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The Enigma of Arab-Israeli Peace

When Israeli premier Netanyahu makes reference to territorial compromise, he conspicuously avoids phrases such as “Palestinian State” or “two states for two peoples”. The vicissitudes of Arab-Israeli half-century-conflict seem to have significantly influenced the psyches of both Palestinians and Israelis. Given the fact that any peace deal Palestinian leaders sign with Israel would have to pass a Palestinian referendum, it is clear that for Palestinian and Arab leaders peace negotiations with Israel are merely a continuation of war.

Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi*

While the Middle East is unfortunately on a path to another war, maybe it is time to ask: Why is there such deep Arab hatred toward Israel, and is this hatred justified? What is really at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

West Bank Policies & Hydro-Politics

Notwithstanding soaring rhetoric of President Barack Obama’s Cairo speech and his tepid criticism of Israel’s settlement program, the growth rate of settlers accelerated again after President Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had taken office. This growth can be detected in East Jerusalem and Area C in the

West Bank. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli control of water supplies in the West Bank has led to a severe water crisis for Palestinian residents.

The situation is worst in the Israeli-controlled stretch of land known as Area C, where the Palestinian Authority (PA) is technically responsible for water services, but simply unable to deliver. Cara Flowers, an officer with the Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Group (EWASH), said the health and livelihoods of communities living in Area C – covering 60 per cent of land in the West Bank and home to some 60,000 of the West Bank’s 2.3 million people – were hardest hit as they have a severe lack of access to water and sanitation infrastructure.

Today, over one-third of Israel’s fresh water budget comes from the aquifers under the West Bank’s highlands. In so doing, Israel (including its settlements) consumes more than 80 per cent of the annual recharge of these aquifers, leaving only 20 per cent for the Palestinians.

Peace Discourse & the Quartet

In fact, any Israeli leader who genuinely seeks a peace agreement should not demand that Hamas first meet the Quartet’s

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requirements. Having suffered the indignities of blockade for so long, even if Hamas agreed to negotiate a peace agreement or a long-term ceasefire (hudna) from its current position of weakness, it would only be a question of time until they rise again to reclaim their dignity. The Quartet's three preconditions, which 1) require Hamas to recognize Israel, 2) accept previous agreements and obligations, and 3) forsake violence before it can become a legitimate partner in the peace talks, are out-dated and impractical because these preconditions are tantamount to surrender.

The Quartet's demands make it impossible for Hamas leadership to negotiate under those terms. In reality, no Israeli-Palestinian peace can endure (even if achieved) without Hamas' full participation as an integral part of a Palestinian delegation. And most significantly, the old analysis – that to achieve a remarkable and meaningful dialogue on Arab-Israeli conflict, the Germans will have to annoy the Jews, the French will have to annoy the Arabs and the British will have to annoy the Americans – remains now an oxymoron theory. Despite the involvement of Russia, the US, the EU and the UN, the dream of venturing the Arab-Israeli conflict has lost its moorings regarding a peaceful scenario of coexistence between Israelis and Arabs.

Big Game Theory

When policymakers and analysts use the same sort of examples to draw the same historical conclusions, they're dismissed as right-wing ideologues. The paradox is that there can be no co-existence if one person isn't willing to negotiate as hard

as the other. The appeaser will always be swallowed up and simply cease to exist. It is stubbornness rather than the willingness to make immediate concessions that brings about successful negotiations. In other words, if you want peace, prepare for war.

Four generations of Arabs and Israelis have been consistently brainwashed and indoctrinated to believe the worst canards about each other. This is not the kind of thing that can be eliminated by signatures on a piece of paper. Peace necessitates changing the mind-sets of both Jews and Palestinians.

The Arab side claims that the main grievances they have with Israel are the following:

- Israeli atrocities against Arabs and Palestinians.
- The Israeli occupation and brutal treatment of Palestinians.
- The denial of the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees into Israel.

Yet, the Arab side claims that there is an issue that is more deeply at the core of the conflict. Namely, the fact that the Jewish homeland was established – with the help of western powers – without considering the wishes of Palestine's Arab inhabitants.

The Draconian Fence

The construction of a security fence separating "little Israel" from areas presently not under Israeli sovereignty (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) has become quite controversial. There were several attempts to bring the subject before an international tribunal in The Hague. The media and a significant number of politicians claim that such a fence will not be a border. In-

stead it will separate Israelis from Palestinian Arabs, which is expected to significantly reduce the instances of terror. Israeli government has already invested millions of dollars in the construction of the fence.

This is a dangerous illusion intended to provide the population with a feeling of security. The only justification for such a wall would be basing Israel's security policy upon some kind of New Age therapy to make the public think that it is being protected against terrorism. The security fence solution to Israel's problems with Palestinians is a perfect example of H.L. Mencken's pithy remark, "There is always an easy solution to every human problem – neat, plausible, and wrong."

There is presently no agreement as to the length of fence required to provide security for an optimal number of persons. Estimates range from 320 to more than 700 kilometres.

The fence has extended through the areas of three military command zones – north, central and southern. In order to ensure efficiency and unified control, the IDF seems to have set up another military command – the security fence command – which seems to control all the activities and personnel associated with the fence. These include the IDF, border patrol, police and other security agencies as well as the ancillary civilian services.

Psychological Aspect of the Fence

Experience has shown that the real and psychological burdens imposed by the security fence will embolden radical left organizations in Israel, supported by the European Union and other anti-sources, to pressure the government into taking

impulsive steps such as hastily retreating from Lebanon with the consequence that the northern border is under continuous threat by Hezbollah.

It could perhaps be interesting to note that Rand Corporation analysts were asked to rate the top ten under-attended international problems in the world today. They found out that Israel's security fence was topping the list.

The Israeli built fence has profoundly changed the geographical and political landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The wall, while enforcing segregation and apartheid, has deepened Palestinian rage and enmity, prompting random attacks against targets inside Israel.

The Israeli-Palestinian dilemma is psychological, and that the way for both sides to create bilateral confidence is on that level. To that end, the wisdom calls on Israel to rebuild Palestinian villages abandoned in 1948 – on condition that Israeli families do not live in them now – and to acknowledge that Palestinians view Israel's War of Independence as the Nakba [catastrophe]. Both issues, as the analysts think, would go a long way toward reducing tensions with the Arab community.

Historic Deals – Much Ado About Nothing

Diplomacy could not make a real success despite the trilateral sharing of the Nobel peace award – initially by Egypt's President Anwar Sadat, Israel's Prime Minister [Menachem Begin](#), and US's president Jimmy Carter at the Camp David (1978); and subsequently at Oslo (1993), by the Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin, the PLO's Yasir Arafat and US's Bill Clinton. While

recalling his wisdom about the Oslo Peace Accords, the former Israeli President Shimon Peres yet feels no regret about that historic deal. Peres says that he longs for a day when the IDF will be made up of soldiers for peace.

“My main message to [the soldiers] is that the story of Israel is not a story of the rich land that has enriched the people, but a story of rich people that enriched the land. Our natural source is the human vein. Everybody can be as great as the cause he serves.”

He remains confident that peace is not impossible, if people can rid themselves of preconceived notions. “Impossibility is a product of our prejudice,” he says. “I happen to think Oslo was a great achievement,” said Lewis, also a former President of USIP. “It started the process of serious negotiation about details on how to turn some of the territory over to the Palestinians. So Oslo was a big achievement.”

But progress has stagnated ever since. When, for example, top officials emerged from the Camp David Summit in July 2000 with little to show for the effort, President Clinton gave American officials there a pep talk. “You know, trying and failing is better than not having tried at all,” said David Miller, a former advisor to six secretaries of State, remembered Clinton saying. “At the time, I was inspired, but you know, that is not right. That is an appropriate slogan for a college or high school football team. But not for others.” Some believe Congress is culpable in all of this, swayed by Israeli interests that dictate the stalled peace process in which the three parties find themselves. Indeed, it’s “very expensive to go against Israel,” said Shibley Telhami of the Brookings Institute.

But Miller pushed back on this notion, saying Congress is not the “Israeli-occupied territory” some believe it has become. “There are no domestic constraints that are powerful enough to handicap or tie down the administration. But, he said, the alliance with Israel can only go so far. “We are Israel’s best friend, but we cannot be Israel’s attorney.”

Netanyahu’s Hedonism: From Occupation to Annexation

The UN Security Council rejected a statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the Golan Heights would always remain under Israeli sovereignty.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the Six Day War in 1967. In 1981, an Israeli law was extended to the occupied region, thereby annexing it. However, the international community does not recognize the annexation. “The members recall Resolution 497 [which] decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect,” the council said on Tuesday. The rising violence here is shaking the already uneasy coexistence between Jews and non-Jews inside Israel’s borders. There are approximately 1.5 million Palestinian and Arab citizens of Israel — other than the Palestinians of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Theoretically, these Arab Israelis have identical rights to Jewish Israelis. But practically, they say, the Israeli government treats them as second-class citizens, allocating them fewer resources and restricting the mobility of their communities while prioritizing Jewish Israelis.

