's politburo, as well as high level leaders of Nasserite, Baathist, and Union of Yemeni Popular Forces. In Morocco, speakers included Mr. Ahmed al-Raysouni, President of the Organization for Reform and Unity, Abdel-Ilah Belkaziz, president of the Center for Arab Thought, and Mohamed Sassi, National coordinator for Loyalty to Democracy. In Egypt, prominent speakers included Dr. Isam al-Aryane, leading member of the Muslim brotherhood, Hussein Abderazzak, political director of the leftist Tajamu party, and Heba Rauf Ezzat, a leading Muslim feminist.

CSID was represented by its Executive Director, Abdulwahab Alkebsi, two board members, Dr. Louis J. Cantori and Svend (Akram) White; and Dr. Sadek Jawad Sulaiman; an Omani philosopher and writer who served his country as Ambassador to Washington.

What is Democracy?

Islamists generally believed that even

though democracy was desirable, in fact, necessary, it could not be accepted or incorporated in Muslim societies entirely as instituted and practiced in the West. They believed that Western democracy was



deficient in areas of special interest to Muslims, such as social behavior and economic justice. Besides, they generally felt the West has not shown itself to be sufficiently democratic in relation to the rights of the non-Western world. Islam to them is essentially democratic, although Muslims have historically failed to practice democracy. Challenged now by the West, Muslims can revive shura, and fashion their version of democratic (shura) governance guided largely by indigenous Islamic values.

Non-Islamists emphasized the importance of democracy in contemporary societies. Only through democratic governance could political stability, economic progress, and social equity be achieved and sustained. The Western democratic practices are meritorious and well proven for their beneficial results, particularly in maintaining rule of law, protecting civil rights and civil liberties, and providing representative yet stable government. Western democracy as such was worthy of consideration and emulation.

Universal Values?

The Islamists were not radical or militant. They were open to different

outlooks and arguments. Every now and then, they would listen attentively and even concede on an issue at hand. For example, in Casablanca, when a non-Islamist suggested the need to synchronize

Islamic values with universal values, an Islamist countered that the term "universal values" was being used as a ploy for "Western" values. However, in later conversations he concurred that the "universal" transcended any given religion or culture, and ought to be the final arbiter of all ideas, Eastern and Western, religious and secular.

Non-Islamists were not diehard secularists. They were not entirely opposed to Islam playing an enlightening role in the promotion of democracy in Muslim societies. They were modernists, convinced that democracy was essential to political harmony and socioeconomic development. There were ultra-modernists who verged on the secular but would not explicitly cross over to formal secularism. It was interesting to hear some of them quote the Quran to make their case. For example, in Sana'a, one prominent non-Islamist leader quoted five Qura'nic verses to affirm religious freedom as a basic human right.

This leader then pointed to two specific inconsistencies in the Islamists' position. While advocating reopening the gate of Ijtihad (innovative jurisprudence), the Islamists then slam it shut by insisting there could be no Ijtihad where an explicit text exists. The text, rather than any jurisprudential interpretation, would then be the controlling authority. And while advocating diversity and freedom, some Islamists would punish by death any Muslim who opts out of Islam, even though no such penalty is postulated in the Qur'an. He bitterly criticized the state of democracy among Arabs and Muslims. It was a state of stagnation in which the rulers and the opposition remained perpetually in place.

Democracy had become a shell without substance, responsive to outside demands and dismissive of internal needs. A crisis pervades the entire Arab and Muslim world, begging for frank discussion and practical solutions. Islamists and modernists must come together in addressing this crisis and dealing with its challenges.

A path to the future:

The Islamists generally argued that Islam could offer sound and effective direction to national life. Constitutionalism and representative governance were well rooted within the Islamic sociopolitical perspective, having for their basis not only Islam's ethical imperatives of justice, equality, and the dignity of man, but also well-established legal precepts embedded within the Sharia proper.

