

A Discourse on No Discourse 9/11: Western Intellectuals and Muslim Intellectuals

Husain Kassim, Department of Philosophy, University of Central Florida

ABSTRACT

The main contention of this article is to show that the discourse on terrorism prompted by 9/11 by the Western intellectuals remains within what I call a 'Eurocentric' framework without understanding the real cause of so-called 'Islamic terrorism'. Correspondingly, the Muslim intellectuals have led their discourse within what I call an 'Islamocentric' perspective with no configuration of the Western ideology. As a result, the discourse from both sides ends in no discourse.

Our discussion of these intellectuals is selective, confined to the Western intellectuals Virilio and Baudrillard, who maintain that the cause of terrorism is Western scientific-technological progress devoid of human values and Nussbaum, Habermas and Derrida, who in order to resolve the issue, use ideas of universal values, cosmopolitanism and world citizenship from the Enlightenment period that are essentially secular ideas. The Muslim intellectuals that are discussed here include Mawdūdī, al-Banna, Qutb, al-Farag, Huweidi and others, who maintain that the ideology of Islam and its values are universal which can be realized only by shari'a and not through secularization.

The suggestion given here to resolve the issue employs simultaneously Western ideological notions of secularization and pluralism and Islamic ideological doctrines of religious freedom and tolerance. This proposal sets out only a broad outline and will not be developed as this is beyond the scope of this article.

Discourse on No Discourse 9/11: Western Intellectuals and Muslim Intellectuals

The event¹ of 9/11 was, no doubt, shocking, utterly unexpected and thought provoking. It not only aroused emotional reaction, but also intellectual response, both among Western intellectuals and Muslim intellectuals. But since the terrorist activity on the Twin Towers was launched by al-Qaeda which is associated with Islam and the Muslim world, the intellectual discourse has become centralized in the context of the West versus Islam as displayed by 9/11 and how both should prevent such terror to humans and humanity from happening again in the future. There is much written in newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, and relayed on radio and television, but most of it is simply news items, information as to its happening and its aftermath. On the other hand, some serious intellectuals in the West as well as in the Muslim world have expressed their thoughts on the subject deeply but unfortunately, their discourse instead of dealing with its cause and why it occurred, is confined to dealing with the issue from within their own perspectives and cultural framework without addressing the concerns of the other. As a result, their discourse leads nowhere and with no results whatsoever. It is really no discourse and, hence, the title of this article "A Discourse on No Discourse 9/11."

Speaking of this confused situation, Jan in his article "Wanted: Honest Muslim Intellectuals" says with great displeasure that even well respected Western scholars, such as Bernard Lewis, "did not shoulder responsibility to expose the lies and analyze the actions according their causes and often hidden intentions. Unfortunately, many Muslim writers are towing the same line under tremendous pressure and for many personal reasons under the label

¹ The word 'event' (Ereigniss) in connection with 9/11 is used in this article in the Heideggerian sense, as Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida employ it, denoting that 9/11 was not an ordinary happening. It was utterly unexpected and unusual that forces us to think from a different and new dimension.

of ‘modernization’... It is easy to blame critics of Islamic ‘moderates’” (i.e. intellectuals) “as ‘extremists’ than to disprove the right analysis by the insiders...”² This article examines, on the one hand, the response to 9/11 by the West as an insider and, on the other, attempts to present the critical analysis of the Islamic fundamentalism and the rise of Islamic terrorists from the inside.

This article is divided into Four Sections: Section One deals with the basic contention of the theme and its implications. Section Two discusses and shows that how the prominent Western intellectuals have led their discourse remaining within what I call a ‘Eurocentric’ framework without any adequate understanding of the Muslim world and its concerns. Correspondingly, Section Three discusses and shows that the Muslim intellectuals have led their discourse within what I call an ‘Islamocentric’ perspective with no configuration of the West, its ideology and goals. As a result, the discourse from both sides ends in no discourse. Lastly in Section Four, it is briefly suggested how to deal with the situation by employing, on the one hand, Western ideological notions of secularization and pluralistic societies and, on the other, Islamic ideological doctrines of religious freedom and tolerance.

Section One: The Main Theme and its Implications

When one begins to inquire about 9/11, one comes across articles in newspapers, magazines, television or radio and journals—whether they are scholarly or not—imparting information to the common public, one reads “War on the USA” or “Attack on the World Trade Center” or some such invoking phrases. This already suggests that the Bush administration perceived 9/11 as an attack on the USA, although there were two different frames of interpretations of the attack available. The first interpretation sees this terrorist activity as an attack on the United States, a nation-state and a superpower that stands as a symbol of Western culture and its hegemony over the whole globe. The second possible interpretation views it as a crime against humanity. Both of these have different implications and each elicits a different response and reaction.³ The first is about war, and the second is about crime. The United States chose to interpret it as an attack on a nation-state and its sovereignty which is, by no means, close enough to justify the response to wage war on another nation-state or states, when it was already known that al-Qaeda which was responsible for 9/11 has no nation-state or country with which it can be identified. That set already the tone, attitude and reaction of the United States and its allies, supposedly the ‘civilized’ nations against the ‘uncivilized’ people. On the other side, al-Qaeda and its terrorist groups do not present a pretty picture. They did not see 9/11 as a crime against humanity. They saw it as a great victory over an all powerful nation-state which they were able to bring to its knees. For them, it was not only a joyous victory, but also it was a great revenge that they were able to afflict on the greatest hegemonous Western power. Thus this phenomenon came to be perceived, especially after Samuel Huntington’s thesis, as a clash, a conflict, and a war between two cultures, between the West and Islam. They are now enemies, as they perceive each other,

² Abid Ullah Jan, “Wanted: Honest Muslim Intellectuals,” <http://usa.mediamonitors.net>.