In recent weeks at least four local school boards moved to expel or restrict Palestinian workers from being in the school during class hours. While most initiatives were prompted by parents, orders were given by administrators to fire or change the working hours of Arab employees. In one case a fund was set up to hire a Jewish worker instead. Other campaigns targeted Arab employees who posted political Facebook statuses seen as anti-Israeli and insisting they be fired. The tensions are so high that Palestinians say Israelis have become too quick on the trigger to shoot unarmed Palestinians or people suspected to be Palestinians. At least three Jewish Israelis have been attacked, at least one fatally, by other Jewish Israelis who believed they were Palestinian attackers.

Arab-Israeli leaders are careful to say they oppose violence. But to many Jews their words feel hollow. On Wednesday, in a Knesset shouting match, Zeev Elkin, a minister from the Likud party, denounced an Arab member, Ahmad Tibi, telling him: "You and your comrades are responsible for the blood spilled both of Jews and Arabs." These were unfortunate words but an honest expression of the way many Jews in Israel feel today.

A responsible Arab leadership would consider these feelings and remember that the Arab community has a stake in coexistence, in Israel's success, and in partnership with the Jewish majority. They may also be wise to remember that provoking a tense majority could have grave consequences, first and foremost, for the minority population.

Netanyahu also made an effort to bolster his status among the ultra-Orthodox electorate. Right at the time the report was released, he met with ultra-Orthodox journalists in his home, promising them

that he would invite the ultra-Orthodox parties to join his next coalition and even that he would revoke the sanctions imposed for violating the Israel Defence Forces draft law, which were introduced at the Yesh Atid Party's request. Netanyahu's apparently successful last minute appeals were aimed at Israelis who still believe national security trumps all other considerations. Furthermore, he made it clear that if he returned to office he would never establish a Palestinian state. "I think that anyone who is going to establish a Palestinian state today and evacuate lands is giving attack grounds to radical Islam against the state of Israel," he warned. "There is a real threat here that a left-wing government will join the international community and follow its orders."

Notorious Role of Israel's Ultra Nationalism

The Israeli "Right", as demonstrated by a scary coalition of right-wing nationalists, ultranationalists and religious zealots, deserves all the bad press it has garnered since its formation in May 2016.

But none of this should come as a shock, as the "Right" in Israel has never been anything but a coalition of demagogues catering to the lowest common denominator in society. As unlikable as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is, he is, in fact, a fair representation of the worst that Israel has to offer, which, over the years, has morphed to represent a mainstream thinking.

But Israel has not always been ruled by right-wingers. The likes of current Justice Minister, Ayelet Shaked, who has made a habit of calls for extermination and geno-

cide of Palestinians, are relatively newcomers to Israel's political tussle. In previous Knesset, the likes of her would have been assigned to a neglected seat in the back of the Knesset along with other lunatics who often mouthed profanities and incessantly called for killing all Gentiles. Tellingly, she is now one of the main centrepieces in Netanyahu's menacing coalition.

For its part, the Israeli government now faces a dilemma. On the one hand, it does not want to escalate the situation, but on the other hand, it might want to show Hamas that a civilian bus bombing crosses the line. The decision about whether and how to retaliate will largely depend on two considerations.

First, images of the burned bus have raised memories of the wave of bombings that occurred after the second intifada had broken out in 2000. So the public might want to see the government react firmly. At the same time, however, public pressure for a harsh response has probably been limited by the fact that bus blast on 21 April 2016 did not result in fatalities, and that few political figures have criticized Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for his reaction so far.

Second, it is still not clear how close this West Bank cell was to Hamas officials in Gaza. True, the organization did claim responsibility for the attack on social media, but this does not necessarily mean it was responsible for every aspect of the plot or knew about it in advance. Previously, Hamas established a "West Bank bureau" to oversee operations in that territory.

Hamas Between Radicalism and Pragmatism

Since the beginning of the current wave of violence – which some politicians and analysts have been calling "the third intifada" – Hamas has sought to execute mass-casualty attacks inside Israel in order to exacerbate unrest in the West Bank. Last November in 2015, the Shin Bet arrested a Hamas cell planning on shooting attacks that could have resulted in many casualties. In December of the same year, a Hamas cell of six operatives planned to kidnap Israelis in a manner similar to the capture and murder of three teenagers in summer 2014, but they were arrested by the Shin Bet before executing their plans. That same month, the Israeli police, military, and Shin Bet worked together to arrest twenty-five members of a massive Hamas cell that intended to carry out suicide bombings in Israel. And in May 2016, Palestinian security forces arrested another Hamas cell that had planned on shootings and kidnappings. In addition, the IDF stated that at least four explosive labs have been discovered during the recent wave of violence.

Hamas's radical agenda has effectively changed over the last decade, moving towards political strategy. Over the 2000s, Hamas has indeed become a major player in Palestinian politics. It implemented a strategy of attracting Palestinian people, which paid off at the 2006 elections.

Hamas has reduced its traditional discourse on the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state, preferring instead a political stance of persistence to resist against Israel. Hamas has even seemed increasingly ready to accept a long-term ceasefire with Israel. Several declarations have hinted at the recognition of Israel within the 1967 frontiers.

Nevertheless this change is mainly strategic and pragmatic. Indeed, Hamas's new discourse has been partially prompted by external factors: Palestinian public opinion and Israeli pressure. Opting for a political strategy was thus a means toward remaining influential in Palestine. Moreover, it appears that Hamas's leaders have not reached a consensus on this moderate strategy. Some hardliners within Hamas are impeding the negotiations for a cease-fire. In addition, Hamas is facing pressure from more radical groups in Gaza that are trying to prevent the organization from following a peaceful path.

Israel's Current Unpopular Approach

The second view, represented by Naftali Bennett and his Jewish Home party and the right of Likud, rejects in principle the two-state solution, and giving up Jewish sovereignty over the 'Land of Israel'. Proponents of this view seem to be committed to entrenching Israel's position in the West Bank through settlement expansion and even annexation of some or all of the West Bank.

Another proposal to change the diplomatic status quo is for Israel to immediately recognise the State of Palestine, creating a new basis for negotiations between the two states on the final status issues. This proposal currently has much less public support or interest than separation. Although some Israeli public figures signed a letter to British MPs in October 2014 supporting the proposal to recognise Palestine, none were active political players. However, in a [policy paper](#) launched in the summer of 2015, Israeli Labour party Secretary General Hilik Bar backed Israeli

recognition of Palestine.

The fears of the two sides are often summarised by saying that Israelis fear that a permanent agreement will become temporary and the Palestinians fear a temporary agreement will become permanent.

Israeli Doctrine of Regional Approach

Though the interest in warming ties with Sunni Arab states spans the political divide in Israel, there are different views of how this relates to the Palestinians. Netanyahu has suggested that improved relations with Sunni Arab states could facilitate progress on the Palestinian issue. However, the centre-left argues that Israel's unclear position on the Palestinian issue places limits on any deepening ties with Sunni Arab states. A common cry, led by Yesh Atid party leader and former finance minister Yair Lapid, and shared by Zionist Union, is that Israel should clarify its position by formally responding to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API) and promoting a regional peace conference. The [Israeli Peace Initiative](#), an organisation led by Yuval Rabin, son of Yitzhak Rabin, has promoted support for this approach. More than 100 ex-IDF generals and other security officers signed an open letter in November 2014 with the same intention.

The Confederation Model?

Another more promising idea, sometimes proposed but not yet seriously investigated, would be to broaden the two-state solution to include Jordan — in which upwards of four million Palestinians now

reside. This arrangement would encompass contiguous territories inhabited by 90 per cent of Palestinians. In a three-state confederation of Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, borders would be recognized but permeable. Palestinians would have the dignity and self-determination that they have been struggling to achieve in a framework that could replace hatred and mistrust with an opportunity for cooperation and friendship. Israel would not be forced back behind an insecure hermetic boundary 16 kilometres wide at its narrowest. Moreover, confederation would not be a complete novelty. It would reunite the peoples who inhabit the area that the British first designated as the unified territory of Palestine following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. At first blush, this proposal may seem naïve and impractical, if only because it would make the Jordanian regime a third party to what is already a complicated two-dimensional puzzle. This third party formally disengaged from the Palestinian struggle in 1988, after the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada, which persuaded King Hussein that the Palestinian people “had elected the PLO”.