All issues –according to the Islamists— of social, economic, and political



Some of the participants in the Cairo workshop.

significance must first be reconciled with Islamic teachings. Islamic stipulations in turn need to be made more compatible with Islamic ethics. The core principles of justice, equality, shura, and human dignity must govern all decisions. To emphasize this point, the Prophet was twice quoted characterizing his mission as one of completing the moral code.

Within those parameters there was no

holding back. For example, in Sanaa, a leading Islamist asserted there was no way out of the existing backward and confused



Opening session of the Cairo workshop.

state of affairs but through reforming the political process, reining in despotic tendencies, upholding freedom as an indivisible value, and adopting democracy as an institutionalized expression of freedom, “above whose voice no voice should be allowed to rise.” Making democracy part of the national environment would raise people’s consciousness of

the merits of the democratic process and make reform less costly and difficult. All claims by either secularists or Islamists that Islam and democracy are incompatible are baseless. “We neither add anything to Islam nor subtract something from democracy when we

marry the two. We are not interested in compatibility per se. What we really want is to make democracy an integral part of the Islamic way of life.”

There were common principles between Islam and democracy, such as respect for individual rights, liberty, equality, rejection of absolute power, limiting the role of the state, and supremacy of the law. Even if these

principles have found better and more modern applications in the West, Muslims may – and should- adopt them to their benefit. As a matter of doctrine, there is nothing in Islam that prevents Muslims from borrowing a useful idea, theory, or practical solution from non-Muslims.

Another Islamist called for an Islamic revival that would make democracy a national imperative. The Islamic version of democracy, however, would avoid the pitfalls of liberal democracy, namely, excessive individual liberty and the lack of social justice. The fact that democracy is more widely identified with secularism should not be of concern to the Islamists. Islam too can find its purposes fulfilled through democratic governance.

Participants were genuinely interested in improving their national political process through collective effort, institutional advocacy, and public discourse. A consensus emerged that democratization was the only fair and viable way to end longstanding political disputed, economic hardships, and intellectual and social malaise. In short, democracy would induce a qualitative change in the modalities of national politics, thereby giving a sound and effective direction to the national enterprise.

Consensus and common objectives:

While differences between the Islamists and the non-Islamists were vigorously argued back and forth, they did not effectively mar the consensus. In fact, as the debate progressed, the rhetoric seemed to cool noticeably, giving rise to a more mature and disciplined exchange.

Participants had high hopes of democratic evolution. The economic

conditions are bad enough now; they would get much worse without democratization. Accountability to the people through regular elections would discipline politicians and keep the government focused on national interest. As such, democracy is desired not only for its moral and ethical value, but also as a practical tool to clean out corruption, provide sound governance, and improve economic conditions.

Though ostensibly sensitive to foreign interference, our hosts at the three cities seemed to welcome earnest outside help. They appreciated our interest, as American Muslims, in their political discourse, and were more than willing to listen to what we had to say.

Clearly, there is a great thirst for democracy in the Arab world. Both Islamists and non-Islamists desire democratic governance. Their differences are not entirely unbridgeable. Their discourse is not altogether unproductive. But they lack experience in the democratic process. Their deliberations, though promising, need greater focus and consistency. Sympathetic American organizations can help and guide. We are hopeful that the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy will remain engaged. The participants in the three cities developed recommendations and specific programs to help develop democracy in their countries and the region. CSID will include these recommendations in an extensive report we plan to publish in the near future. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

Children & Islam: Faith and Social Change in Africa and Southeast Asia April 10 -12, 2003

Send a one-page abstract to: Acacia Nikoi, Conference Coordinator, Center for International Studies, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701 USA or by e-mail: nikoi@ohio.edu

Community of Democracies Forum in Seoul, Korea

Newly-appointed Executive Director of CSID, Abdulwahab Alkebsi, attended the Community of Democracies Non-Governmental Forum held in Seoul, Korea, on November 10-12, 2002. The Forum is an initiative of independent groups to strengthen international collaboration in the promotion of democracy and to make recommendations to the governmental assembly of the Community of Democracies. The Forum in Seoul brought together a diverse group of approximately 300 representatives of democracy support organizations, civil society, trade unions, the business commu-