³ Daniel Archibugi, and Iris Marion Young, “Envisioning a Global Rule of Law” in *Terrorism and International Justice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 158.

standing against each other, frowning upon each other and ready to blow up each other at any given moment. This is actually what the terrorists wanted: to create terror, fear in the West and keep it on its toes as perpetually in conflict with them. In a way, both West and the Islamic terrorists are seemingly pursuing their goals and feeling proud of their success. Discourse or dialogue is not only not needed, but also no longer possible. Al-Qaeda wants to take revenge against the West for its hegemony and power over the Muslim world and the United States and its allies want to maintain the political world order status quo so that they can enjoy the hegemony and their power over the Muslim world. It thinks this can be achieved by counter attacking terrorists and destroying them so that it does not have to face being defeated. This has resulted in the aftermath of 9/11 which is continuously growing with no end. The intellectuals in the West as well as in the Muslim world have begun to express their thoughts about terrorism in reference 9/11 and how to deal with it. But the discourse of each is from within its own ideological and cultural perspectives.

Before we can take it on the following needs to be taken into serious consideration. Both, the Western intellectuals and the Muslim intellectuals are misplaced in their approach to their discourse on terrorism. They need to deal with the real issues rather than terrorism on the surface as being an epiphenomenon which may go away in due course with the minor remedial treatment such as attacking each other by violence. They are both singing different songs. The Western intellectuals are singing the song of modernity, secularization, democracy etc., whereas the Muslim intellectuals are singing the song of their Islam, religious tradition and sharī'a with neither being informed about each other's intellectual backgrounds, ideology and goals. That is why I call the Western intellectuals 'Eurocentric' and the Muslim intellectuals 'Islamocentric'. They both have a different vision and agenda, though both of them speak of universal values, ethics, morals and a society built on social justice and the equality of all human beings. One is an ideological vision from the Western perspective and the other is from the Islamic point of view and both fail to pay attention to what lies at the root. This results in divergent, different and sometimes opposing views on almost every issue such as human rights, race, gender, religious and individual freedom, world political order and question of Western hegemony and its power. As a matter of fact, all the Western and Muslim intellectuals who have led the discourse on terrorism and violence are not familiar at all with the thoughts and works of the person belonging to the opposing group. Most of them might have not ever visited the opponent's countries and are not familiar with their cultures. One wonders whom they are addressing in their so-called discourse and what they are addressing. Both groups actually do not address the issue at hand properly, only obliquely, as the context and level on which they speak in their discourse will make clear in the Section Two and Section Three.

Section Two: The Western Intellectuals and their Conceptual Scheme of Thought

For the sake of convenience, one can divide Western intellectuals into two groups: The first group consists of those who perceive 9/11 as a result of techno-scientific progress for which they are critical of the West, the cradle of this modern civilization that has given birth to un-

surpassing progress in scientific and technological developments. The Western developed countries have passed from the nuclear state to the promise of eugenics and from the atomic bomb to the genetic bomb, but are devoid of any concerns for human life and dignity. The terrorists could have never imagined accomplishing the task without the availability of such technological advancement. These Western intellectuals criticize the West and blame for the terrorist activities to its scientific progress and technological advancement which makes humans humanless and unhuman. Under this group fall, for example, Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard who voiced their thoughts immediately in the year 2002 after 9/11.

The second group consists of those intellectuals who look at 9/11 from the Western philosophical standpoint. Under this group, falls for example, Martha Nussbaum whose analysis goes back as far as Greek philosophical traditions, but Jürgen Habermas' and Jacques Derrida's take on it is from the standpoint of philosophical modernity.

Paul Virilio views the entire episode of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers to be the blame of the United States, finding itself lastingly affected by the dystopia of its own system. He contends that 9/11 showed us how an over-powerful state was suddenly brought up short against its own consciousness or rather against its techno-scientific consciousness. Modern Europe, meaning the West, is bound to become a 'techno-grave yard' taking on a discretely 'funeral character'⁴ laid out before the unseeing eyes of the dead. In sum, Paul Virilio sees the phenomenon of terrorism as a product of Western scientific knowledge and technology for which the West is itself to be blamed.⁵ He criticizes it without addressing the immediate issue at hand as to why it happened and what grievances these Islamic extremists had against the West and Western hegemony. For him Islam, or radical Islam or political Islam does not form part of the vocabulary in the discourse of 9/11. Such phrases do not appear in his text.

Jean Baudrillard approaches the subject from a different angle analyzing it in a wider context, but still remaining within the same framework. He also blames for the happening of 9/11 on the United States as a global power and its technocratic machinery that itself has created the objective conditions for this brutal retaliation—"a terrorist situational transfer," that is as he calls it, "terror against terror"⁶ which reaches far beyond Islam and America. Its efforts are being made to focus the conflict in order to create the delusion of visible confrontation and a solution based on force. According to Jean Baudrillard, this is wherein "the total misunderstanding on the part of Western philosophy, the Enlightenment, of the relation between Good and Evil" lies.⁷ The West believes naively that the progress of Good, its advancement in all scientific areas (the sciences, technology, democracy, human rights, etc) correspond to a defeat of Evil. In other words, the hegemony of the West, its scientific knowledge, technological progress and the globalization that rules the rest of the world is at fault. For him, "Islam was merely the moving

⁴ Paul Virilio, *Ground Zero* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 53.