There are other well-recognized obstacles to any sort of pacification. Perhaps the greatest is that, as the Israeli analyst Asher Susser puts it in his excellent book, *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: the Two-State Imperative*, Palestinians are preoccupied with “the 1948 file” (the rights of Palestinian refugees and resident Palestinians in Israel), whereas Israelis focus on the “1967 file” (the issues of Israel’s borders and the final status of the city of Jerusalem). Nonetheless, updating the vision of what the end game may look like, in light of present realities, enables two-state proponents to fight back

against those who claim that the two-state agenda is dead.

Why a Two State Solution Is Inevitable

In recent years, after so many failed efforts, the Israeli centre-left has struggled against a tide of public apathy with respect to resolving the Palestinian issue. A majority of the Israeli public (57 per cent according to the Israel Democracy Institute’s December 2015 ‘[Peace Index](#)’ survey) remains in favour of a two-state solution since they value having a Jewish majority over holding onto all the historic Land of Israel (with its large Palestinian population). However, they assume that no viable agreement is possible since there is no credible Palestinian partner, and associate previous territorial concessions to the Palestinians – whether under Oslo or through the 2005 disengagement – with increased violence against Israelis. This has made centre-left parties wary of making “peace” a centrepiece of their manifestos. Can a fresh Israeli approach, or an old idea whose time has come, offer a viable Israeli policy alternative? For most Israelis it seems there is nothing, which has not been tried. John Kerry’s big push to secure a framework agreement collapsed in April 2014. It was the third official attempt to broker a negotiated, bilateral final status agreement to fail, after the Barak-Arafat talks in 2000-2001 and the Olmert-Abbas talks of 2007-2008. Meanwhile, the unilateral route to separation pursued by Ariel Sharon in 2005 led to Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip, which desperately attempted to fire rockets at every city in Israel. It is here that the EU fostered a soft approach in this

regard.

The foreign ministers said preserving the option of a two-state solution was a high priority, while settlement construction “seriously threatens the two-state solution”.

“The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation applicable to settlement products,” the ministers said in the statement.

“The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.”

For all the difficulties the two-state solution presents, there is no conceivable alternative that presents a realistic prospect of reconciling Israeli and Palestinian aspirations. A better response to the challenging situation on the ground is to reassert that there is no viable alternative to a two-state solution; to express support for all practical steps that advance in that direction; and to be open to creative solutions which can enable the two-state model to adapt in the face of changing demographic, political and strategic realities.

The on-going exclusionary strategy fostered by Israeli and Palestinian leaders, consisting of hiding interests under the table and negotiating based on positions, has resulted in a categorical failure of the

Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Clearly, a new approach to and movement toward peace is needed. It is not only an issue of getting to the table. It is an issue of getting negotiators at the track one level to engage in meaningful exchanges with and to be accountable to their constituents.

The Model for Inclusive Peace supports a comprehensive process that begins well before formal negotiations. It leverages conflict resolution tools and techniques such as open space forums and consensus-building processes and accounts for technological advances that can facilitate a process to engage both direct and indirect stakeholders in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

And yet the inevitable truth is that a bold and dynamic peace discourse needs to be revived by forward-looking thinkers in the PLO’s camp. Such a bold and dynamic peace discourse has to be initiated by the Israeli civil society led by sane elements in Knesset, whose echo of peace and humanitarian norms has always been suppressed by the policies of the ultranationalist elements in both Likud and Labour Israeli governments.

Nevertheless, as long as the political expediencies seem to dominate the legitimacy of international law, and as long as the unjust legacies of the powerful seem to exploit the weaker, the dream of “peaceful coexistence” between Israelis and the Palestinians cannot see the light of the day.

Men's Hair in the Battle Over Legitimacy of Political Islam

The Muslim world's battle over the legitimacy of political Islam has expanded to the soccer pitch as proponents and opponents of interpreting the faith politically seek to impose their public morals with men's hairstyles and facial hair taking centre stage.

James M. Dorsey*

At the core of the battle are fans and players, a reflection of society as a whole, who seek to exercise their right to choose their preferred styles often in opposition to efforts by autocrats to impose their will depending on their attitude towards public morals and political Islam. The crack-down on hairstyles is part of a larger battle to control public morals by autocrats who either seek to ban religious expression from public life or impose pious behaviour.

Soccer fans sporting beards in the Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan, a country that see beards as potential expressions of empathy with political or militant Islam, were recently barred entry into a stadium. The move was widely seen as signalling another crackdown on anything the gov-

ernment associates with political strands of Islam.

Uzbekistan's long-standing president, Islam Karimov, a Soviet era Communist Party official, who has ruled Uzbekistan with an iron fist since its independence in 1991, views political Islam as a serious threat to his regime.

Plainclothes policemen forced bearded fans standing in line to enter a stadium for a friendly match in late May between FK Bukhara and FK Navbahor Namangan to leave the cue and return once they had shaved off their beards.

"There were thousands of people lining up to enter the stadium when a man in civilian clothes approached me and said 'Go and remove your beard and then you can enter,'" one fan told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Uzbek language service.

The fan said he dropped his rejection of the demand when the policeman was joined by four other men. "I had no choice but to run to a nearby barber shop," he said.

RFE/RL reported bearded university students were also being barred from entering classrooms and that bearded men had been detained on streets and in bazaars and taken to police stations for questioning. Women wearing the hijab were being stopped for questioning in the capital

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Tashkent as well as the Fergana Valley in the east of the country, a hotbed of ethnic tensions and Islamist activism.

A FK Bukhara fan leader told RFE/RL that fans under 40 years of age were informally barred from wearing beards. “Young men with beards aren’t allowed to stadiums,” the fan club leader said. Rather than denouncing the ban, some fans complained that the ban had not been communicated. “They could have put a sign at the ticket office (saying) that bearded men aren’t allowed into stadiums,” one fan said.

If Uzbekistan seeks to control men’s facial hair in the government’s effort to crack-down on political Islam, Saudi Arabia, which sees its autocratic monarchical rule as the only legitimate form of Islamic government, has sought to stop young men from adopting hairdos involving shaved parts of one’s hair in a style popular among youths across the globe.

Al Shabab FC goalkeeper Waleed Abdullah became two years ago the first Saudi soccer player to be publicly humiliated when a referee delayed kick-off of a Saudi premier league match to cut the Al his hair because his hairdo was deemed un-Islamic and by implication subversive – a threat that needed to be dealt with immediately and demonstratively.

The Saudi Arabian Football Association said at the time that Mr. Abdullah’s hairdo violated a saying of the Prophet Mohammed that bans Al-Qaza, the shaving of one part of one’s hair while leaving others unshaven.

The public humiliation of Mr. Abdullah not only evoked the disgracing of players who failed to live up to autocratic expectations in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and Moammar Qaddafi’s Libya but also resembled enforcement of strict dress codes by the Islamic State, the jihadist group

from which Saudi Arabia seeks to differentiate itself.

Al Shabab was only allowed to play its match after fans, players and officials watched the referee use scissors to remove a small Mohawk at the front of Mr. Abdullah’s head.

The incident, which occurred prior to the ascendancy to the throne last year of King Salman and the extraordinary empowerment of his son, deputy crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman, raises questions of how Saudi rulers will balance adherence to precepts of public morals advocated by the country’s powerful, ultra-conservative Wahhabi scholars with their effort to restructure the kingdom’s economy and cater to aspirations of its youth.

Mr. Abdullah’s shaving sparked ridicule and anger among Saudi fans who noted that the kingdom had bigger fish to fry, including changes to its social contract as a result of financial austerity, budget deficits because of tumbling oil prices, a stalled war in Yemen, proxy wars with Iran in Syria and elsewhere, and uncertainty about its relationship with the United States, the Gulf’s main protector, Prince Mohammed’s restructuring of the economy and sensitivity to youth aspiration involves a rewriting of the kingdom’s social contract that with the slashing of subsidies, raising of prices of utilities such as water and electricity, introduction of indirect taxes, and planned streamlining of a bloated bureaucracy. That in turn involves a rewriting of the social contract that promised cradle-to-grave welfare in exchange for surrender of political and social rights.

It wasn’t immediately clear how Prince Mohammed would square his efforts to cater to youth desires by developing a culture and entertainment industry in a

country that has banned cinemas until now with a continued ban on men freely choosing how they wish to groom themselves. The new industry is part of Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030 economic and social plans for the kingdom that were announced in April.

It also remained unclear to what degree the Salmons are willing to take on the Wahhabi scholars with whom they share power in an arrangement that goes back to the founding of the latest Saudi state in the early 20th century. The government recently curbed the power of the religious police but has so far been unwilling to

challenge the Wahhabis on the lifting of a ban on women's driving.

A South Asian leader of a political Islamic group cautioned that Saudi moves were wholly designed to ensure the survival of the ruling family. "In Islam, any head of state should have the trust of the common people. They don't enjoy the confidence of the common people. They appoint their next emperor. This is not in accordance with Islam," the Islamist leader said, pinpointing the risks involved in the inevitable restructuring of relations with the Wahhabis as the Al Sauds seek to take their autocracy into the 21st century.

