

BUILDING A SHARED FUTURE:

ISLAM, KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION

A joint publication of the British Council's Our Shared Future project and the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge



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University of Cambridge
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About the Publishers

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British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We work in over 100 countries in the arts, education, society and English. The Our Shared Future project, based in the US, aims to improve the public conversation about Muslims and intercultural relations in the US and Europe. Our Shared Future is supported in large part by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The related Our Shared Europe project, a partner in convening the conference held in Cambridge, creates opportunities to discuss and share perspectives on diversity, migration, community cohesion, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue in contemporary Europe.

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IT'S TIME TO FILL THE
GAP BETWEEN ACADEMIC
EXPERTISE AND PUBLIC
KNOWLEDGE OF MUSLIMS
AND ISLAM.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, debates on the role of religion in the public space, migration, social cohesion and other issues have revealed increasing social tensions and polarisation in public opinion. Misperceptions and misinformation often dominate public dialogue about relations between Muslims and others. Although they don't speak with the loudest voice, academics, scholars and thought leaders have a key role to play in helping to rebalance these debates by providing fact-based opinion and informed arguments.

In March 2012, the Our Shared Future and Our Shared Europe programmes in the British Council and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies (CIS) at the University of Cambridge invited seventy scholars, civil society leaders, journalists and other influencers to the University's Møller Centre for three days of discussion, training and collaboration in a conference titled 'Acknowledging a Shared Past to Build a Shared Future: Rethinking Muslim/non-Muslim Relations'.

One of the key objectives of this conference was to help fill the gap between academic expertise and public knowledge of cross-cultural relations involving Muslims. Participants broke into discussion groups around five themes to pinpoint new, more inclusive narratives to reshape the conversation about intercultural relations. They explored areas of research and partnerships among institutions in the US, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa that can help shed light on deep connections between Muslim and non-Muslim societies in the fields of culture, the arts, humanities and science. Rounding out these discussions, participants had the opportunity to work with media professionals to develop effective messaging and gain practical skills to improve their engagement with online, print and broadcast media.

The essays that follow reflect the ideas that participants arrived at the conference with as well as the conversations that ensued throughout its three days. We have produced four books covering each of the themes undertaken at Cambridge: *The Power of Words and Images; Islam, Knowledge and Innovation; Citizenship and Identity and Religion, Politics and the Public Sphere*.

While those who came together in Cambridge strive to take forward the ideas and opportunities that arose from the conference, we invite our readers to take up new calls to action and engage in dialogue informed by the arguments set forth in the following pages. We owe deep gratitude to our partners in organising the conference: the Carnegie Corporation of New York; the Association of Muslim Social Scientists; the Woolf Institute and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World at the University of Edinburgh.

To access the companion books in this series and explore further resources on improving the public conversation about civilisation, identity and religion, please visit www.oursharedfuture.org.

- Dr Emmanuel Kattan, Project and Partnerships Manager, Our Shared Future, British Council
- Prof Yasir Suleiman, Founding Director, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge

June 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the fields of maths, culture, the arts, humanities and science, the contributions of Muslim societies and scholars are vast. As Professor Carole Hillenbrand notes in her essay, 'What the East taught the West', 'In mathematics, words like algebra and logarithm...and our system of numbers, down to the concept of zero itself, [are] inherited from the Arabs.' Despite the pioneering breakthroughs of Muslim and Arab scholars in these fields, the history of 'Western' achievements is often written with hardly any reference to the influence of other societies.

The working group focusing on Islam, knowledge and innovation discussed these incomplete views of history whilst attempting to answer how such reductionist misconceptions could be addressed. Although the topic of the conversation progressed to many other areas, the working group addressed four questions.

- What are some innovative ways of improving public knowledge of Muslim/non-Muslim interactions, exchanges and cross-influence in the fields of science, the arts, and humanities, historically and in the present time?
- How can a deeper knowledge of the common historical roots shared by Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultures lead to a better understanding of the rich and complex identities that make up European and American societies today?
- How can academic knowledge of shared histories and common cultural roots permeate our understanding of the world today and influence current debates in relevant ways?

Discussion at the conference centered upon an intriguing question: 'What would be most likely to interest a 10- to 12-year-old boy or girl, in whom we wished to encourage an interest in a broader approach to history?' The panel identified some subjects that could highlight the intercultural dialogue that benefited 'Western' progress. Such ideas included, but were not limited to, travellers, alphabets, food and architecture. Activities promoting these subjects could lead to intriguing new educational opportunities for youth in many parts of the world.

Many of the participants' papers that follow focus on how best to counteract the misinformation often propagated about Islam. Professor Elma Dizdar presses us to 'enable the public to form their perceptions of other cultures, nations and religions based on their own experience rather than on information...[from] voices that do not necessarily reflect understanding.' Shahed Amanullah focuses on roles that innovation can play in cultural integration. He advocates three tactics to promote such integration: public service among Muslim communities, exploring the religious diversity of Muslims, cultivating Muslim voices on issues of common concern. In another paper, Martin Rose links the events of the so-called 'Arab Spring' to what he calls 'The Western Spring': 'Tahrir Square created an idiom with a very clear message: Young people have lost patience with their elders and with the politics of the older generation.' According to Rose, it is this that the young people of Zuccotti Park, St Paul's, Tahrir and the Pearl Roundabout were organising to oppose.

In direct response to many 'Western' history books, Dr Josef Meri calls for a re-evaluation of the role of Islamic civilisation in Europe: 'A greater public awareness of the contribution of Islamic civilisation to understanding Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations in Europe...is now more urgent than ever.' Carole Hillenbrand investigates two related aspects in her paper: 'the extent of the Muslim contribution to global civilisation, particularly Western culture; and how the details and implications of that contribution can

be brought to wider attention in the West.' George Saliba delves into the history of Islam in science and mathematics, offering insight into how it promoted intercultural dialogue and prosperity.

This summary, of course, only touches on a select few of the essays submitted by our participants. Throughout the collection you will note an urgent need to amend the lack of notoriety given to Muslim progress – especially how it relates to 'Western' progress. However, you will also note that our participants have well-researched and specific suggestions of how to overcome this. There is a real chance to reframe this discussion and the following papers offer some fascinating possibilities of how we can do so.

— *Paul Newall, Project Assistant, Our Shared Future, British Council*





ISLAM, KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION: SOME BASIC DEFINITIONS

BY HUGH GODDARD

'Knowledge' and 'innovation' are two words that are used often in the context of issues connected with Islam, but there is not always complete agreement as to their meaning. Regarding knowledge, firstly, there is the often-quoted *Hadith* (saying) of Muhammad that Muslims should seek knowledge, even in China. The authenticity of the latter part of the saying, the reference to China, is disputed, but there is hardly any dispute about the former, the value of knowledge.

Religion is sometimes highly distrustful of innovation.

The Arabic word '*ilm*', however, now bears two meanings. On the one hand, it can be translated into English as 'knowledge', and on the other hand, it can be rendered as 'science'. If it is being used in the latter sense, it can have a plural, '*ulum*', 'sciences', but, as in English, this does not work if the word is being used in the sense of 'knowledge'. You cannot have 'knowledges', in other words, but you can have 'sciences', in English as in Arabic. Common Arabic usage thus speaks of '*ilm al-ijtima'a*', sociology, '*ilm al-hayat*', biology, '*ilm al-kalam*', theology, '*ulum al-din*', the sciences of religion and so on.

In a western context, 'knowledge' is now commonly used to refer to things that are empirically verifiable, according to the principles of 'the scientific method'. This is the dominant approach adopted in the sciences so that in chemistry, geology etc., evidence is collected, theories are worked out and these are then tested, often at considerable cost, until a consensus is reached as to whether any

particular theory holds water. Thus, the theory that the surface of the earth consists of a series of tectonic plates that move is now generally accepted among geologists, although it was only proposed around fifty years ago.

This is the way in which 'knowledge' is generally used with reference to material things, particularly in physics. Is there, however, a different kind of knowledge, relating to different areas of life, *metaphysics*? Is there a different kind of spiritual knowledge, as well as and alongside material knowledge? This is the argument of, among others, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his *Knowledge and the Sacred*, his Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1980 and 1981, and published by Edinburgh University Press in 1981. His suggestion essentially is that there is a 'sacred' science, relating to eternity and the cosmos, alongside what risks becoming 'scientism', an understanding of science that rules out any wider, more transcendent, understanding of the word.

Innovation, secondly, is then also a word that is used in very different ways in different contexts. The Arabic word usually used as its equivalent, *bid'a*, is also difficult to translate because of its different connotations. Scientific innovation is thus almost universally understood to be good, with the highest institution of government in the United Kingdom, the Cabinet, including within its membership a Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills (whose responsibilities include universities as part of his brief). Similarly, in a different context, KAUST, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, just outside Jeddah, has an 'Innovation Center', a Technology Transfer and Innovation Center, and

in general terms advertises itself in the following terms on its website: ‘With its pioneering spirit and mission of *innovation* (my emphasis), KAUST attracts faculty, staff, and students who are themselves pioneers’.

Religion, by contrast, is sometimes highly distrustful of innovation. Bernard Lewis, many years ago in an article on the significance of heresy in Islam, drew attention to another *Hadith* (saying) of Muhammad that every novelty is an innovation and every innovation is an error. The converse of *bid'a*, on this view, is therefore *sunna*, custom, the following of which is good. Islam may thus appear to be inherently a conservative, rather than an innovative, tradition.

Nuh Ha Mim Keller, an American convert to Islam, however, provides a more nuanced and subtle view in a short pamphlet entitled ‘The concept of *bid'a* in the Islamic Shari'a'. The main thesis of the pamphlet is that the ‘innovation of misguidance’ is not the same as innovation *per se*, and he suggests that there are in fact five categories of innovation, which he calls the ‘obligatory’ (e.g. classifying hadith using philosophical arguments to refute the ideas of sectarian groups such as the Mu'tazila and recording the Qur'an), ‘unlawful’ (e.g. non-Islamic taxes or giving positions of authority to those unqualified to exercise them), ‘recommended’ (e.g. building hostels and schools of Islamic law, in-depth studies of Arabic linguistics, Sufi recitations or commemorating the birthday of the prophet Muhammad), ‘offensive’ (e.g. ornately embellishing mosques and decorating the Qur'an) and ‘permissible’ (e.g. sifting flour, using spoons or developing more enjoyable food, drink and housing).