⁵ As is well known, Paul Virilio is a media theorist who is basically interested in questions of representation than causation, but this essay was written by him in the context of 9/11 and his thought on terrorism were prompted by it.

⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

front along which the antagonism crystallized. The antagonism is everywhere, in every one of us. So, it is terror against terror.”⁸ “No ideology, no cause—not even the Islamic cause—can account for energy which fuels the terror. The aim is no longer even to transform the world”⁹ by universal values and universal norms on the part of either the West or Islam as both perceive their ideologies to be universal and there is a battle between West and Islam: Western cultural and secular values versus Islamic cultural and religious values.

Baudrillard’s analysis stops here rather than clarifying further that the Enlightenment period, which began in the eighteenth century by John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1771-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and others was universalistic in its approach that has resulted gradually into the hegemony of the West in imposing its cultural and secular values and norms on the rest of the world. Nonetheless, Baudrillard comes close to discern the fallacy of the West which has now come about to culminate into ‘terror against its own terror’, but neither does he explain what prompted these so-called Islamic terrorists to cause this ‘terror against the terror’, what issues they had with the West because of which their so-called ‘terrorists’ activities disturbing the whole world order in terms of politics, economics and every other walk of human life throughout the globe. He touches 9/11 as a terrorist activity on the periphery without going deep enough to inquire into the root of the problem. In his account this ‘terror’ is simply caused as a reaction of its (West’s) own terror, as if Islam and Islamic terrorists had nothing to do with it. It could have happened ‘anyhow’ with or without the Islamic terrorists.

The thinkers in second group approach this issue from the Western philosophical point of view. Martha Nussbaum’s analysis attempts to dissect the central philosophical problem regarding the emotions which have been aroused because of 9/11. According to her, such a phenomenon has been debated through much of the history of the Western philosophical tradition. Nussbaum draws a powerful scenario of the Twin Towers comparing it with Euripides’ (480-406 B.C.E) drama the *Trojan Women* in which the Towers of Troy are burning which arouses, on the one hand, emotions of terror but on the other, emotions of compassion for those who suffer.¹⁰ Compassion and terror have always been in the fabric of human lives throughout the history of mankind. She reminds us that because of 9/11 it was only American lives and not human lives on the other side of the globe which were also suffering. Such compassion for our fellow American citizens can too easily slip over into desire to make America come out on top, defeating or subordinating other nations.¹¹ “Anyone who crosses us is an evil terrorist, deserving of extinction,”¹² forgetting that the pain and suffering of others ‘the enemies’ on the opposite side of us. Thus, compassion is not as simple an emotion as it looks. In fact, it is quite complex and difficult due to varied factors, situations and even the motive of compassion that can make it a kind of relative and subjective notion defying any objective analysis. This has forced much of

⁸ Ibid. p. 14.

⁹ Ibid. pp, 11-12.

¹⁰ Martha Nussbaum, “Compassion and Terror,” in *Terrorism and International Justice*, edited by James. P. Sterba (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 229.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 233.

¹² Ibid.

the philosophical tradition to do away with compassion as a basis and, instead, turn to strict objective moral principles that can be relied upon—a Western philosophical tradition from Cicero through Kant.¹³

For Stoics, human dignity was a self-sufficient condition where all humans are treated equally and with respect. But, then this principle also turns out to be a failure as to how one can determine a person's dignity and respect in terms of wealth, fortune, fame, status or power. These external conditions sometimes play a great role in determining one's dignity and respect, but not in others. Therefore Stoics turn to and hold that virtue is a sufficient condition for eudemonia (happiness) and basic human dignity is sufficient for becoming virtuous. However, Nussbaum decides in favor of compassion and adapts to some of the Stoic's virtues and the elimination of human emotions such as human local loyalties and attachments to external goods which can take in some instances an especially aggressive form. In her mind, this can be done on moral grounds by educating how to stop emotional illiteracy which is closely connected to aggression.¹⁴ After this elucidation of Western philosophical tradition, Nussbaum finally comes to speak specifically about terrorism.

According to Nussbaum, “most of the preventable suffering and death in the world is not caused by terrorism.”¹⁵ “It (terrorism) is caused by malnutrition, and lack of education and all the ills connected to poverty.”¹⁶ She concludes the discussion in an emphatically Kantian fashion: “we will achieve no lasting moral progress unless and until the daily remarkable lives of the people distant upon us become real in the fabric of our lives, until our everyday eudemonistic judgments about our important ends include them as ends...”¹⁷

From this it becomes evident that Nussbaum's discourse centers around and from within the perspectives of the Western philosophical tradition and concludes with the Kantian notion of humans and humanity as ends themselves and as universal values wherein all humans are considered equal, to be treated with dignity and free from external constrains. This goal has been achieved to a certain extent in the West, but not surprisingly, this positive factor has resulted in the Western hegemony, superiority of Western culture and its secular values that has caused, as the Muslim intellectuals perceive it, suffering, agony, fragmentation of their societies, and loss of their cultural and religious values. In Nussbaum's analysis of terror and compassion this side of the picture is nowhere in sight, much less how to remedy it. Her scheme of education, even if it is some help toward the solution is a slow and long ranged process of teaching and educating about the suffering of others, confined to the West and the Western educational system but, in the meanwhile, what happens to those people who are on the other side of globe in the Muslim world? Should we let them suffer unto death without even knowing why they are suffering, whether their suffering is materialistic to be accounted in terms of poverty and malnutrition or is

¹³ Ibid., pp. 240-242.