Panel on MENA was moderated by CSID

The Forum consisted of different topical groups including *Corruption and Democracy, Education for Democracy, Local Government and Democracy, Media and Democracy, and Gender and Democracy*. The strategy sessions

were divided into regional working groups to assess major problems. These regional groups included *Europe/Russia, Middle East/North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia/Caucasus, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, and the*

Americas. CSID chaired the Middle East/North Africa Regional Working Group, which, in addition to the dire situation in Palestine and Iraq, included lively debates on the region's need for a more vigorous effort towards democracy in the region. The panel discussions focused on the elevated sense of urgency for a moderate discourse that integrates democracy with Islam and would present an indigenous solution to the people of the region, assist in the abatement of extremism and terrorism, and promote transitions towards genuine democracy. ■



Participants at the NGO meeting included more than 250 people from 57 countries.

nity, political leaders and other democracy experts.

The opening speech on Sunday was given by Korea's President, Dae-jung Kim, followed by Kwan Yong Park, the Speaker of the Korean National Assembly. Speakers at the Forum included Madeleine Albright (Former U.S. Secretary of State), George Soroush (Chairman, Open Society Institute), Jose Ramos Horta (Minister of Foreign Affairs, East Timor), and Carl Gershman (President, National Endowment for Democracy).

JINNAH ON DEMOCRACY AND ISLAM IN PAKISTAN

Sultan Mahmood

Quaid- I- Azam University Islamabad

Both democracy and Islam played a vital role in the creation of Pakistan. Pakistan's founder Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared on January 13, 1948 in his speech at Peshawar that: "We did not demand Pakistan simply to have a piece of land but we wanted a laboratory where we could experiment with Islamic principles."

In 1947, Pakistan inherited this two-fold legacy i.e. democracy and Islam. Just after its creation, a debate started about the relationship between Islam and democracy. Keeping in view Europe's experience of religious government during medieval period, some people thought that Pakistan would be a theocratic state. This misconception was removed by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He said: "Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state to be ruled by priests with a divine mission." He clearly stated that Pakistan would be an Islamic

We need your help!

CSID was founded in 1999, to promote democracy, tolerance, and freedom in the Muslim world and to build better relations and understanding between the United States and the Muslim world. We need your moral and financial support to succeed.

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Democratic state. During a speech on February 14, 1948, he said: "Let us lay the foundations of our democracy on the basis of truly Islamic ideals and principle. Our Almighty has taught us that our decisions in the affairs of the state shall be guided by discussion and consultation."

Jinnah clarified that Islam and democracy are compatible. On 14th August 1947, he declared: "In reality we had learnt democracy 1300 years ago. When you talk about democracy. I doubt that you have not studied Islam."

On the future constitution of Pakistan he expressed his viewpoint in detail in his recorded interview to a foreign journalist in February 1948. He said: "I am sure that it (Constitution) will be democratic type embodying the essential principles of Islam. Today they are as applicable in actual life as they were 1300 years ago. Islam and its idealism have taught us democracy. It has taught equality of man, justice and fair play to everybody."

Pakistan's constituent Assembly translated his ideas into reality no March 12, 1949. When it passed Objectives Resolution, which determined basic objectives of the Constitution of the country. It stated: "Wherein the sovereignty over the universe belongs to Allah alone and the authority, which He has delegated to the state of Pakistan through its people for being exercised within the limits prescribed by Him, is a sacred trust."

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late 15th century, many Jews from Spain elected to follow the fleeing Moors into North Africa and other parts of the Muslim world, where Jews — with rare exceptions — had always been treated with respect, honor, and dignity.

My dear brothers and sisters, the struggle in the Middle East between Jews and Palestinians is a political struggle, not a religious war. Let us work together to stop this senseless violence so that Jews, Muslims, and Christians can live in peace, in harmony, and in dignity. If we are sincere, and I pray and hope we are, then peace is not that hard. Without peace, we have no future. Therefore, peace is not an option; it is an imperative. We have lived together peacefully in the past, and we can do so again.