This categorisation will sound very familiar to anyone who has any degree of knowledge of Shari'a (Islamic Law), as these categories of *bid'a* correspond precisely to the five categories of action that are used with respect to almost every action in the standard textbooks on the subject.

The practical consequences of this more nuanced view are also interesting as seen, for example, in the National Museum in Riyadh, where the exhibits display no unease with showing the latest discoveries of the ‘hard’

sciences, including the theory of tectonic plates, the geology section of the museum using exactly the same title as is used in Edinburgh, the ‘Dynamic Earth’, but there is complete avoidance of discussion of the latest thinking in the ‘life sciences’ (i.e. Biology etc.) because of its association with what is commonly understood to be either ‘unlawful’ or ‘offensive’ innovation; namely, the idea of evolution, which is seen as an unacceptable alternative to the idea of humanity being created by God.

One of the consequences of these different understandings of both ‘knowledge’ and ‘innovation’ is the emergence in many Muslim-majority societies of two quite separate systems of education, one dealing with ‘scientific’ knowledge—which encourages empirical research, the questioning of accepted truths and innovation (i.e. is in some sense forward-looking)—and the other ‘religious’, which encourages memorisation and the acceptance of inherited tradition and faithfulness to it and where innovation is treated with a much greater measure of suspicion (i.e. is in some sense backward-looking). Fazlur Rahman's book *Islam and Modernity*, first published in 1982, remains one of the most constructive attempts to address this issue.

— Hugh Goddard is director of the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh.



THE WESTERN SPRING¹

BY MARTIN ROSE

The events of the last year in North Africa and the Middle East have been dramatic and important and have certainly triggered huge changes. Some of these changes will stick; others will not. Not every new government that emerges from these upheavals will be better than its predecessor, nor every people happier. What's more, there are some governments that are trying conscientiously, and often successfully, to manage change in less abrupt and less dangerous ways. But beyond all this, what will we see when we look back on 2011, as the great underlying changes of thought, assumption and culture that have taken place behind the comings and goings of tin-pot dictators?

Consider Tahrir Square. A year ago, very few people in Europe had heard of Midan al-Tahrir, the busy, jostling, nondescript, honking space in the centre of Cairo where all roads cross. Today, the world has heard a great deal of it, and its name is heavy with resonances, well on the way to becoming a cliché. What we are seeing is a sudden discharge of ideas and symbols from the Middle East to the rest of the world—to Europe and the USA above all. Tahrir Square has become the touchstone of protest—the events there in January and February 2011 have become the epitome of youth-led, idealistic revolution. One estimate is that nine hundred occupations of urban public space have taken place in the West since last spring, most visibly perhaps that of Puerta del Sol by Spain's young indignados, from May 15 onwards. Some have been huge—Berlin, Lisbon, Zagreb, Brussels and others—some much smaller; some long lasting, some almost ephemeral. There have been Occupy protests in Dataran, Bath, Ulaanbaatar, Auckland, Santiago de Chile—in other words, right across the world.

Tahrir Square created an idiom with a very clear message: Young people have lost patience with their elders and with the politics of the older generation. They want a fresh start, without

hypocrisy and with popular consent. They are clean (morally if, after weeks in a public square, not always literally) and innocently single-minded, and their politics is about values and culture and change. Certainly, they want the basic necessities of life—decent education, jobs and the wherewithal to marry and raise families. But the core demands are for respect—and for hope. Every demonstration and camp around the world now picks up these features and is a conscious reiteration of them. It has taken time for coherent demands to emerge from the movements around the world, but they reflect the same demands: first of all, education, employment, respect and hope.

We can look forward to, and help to engineer, a future of much greater cultural equality in the post-post-colonial era.

If we are looking for the Highest Common Factor, we don't have to look very far: The outrage is about impotence. In North Africa, this focused upon military dictatorships and the hopelessness of huge numbers of excluded young people. In Europe and elsewhere in 'the West', it focused on the consequences of the financial crisis for young people—unemployment, huge education debts, inability to enter the housing market. Young people feel that they are suffering the consequences of their elders' sins and that the political systems of their own countries are unresponsive and incapable of delivering the radical change that many (and not just the young) see as necessary. In all cases, those appropriating the public spaces of the world's cities railed against arbitrary power exercised beyond their reach.

I'd like, though, to argue that there is something else in common. It's something that interests me a good deal, because in a strange and indirect way, the indignados of Puerta del Sol and the press managers in Tahrir Square are in the same business that I'm in; that's to say, cultural relations. This is all about people speaking over the heads of governments, directly to people. In institutions like the British Council, we use what is perhaps a simplistic typology of international communication: Diplomacy is what we call communication from government to government, public diplomacy is direct communication by a government to another people and cultural relations is direct communication from people to people.

Silent, retail uploads to the net, or blogs, or twitter-feeds, are all panicky recognitions of the power of the image that cannot easily be constrained.

It's precisely this last that the young people of Zuccotti Park, St Paul's, Tahrir, the Pearl Roundabout and countless other open spaces in the A-Zs of the world's cities have been up to. They want to talk across the heads of government to people around the world, and thanks to the amazing hand-held communication technology available to them, they can. Placards waved in Tunis are seen in Rio and Sydney and Delhi, just as the fuzzy cell-phone film clip of Mohamed Bouazizi setting fire to himself flashed around the Arab World on Al-Jazeera. It is not that official media are being by-passed (though they are); they are being ignored. The on-going struggles between governments in the MENA region and uncontrollable image-vectors like Al-Jazeera, or silent, retail uploads to the net, or blogs, or twitter-feeds, are all panicky recognitions of the power of the image that cannot easily be constrained—and perhaps cannot be constrained at all.

For much too long, many (but not all) European cultural institutions have treated the relationship between Europe and North Africa as one of

instruction, of demonstrating how things are—how they can be—done best. There has been a strong sense of cultural hierarchy, which in many quarters still exists. At a meeting recently of North African arts managers, I heard the message clearly iterated: Don't tell us what we want or what we need. Ask us, and listen to the answer: We know more than you do about our needs, our continent, our world.

And this, I think, is the nature of the opportunity. If (as a Moroccan courtier recently said to me) we are witnessing the last act of the post-colonial era, we can look forward to, and help to engineer, a future of much greater cultural equality in the post-post-colonial era—what I might call (in view of the terms I described a moment ago) real cultural relations. Actually, I'm not even sure that this future needs much engineering; we are living in it. The changes that have swept over the public face of a generation of young Arabs and Amazigh in the last year have also washed their European and North American contemporaries.

This is what I want us to hold on to. The strong conviction that we are seeing something new, something that can shift the cultural and ethical balance in important ways. An understanding that contributions to the future of our world don't come only from Europe. That there are new and virile memes on the loose. 'Ex Africa', as Pliny put it, 'semper aliquid novi'.

— Martin Rose is director of the British Council in Morocco.



ISLAMIC DISCOURSES IN CYBERSPACE: LESSONS FROM THE ARAB SPRING

BY SAHAR KHAMIS, PHD

The sweeping wave of radical political change that imposed itself on a number of Arab/Muslim countries lately, and which came to be widely referred to as the 'Arab Spring' or the 'Arab awakening', signifies the prominent role that new media, especially the Internet, played, and is still playing, in triggering these popular uprisings. These uprisings were largely characterised by the instrumental use of online social media, especially Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, by protesters to bring about political change and democratic transformation. These Internet-based communication tools acted as effective weapons for promoting civic engagement through supporting the capabilities of the democratic activists by allowing forums for free speech and political networking opportunities; providing a virtual space for assembly; and supporting the capability of the protestors to plan, organise and execute peaceful protests. Additionally, these new media avenues enabled an effective form of citizen journalism through providing forums for ordinary citizens to document the protests; to spread the word about on-going activities; to provide evidence of governmental brutality; and to disseminate their own words and images to each other and, most importantly, to the outside world through new media.

Do these sites play a divisive or an integrative role, or both, between different Muslim identities?

The Internet played a number of important roles during these uprisings. It provided forums for self-expression, channels for public mobilisation and avenues for mass organisation and acted

as a catalyst for change. Through magnifying and amplifying the voices of protest in the Arab/Muslim world and enabling the creation of effective political and communication networks, the Internet enabled the snowballing of these uprisings, both inside and across several countries.

This new wave of political upheavals compels us to consider not just the political struggle, but also the communication struggle that erupted between the people and their governments, leading to the creation of heated 'cyber wars', alongside equally heated political wars. In brief, it became equally important to analyse how people engaged in both a political struggle to impose their own agendas and ensure the fulfilment of their demands while at the same time engaging in a communication struggle to ensure that their authentic voices were heard and that their side of the story was told, thus asserting their will, exercising their agency and empowering themselves.

These newly emerging political and communication struggles in the Arab/Muslim world equally compel us to consider how Islamic discourses are created, shared, exchanged and modified in the age of cyberspace and how Muslim identities are, in turn, reconstructed and reshaped by this phenomenon, leading to the creation of a 'virtual *umma*' (Islamic community) in the digital age.² This is especially important, since there are numerous Islamic websites that have had a great impact on mainstream Islamic discourses in recent years.

Some of these new Islamic websites were launched by authoritative religious clerics as virtual extensions of conventional Islamic

institutions, while others are simply attempts by ordinary individuals, with no formal religious education or training, to create an online public space for discourse about Islam. The current trends in online Islamic websites pose several pressing and foundational questions: What are the general patterns and trends of these sites' discourses? Have these sites weakened or consolidated the control of the mainstream Islamic establishment over the production and distribution of religious information? Can these sites provide a platform for alternative voices, which can diverge from, or even challenge, the traditional authority of the *ulama* (authoritative religious scholars)? Can they also provide a forum for resistant voices that can challenge sources of internal political authority, such as governments in the Muslim world, as well as forces of external hegemony and domination? How far do these sites act as a platform for the display of collective identities within the realm of the 'virtual *umma*' (Islamic community) in the digital age? How far can they also provide a forum for divergent identities to freely express themselves? Do these sites play a divisive or an integrative role, or both, between different Muslim identities, on one hand, and Muslim vs. non-Muslim identities, on the other hand? What types and levels of identity (re)construction and resistance(s) manifest themselves through these sites? How do these sites contribute to the creation of an Islamic public sphere(s)?³

It is mandatory to address these pressing questions, which deserve further investigation in the academic literature and deeper exploration in current scholarly initiatives, especially in light of the recent changes and challenges in many parts of the Arab/Muslim world.