¹⁴ Ibid., 246.

¹⁵ Ibid., 248.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 249.

it ideological? In any case, Nussbaum's analysis stops at Kant without utilizing Kant's notions of citizenship and cosmopolitan right.

Both Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida affirm the value of Enlightenment ideals of citizenship and cosmopolitan right as envisioned by Kant and back this idea. This is also their main contention and dream, but they both differ in their pursuit of this goal. Habermas sees it as an Enlightenment project which is yet not realized, whereas Derrida understands it as an ideal that can be pursued continually having it face its limits.¹⁸ For Habermas, this Enlightenment project is to be realized by tolerance on both ethical and legal fronts by rational consensus reached through constitutional democracy, whereas for Derrida, the notion of tolerance is an inadequate concept for its use in secular democratic societies and institutions.¹⁹ He offers forgiveness as an alternative.

Habermas' opening paragraphs on 9/11 draws a dramatic scenario not much different from the opening lines of Nussbaum's essay. According to Habermas, the destruction of the Twin Towers symbolizes the ruin of the capital of the twentieth century—"the terror of this disaster, which literally came bursting out of the blue, the horrible convictions behind this treacherous assault, as well as a stifling depression that set over the city."²⁰ This has left a widespread awareness of a living act—a turning point in history. The essence of this terror is the eradication of individuality and of the capacity of people for their autonomous action.²¹ This already sets the tone of Habermas' discourse in the context of Western philosophical tradition of modernity, the transition from classical international law to a cosmopolitan order that has uprooted the traditional ways of life, culture and society. The modern conditions of accelerated growth in complex pluralistic societies can no longer allow any claim for exclusive truth and universalism of religious ideologies. According to Habermas, this change has compelled European societies to reflect upon their religious belief and their exclusive place within the universal discourse shared by scientifically generated secular knowledge.²² But the Muslim societies, which are deeply rooted in their religious traditions such as Iran and many other Muslim countries that are striving for the re-establishment of Islamic form of government, refuse to make a distinction between and separation of religious and secular and their different functions. This he considers as Islamic fundamentalism and associates it, consciously or unconsciously, with Islamic terrorism as the context of his discourse shows. If that were the case, then, according to this, all or rather almost all Muslims and Muslim societies can be considered fundamentalist, whether they are Sunnis or Shi'ites as they yearn to establish their societies on

¹⁸ Giovanna Borradori, Giovanna, "Deconstructing Terrorism" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 140.

¹⁹ Giovanna Borradori, "Terrorism and the Legacy of the Enlightenment," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 16.

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas "A Dialogue with Habermas," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 26.

²¹ Giovanna Borradori,, "Terrorism and the Legacy of the Enlightenment," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 7.

²² Jürgen Habermas, "A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2003), p. 31.

the fundamentals of Islam and shari'a, only they differ in their interpretations and how to make it functional in the modern world with changed and changing conditions. But, they are all not terrorists. They are simply either traditionalists or liberals, but sometimes they are wrongly placed as being fundamentalists versus intellectuals in Western scholarship.²³ In passing, it needs to be pointed out at this juncture for the understanding of Islamic fundamentalism and the cause of terrorism that it was this fundamentalism which was responsible for bringing intellectual movements to the Muslim world. In fact, the Islamic fundamentalism has its roots in these intellectual movements. It was the intellectual movements of Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī (1839-1897), Muhammad 'Abdūh (1845-1905) in Egypt and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent which brought changes to the Muslim world, while still trying to remain true to the fundamentals of Islam.²⁴ And so is the case of Muslim intellectuals who have been discussed in this article. This point, as such, is not too important but it reflects upon Habermas' discourse which is within a 'Eurocentric' framework and without adequate understanding and knowledge about the nature of Muslim societies from where 9/11 as a terrorist activity emerged and why it emerged. This can be attributed to Habermas' lack of knowledge about the backgrounds of Muslim societies, their vision and goal that they have been not yet able to realize, resulting into their suffering, anguish and anxieties have come to manifestation so intensely. As a result, some of the radical groups among the fundamentalists feel helpless hold the West and Western powers responsible for not being able to realize their goal and have turned to violence by radicalizing the Islamic ideology as we shall discuss in Section Three.

However, Habermas believes that by applying the model generated by his theory of communicative action, it is possible to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism, although there are certain inherent difficulties that contain a structural violence which arise due to distortion in communication, from misunderstanding and incomprehension, to insincerity and deception. But as Habermas is himself aware of, in a phenomenon such as terrorism, the situation is more complicated as is the case in other matters where different notions and different cultural groups are more foreign to each other. They do not know each other intimately like members of the same society and therefore are more likely to be subject to a greater degree of distorted communication.²⁵ Multi-cultural dialogue and world conferences regarding the concerns of different cultural groups might help, but not much. Nonetheless, Habermas not only thinks but insists that in spite of difficulties in the process, it is possible to create understanding and widen the original perspective of the people from opposing cultural groups. Theoretically this sounds like a good idea, but it is too abstract to put it into practice. Habermas' scheme does not provide sufficient conditions to bring the two opposite groups, namely the West and the Islamic terrorists, together. Habermas' theory of communicative reason is grounded in the Enlightenment project of universalization of value modeled after the Western cultural world view which, as the

²³ For example, as the title of the book *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt, 1973-1993* by David Sagiv (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1995) suggests.