Orlando Shooting: Is It Islam or Western Homophobia?

On 12 June 2016, a mass shooting left 49 dead and 53 wounded in an LGBT+ nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Statistics show that the LGBT+ community is the minority whose members are most likely to become victims of hate crimes in the United States. More depressingly, over 80% of LGBT+ people killed in the US are queer people of colour, according to a report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

Iris Bendtsen*

Someone who knew Pulse Club well was anonymously quoted online saying that calling it a “gay club” would be factually false: “What actually made this club unique is that it was explicitly for the entire LGBT+ spectrum.

“A place where in addition to theme nights in various topics related to the broad community, also did a lot of educational and supportive work for lesbians, bi-people, trans-people, QTPOC and others.” QTPOC refers to Queer & Trans People of Colour. What supports this view is that the list of victims clearly shows that many women were present there at the nightclub, too.

Omar Mateen, the Pulse shooter, allegedly claimed allegiance to ISIS before the

attack. In doing so he tried to gain legitimacy in an attempt to be something more than just a “lone wolf”, more than a solitary madman. What he was literally doing was jumping on the bandwagon of Islamism, the most visible representative of bloodthirstiness that is globally known right now. It is telling that while he was in Pulse, he called the police to pledge allegiance to Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, two Islamist groups that immensely differ from ISIS and are in fact fighting against them in Syria. This suggests that he actually had little knowledge about Islamic extremism.

In fact, his homophobia was not an outside product. Omar Mateen was born in New York. His views were completely in line with what many conservative people think in the US.

Some of the reactions to the attack afterwards demonstrated how deeply homophobic some parts of US society are. People from various denominations or religious identities tweeted things like “this was good, there is (sic) less perverts now” and “gays should be shot for disrespecting the natural order”.

In the wake of the attacks, there were at least three separate occasions where men

* Blogger and journalist about West Asia for almost a decade

threatened other LGBT+ venues with attacks – two of the threats came from marines and one from a gay man from Atlanta. All three men were white. One Florida priest expressed joy at the attacks and was filmed saying: “As Christians, we shouldn’t be mourning the death of 50 sodomites.

“We shouldn’t be sad or upset,” the priest added.

Blaming Islam, in this case, precisely serves finding an “outside source” for the homophobia bred in the United States. The endemic homophobia is the atmosphere the shooter breathed, while he was preparing his mass shooting attack. He knows he will be applauded by certain segments of society.

A writer on Tumblr hit it like the nail on the head with the following piece:

“You weren’t the gunman, but you didn’t want to see gay people kissing in public. You weren’t the gunman, but you were upset when gay people gained the right to marry. You weren’t the gunman, but you use slurs for gay people. You weren’t the gunman, but you were the culture that built him.”

For queer people the shooting was a reminder of the dangers they live with every day – a life straight people cannot imagine. As one person, Alex Darke, wrote on Facebook: “When I reach to hold [my boyfriend’s] hand in the car, I still do the mental calculation of ‘ok, that car is just slightly behind us so they can’t see, but that truck to my left can see right inside the car’. If I kiss [him] in public, like he leaned in for on the bike trail the other day, I’m never fully in the moment. I’m always parsing who is around us and paying attention to us. There’s a tension that comes with that.

“Every LGBT+ person you know knows what I’m talking about. Those tiny little mental

calculations we do over the course of our life add up,” he added. “And we just got hit with a stark reminder that those simmering concerns, those fears probably won’t ever go away.”

When the news came out that Omar Mateen had frequented Pulse himself and was inscribed on gay dating apps like Grindr, one trans woman

ed: “The fact that this attacker had homoerotic feelings, the fact that homophobia and homoeroticism are linked, while it may be surprising for many straight people, is no surprise for those of us who are queer and trans and have to constantly flirt with the invisible line between violence and desire as part of our existence in this world.”

Those who are having it the hardest in the wake of the attacks are Muslim members of the LGBT+ community. Amina Wadud, a feminist Muslim scholar, wrote on social media “queer Muslims, I know you have always had a hard time finding your place in the LGBT+ community. Know that you are loved!”. David Klion, an Al-Jazeera journalist remarked, “there will be attempts to pitch two already vulnerable communities against each other. Don’t let them do it, resist!”

Many were quick to blame religion, specifically Islam. Yet not all Christians are like the priest cited above. Indeed, some Christians also came forward to help. And just as there are progressive currents of Christianity, where women and members of the LGBT+ community can become priests, there are progressive movements in Islam. The passages of the Quran that concern homosexuality can very cogently be interpreted as being actually more progressive than the Bible.

According to these interpretations, the “story of Lot” in the Quran was told with

the intent of showing that raping men is just as bad as raping women, and not, as in the Bible, to condemn homosexuality. To cite one senior researcher in Islamic Studies, Usama Hasan:

"[T]here is no automatic penalty for homosexuality in Islamic scripture, and this was also the view of Imam Abu Hanifa. Imam Ibn Hazm also mentioned this in his Al-Muhalla with regard to lesbian sexual acts. By the way, the Ottoman caliphate was the first modern state to decriminalise homosexuality, in the 19th century."

During the Pulse shooting, Imran Yousuf, a trained marine was able to save 70 lives. Like the shooter, he was also a Muslim. When the press wrote about him, however, his religion did not make the headlines.

A few days after the Pulse shooting, a white man was stopped with explosives on his way to a Pride event in L.A. He was not a Muslim, but a white supremacist. And a week later, British politician Jo Cox was murdered by a man identified as a white supremacist. The hypocrisy of one particular newspaper was outstanding: When two years ago two black, Muslim men killed British Army soldier Lee Rigby on the streets, the Daily Mail showed one of the men titling: "Blood on his hands, hatred in his eyes". In Jo Cox's case, the Daily Mail used the headline "MP's alleged killer was a timid gardener dogged by years of mental turmoil".

Islamist terrorism is clearly a threat. But tantamount to that is white supremacism, which doesn't receive media attention Islamism does. One explanation for this could be that white supremacism does not fit into the narrative state powers want to create. The idea that danger comes from within society is much harder

to exploit and transform into political capital than that of an "outside enemy". Apparently the FBI told Omar Ma-teen's widow not to tell the media that her husband was gay. The story of a man conflicted about his own sexuality did not fit into their grand narrative of identity politics, pitching "Muslims" against the "rest of society", which is conceptualized as mostly white.

In the same week of the Pulse shooting, there were several violent crimes elsewhere in the US: A shoot-out at a Walmart store, a female pop-star was killed by a stranger, a woman was killed together with her three daughters by her husband, and teenage girlfriend murdered by her boyfriend. The real list of violent crimes is most certainly longer. Incidents of domestic violence ending with murder are often seen as "ordinary" violence that usually makes headlines only locally.

What's the common denominator here? All the perpetrators were male.

To quote one sarcastic tweet that was widely spread: "998 shootings since Sandy Hooks, 2 involved Muslims. 998 out of 998 involved males. But yeah, must be a Muslim problem, not a male violence problem." Some parts of society, especially men, laugh at the suggestion that "male violence" is actually a thing. Other men actually get angry if someone points out male violence providing solid details. Just imagine a woman did anything remotely close to the Orlando shooting. People would immediately jump into her problems with femininity. I can hear the comments already, "did she need the gun to feel tough or what?"

"Why did she need this for her ego to start with?"

Although by far not all men live their masculinity in this pathological kind of

way, the fact that the need to “feel like a man” can be bolstered with a gun in hand is almost taken for granted and not seen as something worrisome in and of itself.

This toxic, violent type of masculinity must structurally be understood as part of explaining violence. This is another problem at the core of American society itself.

France's Middle East Peace Initiative and the Hamas Conundrum

The exact location in Paris where France's Middle East peace conference took place on June 3 was not announced in advance to the world's media. The precaution was fully justified on security grounds. For just prior to the meeting of some thirty foreign ministers from around the globe, [Hamas had issued a statement](#) condemning the French initiative. Hamas, be it remembered, rules nearly 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza strip, and is supported by unknown numbers of Palestinians – perhaps a majority – in the occupied territories.

Neville Teller*

“Any proposals to bring the two parties back to the negotiating table,” declared Hamas leader Yahya Moussa to the website *Al-Monitor*, “aim at slaying the Palestinian cause. The international community cannot offer any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without the approval of Hamas, which won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006.”

Moussa's last point is rather sparing with relevant facts. The legislative elections of 2006 indeed gave Hamas a substantial lead over its Fatah rivals, and after much bargaining the two parties agreed to form

a national unity government. But sharing power was the last thing Hamas wanted. In a bloody fratricidal coup, it fought, defeated and expelled its Fatah rivals in the Gaza strip. In fact Hamas rules Gaza by might, not by right.