— *Sahar Khamis, PhD is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland, College Park.*



INNOVATION FOR INTEGRATION

BY SHAHED AMANULLAH

In the ten years after the 9/11 attacks, there has been an intense discourse surrounding the relationship between western countries and their Muslim minority populations. Driven first by a need to understand the nature of a substantial group of people that until that fateful September day existed more or less in the quiet corners of society, the discussion has covered nearly every aspect of Muslim life in the West—from political participation to cultural expressions, from questions of loyalty to the State to the finer points of Islamic law. It has permeated the front pages of newspapers on a near-daily basis and has given rise to a virtual industry of subject matter experts on the character and behaviour of Muslim communities.

On the face of it, this discourse is a good thing. For there to be a long-lasting, stable and mutually beneficial relationship between disparate communities living under a common polity, a vigorous and healthy discussion about the nature of that relationship can bring about an understanding by the majority of the contributions a minority brings to all as well as an education of the minority of their responsibilities as citizens to society as a whole.

Unfortunately, the discourse surrounding Muslim communities in the West over the past ten years has not had this desired effect. Paradoxically, it appears that the more discourse that occurs, the more polarised society has become. On one side, fears of Muslim impositions on western legal and cultural norms have reached a fever pitch. On the other, Muslim communities are feeling increasingly embattled and unsure about their future security and the permanence of their lives in the West.

Why is this happening? Part of the reason is that while the quantity of discourse is high, the qualities of such discourse do not serve the goal of reducing tension. The discussion surrounding

Muslims in the West has been permanently set in a framework of conflict in the wake of 9/11 and subsequent similar attacks in the West. While well suited for debate about facing an existential foe from afar, this framework is useless when considering the goal of integrating Muslims peacefully and productively into a greater society in which there is a mutual understanding of rights and responsibilities and a general sense that both sides contribute to the security of the other.

Too many people—Muslims included—have a narrow sense of the diversity and history of Islam.

This discourse cannot be reset in a more positive framework unless the underlying assumptions that drive it—that Muslims constitute a permanent foreign plant within society whose goal is to undermine it and supplant its values with its own—are successfully negated. It is not enough for this to be done at a legal or government level; those that fear Muslims the most must freely come to the conclusion that Muslims have a positive contribution to make to society.

While there have been many intelligent people who understand the need to reach this bar—as high as it is—and are working hard to resolve this tension, there has been remarkably little progress. One primary strategy that has been used extensively is based on the hypothesis that familiarity with one's Muslim neighbours will help increase understanding. While initial polls once reinforced this hypothesis, more recent polling is showing that personal interaction with a Muslim is no longer pushing back as effectively against negative feelings about Islam or Muslims.

It is clear that simplistic PR campaigns, reactive editorials and legal manoeuvres are not enough—more innovative thinking is needed in order to promote integration of Muslim communities in the West. Here are a few suggestions to help kick-start this effort:

- **Promoting public service among Muslim communities:** One of the best ways to promote integration is to instil a sense of public service among Muslim minority communities that benefits society as a whole. For the public at large to see Muslims volunteering to better the communities in which they live will go a long way in helping to neutralise hostility as well as making Muslims feel invested in the areas in which they live. One of the more effective ways to do this is to create an online clearinghouse of public service opportunities that Muslims can subscribe to so that resources are put where they are most needed. An interesting twist on this initiative would be to have young Muslims sign up to be a part of volunteer ‘flash mobs’—sending groups of people to help out with public service projects with short lead times (for example, clean-up after particularly messy public events).
- **Exploring the religious diversity of Muslims:** Too many people—Muslims included—have a narrow sense of the diversity and history of Islam. Those misguided young people who choose extremism as a path are often led to believe that Islam only endorses this one path, and too many opinions are shaped about Muslim communities based on this same misconception. The truth is that there is a wide diversity of Islamic thought reaching back a millennium that has plenty of room for peaceful co-existence, nonviolent resolution of conflict, appreciation for diversity and human rights and more. Unfortunately, the proponents of a more politicised version of Islam have had more success propagating their ideas online. Those who value the full spectrum of Islamic thought need to be empowered to communicate this heritage to Muslims and others in clear, engaging and authoritative ways—preferably in an online

environment for maximum reach.

- **Cultivating Muslim voices on issues of common concern:** Far too often, when Muslim voices are heard in the media, it is in the context of divisive and tense discussions about grievances (real or perceived) and issues surrounding political conflict in foreign countries. However, Muslims who live in the West have many of the same day-to-day concerns of their neighbours, but media representations don’t show that picture. An initiative that helps to train integrated Muslim voices to add to public discussions about issues of common concern—local politics, the environment and public health, for example—will go a long way in promoting a truly integrated community that works for the benefit of all.

What these projects all have in common is that they are geared towards educating both Muslims and their neighbours about the realities of the Muslim experience in the West (as opposed to rumour and innuendo), facilitating face-to-face interaction on issues of common concern, using online environments to maximise participation and communication and creating a sense of shared responsibility for community affairs that breaks down barriers between peoples.

When members of a society face a common problem together, they are most likely to put personal divisions aside and see each other as citizens with a mutual interest. Innovative ideas such as the ones above can help bring this vision to reality.

— *Shahed Amanullah is Senior Advisor for Technology at the US Department of State.*



REFLECTIONS ON ISLAMIC RENEWAL

BY DR MOHAMED CHTATOU

Considerable importance is granted by Muslim scholars to the issues of renewal and ***ijtihad***, particularly the renewal of Islamic intellectual heritage. This renewal is the constructive process that continues the action of ancestors and benefits from the ***ijtihad*** of contemporary scholars in rebuilding cultural identity and entrenching its principles and lofty references as well as the divine revelation that guides man onto the straight path. This revelation is the referential framework and knowledge regulator in the Islamic civilisation's view of all concepts and matters. It is the factor most likely to propel it towards shedding the manifestations of backwardness that emerged during past historical phases; spread the culture of ***ijtihad***, which promotes complementarity and the unity that defies conflict; and reposition the Islamic ***Umma*** on the scene of cultural action and human contribution.

In this age of globalisation where challenges are growing in size and number, revitalising Islamic intellectual heritage, renewing it and shedding light on the riches that contributed to the march of human civilisation seem to be of utmost importance if we are to counter the standardisation and alienation attempts and centralist cultural tendencies that negate the multiplicity of historical courses in shaping human civilisation. Islamic thought needs new blood and a reformist boost to be given by the ***Umma***'s scholars in a wise approach free from the logic of exclusive bipolarity, where the sources of knowledge are integrated. Thus can be edified the civilisation of the ***Umma*** of the middle way, known in Arabic culture as ***wasatiyya***, which stands witness to all mankind and carries the universal message of Islam.

Inequality in the consumption of cultural products and inequality in creativity are intolerable injustices. For individuals and companies, exercising cultural rights is often hampered

by inequality in economic development between individuals and States. However, amid serious globalisation challenges threatening to undermine the principles of plurality and sustainable development, each individual and each community must be able to contribute to the building of the present and the making of the future. For this reason, at the international level, the action of Islamic peoples ought to be in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the principles of the International Convention on Cultural Diversity. Such international instruments provide a common framework for alleviating world poverty and reducing disparities with regard to cultural rights, towards achieving sustainable development.

To ensure a better implementation of this process, Muslim thinkers will have to accentuate their efforts to ensure access to culture for all, with particular attention paid to special needs groups (children, young people, women, disabled people, exiled, refugees, prisoners etc.) who often are on the sidelines of the cultural action. In addition, there cannot be any acceptable, harmonious and equitable sustainable development unless the cultural dimension is integrated in the process and unless it is taken into consideration in the political, economic and social plans and programmes. Therefore, more focus should be given to the field of culture so that it will be able to attain the place it deserves as a decoder and interpreter of sustainable development. Thanks to culture, sustainable development will be perceived as a new societal project and as the engine of a new phase for the organisation of human activities.

In this regard, previous actions undertaken by Muslim thinkers underlined the importance of including the cultural dimension in every sustainable development approach, especially the protection of cultural diversity—which is the

equivalent of nature's biodiversity—as well as the reassertion of the value of artistic and cultural practices and, generally, the intangible heritage that is the basis of indigenous knowledge and cultures. This is about addressing the problem of sustainable development with its cultural dimension, especially the environment, health and genetic resources. By having 'culture' and 'sustainable development' articulated around a common challenge, thinkers will pursue its efforts for consolidating the place of culture in the relations of the human being with his/her immediate surroundings. Its action will highlight the cultural dimension that is necessary to be integrated in the management of the environment and health in order to better adapt them to the expectations of populations. The safeguard of genetic resources, which are essential elements for the preservation of knowledge and traditional expertise, will undergo a similar action.

Therefore, sustainable development requires a deep change in our means for understanding the world. It cannot be conceived in isolation from the relations that exist between Man and nature. It is inherent to the acceptance of the values of cultural diversity, which themselves are intrinsic in the culture of peace. In fact, accepting differences means that other cultures are seen as a source of enrichment and as a driving force for development. It also means ensuring harmonious relations between them. Accordingly, thinkers will continue their action for the dissemination of the values of cultural diversity within the different components of the society.

Linking sustainable development to indigenous cultures reflects understanding of the importance of traditional knowledge and know-how in the wellbeing of society; of putting a halt to the increased poverty rates among women; and of empowering them economically, socially and culturally. Action ought to be continued to reach the goals laid out in this field on the role of women in sustainable development. The objective is to overcome the obstacles hindering women's development within society by fighting all forms of economic and social discrimination and highlighting the Islamic perspective on this issue.

With regard to indigenous cultures, delays in the adoption of a universal convention on the

protection of popular arts, traditional know-how and genetic resources confirm the economic and cultural challenges inherent to this issue. With this in mind, emphasis must be laid in this sensitisation process on the role of traditional know-how in sustainable development. Indeed, it is not enough to guarantee the right of linguistic minorities to cultural expression but also their right to monitor the exploitation of their intellectual heritage. Furthermore, and considering the major role the civil society plays in this regard as the link between national policies and the strategies of sustainable development international organisations, the scope of partnerships with civil society organisations and institutions will be broadened to achieve the desired objectives.