²⁴ Fazlur Rahman *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), pp. 216-218.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The Chicago University Press), pp. 35-36.

Islamic fundamentalists understand it, runs against their claim of Islamic universal values. And as a matter of fact, that is the reason why 9/11 has occurred, but this aspect of terrorism is totally failing in his discourse. Habermas does not touch upon how Western modernity should understand Islamic terrorists, their grievances who have caused these terrorist activities because of their grievances and, most importantly, their goals of Islamic ideology. There is a lot more to it in the imagination and desires of Islamic fundamentalism and its offshoot radical terrorism whose voice has not been heard properly and seriously.

Jacques Derrida's discourse opens with the same kind of lamentations as that of Martha Nussbaum's and Jürgen Habermas' discourse over the violence that has been wrought over the territory of the country which is the guarantor and guardian of the entire world.²⁶ The event of 9/11 is 'an act of international terrorism'²⁷ because of which the world order felt itself targeted through the violence, a transgression without precedent in history. This shows, as it was the case with Nussbaum' and Habermas', that Derrida's discourse on 9/11 centers around and within the Western philosophical framework. In Derrida's readings, the terrorist act of 9/11 is a symptom and manifestation of an auto-immune crisis occurring within the system²⁸ and offers the notion of forgiveness as a solution to the problem. Derrida rejects Habermas' concept of tolerance. For him, it is not an adequate concept for its use in secular institutions and secular politics. "Tolerance is a Christian virtue, or for that matter, a Catholic virtue," as if such a concept is not found in Judaism or Islam or for that matter in Protestantism—the other half arm of Christianity. "Tolerance", as he conceives of it, "is always on the side of the 'reason of the strongest' where 'might is right'; it is a supplementary mark of sovereignty, 'the good face of sovereignty'"²⁹—a manifestation of the hegemony of the West, which bestows a form of charity to its inferiors and second class citizens whose foreign faces are tolerated when they are seen. It makes a giver of charity feel superior and its taker a subordinate and always dependant, but never equal. That is not what the Enlightenment project envisions. What it envisions is 'All the citizens are equal.' Thus he offers forgiveness as an alternate solution that goes beyond the limits of cosmopolitanism and beyond the political. This is the concept of forgiveness which he defines as "the impossible task for 'forgiving the unforgivable'" that "cannot be reduced to any legal or moral boundaries, but only appreciated whenever and however it arises...",³⁰ as this unconditional forgiveness consists in forgiving the unforgivable without any conditions. "One could never, in ordinary sense of words, found a politics or law on forgiveness"³¹—so be it—"that it arrives and arrives as a surprise, upsetting the ordinary course of history, politics and

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, "A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 94.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 86.

²⁸ Giovanna Borradori, "Terrorism and the Legacy of the Enlightenment: Habermas and Derrida" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 20.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, "A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 127.

³⁰ Giovanna Borradori, "Deconstructing Terrorism – Derrida," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 139-140.

³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London and New York:Routledge, 2001), p. 39.

law.”³² This notion of forgiveness, as Derrida reads it, belongs to a specific Abrahamic religious tradition that brings together Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Derrida points out that this notion has even extended into geographically and culturally very different regions which have absorbed it to the point of molding their international profile in accordance with it. This is the case for example of Japan which has publicly apologized to South Korea for the sexual enslavement of thousands of Korean women during World War II.³³

Now, analyzing this notion of forgiveness from the point of view of the theory of deconstruction, Derrida contends that it has two intrinsic elements to the Western religious experience: sacredness and indebtedness. Religion has become progressively more focused on the indebtedness and obligation and less on sacredness.³⁴ Only by deconstructing religion, as it is now conceived, we will be able to really engage it by reaching out to the ‘other’ which is very close to what the notion of unconditional forgiveness entails, ‘the act of forgiveness of the unforgivable’.³⁵ According to Derrida, the unconditional forgiveness can not have a political or juridical status. It is only from the standpoint of unconditional forgiveness or in some places he uses the phrase ‘hospitality’ or ‘right of visitation’ that one can gain a critical perspective on the limits of cosmopolitan right, tolerance and hospitality, though such a situation can expose the host to the greatest risk. According to Derrida, the ideal of democracy lies beyond cosmopolitanism and world citizenship, beyond the economy of sovereignty, politics and its jurisdiction. For justice as well as democracy is not just about our conduct within the framework of the state or under the obligations of citizenship, but also ‘facing the stranger and offering hospitality unconditionally’. It is a matter of pure ethics. With this Derrida invokes Kant: A moral action must be accomplished not only “according to duty (pflichtgemäß)” but “from duty (aus Pflicht)”³⁶ or what duty calls for. We must be dutiful beyond duty and do it because of pure ethics not tainted by other motivations.

The notion of hospitality or right of visitation requires an unconditional forgiveness to ‘other,’ who is my enemy, the last person whom I can imagine to forgive. But for Derrida, “(T)hose called terrorists are not, in this context, ‘others’, absolute others whom we, as ‘Westerns’, can no longer understand. We must not forget that they were often recruited, trained, and even armed ... by a Western world.”³⁷ There seems to be a tension here between Derrida’s theoretical analysis of terrorism as the symptom of an autoimmune disorder that threatens the world order and democracy. “The autoimmune theory of terrorism...when brought in conjunction with the possibility of forgiveness” to terrorists “...transforms the question of

³² Giovanna Borradori, “Deconstructing Terrorism – Derrida,” in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 144.