Moussa had more to say regarding the French initiative. Hamas's solution to end the conflict, he declared, is based “on the Israeli withdrawal from the entire Palestinian territories occupied since 1948, the return of the Palestinian refugees who have been displaced from their home and lands since 1948, and the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Hamas will always opt for armed resistance, he added, until the “restoration of Palestinian rights.”

Hamas is quite explicit as regards its objectives. It intends to continue its armed struggle until it has defeated Israel and rendered Mandate Palestine *judenrein*. Global opinion, West and East, consistently ignores, or underplays, this factor in the equation. Almost without exception the world supports the two-state concept as the answer to the perennial Israel-Palestine dispute. This was the ideal set out by France's President François Hol-

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lande, as he launched the ministerial peace conference: “two states living side by side in peace.” How peaceful co-existence can be achieved when Hamas, representing a substantial proportion, if not the majority, of Palestinians is opposed tooth and nail to any accommodation with Israel – that is the question not asked, and therefore left unanswered.

Any yet, in acknowledging the difficulty of the task before the international community, Hollande perhaps nodded in the direction of the Hamas conundrum. Referring to the fact that neither Israel nor the Palestinian Authority had been invited to this first of France’s two projected peace conferences, he said: “We cannot substitute for the (absent) parties. Our initiative aims at giving them guarantees that the peace will be solid, sustainable and under international supervision.”

Could “international supervision” guarantee that a new, sovereign Palestine in the West Bank would not very quickly be infiltrated by Islamic State, as well as taken over by Hamas, either through force of arms or by democratic election? What then of Israel’s security, with Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion airport and Israel’s road and rail infrastructure under direct threat of rocket and missile attack?

French foreign minister Jean-Marc Ayrault gave a press conference after the summit. He said that the participating ministers had decided to set up teams by the end of June charged with working on “economic and security incentives for the Israelis and Palestinians to reach a deal.” The security incentives he mentions would need to be very explicit and substantial if they are to be meaningful.

The joint communiqué issued after the conference emphasised that the status quo is not sustainable, and stressed the

importance of both sides demonstrating, “with policies and actions, a genuine commitment to the two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and create the conditions for fully ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and resolving all permanent status issues through direct negotiations ... also recalling relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and highlighting the importance of the implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative.”

The Arab Peace Initiative, let it be said, has been comprehensively rejected by Hamas. Its basis is an undertaking to normalize relations between the Arab world and Israel in return for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute on a two-state basis. Although incorporated into US Middle East policy by President Obama early in his administration, Israel has been equivocal about it until quite recently. On May 30 Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, surprised many by saying: “The Arab peace initiative includes positive elements that can help revive constructive negotiations with the Palestinians. We are willing to negotiate with the Arab states revisions to that initiative so that it reflects the dramatic changes in the region since 2002 but maintains the agreed goal of two states for two peoples.”

More than two weeks passed. Then on June 15 a spokesman for the Arab League rejected Netanyahu’s offer to negotiate. “This is completely unacceptable,” said Secretary-General of the Arab League, Dr Nabil Elaraby, “because the Arab Peace Initiative has a certain philosophy and a certain order.” This delayed response should perhaps be considered as a first move in a longer diplomatic game, especially so in light of the specific mention,

not once but twice, of the Arab Peace Initiative in the joint communiqué following the Paris conference.

What was not mentioned, but ought perhaps to be seriously considered, is the concept of establishing a sovereign Palestine within the framework of a new legal entity – a confederation, either comprising only Israel and Palestine, or even a three-party confederation of Jordan, Israel and Palestine. In a confederation sovereign states link themselves together to co-ordinate common action on critical issues. A new, weak Palestinian state

would be instantly vulnerable to IS and Hamas – but not only Palestine, for both are already knocking on Israel's and Jordan's doors. A three-partner confederation might be conceived specifically to achieve close military and economic co-operation, thus providing not only high-tech security for all three, but also the basis for the future growth and prosperity of each partner.

If something along these lines emerges after France's second conference, planned for the end of 2016, the whole enterprise will have been worthwhile.

Islam and the Enlightenment

The intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th century that became known as the Enlightenment helped a new class to come to power in Europe. Neil Davidson asks why the more advanced civilisations of the Islamic world did not develop a similar movement of their own.

Neil Davidson*

In the current Western controversy over Islam, one theme recurs with increasing predictability. Many writers are prepared to acknowledge Muslim cultural and scientific achievements, but always with the caveat that Islamic civilisation never experienced an equivalent to the Enlightenment. “Islam never had to go through a prolonged period of critically examining the validity of its spiritual vision, as the West did during the 18th century,” writes the historian Louis Dupre. “Islamic culture has, of course, known its own crisis... yet it was never forced to question its traditional worldview.”

The same view has also been expressed by individuals who were originally from Muslim backgrounds but have subsequently abandoned their religious beliefs. Salman Rushdie has recently argued that Islam requires “not so much a reformation... as an Enlightenment”.

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Muslims have responded in different ways to the claim that their religion has never produced an Enlightenment. Ziauddin Sardar has criticised it in the *New Statesman* on two grounds. On the one hand, “It assumes that ‘Islam’ and ‘Enlightenment’ have nothing to do with each other – as if the European Enlightenment emerged out of nothing, without appropriating Islamic thought and learning.” On the other, “It betrays an ignorance of postmodern critique that has exposed Enlightenment thought as Eurocentric hot air.” So Islamic thought was responsible for the Enlightenment but the Enlightenment was intellectually worthless. This is not, perhaps, the most effective way of highlighting the positive qualities of Islamic thought. Sardar’s incoherence is possibly the result of his own critical attitude towards Islamism. More mainstream Muslim thinkers generally take one of two more positions.

The first is that Islam did not require the Enlightenment, because unlike Christianity its tenets do not involve the same conflict between religion and science. As the Egyptian scholar AO Altwaijri has written, “Western enlightenment was completely opposed to religion and it still adopts the same attitude. Islamic enlightenment, on the contrary, combines belief and science, religion and reason, in a reasonable equilibrium between these components.” Is-

lam is certainly less dependent than Christianity on miracles or what Tom Paine called “improbable happenings”, but ultimately, because it counterposes reason to revelation, Enlightenment thought casts doubt on all religions – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism alike.

The second position is that, although the Enlightenment represented progress for the West, it was a means of oppressing the Muslim world. A Hussain asks, “Given that our people have been victims of these developments, then why should we appreciate them?” It is also true that both the Islamic world and Muslims in the West have suffered and continue to suffer from imperialism and racism. But this is not the fault of the Enlightenment as such. Rather, it is an outcome of the failure of Enlightenment ideals to find their realisation in socialism, and the way they have been harnessed instead to the needs of capitalist expansion. In the hands of a resurgent movement of the working class and the oppressed, these ideas can be turned against the warmongers and Islamophobes who falsely claim them as their own.

The history of the Islamic world shows that it also raised many of the themes which later became associated with the Enlightenment, and did so earlier in time. The issue is therefore why the Enlightenment became dominant in the West and not in the Islamic world – or indeed in those other parts of the world, like China, which had previously been materially more advanced than the West.

The comparative basis for the critique of Islam is the Enlightenment that occurred in Europe and North America between the mid-17th and early 19th centuries, but the terms of the argument are changed in

relation to Islam. No one refers to a “Christian Enlightenment”. If the Enlightenment is given any specificity at all, it is in relation to individual nations. Why then is territoriality the basis for discussion of the Enlightenment for the West, but religion for the East?

A Christian Enlightenment?

The assumption is that the Enlightenment, like the Renaissance and Reformation before it, emerged out of what is usually called the “Judeo-Christian tradition”. In other words, Christianity was intellectually open and tolerant enough to allow critical thought to emerge, with the result that religion could gradually be superseded, and the separation of church and state brought about. The implication of course is that Islam has been incapable of allowing the same process to take place. The fate of Bruno (who was burned at the stake by the Holy Inquisition) or Galileo (who was threatened with the same fate) for daring to question the doctrines of the Catholic church casts some doubt on the claim that Christianity is intrinsically open to scientific rationality.