Today, it is axiomatic that the development of education, science, culture and communication hinges on security and peace, within or between countries, both at the regional and international levels. No development will be conceivable under a climate filled with ethnic, sectarian and religious tensions. The same is true for the lack of justice and mutual respect, which are key elements for creating international relations that could promote prosperity and human development. Also, it is internationally recognised that the alliance of civilisations represents the sole means that can restore balance to the world and establish peace, respect for diversity and the acknowledgment of the legitimate cultural rights and cultural specificities of the different peoples and nations.

The cultural strategy of the Islamic World must underline that no one culture can survive on its own and that cultural diversity and interaction between civilisations, cultures and peoples are realities that cannot be circumvented. This approach will contribute to promoting the level of dialogue, both inside and outside the Muslim world, and extending the scope of participation and consultation necessary for its implementation, as well as combating all forms of fanaticism and withdrawn attitudes.

Muslim countries will have to focus their action on programmes and activities aimed at entrenching the culture of dialogue and the respect of cultural specificities and cultural diversity in consolidating human rights, understanding and concord between cultures;

encouraging governments to ratify and publicise the *International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*; disseminating its contents as widely as possible, especially among young generations and civil society organisations; and working towards ensuring a democratic governance and the respect for cultural rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities.

These actions must also seek to enhance the sense of citizenship and active participation of foreign nationals and immigrants as well as educate them on the values of tolerance and the rejection of all forms of discrimination, racism and hatred. Similarly, these actions will strive to reactivate the concept of international cultural **Takaful** in order to firmly establish the culture of human rights and the rights of peoples; consolidate cultural relations and cultural exchange; and facilitate cultural mobility and the freedom of movement of people and ideas by encouraging South-South and North-South programmes for student exchange visits. Furthermore, this approach is aimed at setting up consultation mechanisms on labour and immigration to ensure the respect of human dignity of immigrants and foreign nationals; devising tourism's development policies within the respect of cultural and cultural identities; and ensuring social harmony and combating poverty, violence, marginalisation and social vulnerability.

In this age of globalisation, information explosion and the multiplicity of audio-visual media and channels, the issue of image has acquired more weight and urgency in view of the impediments that may hinder the flow of information and its communication capacity. This has become even more relevant following the international changes to which Islam and Muslims were party, and in the aftermath, the image of the Islamic civilisation became the subject of a tremendous amount of premeditated and unpremeditated distortion. There was talk of the phenomenon of Islamophobia that has taken many forms of which the most blatant is the discrimination against Muslim immigrants in employment, housing, education and other fields. Some western parties went even further and began to flaunt their hostility towards Islam, desecrate

and denigrate its sanctities and make racist statements that are punishable by law and condemned by international conventions. Some Muslim institutions were the victim of vandalism and desecration as were some mosques, graves and cultural centres in the West. Faced by the escalation of this phenomenon and its progression from a state of dormancy to one of active notoriety, it is necessary for Muslim intellectuals to take charge of the mission of countering this phenomenon and addressing it following a two-tiered and tightly devised plan. The first part consists of the emergency measure of monitoring and compiling what is written and said about Islam, condemning it and engaging legal action against it in cooperation and coordination with regional and international partners. The second part is presenting the truthful image of Islam on the ruins of the erroneous misconceptions and stereotypes circulating either in the media or school curricula, history books or biased literary works, which action represents a long-winded and strenuous road. One of the major objectives that Muslim thinkers must seek to fulfil is to modify this erroneous image. Their action in this regard consists of many joint programmes that they must begin to implement with international partners to cleanse school curricula from these stereotypes and produce an Islamic encyclopaedia that will present an alternative and full image on the Islamic world and its civilisation, penned by Muslim and fair-minded Western authors. Universities in the Muslim world must seriously monitor the Islamophobia phenomenon and draw up a database on all the manifestations of animosity towards Muslims and Islam, thus enabling researchers to study them or engage legal action against them in addition to helping countries build up their cultural policies.

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RE-EVALUATING THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

BY DR JOSEF (YOUSEF) MERI

A greater public awareness of the contribution of Islamic civilisation to understanding Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa is now more urgent than ever. Sustained discussion and dialogue about the historical legacy of Islamic civilisation is virtually absent in the West and the Islamic world. In the West, the view that the fall of autocratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa will bring about the imposition of Shari'a law upon non-Muslims and result in the repression of religious minorities echoes the uncertain times in which we live. Indeed, it reflects a lack of engagement and understanding on the part of the educated public and decision makers about the historical legacy of Islamic civilisation and the discourse concerning its contribution to western civilisation.

A celebration of all faiths is required.

Similarly, in the Middle East and North Africa, a disconnect from the past has resulted in a lack of dissemination of knowledge about Islamic civilisation. Some perceive the study of the intellectual and scientific achievements of medieval Muslims, Jews and Christians to be dangerous or irrelevant. In spite of this, transmitted knowledge is nonetheless a part of the historical record of Islamic civilisation.

What constitutes useful knowledge? Who decides what is taught? There isn't a single answer, to be sure. While merely advocating the dissemination of Jewish and Christian works that are sometimes polemical in nature and so-called heretical works like those of Ibn al-Rawandi (b. 815) or Shahab al-Din Al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191) is not the solution,

a deeper understanding of the context that gave rise to and led to dissemination of such works in the Islamic world is called for. Universities are reluctant to teach controversial works and their contexts due to observed norms within the learning and religious establishments as well as a lack of expertise to be able to properly contextualise such works for students and non-specialists. In teaching and studying such works, Muslims have a duty and responsibility to disseminate them within a proper contextual framework in the interests of free enquiry, civilisational dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

Disseminating knowledge of Islamic civilisation and its contacts with European history and thought is required.

In the West, one of the primary reasons for a lack of engagement with Islamic civilisation is that the Judeo-Christian paradigm continues to dominate public discourse in an exclusionary fashion. It is employed in its limited sense of a shared biblical history. Attempts to promote Jewish-Christian relations within the rubric of the so-called Judeo-Christian heritage sometimes negate the Islamic contribution to the history of Europe. However, the persistence of such a paradigm should not be at the expense of engaging with the Islamic contribution to western thought and science. Another problem is rabid secularism, which inhibits the dialogue of civilisations. A celebration of all faiths is required. Meaningful acknowledgement of Europe's Christian, Jewish and Islamic roots would allow for greater interchange among cultures, religions

and civilisations. The same is true of Spain's as well as Bosnia's Islamic heritage. A more useful counterpoint to 'Judeo-Christian' is Richard Bulliet's designation of 'Islamо-Christian'; that is, conceiving of Europe and the Middle East as part of an Islamо-Christian civilisation. Historians refer to a Judeo-Islamic heritage in the Middle East, North Africa and Iberia, a designation that is liberating. It is liberating in the sense that it encompasses transformations that have occurred in the Middle East and Europe in the interaction of peoples, languages, cultures and ideas. However, like all binaries, it compartmentalises the interactions (in this case, of Muslims and Jews).

A historian of interfaith and communal relations would engage with the shared humanity of Muslims, Jews and Christians, which in turn requires an intimate awareness of the history, literature, culture and religions of the Islamic world and Middle East. History is replete with examples concerning Muslims, Jews and Christians exchanging, borrowing and adapting ideas and learning from each other. The great discoveries and works of Muslim scientists and thinkers along with those of Jews and Christians living in the 'abode of Islam' must be at the heart of any enterprise that purports to look at interfaith relations and the contributions of Islamic civilisation to the West.

How do we counter misperceptions about the history of Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations in the Islamic civilisational context? One way is through continuing to publish accessible works. Over the years, relevant publications for non-specialists have appeared, including María Rosa Menocal's *Ornament of the World* (2003),⁴ which looks at medieval Andalusia based on literary sources, and *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*.⁵ More recently, Intertwined Worlds (intertwinedworlds.wordpress.com), an e-platform that recently published its first virtual issue (April 2012), made accessible peer-reviewed articles by leading international scholars on various aspects of Muslim-Jewish and Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations as well as a blog, book reviews and interfaith resources. Another excellent example is the production of documentaries concerning various aspects of Islamic civilisation such as

the BBC documentaries 'An Islamic History of Europe' and 'Science and Islam'. However, there is an urgent need for making available on a freely accessible website Arabic and Persian works produced by Muslims, Jews and Christians in the original languages with levels of annotation for different audiences and in English translation. Moreover, relevant scholarly studies would be made freely accessible to those in the Middle East and third world. Do the relatively few existing pre-modern Jewish works written in Arabic, Hebrew or Persian have to be treated apart from works published by Muslim authors? Although such works mainly had a Jewish audience, they nevertheless, were produced in an Islamic context. Leading Jewish personalities like Maimonides (d. 1204) were influenced by Arab-Islamic science and thought. Iberian poets like Judah Ha-Levi (d. 1141) wrote in Hebrew on secular and religious themes.

Disseminating knowledge of Islamic civilisation and its contacts with European history and thought is required. This requires a long-term collective strategy of publishers, scholars and media working together to make relevant and accessible knowledge of Islamic civilisation and to pro-actively promote scholarship that appeals to non-academic audiences and engage authors in public discussions and forums.

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WHAT THE EAST TAUGHT THE WEST

BY PROFESSOR CAROLE HILLENBRAND

This paper will investigate two aspects of a vast subject: first, the extent of the Muslim contribution to global civilisation, particularly western culture; and second, how the details and implications of that contribution can be brought to wider attention in the West. In short, it will deal first with 'what?' and second with 'how?'

Paradoxically enough, the Muslim cultural achievement was in many respects better known and better appreciated in the pre-modern West than it is today. The reasons are not far to seek: Islamic discoveries and innovations were ahead of those in the West in that period of a millennium and more. It was above all Muslims who brought light to the Dark Ages, and it is a history of western ignorance and hostility that has obliterated that achievement. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the West gratefully plagiarised the knowledge steadily built up in the 'exotic' east. This can be demonstrated in any number of fields. 'World histories' written in the medieval West scarcely ventured beyond the confines of the Bible and Europe. But their equivalents in the Islamic world covered the known globe from Ireland to China. Did not the Prophet Muhammad himself say, 'Seek ye knowledge, even unto China'?