³³ Ibid., pp. 141-142. This is not a good example. The apology does not mean forgiveness. The apology means that when one who does wrong to others, he asks them to be forgiven and not that he forgives them.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 155.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, “A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida,” in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 133.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

forgiveness into one of self-forgiveness.”³⁸ This might be the case. The real question is: How does such an absolute forgiveness help concretely in eradicating terrorist activities occurring in the future? Should we always forgive terrorists and let them do what they are doing?

Derrida’s notion of forgiveness seems to be closer in bringing three religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam together and it seems that his analysis of religion from the point of view of deconstruction may present a better alternate to Habermas’ notion of communicative reason.

But on the whole, one can safely conclude that Western thinkers’ discourse, whether it is Paul Virilio, Jean Baudrillard, Martha Nussbaum, Jürgen Habermas or Jacques Derrida, centers around Western perspectives in pursuing the same goal: the world political order from its own Western universal values and norms without taking into configuration the counter claim of Islamic fundamentalists that Islam and Islamic values and norms are universal which need to be re-established according to sharī‘a. In the Western discourse of these thinkers, there is no awareness of the ideology of Islam, Islamic fundamentalists and radical Islamists who have taken upon violence. For them, it is through this notion of Islamic universal values that social justice, democracy and world political order are to be realized whereas Western thinkers such as Kant, Habermas and Derrida claim that they are to be achieved by the Enlightenment project as they envision it. At the center of this Enlightenment project lies the secularization³⁹ through which Western intellectuals envision achieving justice, democracy and peace. Especially, as Derrida’s analysis from the deconstruction point of view shows, religion has moved farther away from a sense of sacredness over and beyond any exchange. That is true but only of the Western world, not the Muslim world. This historical process has taken place in the West with Christianity, but that is not the case with Islam and in the history of the Muslim world. The Islamic fundamentalists are very much aware of this and find the secularization which is spreading through the Western world responsible for moving us farther from sacredness and obedience to God. They fear it will lead to the eradication of their religious values and sharī‘a in the governance of their states and countries. Their attempt is to prevent this from happening in the Muslim world. Islamic fundamentalism represents a deep and coherent ideology stretching back to the fourteenth century and that is interiorized into the very foundation of Islamic legacy—an all encompassing commitment to universal Islamic values which strictly forbids a distinction between secular and religious. The Muslim fundamentalists perceive that Islam is the whole way of life to be guided by the rule of God in the form of sharī‘a. In order to revive the true spirit of Islam, Muslim societies must be reformed in accordance with sharī‘a. But they perceive that the West is encroaching upon their culture, values, tradition and their religious identity. In that sense of the term, they feel and have been feeling so since the Western colonization of their countries

³⁸ Michael Strawser, “A Place for Forgiveness? A Derridean Response to Terrorism” in *Politics and Religion in New Century Philosophical Perspective*, edited by Philip Quadrio and Carrol Besseling (Sydney: Sydney University Press, forthcoming).

³⁹ Recently Jürgen Habermas has changed his position and has backed off on the secularization requirement. See Habermas’ article “Notes on Post-Colonial Society” in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Fall 2008, pp. 17-29.

and now through the neo-political world order governed by the Western powers. With these ending comments on the discourse of Western thinkers from the Islamic fundamentalist point of view, the account of the discourse by the Muslim intellectuals follows with comments from the point of view of the Western intellectuals.

Section Three: Muslim Intellectuals and their Ideology

Islamic fundamentalism among the world religions is being perceived as more pronounced and generally has come to be associated with terrorism, though fundamentalism in other world religions is not so uncommon. Islamic fundamentalism has become more widely spread and sometimes has become more intense and severe to the extent of becoming radical, violent, militant and, indeed, in that sense there is an element of terrorism involved with it. But, neither Islamic ideology nor fundamentalism considers it legitimate. This Islamic radical group is only an offshoot and epiphenomenon which has entered into the discourse on terrorism, especially in connection with the emergence of 9/11. This was neither supposed to happen nor was it intended to happen so far as Islamic fundamentalism is concerned. It does not accomplish what the Islamic fundamentalism envisions as its ultimate goal. Islam, as perceived by Islamic fundamentalism and most Muslims, is not only the most supreme religion and universal ideology, but also a culture and entire *modus vivendi*, worthy of organizing society in its entirety. For most Muslims, sharī'a which is based on the Qur'ān and Sunna comprise a kind of constitutional framework and order according to which society should be conducted. In this matter, there is no dissension between Islamic extremists, the so-called Islamic terrorists and those Islamic fundamentalists who interpret sharī'a as the source of conduct for society on which it should be based. Rarely do we find intellectuals in Muslim society who consider themselves secularists as one finds in Western society. As a matter of fact, Islamic fundamentalism, as it is pointed out, has its roots in the Islamic intellectual movement that began with Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī, Muhammad 'Abduh and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Islamic fundamentalism is intellectual but not fundamentalism as it is understood in Western scholarship and Western thought.

This shows that Islamic fundamentalism is not necessarily concerned with the West. It is neither against the West as such nor does it address directly the Western Enlightenment project and its ideology which is at the heart of Habermas and Derrida, when they discourse on the terrorist activity in the context of the 9/11.