At this point the argument usually shifts from Christianity in general to the role of Protestantism in particular or, more narrowly still, that of Calvinism. But this is no more convincing. Writers as politically different as Antonio Gramsci and Hugh Trevor-Roper have explained that Protestant thought was in many respects a retreat from the intellectual sophistication of late medieval Catholic thought, as characterised by, for example, Erasmus. Certainly 16th century Geneva and 17th century Edinburgh were not places in which rational speculation was encour-

aged. The intellectually progressive role of Protestantism lies in the way in which some versions of the faith encouraged congregations to seek the truth in their individual reading of the Bible, rather than from received authority – an approach which could be carried over into other areas of life. But the teachings themselves did not point in this direction. Justification by faith is an enormously powerful doctrine but not a rational one, since it rests on the claim that the ways of god are unknowable to man. Edinburgh did later become the centre of perhaps the greatest of all national Enlightenments, but in order to do so it had first to abandon the “theocratic fantasies” of the Church of Scotland. And this was true across Europe and in North America. Whatever the specific religious beliefs of individual Enlightenment thinkers, and however coded some of their arguments, the movement as a whole was at war with the Judeo-Christian tradition. It represents not the continuity of Western culture but a profound break within it. Far from being the apotheosis of Western values, the Enlightenment rejected the values which had previously been dominant.

Enlightenment thinkers also took a far more complex attitude to Islam than their present day admirers would have us believe. As Jonathan Israel recounts in his important history, *Radical Enlightenment*, “On the one hand, Islam is viewed positively, even enthusiastically, as a purified form of revealed religion, stripped of the many imperfections of Judaism and Christianity, and hence reassuringly akin to deism. On the other, Islam is more often regarded with hostility and contempt as a primitive, grossly superstitious religion like Judaism and Christianity, and

one no less, or still more, adapted to promoting despotism.” Edward Gibbon wrote in a remarkably balanced way about Mohammed and the foundation of Islam in *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, particularly given his generally critical attitude to Christianity. In general, then, the Enlightenment did not regard Islam as being any better or any worse than Christianity.

Perhaps we should therefore consider the possibility that the decisive factor in both the emergence of Enlightenment in the West and its failure to do so in the East may not be religion as such, but the kind of societies in which their respective religions took root, and which these religions helped to preserve. We will in any case have to qualify the claim that Islam knew no form of scientific rationality. After all, it was Muslim scholars who translated and preserved the philosophy and science of Greece and Persia, which would otherwise have been lost. It was they who transmitted it to their equivalents in Europe, who came to be educated by Muslim hands in Spain and Sicily.

But Muslim achievements in scientific thought were not simply archival. The 13th century Syrian scholar and physician Ibn al-Nafis was first to discover the pulmonary circulation of the blood. In doing so he had to reject the views of one of his predecessors, Avicenna – himself an important medical thinker who, among other things, identified that disease could be spread by drinking water. Ibn al-Nafis died in his bed at an advanced age (he is thought to have been around 80). Compare his fate to that of the second person to propose the theory of circulation, the Spaniard Michael Servetus. In 1553 he was arrested by the Protestant authorities of Geneva on charges of blasphemy, and

was burned for heresy at the insistence of Calvin after refusing to recant.

The Islamic world did not only produce scientific theory, but its philosophers also considered the social role of religion. According to the Marxist historian Maxine Rodinson, the Persian philosopher and physician, Rhazes, held the view “that religion was the cause of wars and was hostile to philosophy and science. He believed in the progress of science, and he considered Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates much greater than the holy books.” No comparable figure in, say, 10th century Normandy in the same era could have openly expounded these views and expected to live. In some Muslim states comparable positions were even held at the highest level of the state. In India the Mughul Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) emphasised “the path of reason” rather than “reliance on tradition”, and devoted much consideration to the basis of religious identity and non-denominational rule in India. His conclusions were published in Agra in 1591-2, shortly before Bruno was burned at the stake in Rome. Akbar’s minister and spokesman, Abu’l Fazl, included several exasperated passages in his book *A’in-i Akbari* bemoaning the constraints imposed on scientific endeavour by religious obscurantism: “From time immemorial, the exercise of inquiry has been restricted, and questioning and investigation have been regarded as precursors of infidelity. Whatever has been received from father, kindred and teacher is considered as a deposit under divine sanction, and a malcontent is reproached with impiety or irreligion. Although a few among the intelligent of their generation admit the imbecility of this procedure in others, yet they will not stir one step in this direction themselves.”

Clearly, then, there is nothing intrinsic to Islamic society which prevented Muslims from rational or scientific thought. Yet these intimations of Enlightenment, which occurred at an earlier historical stage than in the West, never emerged into a similar full-blown movement capable of contributing to the transformation of society. Ibn al-Nafis was untroubled by authority, but his ideas had no influence on medicine in the Islamic world. In the West, where similar ideas were initially punished by death, they were rediscovered and within 150 years were part of mainstream medical thought. Ideas, however brilliant, are by themselves incapable of changing the world – they must first find embodiment in some material social force. But what was this social force in the West, and why was this missing in Islamic and other countries?

The Nature of Islamic Society

Clearly there were great transformations in Islamic society between the death of the Prophet in 632 and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, but some underlying characteristics remained throughout. The Islamic world rested on a series of wealthy cities ranging from Baghdad in modern Iraq, through Cairo in modern Egypt, to Cordoba in modern Spain. Connecting these urban centres was a system of highly developed desert and sea trade routes, along which caravans and ships brought luxury goods like spices and manufactured goods like pottery. The richness and the opulence of this civilisation stood in stark contrast to impoverished, backward Europe.

But what was the basis of the underlying economy – the “mode of production”?

Feudalism, the mode which dominated in Western Europe and Japan, was of minor importance in the states of the Muslim world, with the major exception of Persia (modern day Iran) and parts of India. Instead, the dominant mode was what some Marxists, including the present writer, call the tributary mode. In Europe the feudal estate monarchies presided over weak, decentralised states. Power was devolved to local lords based in the countryside, and it was here, in their local jurisdictions, that exploitation was carried out through the extraction of rent and labour services. But precisely because of this fragmented structure it was possible for capitalist production to begin between these different areas of parcellised sovereignty. The towns varied in size and power, but some at least were free from lordly or monarchical domination, and provided spaces where new approaches to production could develop.

Attempts have been made to present the Enlightenment as a pure expression of scientific rationality which coincidentally appeared in the epoch of the transition from feudalism and the bourgeois revolutions. But it must rather be understood as the theoretical accompaniment of these economic and political processes – though in many complex and mediated ways.

The conditions which allowed capitalist development, and hence the Enlightenment, did not exist to the same extent in the Muslim world. In the Ottoman Empire, which lay at its heart, there was no private property in land, no local lordship, and therefore little space for new approaches to production and exploitation to arise. The state was the main exploiter and its officials displayed a quite conscious hostility to potential alternative

sources of power, hence the bias it displayed towards small-scale commerce and the hostility it displayed towards large mercantile capital. Consequently, merchants tended to be from external “nations” – Jews, Greeks or Armenians – not from the native Arab or Turkish populations. There is nothing inherently stagnant about Islamic societies, but they stand as the best example of how ruling classes are consciously able to use state power, the “superstructure”, to prevent new and threatening classes from forming, with all that implies about the thwarting of intellectual developments. “Asking why the scientific revolution did not occur in Islam”, writes Pervez Hoobdhoy, exaggerating only slightly, “is practically equivalent to asking why Islam did not produce a powerful bourgeois class.”

This lack of the development of a new, more advanced economic class meant that Islamic theorists had no material examples to look to. Take the Tunisian writer Ibn el Khaldun (1332-1402), author of the *Kitab Al-Ilbar* or *Book of Examples* (usually referred to in English as *The Muqaddimah* or *Introduction to History*). His sociological insights identified the continuing struggle between civilisations based, on the one hand, on towns and traders (*hadarah*) and, on the other, on tribes and holy men (*badawah*), the two endlessly alternating as the dominant forces within the Muslim world. Adam Smith and his colleagues in the Historical School of the Scottish Enlightenment could develop a theory that saw societies develop and progress upwards from one “mode of subsistence” to another because they had seen this movement in England, and wished to see it reproduced in Scotland. Ibn el Khaldun saw only cyclical repetition in the history of Islamic socie-

ty, and could not envisage any way to break the cycle. His work could not transcend the society it sought to theorise.

In the face of this, the doctrines and organisation of Islam are difficult to separate. In Christian Europe, church and state were allied in defence of the existing order. In the Islamic world they were fused – there was no separate church organisation. There were of course differences between branches of Islam – Shias favoured rule by charismatic imams, Sunnis a consensus among believers – but in neither was there an overarching church organisation comparable to that of Christianity. Instead a federal structure arose which adapted to the individual states. It is difficult, therefore, to dissociate reasons of state from reasons of religion. A belief in predestination implied that it was impious or even impossible to attempt to predict future events. A belief in utilitarianism focused intellectual investigation or borrowing only on what was immediately useful. Finally, as the boundaries of the Islamic world began to run up against the expanding European powers from the 16th century on, the idea of drawing on their methods and discoveries became all the more painful to contemplate for ruling elites accustomed to their own sense of superiority. As the Western threat grew, the control over what was taught became even more extreme.