No European traveller of medieval times can compare with the Moroccan Ibn Battuta, who in the fourteenth century crisscrossed continents, travelling some seventy-five thousand miles over some three decades and writing a gazetteer that is a mine of information to this day for historians, geographers and sociologists. Islamic architects experimented with pointed and horseshoe arches, rib vaults and elaborate systems of dome support long before their counterparts in Western Europe stumbled onto these forms. It was in the Middle East that the most technically innovative ideas in castle building were developed, from parapets to machicolation, polygonal towers to barbicans and splayed or slit

windows. The aridity of much of the Islamic world triggered all manner of irrigation devices, from underground canals to dams, mills, waterwheels and other forms of turning rotary into linear motion and thus ensuring the flow of water. In mathematics, words like algebra and logarithm proclaim the origins of these concepts in the Muslim east, and our system of numbers, down to the concept of zero itself, is inherited from the Arabs.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the West gratefully plagiarised the knowledge steadily built up in the 'exotic' east.

Similarly, textiles of all kinds betray in their very names—atlas, satin, organdie, damask, muslin—the dependence of western society on Islamic fabrics. The lore of the stars was far further developed in the Orient than in the Occident, as the Arabic names of over a hundred stars reveal, not to mention devices like the astrolabe, the celestial globe and the compass. The astronomical tables of Sultan Ulugh Beg, drawn up in Samarcand in the mid-fifteenth century, were still being used at Oxford University over two centuries later. The Egyptian physician Ibn Nafis discovered the circulation of the blood in the later thirteenth century, almost four hundred years before Harvey, while in the tenth century, the Spaniard Ibn Zahrawi was perfecting surgical devices like scrapers, cauterisers and forceps; his book lists some two hundred separate instruments, many of them virtually identical to those used today in modern hospitals. And the regime in Islamic hospitals in terms of cleanliness, environment and patient care (for example, the holistic medicine championed by Ibn Sina) was far more advanced than it was in Europe at the time.

Nor did medieval Europe produce a thinker in the field of sociology and economics to match the great North African polymath Ibn Khaldun. The foundations of modern chemistry, with instruments like the crucible and the still, were laid in medieval Baghdad—and to underrate Baghdad is to underrate Rome. For here was the celebrated House of Wisdom, where in the ninth century, government-funded scholars engaged in vastly ambitious translation projects that brought the wisdom of Greece and Rome, of Persia and India, to an Arab audience—and from those Arabic versions of ancient texts, Latin translations were made in Spain in the centuries to come, thus saving the precious heritage of antiquity for our own times. Paper made by Muslims was crucial to all this and to the massive medieval Islamic libraries; the Arabs even invented the fountain pen. Islamic cities had street lighting, public bathhouses and sewage disposal a thousand years ago. From shampoo to deodorants, from the lute to the flamenco, from coffee to chess, from cryptology to the camera obscura, Europe's debt to the Islamic world is beyond computation.

The achievements of the past could serve as a bridge to learning about the subject in contemporary guise.

How best can the riches of this heritage be presented to a modern audience? The key is surely to mount a campaign on multiple fronts. To reach schoolchildren, new curricula have to be devised, preferably in the form of modules that can be inserted into a variety of subjects—mathematics, geography, history, religion, science. In each of these subjects, the achievements of the past could serve as a bridge to learning about the subject in contemporary guise. Teaching aids and materials to be used in this process would include DVDs, films, posters, teachers' packs, workbooks and project outlines that each student could shape to his or her individual interests and capacities. School discussions and debates could take the subject further. This school programme would

necessarily involve on-going provision for teachers' workshops and seminars.

For the general public, targeted exhibitions (not just one-off events but also touring shows) and television series would complement popular books as well as articles written for newspapers and magazines. At both school and adult levels, the potential of Islamic art as a source of information and inspiration, to excite wonder and curiosity, would be exploited. The great buildings of Islamic architecture—the Dome of the Rock, the Alhambra, the Taj Mahal—would play their part in such programmes. Summer schools at universities open to the general public but aimed particularly at sixth-formers and would-be university students would be a useful medium for this kind of education, which could also highlight the careers of the great Muslim pioneers in many a science. Harnessing the potential of the Internet would be an integral part of the vision, with dedicated websites for the various categories of Muslim heritage studies.

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BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD: SCIENCE AS AN INTERCULTURAL BRIDGE TO PROSPERITY

BY GEORGE SALIBA

In the context of the interaction between Europe and the world of Islam, history offers us several lessons that continue to be useful for our own day. In its past, and when it was searching for its own identity, Europe did not hesitate to turn to new scientific ideas that were then found in the world of Islam. I use that episode in order to illustrate how scientific ideas could constitute an intercultural bridge.

Renaissance scientists may have not been aware that they were using ideas from the Islamic world, and they did not seem to care about the sources of those ideas, and that is how science can stealthily trespass cultural boundaries.

The occasion when science played a celebratory role by fostering social and political harmony was when scientific ideas crossed freely, from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean to the shores of the Latin West, producing what was once called the twelfth-century ‘Renaissance’. That transfer of ideas brought with it the building blocks of what we now enjoy as universal science. The so-called Arabic/Indian numerals, the very conception of algebra, and with it the term ‘algorithm’—an accidental corruption of the name of the father of algebra, Al-Khwarizmi—are now part of our daily life. Spherical trigonometry, medicine and astronomy soon followed.

All that was accomplished when there was a willingness on the northern shores of the Mediterranean to take wholeheartedly the new ideas their southern neighbours had produced. We now romanticise that age of convivencia first in the Iberian Peninsula and then in Norman Sicily and along the southern shores of France. Unhampered by political, economic or cultural considerations, and despite the Crusades, the march of science to Europe then seemed unstoppable. The proof of its durability is evident in our abandoning of the old Roman numerals in favour of the Arabic/Indian ones in all our scientific research, banking and day-to-day transactions. We all acknowledge this legacy, with great joy, and use it as a win-win situation for all concerned.

The other occasion was during the Renaissance when Arabic/Islamic sources were deeply embedded in the scientific writings of the Renaissance scientists like Copernicus and Galileo. This latter transfer touched on the very foundations of modern science. People like Copernicus did not shy away from borrowing directly the lunar model of the Damascene astronomer Ibn al-Shatir. He also did not hesitate to borrow the model of the motion of the planet Mercury, even when he did not understand it fully. As if that was not enough, we now know that he also borrowed from the works of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi who lived some three hundred years before Copernicus. All this transmission of highly technical theoretical mathematics, mistakes and all, was not a coincidence.

Almost half a century later, the father of Modern Science, Galileo (1560–1642) himself, also used

from the works of Copernicus the very same theorem that the latter had borrowed from Tusi.

Those Renaissance scientists may have not been aware that they were using ideas from the Islamic world, and they did not seem to care about the sources of those ideas, and that is how science can stealthily trespass cultural boundaries.

But something else happened in Europe at that time. Someone in Europe got the brilliant idea of transforming all that search for knowledge into a profitable commercial activity, thereby transforming science from a research project into a capital-making enterprise. The very invention of the concept of patent for new scientific and technological ideas was born in Europe and was an idea totally alien to non-European cultures. While ancient Greeks, and the Islamic scientists after them, sought science to understand natural phenomena, the European Renaissance scientists sought science in order to enrich themselves and produce further capital. Neither the Greeks nor the Islamic scientists would have shunned a reward, but none of them ever dreamt of taking a patent specifically to prevent others from using an idea without paying them royalties.

Non-European cultures seem to have intuitively concluded that patenting an idea was tantamount to creating a form of monopoly. And monopoly by itself was abhorrent. Benign as it was in its beginning, and ferocious as it has become in our modern days, monopolistic tendencies still characterise the modern science we inherited from Renaissance Europe. The incentives of this system certainly gave Europe the edge that all other cultures now find themselves obliged to emulate.

My concluding question is the following: If the rest of the world is to benefit from the scientific advances that were made in Europe since the time of the Renaissance, then should that world follow the same system of monopoly as it seems to be trying to do with slow relative success? Alternatively, should the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and behind them the rest of the world cultures, take back the debt owed to them by the modern Europeans? Or should they opt for a different system if they

can? And if monopoly governs most of modern scientific behaviour, could it then be shared with others without losing its very advantage of incentives and the like?

To my mind, these are the real questions that should be addressed both in the industrial world, which uses science for making capital, and in the rest of the world in order to find an equitable adjustable system that will allow the existence of incentives for new production and at the same time create a legal system that allows everyone to share in the benefits.

There is no doubt that the wealth that had accrued in the industrialised world, mostly as a result of the capital-driven production of science, has, through the monopolistic patent system it created, also created tremendous gaps between the rich and the poor nations all around the globe. In my estimate, this gap cannot be overcome with the existing monopolistic system in place, and as such, these inequitable discrepancies are bound to produce political and economic upheavals no matter how much we try to patch them by diplomatic talk. We are only witnessing the beginnings of those upheavals, and they do take different twists and turns, but in the end, they will all seek to create more equitable lives for millions, if not billions, of people doomed to poverty. How can the industrialised world that owns the capital, and the science that is now defined as the means to produce further capital, participate in the reduction of the inequity that has become obvious for all to see?

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TOLERANCE IS NOT A VALUE

BY HUSSEIN FANCY

At the heart of the contemporary notion of tolerance lie deeply rooted ideas about religion that obscure more than they reveal about both the past and the present, a fact that should give scholars and political advocates pause. Nevertheless, the very same rich and complex history of interaction between Muslim, Jews and Christians that underpins these claims of tolerance also holds the promise of troubling its unspoken assumptions, allowing us not only to rethink the history of religion but also to redirect contemporary discussions about the values that should ground our shared religious and political futures.

Perhaps, it bears examining one relatively uncontroversial but also relatively unknown example. Over the course of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, in the heart of the period of the Crusades, thousands of Christian and Muslim soldiers crisscrossed the Mediterranean to serve in armies of the other faith. In a period punctuated by expulsion, persecution and forced conversion—a period easily dismissed as one long night for religious toleration—these soldiers seem to run against the current. One sees them in battles across the Mediterranean: Christian soldiers defended the city of Tunis against French Crusaders in 1270, and Muslim soldiers fought along Templar knights—the soldiers that epitomised the Crusades—in armies of the Crown of Aragon. And perhaps even more strikingly, one finds them in royal courts, where North African, Sicilian, Iberian and French kings used them as their personal protectors.