The children of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael reunited at last. Now, that's a dream worth fighting for. ■

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religious studies at the University of Virginia and author of "The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism," criticized "the constant effort in our communities . . . to obstruct the mind to think." He called for a new approach in religious education so that Islam's sacred texts can be read with new meaning. "When minds become closed, the text becomes closed," Sachedina said. "But when the mind becomes open, the text becomes open."

The fourth panelist was Grover Norquist, a Republican Party activist and president of Americans for Tax Reform. Norquist, a liaison between the White House and the Muslim community, said calls for political reform in the Muslim world should not be undermined by attacks on Islam itself. ■

Mark your Calendar!

Muhammad: The Legacy of a Prophet

A great documentary film, *Muhammad: The Legacy of a Prophet*, is scheduled for a national broadcast on all PBS stations, **Wednesday, December 18, 2002**. The film tells the story of Muhammad through scholars and American Muslims. It is a compelling story that describes the impact his life has on Muslims today. You will hear from a NY firefighter, a congressional chief of staff, a nurse in Detroit, MI and others about their lives as American Muslims. **Don't miss it.**



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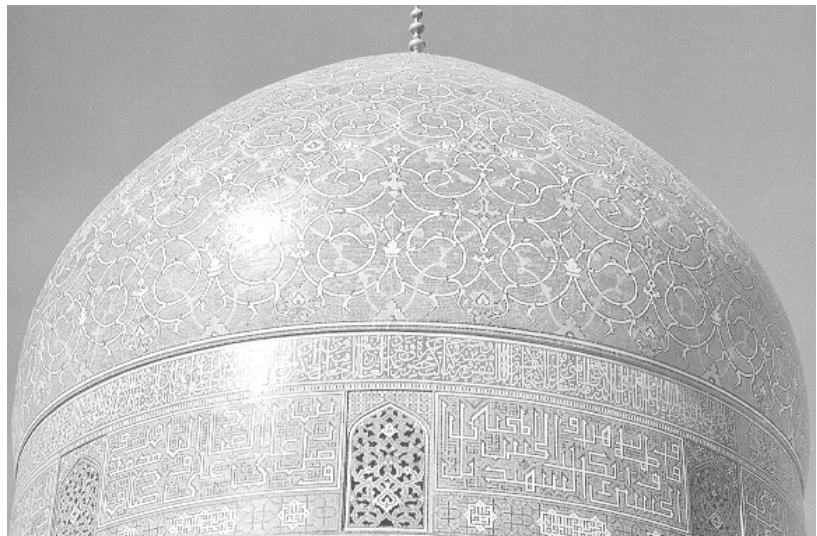
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Objectives of CSID

- ◆ 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.

Serious Talk About Faith Flourishes in Wake of 9/11

By Caryle Murphy
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two recent meetings in Washington — one hosted by Muslims and the other by a Jewish congregation —

question, “Does Islam Need a Reformation?” The four panelists, speaking at a center fundraising dinner at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, agreed that Muslims here and abroad need to reform their education institutions, theological studies and political systems.



CSID Panel on Islamic Reformation.

Akbar S. Ahmed, a former Pakistani diplomat who holds the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University, said many Muslim societies are “in a state of disequilibrium” because of unrepresentative governments. There is a need, he added, for Muslims to highlight their faith’s traditional stress on mercy and compassion.

Judith Kipper, director of the Middle East Program at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies, described “a massive, massive clash of misunderstanding” between

illustrate the heightened interest in exploring theological issues generated by the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

American and Muslim societies. This imposes an obligation on moderate Muslims to forcefully condemn Muslims engaged in religiously based violence, she said. “Keeping your head down,” Kipper said, “won’t work anymore.”

The first was a panel discussion on Saturday — sponsored by the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, a three-year-old Muslim think tank — on the

Abdulaziz Sachedina, a professor of
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