Partial Reform

The example of China also tends to support the view that the key issue is not religion but the nature of the economy and the “corresponding form of the state”. Like Islamic societies, China encom-

passed a great civilisation with important scientific and technical accomplishments, surpassing those of Europe. But here too there was a bureaucratic tributary state acting to suppress emergent class forces and their dangerous ideas. Reading the work of one leading intellectual in 17th century China, Wang Fu-Chih (1619-92), it is difficult not to see him as a predecessor to Adam Smith in Scotland or the Abbé Sieyès in France, but unlike them his thoughts led to no immediate results. In China, as in the House of Islam, the state acted to control the spread of dangerous thoughts. But China was not an Islamic country – the similarities lie not in religion, but in economy and state, and it was these that led them to a common fate.

So was it possible that Enlightenment ideas could be forced onto these societies from without? The temporary conquest of the Ottoman province of Egypt by French revolutionary armies in 1798 led to an attempt, first in Egypt and Turkey, to adapt at least some of the technical, scientific and military aspects of scientific rational thought. Many of the aspects of Islam which are ignorantly supposed to be “medieval” traditions are products of this period of partial reform. As one historian notes, “The burqa was actually a modern dress that allowed women to come out of the seclusion of their homes and participate to a limited degree in public and commercial affairs”. Another points out, “The office of ayatollah is a creation of the 19th century, the rule of Khomeini and of his successor as ‘supreme Jurist’ an innovation of the 20th.” The imperial division and occupation of the Middle East after the First World War froze, and in some cases even reversed, the process. It should not be forgotten, in the endless babble about Western superiority, that

feudal social relationships – against which the Enlightenment had raged – were introduced into Iraq by the British occupiers after 1920 to provide a social basis for the regime.

The subsequent history has been told in remorseless detail by Robert Fisk in *The Great War For Civilisation* and cannot even be attempted here. The question is, after over 100 years of imperialist intervention, does the Islamic world today have to reproduce the experience of the West, from Renaissance to Reformation to Enlightenment? In 1959 one Afghan intellectual, Najim oud-Din Bammatt wrote, “Islam today has to go through a number of revolutions at once: a religious revolution like the Reformation; an intellectual and moral revolution like the 18th century Enlightenment; an economic and social revolution like the European industrial revolution of the 19th century.” History, however, does not do repeats. Leon Trotsky’s theories of uneven and combined development and permanent revolution argue that these revolutions do not have to follow each other, but can interlock and be compressed in time. Christian Europe, after all, was incomparably less developed than Arab or Persian civilisation in the 10th or 11th centuries. But its very backwardness allowed it to incubate a far higher form of class society – capitalism – and hence to “catch up and overtake” its former superiors and in the process fragment, occupy and destroy them.

When the Enlightenment ideas came to the masses of the Islamic world, they came not as a recapitulation of the European experience of the 17th and 18th centuries, but in the form of Marxism – the radical inheritor of that experience. Unfortunately the theoretical and organisational forms in which Marxism made its

impact were Stalinist and consequently carried within them the seeds of disaster – most spectacularly in Iraq during the 1950s and in Iran during the 1970s, but more insidiously almost everywhere else. It is because of the catastrophic record of Stalinism, and more broadly of secular nationalism, that people who would once have been drawn to socialism see Islamism as an alternative path to liberation today.

What future, then, for Islam and the Enlightenment? We should remember the experience of the West. Our Enlightenment occurred when Christianity was older than Islam is now and did not occur all at once. People did not simply become “rational” and abandon their previous views because they heard the wise words of Spinoza or Voltaire. It happened over time, and because the experience of social change and struggle made people more open to new ideas that began to explain the world in a way that religion no longer did.

Socialists in the West today have to begin with the actual context of institutional racism and military intervention with which Muslims are faced every day. The absolute obligation on socialists is first to defend Muslims, both in the West and in the developing world, and to develop the historic alliance at the heart of the anti-war movement. To say to that they, or people of any faith, must abandon their beliefs before we will deign to speak to them is not only arrogant but displays all the worst aspects of the Enlightenment – “Here is the Truth, bow down before it!” Why should Muslims listen to people whose self-importance is so great they make agreement with them a precondition of even having a conversation? Enlightenment cannot be imposed by legal

fiat or at the point of a gun. The real precondition of debate is unity in action, where discussion can take place secure in the knowledge that participants with different beliefs nevertheless share goals as a common starting point. It is, I suspect, more than a coincidence that those who are most insistent on the need for Islamic

Enlightenment are the voices crying loudest for war. The original Enlightenment will never recur. However, we may be seeing the first signs of a New Enlightenment, not in these voices but in the actions of those – Muslim and non-Muslim alike – who have taken to the streets to oppose them.

The Quandary of Turkey's EU Bid

Turkey – a de facto NATO-EuroMed member – moved a step closer in its bid to join the European Union after its government announced fresh talks with the 28-member bloc. The talks will focus on economic and monetary policy. German Chancellor Angela Merkel previously said that she is opposed to Turkey becoming a member of the EU but has promoted talks, calling Turkish membership an “open-ended issue”. Other European leaders may not be overwhelmingly in favour of Ankara’s membership bid as Turkey borders a number of conflict zones, specifically Iraq and Syria, and while oppressing the Kurds, is fighting a Kurdish insurgency waged by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in the country’s south-eastern regions. Although Turkey’s relationship with European integration goes back to the late 1950s, it is not necessary to look far in the past to realize there is a much more complicated picture replete with change throughout the last decade.

Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi*

Hakim Khatib**

Turkey's Quest for Joining the EU

Turkey is on Europe's edge. In the last decade, the country has struggled with whether to join the European Union (EU) or focus its diplomatic efforts elsewhere. During this period, Turkish public opinion has swung back and forth.

While a slim margin currently favours EU membership, both elite opinion and public sentiment remains volatile, particularly with so much changing within Turkey itself. This is because Turkey's European dilemma is no longer one of mere foreign policy but also concerns the future shape of Turkey itself. In the early years of Turkey's relations with the project of European integration, the Turkish elite sought membership as the next stage in Turkey's development and westernization. At the time, the European Community was considered the economic wing of the NATO.

Turkey expected that joining another western institution would bolster its efforts at being/becoming western. Second, the economic dimension of membership was (and remains) of enormous significance, leading to the signing of a Customs Agreement that went into effect in 1995. Third, supporters of EU membership were keen to replicate the process of rapid development in Turkey that other candidates and EU members

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went through when preparing for and after joining the Union.

Of these three, the symbolic importance of locating the country in the West cannot be underestimated. Contrary to popular representations, Turkey's westernization was never a mere lifestyle choice. Being part of the West was also a strategy to avoid being on the margins of the world political and economic system. Such concerns are rooted in a particular memory of the final days of the Ottoman Empire that traumatized Turkey's elite – the memory of Anatolia turned into a backwater of the world economic system and pushed to the brink of dismemberment. These concerns have been a driving force behind the project of westernization throughout the republican era.

On the surface, the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, attempts to come off as a progressive and an enthusiastic proponent of integrating with Europe. The former premier, Abdullah Gül, has been a leading supporter of his nation's seemingly perpetual EU membership bid. The ruling political party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), has implemented several reforms to improve Turkey's résumé in the EU enlargement office.

Europe seems content to leave it at that when it comes to doing business with Turkey—particularly business that involves receiving energy via Turkey. But you don't have to look far to see a more complicated picture.

The AKP's Role

The AKP has an Islamist pedigree and maintains pan-Islamic ties throughout the region. Flush with an electoral vic-

tory in 2015 that made it the biggest party in the Turkish parliament, the AKP is increasingly brushing the nation's secularists aside. It has punished journalists critical of the party. It has finagled control of prominent media companies into the hands of AKP-loyal businessmen. It has jailed opponents based on information obtained through dubiously intercepted phone calls and e-mails. It has loosened regulations on religious schools—regulations intended to prevent Islamist indoctrination. It is imposing a more conservative morality. In several ways, the ruling party has relaxed the nation's constitutionally strict separation of religion and politics. Critics accuse it of inching the nation toward Islamic sharia law.

The EU membership requires countries to internalize democratic principles that are beyond the electoral democracies. Applying for the EU membership, the candidate countries voluntarily put themselves under an obligation to establish democracy to a full extent, which in return entails respecting human rights and freedoms.

EU Entry Criteria

Turkey's accession process to the EU is in limbo: Only 14 of the 33 chapters of the *acquis* that require negotiations have been opened in ten years (the last one in November 2013) and just one provisionally closed. The main stumbling block is Turkey's failure to implement the 2005 Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement and extend its customs union with the EU by opening its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic. As a result, the EU suspended at the end of 2006 the opening of eight

chapters related to the Customs Union and announced that no more chapters would be provisionally closed until Turkey had fulfilled its commitment. France and Cyprus have unilaterally blocked other chapters.