What does one make of all this dizzying and vertiginous interaction? For a generation of nineteenth-century historians, committed to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the transformative potential of history, such interaction demonstrated that tolerance was grounded in man's ability to act rationally and freely, to ignore the constraints of religious

demands. It's not difficult to detect the hostile attitude among these scholars, who saw religion as a prison, a sign of intellectual or civilisational immaturity. And thus, it's also not surprising that contemporary scholarship has tried to move away from these attitudes. Now, we attempt to understand religion as one aspect of culture. We attempt to understand religious men and women from within their beliefs, emphasising the manner in which they exercise free will and choice within the broader ideas that frame their lives, the manner in which they can both resist and shape their beliefs to achieve their own ends. To put this contrast most bluntly, if, for an earlier generation, religion posed an obstacle to free and rational behaviour, then, for the current generation, it poses no real obstacle to freedom and thus toleration at all.

Although sympathetic with the aim and intent of the latter approach, I would argue that both views share an inner solidarity: They share the same idea of religion. Simply put, to say on the one hand that religion impedes tolerance is no different than to say that individuals or communities act tolerantly when they set religious beliefs aside and pursue their own, rational ends. If these positions differ about the importance of religion in determining choice, they agree that religious belief is essentially incompatible with the modern ideals of freedom and tolerance, a line of argument, it's worth adding, that has appealed to both religious fundamentalists and their secular critics.

The problem, I would argue, is less the quality of historical research than the degree to which the ideals of freedom and tolerance have distorted the lessons we take from history. It bears remembering that tolerance—at least, as a positive ideal—was not a value spoken of in the Middle Ages but rather an idea first rooted in Reformation attitudes toward heretical, Christian minorities. Liberal tolerance, as paradigmatically

expressed in John Locke's 'Letter Concerning Toleration' (1689), emerged as a pragmatic solution to religious violence, which is to say that it was not an unquestioned good but rather 'tolerance' in the strictest sense of the word, the willingness of a majority to put up with (but not admit as equals) vexing minorities. Religion, Locke argued, should have no bearing on political, social and economic life. Religion should be a matter of private belief, nothing more. Tolerance, in other words, emerged both as a means of defining what religion should be—a matter of conscience—and as a means of establishing political hegemony—of Protestants over Catholics. This historical legacy alone should give scholars and political advocates pause before advancing it as a moral value.

**Histories such as these
caution us against drawing
easy conclusions about the
meaning or significance of
past interaction.**

To return to our historical example, the movement of Christian and Muslim soldiers across the Mediterranean, for example, highlights the surprising degree to which peaceful interaction reflected and reinforced religious boundaries. As hundreds of unexamined charters, contracts and letters in Arabic, Latin and Romance demonstrate, these troops were often traded for one another, moving like strokes of an engine. And within these agreements, both rulers and soldiers sought and agreed to fascinating rules and limits. Soldiers wore distinguishing religious and political markers, such as crosses and flags. They were allowed to practice their faiths and prevented from conversion. And most strikingly, limits were placed on their violence: Christians could only fight Muslims, and Muslims, Christians. In this way, far from representing a break from the abstract logic of religious violence—crusade and jihad—these exchanges represented a surprising reconfiguration and confirmation of that logic. Christian and Muslim kings, to put it simply, traded crusade for jihad.

The implications of this material on our understanding of medieval religion are profound, but more generally and for imagining the future, histories such as these caution us against drawing easy conclusions about the meaning or significance of past interaction. Thus, they also provide us an opportunity to unsettle contemporary debates that wittingly or unwittingly stand upon the horizon of liberal tolerance and redirect those debates to more enduring values such as justice and equality.

— Hussein Fancy, University of Michigan



FROM MISPERCEPTION TO A NEW, 'MORE IMPORTANT' REALITY

BY ELMA DIZDAR

In the crowded, bustling world of today, perceptions tend to become 'the more important reality', countries and nations are marketed as brands, while stereotypes and clichés, whether positive or negative, true or untrue, fundamentally affect people's behaviour towards other peoples.⁶ Living in this world, we should seek for ways to enable the public to form their perceptions of other cultures, nations and religions based on their own experience rather than on information and, quite often, misinformation they receive from individuals and voices that do not necessarily reflect understanding of the Other and Different, or a wish thereof.

Sociolinguistics and neuro-linguistic programming propose the concept of mental maps as a way whereby we perceive the world, as vast and rich as it is. Maps, however, being simplification by their very nature, both leave out and give information and inevitably lead to filtering our perceptions through our beliefs, interests and preoccupations, thus determining what sort of world we live in.^{7,8} It is this filtering effect of our mental maps that makes it so difficult for people to change their perceptions, even when confronted with evidence to the contrary.

That is why the task of addressing misperceptions implies more than simply giving information. It involves the rewriting and reshaping of people's mental maps, of the way they see the world, themselves and the Others. A possible path to effecting this change can be found in innovative foreign language teaching techniques. Such techniques, aimed at the strengthening of learners' sociocultural competence, aspire to transform learners into 'intercultural speakers'⁹ persons able to embrace both specific characteristics of their own and

culture of the target language, intermediaries bringing cultures into relation. Thus, by shifting the focus of foreign language teaching from the mere developing of language proficiency of learners to developing competence that would enable them to interpret and bring into relation different cultural systems and manage dysfunctions and resistances of intercultural communication, it actually might be possible to facilitate a better interaction and communication between cultures and begin to redefine some of the deeply rooted misperceptions.

We should seek for ways to enable the public to form their perceptions of other cultures, nations and religions based on their own experience.

Successful interaction between cultures does not only involve positive attitudes of their members about each other. Teaching facts is as important as teaching interest in and openness towards other cultures, developing learners' readiness to relativise and question their own viewpoints and systems of values, helping them acquire the ability to distance themselves from the usual simplistic relation to cultural differences and preparing them to act as intermediaries between cultures. Moreover, in order to be able to act as intermediaries, learners must develop understanding of how the process of interaction works. They must be aware of their position in communication as representatives of their own culture through which their interlocutors tend to perceive the culture as a whole as well as of their own perception of their interlocutors as members of the other community.

The fostering of sociocultural competence and intercultural communication through foreign language teaching lies at the heart of interest of a number of institutions and scholars in Europe. Neuner¹⁰ believes that the schools of the future will develop a general concept in all subjects wherein the interpretation of ‘who we are and how we see others’ will play an important role. Katnić-Bakaršić¹¹ claims that the true objective of education is to develop personalities ready to accept the Other, to embrace the differences that Otherness implies. It is my firm belief that this European focus on acquiring intercultural communicative competence through education in general, including foreign language teaching/learning, could and should be used as an asset in the rethinking and reshaping of Muslim non-Muslim relations.

Specifically, foreign language teaching and learning might provide an important avenue for improving the public knowledge of Muslim non-Muslim interactions, exchanges and cross influence. The underlying reasons involve as much the massive and widespread nature and accessibility of foreign language teaching/learning as the nature of language itself, a powerful medium of shaping people’s views of the world. On the one hand, foreign language teaching/learning is a tool that works both ways. It is present both in Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and it has the potential to become an instrument of a better and deeper understanding between nations, cultures and religions, a tool for battling against prejudice and stereotypes. On the other hand, as O’Connor and Seymour¹² point out, it is the medium of language that enables human beings to go as far as creating varieties of sense experience although they have not had the actual experiences. Moreover, they claim that the very experience of learning a foreign language almost always causes a radical change in the way people think about the world. The same idea is at the centre of Neuner’s¹³ belief that foreign language learning may substantially contribute to the development of learners’ personal and social identities, their capability of getting along with others as well as their understanding of both their own and other worlds. Finally, as Wightwick¹⁴ puts it, even if we never achieve full understanding of the other

culture, it is through language learning that we can always come one step closer.

By learning a foreign language, learners in fact draw islands, entirely new parts of their mental maps, or it may be the case that they build links to completely different maps, which at the same time represent parts of their original maps and live lives of their own. Drawn on their maps are all their contacts with the culture of the target language as well as their conceptions, beliefs and even prejudices and stereotypes about it. However, unlike their original mental maps, reflecting their unique personal experience of the world, these maps can be drawn in a structured environment, through support and encouragement to keep them open to receive as much richness of the world as human nature can take in. It is by this means that we can reconnect perceptions to human experience, opening people’s minds to a new, ‘more important’ reality.

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ENRICHING TEACHER EDUCATION WITH THE CONTENT OF MUSLIM CULTURES

BY JENNY BERGLUND, PHD

This paper argues that increasing the involvement of scholars of Muslim cultures in programmes of teacher education holds great potential value, not only for teachers of religious education and history, but for all future teachers and the educational sciences in general.

Religious Education (RE) need not be the only educational forum in which Muslim cultural contributions are discussed and understood.

In every European country, there is one institution that all residents must participate in regardless of social class and/or cultural background: school. And while there are obviously wide variations between and within countries regarding the quality and content of education, who bears responsibility for the latter and so forth, the fact remains that all children and teenagers are guaranteed an education and thus must pass through the school system.¹⁵ Among other things, this is because schooling is not only an efficient means of ‘conveying’ knowledge of different subjects, but also a means of instilling certain values and connecting them to national narratives and thus to the matter of identity. National educational systems, in other words, forge forceful links between the state and its citizenry.

In this regard, education concerning the historical contribution of Muslim societies and scholars to European culture is today almost non-existent in most of Europe’s public and private schools.¹⁶ Moreover, several scholars have shown

that when Islam and Muslim societies do figure into the educational content of what are mostly Religious Education (RE) and history courses, the depiction of these cultures in some of the related textbooks is highly problematic.¹⁷

While teaching about Muslim cultures within RE is certainly one way of highlighting their role in the making of Europe, the reality of a shared past and so forth, it must also be noted that the presentation of this subject varies widely across countries: In France and Latvia, it is non-existent; in Poland and Spain, it is a confessional subject that educates students *into* their own religion’s version of how to live a ‘good’ life; and in Sweden and Great Britain, it is a non-confessional subject that provides ‘general information’ about the major religious traditions, among which Islam is counted as one. Beyond this, it can be noted that RE need not be the only educational forum in which Muslim cultural contributions are discussed and understood and that such a restriction might convey the impression that Islam *only* concerns private matters of ‘faith’ and thus has nothing to offer to the general public sphere. Indeed, it is my position that the rich and varied content of these cultures contains elements of knowledge that would enhance the capacity of teachers to handle their jobs, including the one to be discussed below: knowledge of what might be called Islamic theories of education.