Islamic fundamentalists are against the West being against Islamic fundamentalism. They are simply the expression of reaction against and response to this Western action to safeguard their own ideology and maintain their own religious and cultural identity against any encroachment from external powers that can prevent them from realizing their own ideological project. They want to create in their own countries a new order reviving their own cultural and religious values in the new historical realities of the modern world.

The new reality which the Muslim countries faced after the departure of the colonial powers was to build their state-nations according to their own traditions, legacy and cultural

values. But the Muslim countries failed in this endeavor because of the ruling segment of their societies which included mostly the elites, monarchs, kings and dictators to whom the ruling power came to be transferred. This scenario is to be found more so in the Muslim countries than any other parts of the world. It is these ruling elites who replaced the 'white masters' now playing their role under the 'brown skin'. If one closely inquires into the origins and roots of recent Islamic fundamentalism, then one finds the beginnings of it are to be found in their not being able to bring changes in these internal conditions of their countries. Their discontent is that they are simply not able to overthrow these ruling powers and bring the new order according to the Islamic ideology and sharī'a. Neither have they been yet given a chance nor do they see it in the foreseeable future to happen. To this fire, fuel is added when the Western powers support these ruling powers to maintain their status quo. This has been the story from the time all Muslim countries gained their independence until recently. With the advent of 9/11, increasing intrusion of Western powers, especially that of the United States of America in the affairs of Muslim countries is remarkably noticeable. Such an intrusion of the Western powers has become a permanent 'head ache' for the Muslim countries, whether it is in the name of keeping 'political order', 'peace' and 'progress' in the world or only to maintain the 'hegemony' of their ideology and values.

With this backdrop, we now proceed to give an account of the individual Islamic fundamentalist intellectuals, who articulated the ideology of recent fundamentalism and championed its cause. Among these Muslim (fundamentalist) intellectuals are Sayyid Abū al-A'la Mawdūdī (1903-1979) of Pakistan, Hassan Ahmad Abdel Rahman al-Banna (1906-1949) of Egypt and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1965) of Egypt and several Islamist intellectuals of the present generation. These three Islamic intellectuals, who are mentioned here, can be considered the pioneers of Islamic fundamentalism and their thoughts and interpretations of it play a major role in the movements of recent fundamentalism. According to these three thinkers, Islam and Islamic ideology are universal and sharī'a, which is God-given and not man-made, should be implemented as a religious, social cultural and political order, regardless of the place, race, gender and cultures or any other ideologies, such as, socialism, capitalism or any secular constitution governed by democracy, monarchy or military rule. Such are their contentions and they are in that sense not necessarily against the West. Mawdūdī is simply offering an alternate ideology to Western ideology, which he finds dysfunctional for Muslim societies and, therefore, he is constructing it in the new existing environment at present.

Mawdūdī is perhaps the most influential, a systematic thinker and a prolific writer to whose credit there are more than a hundred books and journal articles which deal with varied themes ranging from the religious and ethical to social and political issues interpreted in the light of modern conditions. For Mawūdī, Islam is a universal and complete ideology that offers solutions to every problem throughout the history of mankind. According to Mawdūdī, this goal of Islam is a world-state which incorporates all mankind in a cultural and political system that establishes Dār al-Islam (House or Territory of Islam) and makes it Dār al-Salām (House of Peace), wherein all humans are treated equally and they contribute to the material and moral

good of one another as well as socially as a whole.⁴⁰ It is to be achieved by sharī'a which aims at bringing together mankind into one universal moral and spiritual frame-work and on a universal scale.⁴¹ But most importantly, it is Mawdūdī who was first to revive the recent fundamentalism by invoking the concept of 'the new jāhilīyya' in modern times. Mawdūdī in the beginning did not support the independence movement of Pakistan and demanded that a pure Islamic nation-state be built on the foundations of Islamic principles as in the 'Golden Age' of Islam. Mawdūdī's ideas were promulgated in the 1940s through the journal "Tarjumān al-Qur'ān" which was edited by him. In the journal, he contributed many articles in which he put forward this idea that human society which is not founded on sharī'a is basically 'jāhilīyya' against which one must necessarily fight so that Islamic law can prevail. "Jihād is but another name for the attempt to establish the Divine order."⁴² This means, though not expressed explicitly by Mawdūdī that all the societies, including Muslim societies which are not based on sharī'a are infidels and therefore it is permissible and even obligatory to wage war against them and forcibly take over power and all that which it entails.

Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwān al-Muslaymīn) in 1929, articulates the Islamic ideology in a similar fashion as Maudūdi, though independently. During that time, Egypt was in the throes of a deep economic crisis as a result of the global depression of 1928-29 and the sharp decline in the prices of cotton which is to this day one of Egypt's leading exports. The Muslim Brotherhood casts contemporary Islamic society in general and Egyptian society in particular as rife with stagnation and decay. This was caused by the meddling of the French and British colonial powers in the internal political affairs of Egypt by manipulating different factions to their advantage and introducing Western values being adopted by the local rulers. It was in this context, Hassan al-Banna wrote to King Faruk that "Egypt was lying at the crossroads and had to choose one of two directions: the way of the West or the path of Islam."⁴³ The Muslim Brotherhood wants to return to pure and original Islam that encompasses "the sense of nation (watan), nationalism, religion, creative spirit, the Holy Book and sword."⁴⁴ This seems to give a negative tone to Hassan al-Banna's Islamic ideology, as if he and the Muslim Brotherhood are just against the West, its hegemony and values. As a matter of fact, for Hassan al-Banna as well as for Mawdūdī, the ideologies that have been created in the West—nationalism, socialism, capitalism or any other political systems are inferior compared to Islamic ideology which is universal for all humankind; and sharī'a is binding for man's conduct. This claim of universality of Islam and its Islamic ideology is as strong as and as vehemently pursued as the Western intellectual claim that Western values of the Enlightenment project are universal

⁴⁰ Mawdūdī, Abū al-A'la Mawdūdī "Nationalism and Islam" in *Islam in Transition*, edited by John Donohue and John Esposito (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 94. This article by Mawdūdī was published in the journal *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* in Urdu in 1947.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁴² Abū al-A'la Mawdūdī *The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power and Change*, translated and edited by Khurram Murad (Karachi: The Islamic Foundation, 1984), p.79.