The Cyprus Connection

Although it is not part of the EU accession, Mustafa Akıncı, the president of Northern Cyprus, raised hopes for reunification of Cyprus, divided since Turkey's 1974 invasion of the island. While a window of opportunity has opened in Cyprus, the one provided in 2013 by a fragile ceasefire between the Turkish state and the insurgent Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), following a brutal dirty war of 28 years that killed at least 40,000 people, was closed in July with a renewal of violence on both sides.

The best way to keep Turkey on board, improve its flawed democracy and reinvigorate its EU negotiations would be to open the two chapters on judicial and fundamental rights and on justice, security and freedoms, core areas blocked by Cyprus since 2009.

Geopolitical Factors

Geopolitical location of Turkey between the Balkans, West Asia, and Africa might contribute to the EU in gaining leverage in the region. Thereby, the EU can also secure energy transfer areas as well as independent energy market apart from Russia's. While accepting a Muslim country may, yet arguably, help the dissemination of a moderate version of Islam in other countries, Turkey's military capacity remains significant in

the development of EU's defence and security systems.

Although Turkey's relationship with European integration goes back to the late 1950s, the nature of this relationship began to change in the last decade. In 1999, the EU granted Turkey candidate country status. In the run up to and the aftermath of this decision, Turkey's Europeanization gained pace. The 2001 economic crisis created an opening not only for the financial and economic reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund but also the political reforms demanded by the EU. During this period, Turkey amended its constitution several times to improve human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and restructure democratic institutions. Although problems with implementation remain lingering, the prevailing view, at least in Turkey, is that Turkey has come a long way toward meeting European standards.

The Old Europe & Turkey

Germany and France had principal institutional objections regarding Turkey's accession into the European Union. The objection rests on the grounds that any country interested in joining the EU should unconditionally harmonize with EU values and principles and the *acquis communautaire*, effectively uphold fundamental principles, such as the rule of law, democracy, respect of international humanitarian law, the human rights declarations, minority rights, political asylum rights and civil liberties.

Democratic political stability and financial restructuring, the modernization of public administration and regulation of social and economic competition poli-

cies, constitute additional basic requirements. These are generally regarded among EU institutions and member states to constitute the foundations of democratic and sound political institutions and of a competitively functioning free market economy.

Another key issue whose significance can hardly be exaggerated, and one of grave concern, mainly for Germany and France but also for other EU member-states, is demography: The high rate of population growth in Turkey and an expected mass migration movement of Turkish labour force top the list. It is argued that the implications for the future national identity of individual EU countries, as well as for internal EU political balance and decision-making process will be significant.

The former Socialist German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, depicted these concerns in his book “Germany after the Cold War and Europe”, stressing that they are embedded in Franco-German political culture. Regarding the first issue of the rapid Turkish population growth, he maintains that it is or could soon become “threatening” to EU national and community balances. Simply put, Turkey is not any accession state candidate, but one, which could become the largest state within the EU. In 2050, Turkey will probably have twice the population of Germany and France combined.

As a result, the voting power (that is based on the member country’s population) of Turkey in various EU institutions, like the European Parliament, will be substantially larger than that of Germany and France, and thus, Turkey will be able to greatly influence and in some cases control or determine the decision making mechanisms of the EU.

Currently Germany and France are the countries with the greater voting power within the EU.

The second substantial fear of the German and French elites and indeed the public at large concerns the crucial issue of free movement of workers and other social groups between EU members. If Turkey joins the EU, millions of Turkish workers would be able to freely move into European cities. Free movement of labour is a defining characteristic of integration, an EU right and privilege from which no member country could be excluded from.

In several EU member states, there appears to be a stark contrast between the opinion of the political establishment on Turkey’s membership of the Union and that of the broad public. For some, but clearly not all, current member states, Turkey represents a challenging but huge potential. For many of these states’ citizens, however, Turkey appears as a country too big, too poor, too distant and too Muslim. Although public opinion surveys on Turkey joining the EU are still few across Europe, the general understanding appears to be that any possible referendum on the issue would most likely fail in all the major EU member states. The leaders of the member states will have to reach a unanimous decision. While a few national governments have already declared their respective positions on the Turkish bid, there are still many—especially smaller—member states which appear to be marking time, seemingly waiting for the major powers to spell out and align their stance first.

Economic Factors

The pugnacious Turkish EU Minister, Egemen Bagis, has said opening chapters is less important than opening minds. Turks contrast their own economic vigour with a growth matching China's to the woes of the Eurozone. Turks claim that they need the EU less than the EU needs Turkey.

The writer and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk said recently that the hearts of Turkish Europhiles had been broken by the reluctance to welcome Turkey into the EU club.

EU officials demand that Turkey could, and should, do more to break the impasse over Cyprus, and to improve its human rights record. The oppression of minorities and systematic otherisation of the Kurdish factions within and outside the borders of the nation-state of Turkey remain lingering.

Copenhagen Versus Maastricht Criteria

It has been a rather popular discussion for decades. Is the [European Union](#) a geographic zone or an area of norms and values? With the Copenhagen criteria, the EU partly provided an answer to that question by setting a web of values and norms as the *sine qua non* (absolute requirements) of eligibility for membership. The Maastricht criteria, on the other hand, set economic and administrative standards required for a common economy and to some degree a monetary union.

While Maastricht criteria might be achieved during the period of accession negotiations, the Copenhagen criteria of democratic governance, respect of norms and values of democracy are absolute conditions any candidate state

must possess at a satisfactory level before it can be eligible for accession talks. It is not a welcome development but as was seen in Europe's last crisis, countries might, because of local political failures and political greed, try to make the best use of confidence entrusted to them and deviate from the Maastricht criteria, thus landing the entire economic zone in varying degree of economic crisis.

Copenhagen criteria, however, cannot and should not be bypassed, ignored or placed aside by any member or membership-aspiring country because the norms and values listed are the basic fundamental requirements for club membership. What are the Copenhagen criteria? It is rather easy to answer: If any country governs exactly the opposite of today's governance in Turkey, it perfectly complies with the Copenhagen criteria. As they were stated in the 1993 Copenhagen Council statement, the Copenhagen criteria is: "Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union."

Starting from today, Turkish leaders will most likely declare the Turkey Progress Report, which had yet to be voted on at the European parliament when this article was penned, as hypocritical, unacceptable and contained false and biased information. Perhaps an easy way will

be found and the report will be refused all together, by saying the report again called for Turkey's recognition of allegations that Ottoman Turks committed an Armenian genocide during the dissolution years of the empire. Of course, it is Turkey's right to accept or reject any document but with regards to voting at a parliament of a club it is aspiring to join, Turkey must take into consideration that to join it must abide by the rules of the game.

EU-Turkey Migration Deal

In a deal struck in March 2016, Turkey promised to help stem the flow of migrants to Europe in return for cash, visas and renewed talks on joining the EU. The Turkish prime minister called it a "new beginning" for the uneasy neighbours. At the core of the deal addressing the flow of smuggled migrants and asylum seekers, both parties agreed that Greece could return "irregular migrants" arriving after 20 March 2016 back to Turkey.

Leaders of the European Union met Turkish premier Ahmet Davutoglu in Brussels on 07 March 2016 to finalize the agreement, as Europeans struggle to limit the strain on their 28-nation bloc from taking in hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees.

A key element is three billion euros (\$3.2 billion) in EU aid for the 2.2 million Syrians settling now in Turkey. The money is intended to raise their living standards and so persuade more of them to stay put rather than attempt perilous crossings to the EU via the Greek islands.

The final offer of "an initial" three billion euros represents a compromise between the EU, which offered that sum

over two years, and Turkey, which wanted it every year. Now the money, as French President Francois Hollande said, will be paid out bit by bit as conditions are met, leaving the total pay-out unclear. In addition, such an agreement strengthens the positions of some member countries such as the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland), which base the acceptance of refugees on their identity (preferably non-Muslims), in a complete violation of the European principles and treaties.

The liberal idea of the EU being a purely political union based on Kantian ideals with a long standing high asylum standards requires a whole new language now. While the deal between Turkey and the EU could require neglecting or perhaps violating EU laws, it also undermines Europe's human-rights commitments, which might prove costly in the long run.

Europe director for Amnesty International John Dalhuisen said to [The Guardian](#): "It's a really grim day and it's a really grim deal. It's being celebrated by people who are dancing on the grave of refugee protection."

At the moment Turkey is already in a sort of "grey area". The problem is what rights do they have in such a relationship? For instance, as a part of a customs union with the EU, Turkey must apply the EU's common external tariff to third countries and has to adopt a large part of the *Acquis Communautaire* – i.e. EU law. Turkey complies with the rules, yet has no formal say in the law-making process. Such a "privileged partnership" is neither to Turkey's advantage as a permanent solution nor to Europe's advantage as a democratic construct.

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