The World in the Classroom

Advances in communication and other technologies over the last several decades of globalisation have resulted in a situation in which teachers virtually have the world in their classrooms. This includes the possibility of interacting with students from diverse cultures via the Internet and other forms of modern media

or having a wide diversity of students with a wide diversity of experiences present in one's classroom.

This notwithstanding, the outlook of most teacher education programmes tends to be nationally bound, or at least widely Eurocentric. And while there may be legitimate reasons for such programmes to concentrate on 'western' sources in their teaching of pedagogic history, given the sociocultural and geopolitical realities of today's world, there are equally good reasons to incorporate a less narrow approach. Here, my basic premise is this: European teachers that have been exposed to a broader and diversified presentation of educational theory, imbibing a more global perspective, will be better prepared to encounter the challenges of the modern western classroom.

One way that scholars of Muslim cultures might contribute to this globalisation of theory in teacher education would be by acquainting prospective teachers with the historical Muslim discourse on teaching and learning and conveying the insights of early Muslim educational scholars on important issues of pedagogy and education that are still of relevance today. Such scholars understood, for example, that a broad, unrestricted professional education is of vital importance to dynamic cultural and societal development. Such a view is evident in the educational writings of Ibn Sahnun (d. 870), Al-Farabi (d. 950), Ibn Sina (d. 1037) and others, all of whom displayed a preference for analytical reasoning and an open-minded educational approach.¹⁸ Even more significantly, these scholars appear to have been extremely creative and original when it came to developing pedagogical theories that were applicable to the culturally diverse contexts in which they lived.

This, in fact, is why their ideas are of potential relevance to today's modern liberal democracies, with their penchant for pluralism, logical reasoning and scientific responses to individual and societal needs. For them, as for us, education was about more than the mere conveyance of facts and figures. As noted, for example, by al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the teacher is also responsible for presenting enduring values, instilling a

desire for the good and providing an education that is effective, enjoyable and inclusive of all participants.

Although every epoch is marked by its own distinctive cultural and pedagogical characteristics, impulses and tasks, one should not forget that the circumstances and issues of our age represent only one chapter in the on-going process of human development and must be seen in that light. Learning about the ideas of renowned Muslim educationalists may not, in and of itself, enable teachers to 'fundamentally resolve' the problems of the modern classroom. On the other hand, since many of today's educational issues are rooted (and have been addressed) in the past, exposing prospective European teachers to a more internationalised spectrum of educational thought should better prepare them to handle the challenges of schooling in a culturally diverse milieu. Increasing teachers' knowledge of Islam and Muslim cultures can also help to globalise, diversify and enrich the teaching of subjects such as citizenship, ethics and philosophy as well as literature, art and music.

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ISLAM, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE ‘GREAT BOOKS’ COURSES

BY NABIL MATAR

Introduction

After the end of WWII, a course of historical study was introduced into the academic curriculum, first at Columbia, and then throughout the country. The purpose was to prepare students for the world in which the United States would be a major player and to instil in them the values of a humanistic and liberal education. This course of study was to be conducted by focusing on the great books of civilisation. And since the preeminent world of post WWII was European, and chiefly Western European, then the great books reflected that region.

In the wake of the program, the major publishing houses in the United States turned to academics with instructions to design textbooks for that purpose. The titles of the textbook varied, but all emphasized ‘the West’—be that in terms of ‘Western History’, ‘Heritage of Western Civilisation’ or ‘The Western Tradition’ and others.

The Problem

Encompassing the history of the ‘western’ world, which began in Sumerian Mesopotamia, within the covers of a single textbook was not an easy task, and so teams of academics laboured to produce manageable but also relevant coverage. Inevitably, they had to cut and eliminate, but not only because of the need to control the size of the book. Ideological preferences and partisanship came to the fore in determining the scope and magnitude of the cuts.

And so, Islamic civilisation with its vast legacy from Fez to Baghdad to Isfahan to Agra was reduced to very few pages. Such reduction reflected the following intellectual biases:

1. Islam was approached in the same manner as Byzantium. Both were categorised as ‘Heirs of the Roman Empire’. This categorisation stemmed from the need

on the part of the policymakers-cum-academics to highlight Greek-Roman-western-American continuity. Civilisation belonged to that western/Christian trajectory.

Such a trajectory ignored the two vast civilisations that came between the Roman and the ‘western/Euro-American’: Greek and Arabic. After all, the Christian scriptures of the New Testament were all written in Greek (and the Septuagint, too); the supreme theologian of Catholicism, St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote one of his two major works against the Arab-Muslim Ibn Rushd (*Summa contra gentiles*); and many of the writings of Greek geographers and scientists survived only in Arabic (before they were translated into Latin).

But western European historians had been satisfied with this ‘heir’ factor for Byzantium—thus the influential works of J.B. Bury, Arnold Hugh Martin Jones and the *Cambridge Medieval History*. And so, as Byzantium became the ‘late Roman empire’, so was the civilisation of Islam—bundled along as another ‘late’ manifestation of Rome.

2. As a mere ‘heir’, Islam has received some pages about the life of the Prophet and bits and pieces about the datelines of the early empires.¹⁹ In some books, there is mention of science. But Islam remained an oriental and alien religion, just like Orthodox Christianity, and therefore unconnected to the alleged Judaeo-Christian legacy, which defined the ‘West’ (the term ‘Judaeo-Christian’ having come into use in the late nineteenth century).

The damage in such a presentation was not only in the brevity of the presentation of Islam, but also in the relegation of 'Islam' to a religion without a civilisational history. It was therefore understandable that it would have no place in books with titles emphasising 'Western Civilisation'.

The Historiographical Error

The fundamental bias of such a historiography has not been lost on some of the major scholars of the last quarter of a century. I mention one in particular, Richard Bulliet, who in a wonderfully succinct book showed how flawed the above trajectory is and argued for a historiography that is Islamo-Christian.²⁰ And although, over the decades, there has been some change, it has been minimal.

The Solution?

Of course, book publishers argue that not everything can be included in a book of inevitably limited length. True. Which is why, a long time ago, I presented the following argument to a publisher:

One of the chapters in the textbook was completely dedicated to the Merovingians and Carolingians. The reason was not anything of notable intellectual or cultural importance, but the political importance of Charlemagne laying the foundations for the 'Christian' West and the Holy Roman Empire.

But in terms of the history of 'civilisation', his contemporaries in the Abbasid Empire played a vastly more important role in overseeing the adoption and innovation of ancient learning, the transmission of which made possible the first 'little' Renaissance in Western Europe (in the twelfth century).

I suggested that a few pages be allocated to the Merovingians/Carolingians and a full chapter to 'Islam'. Furthermore, the study of the Abbasids, and other Islamic dynasties, would allow for the introduction of religious groups that rarely feature in the study of the 'Western' Middle Ages (until the early modern Renaissance). It bears noting that when Charlemagne was setting up the 'Christian' West, there were more Christians

living in the Islamicate Empires than there were in Western Europe. And there were large minorities of Jews, enjoying much better lives than their brethren in the 'West'. A long chapter on the Abbasids (whose dynasty extended from AD 750 to 1258), for instance, would allow for a perspective on diversity that is very much appreciated in today's world.

Conclusion

There is a need to put together a team of historians and experts that will produce a draft of a textbook with the historiographical trajectory mentioned above and then present it to publishers with illustrations, maps and the appropriate pedagogical apparatus. There is a need to enter the mainstream of education—and nothing is more effective than through courses offered to freshmen students.

From my limited experience, talking with book representatives and commissioning editors is not very productive, simply because the scope that is being proposed in such a textbook is not familiar to them. But then, it took Howard Zinn quite a bit of pushing and shoving to get his interpretation of American history 'standardised' at the universities.

— *Nabil Matar is Presidential Professor in the English Department at the University of Minnesota.*



OVERCOMING HEGEMONIC HISTORIES TO BUILD SHARED FUTURES

BY DR FATIMA ZOHRA

In thinking about Islam, knowledge and innovation, I want to introduce some ideas that challenge current notions of how Islam should be perceived, its contribution in the West and who the audience will or should be going forward as we seek to build shared futures. In sum, the argument presented here is that it is clear that the long history of cross-cultural and political relationships between 'the West' and the rest of the world is imbued with both intellectual and linguistic constructions resulting in accepted inequalities, which when challenged, merely reproduce an ideological bias. In other words, should our shared history be one that seeks to achieve parity with the 'other', or should there be a refocus on what is the real nature of our historical (and global) interactions? If the aim of shared histories is to create a forum for better understanding between parties of different faiths, ethnicities and nationalities, then I would argue it is important to capture where we are now rather than how we got here. On the face of it, this appears to deny the importance of the historical record. However, what is being argued or postulated is that the challenges facing different communities around the world need solutions that are referenced to the 'here and now'. Historical analysis will take us some way in understanding root causes but in itself can and often has contained the very biases that need to be addressed. If true or at least 'equality of dialogue' is to be achieved that has real relevance for today's global communities, then historians, politicians, political activists and faith thinkers need to address common/shared concerns, values and the like. They also need to challenge their perceptions of who the Muslims are.

Pursuing this line of thought in my view it is not enough to list what 'sharing' has occurred. This is because these exchanges have not taken place

in a vacuum. It is a history steeped in cultural, eco-political and linguistic hegemony of what is perceived as Western Europe and its interactions and expansion into non-western territories. These exchanges have included the unattractive construct of racialisation as a contextualising factor in both the colonial and imperial periods of western hegemony. Consequently, these are the referencing points that need to be acknowledged in order to understand why Islamic cultural, technological and social influences have been written out of the cultural psyche of the West. But this is only one side of the equation. In contrast, current perceptions of Islam by elements within the Muslim diaspora (elements currently typified as radicalised or conservative Islam) would seek to glorify the past and smooth over uncomfortable truths. In that sense, inequality breeds its own ideological constructions where assumptions over the 'good and the bad' serve to reinforce grievances that are often based on far more complex and conflicting events and processes. Common perceptions in that sense are often the abridged version of a truth that is limited as it seeks to support current political concerns.

Being Muslim in the West appears to be perceived as a 'one size fits all' problematic.

In addition, there is another level of complexity that must be both acknowledged and addressed. Ironically, whilst academia has touched on it, populist perceptions in the West have rendered the everyday concerns of Muslim cultural communities practically invisible. I would argue that this is not surprising, as the current political preoccupation with the 'war on terror' as codified through media-speak has reduced engagement

with Muslim communities (whether residing in the West or not) to those associated with geo-cultural stereotypes—such as Muslim Arabs in the US, the Moroccans of the Netherlands, the Asians of the United Kingdom, the Iraqis, Palestinians and Kurds. To give this some flavour, how many would conceive of the whites of Aboriginal Australia! Consequently, the real concerns, problems and pains experienced by these communities are consumed, reduced and subsumed to partisan media issues that don't reflect the common realities of unemployment, crime, economic inequality and the like. Ironically, being Muslim in the West appears to be perceived as a 'one size fits all' problematic, but I would argue it is referenced to particular groups that don't reflect the extent of the Muslim presence or participation in Western Europe.

Scholarship needs to address this in order to provide a grounded and hence relevant rendition of all contributions of Muslim communities living in and with the West.

Another issue that should be addressed is the means by which entire communities originating from the African diaspora remain invisible both within populist perceptions and importantly within Muslim cultural communities. There appears to be a disconnect between Arabs, Asians (Indian subcontinent), Indonesians, European and African communities and their Islamic cultural identities, which do not reflect *their* shared Islamic history. Racism has worked to include and exclude different cultural communities, belie their shared histories, resulting in a singular lack of engagement with Islam as it is lived across the globe.

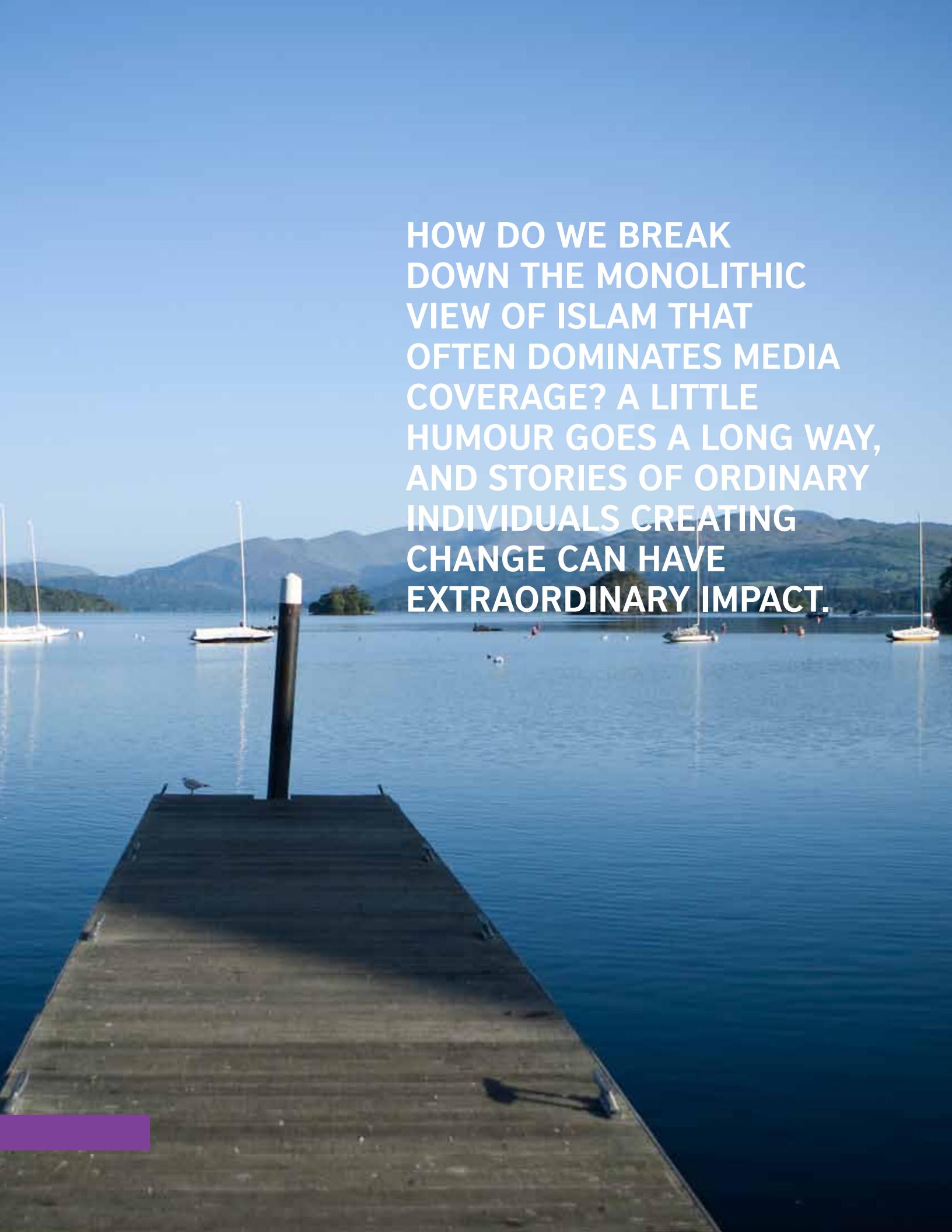
Racism determines what is acknowledged and shared and what remains 'hidden'. Scholarship needs to address this in order to provide a grounded and hence relevant rendition of all contributions of Muslim communities living in and with the West today and in the past. Without this, the depth of understanding of what and

who makes up global Islam (i.e. who are the Muslims - real opportunities for forming links with disaffected communities) will become subsumed under nationalistic interpretations of who should be counted as belonging to the Islamic story in the West, and vice versa, the impact of western cultural history on bounded and fluid Muslim communities across the globe.

In sum, I have pointed to issues that I believe will render solutions of relevance to all cultural communities, Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the West and beyond. Without this, establishing a 'shared future' becomes fraught as worldviews to describe the here and now clash—with each side using the historical method to validate false cultural 'pasts', foster enmities and fuel misrepresentations.

Finally, I note that the unprecedented spread of new global communication technologies and its interface with everyday human life should be viewed as an opportunity for establishing new forms of cross-cultural exchange that are educative in nature and allow individuals and groups to engage in common purposes, shared interests and religious polemics. It offers up a voice for the voiceless as well as a tool for academics to go beyond the university to engage and challenge populist expressions of what constitutes a shared past and future.

— Dr Fatima Zohra is a trustee of the Muslim Women's Helpline.

A photograph of a wooden pier extending into a calm lake. In the background, several sailboats are anchored, and a range of mountains is visible under a clear blue sky.

**HOW DO WE BREAK
DOWN THE MONOLITHIC
VIEW OF ISLAM THAT
OFTEN DOMINATES MEDIA
COVERAGE? A LITTLE
HUMOUR GOES A LONG WAY,
AND STORIES OF ORDINARY
INDIVIDUALS CREATING
CHANGE CAN HAVE
EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT.**

ENDNOTES

1. This essay is adapted from the lecture "The Western Spring," given by the British Council Morocco Director, Martin Rose, as part of the monthly Thursday Culture organized and hosted by Féminin Pluriel on November 26, 2011. The full original speech is published at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/morocco-lecture-martin-rose-western-spring.htm>.
2. M. El-Nawawy and S. Khamis, *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
3. Ibid.
4. María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World* (2003).
5. J.W. Meri, ed., *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (2005).
6. Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
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8. Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People* (San Francisco: Thorsons, 1993).
9. Michael Byram and Genevieve Zarate, "Definitions, Objectives and Assessment of Sociocultural Competence," in *Sociocultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching*, eds. Michael Byram, Genevieve Zarate, and Gerhard Neuner (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998), 9–43.
10. Gerhard Neuner. "The Role of Sociocultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning," in *Sociocultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching*, eds. Michael Byram, Genevieve Zarate, and Gerhard Neuner (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998), 47–109.
11. Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, "Interkulturna svijest u odgoju i obrazovanju u Bosni i Hercegovini," *Porodica i dijete* 2 (1998): 14–16.
12. Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People* (San Francisco: Thorsons, 1993).
13. Gerhard Neuner. "The Role of Sociocultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning," in *Sociocultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching*, eds. Michael Byram, Genevieve Zarate, and Gerhard Neuner (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998), 47–109.
14. Wightwick, "The Place of Intercultural Learning (ICL) in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT)," in *Report on Workshop 13/97* (Graz: ECML, 1998), 9–13.
15. European Convention on Human Rights. While the possibility for home schooling exists in certain European countries, the phenomenon remains relatively small.
16. This is based on my own and others' research pertaining to Sweden and the Nordic countries as well as on discussions with educational studies scholars that have researched the situation in other European countries.
17. See, for example, Otterbeck 2005.
18. See Sebastian Günther, "Be Masters in That You Teach and Continue to Learn: Medieval Muslim Thinkers on Educational Theory," in *Comparative Education Review* (2007).
19. The list of books is extensive, but see, for example, the following: T. Walter Wallbank et al., eds., *Civilization, Past and Present*, 3rd ed. (Scott Foresman and Company), 171–183; John Louis Beatty and Oliver A. Johnson, eds., *Heritage of Western Civilization: Select Readings*, 2nd ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1958, 1966); George H. Knoles and Rixford K. Snyder, eds., *Western Civilization*, 4th ed. (J.B. Lippincott Co., 1951, 1968) (nothing on Islam/civilization); Donald Kagan, ed., *The Western Heritage*, Brief ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1996) (nothing on Islam/civilization); Lynn Hunt et al., eds., *The Making of the West, to 1740*, 3rd ed. (Bedford, 2003, 2010), 238–244, 600–750, 278–281; Katharine J. Lualdi, *Sources of the Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures* 3rd ed. (Bedford, 2009), 153–159; McKay et al., *Western Society: A Brief History*, vol.1 (Bedford, 2010), 163–170.
20. Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilisation* (Columbia UP, 2004).