⁴³ Nachman Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p. 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and they should be pursued, as they envision it, to be realized by their Western philosophical rational mode of thought and secularization of societies.

The structure of the Islamic government and rule in the future, as Hassan al-Banna envisions it, is built on the principles that the Qur'ān is the basis of Islamic constitution and in the state of Egypt it is to operate through the shūra council (mutual consultation and consensus of the people). The head of the state administers the state and is responsible for implementing sharī'a in all institutions and they will function according these laws.⁴⁵

The cornerstone of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology is the preeminence of Islam and progress toward the goal of changing the government of Egypt and its society based on sharī'a. This would eradicate Western imperialism, its hegemony and its political and economic interests in Egypt. Therefore the emphasis and struggle of the Muslim Brotherhood in the beginning was laid in removing the presence of the British from Egypt. In the year 1944, Hassan al-Banna appealed to King Faruk to replace the political culture of Egypt with sharī'a laws. In the 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood was a large and politically powerful movement. It had joined hands in the Free Officers coup led by Jamāl Nasser ousting King Faruk. During these times some terrorist activities were attributed to the Muslim Brotherhood that included the explosion in the Oriental Advertising Company Building in 1948, the murder of the Cairo Chief of Police in 1948 and for the assassination of Prime Minister Mahmood al-Nuqrashi in 1948 for which Hassan al-Banna was, in turn, murdered.⁴⁶ However, in late 1953 and early 1954, a rift developed between Hassan Ismā'īl al-Houdeibi who was elected as the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood and Gemal Nasser. Eventually, relations between the junta and the Muslim Brotherhood reached an impasse followed by an unsuccessful attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood to assassinate Nasser during his speech in Alexandria on October 26, 1954. Several members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested among whom was Sayyid Qutb. Thereafter, Hassan al-Houdeibi adopted a more moderate stance and declared that the Muslim Brotherhood had no 'liberation battalions'⁴⁷ and its goal was to transform Egyptian society and the Egyptian nation-state according to the Islamic ways and teachings in a peaceful manner and not to bring immediate revolution in a violent manner. From there on, the Muslim Brotherhood as a fundamentalist ideology tries to accomplish its goal by political participation in the Egyptian nation-state. But all in all, it remains true, as the Muslim Brotherhood considers it that even till the last election of Mubarak as a president, the regime's claim of democracy and respect for law is but a despotic authoritarianism, somehow, supported by the Western powers especially the United States. For the Muslim Brotherhood, there should be constitutional rule, but not necessarily democracy as being practiced in the Egyptian regimes of Nasser, Sadaat and Mubarak.

Sayyid Qutb, who is considered the ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood,⁴⁸ was most enlightened, a man of literature and well read among all the Islamic intellectuals. His earlier

⁴⁵ Nachman Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan* (Brighten, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p. 21..

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ David Sagiv, *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt, 1973-1993* (London; Fran Cass & Co. LTD, 1995), p. 37.

writings include literary works such as *Khasāis al-Tassawūr al-Islamī (Characteristics of Islamic Perception, 1988)*, “al-Naguib Mahfooz” (On Naguib Mahfooz), *al-Hilāl, 1988*), *al-Tassawūr al-Fannī fī al-Qur’ān (1982)*. Sayyid Qutb is among the very few Muslim intellectuals, who have observed Western society directly and keenly during his stay in the United States as a student in the years 1948-1950. His perceptions of American society and its secular capitalistic system are, to say the least, negative as his remark shows: “America is fit to be (the factory of the world) so that it will perform its job best, but if all worlds were America, it would undoubtedly be the disaster of humanity.”⁴⁹ This critique on America prompted Sayyid Qutb to see the Islamic ideology as an alternate which is reflected in his later works. These later works of Sayyid Qutb were most certainly influenced by Mawdūdī’s works which were already translated into Arabic. As we have discussed, Mawdūdī was the first one who introduced the concept of ‘the new jāhilīyya’ that becomes the basic premise of Sayyid Qutb’s Islamic ideology. In his *Ma’alim fī al-Tāriq (Milestones, 1982)*, which is Sayyid Qutb’s most important work, sets a constitutional framework of the Islamic ideology which he conceives of as being universal and all other societies that do not follow it are ‘jāhilīyya’ societies, whether they are Jewish and Christian societies or the societies who have pretensions of being Muslim, such as the Egyptian society and nation-state.⁵⁰ According to Sayyid Qutb, as with Mawdūdī, the world exists today in a state of ‘jāhilīyya’ and is based on the hostility to the rule of Allah on earth. In the very first pages of his book, Sayyid Qutb describes succinctly and forcefully the main contentions of his Islamic ideology that reminds the reader that he has written the opening paragraphs after he has studied Mawdūdī’s works intensely. According to Sayyid Qutb, as described in his book *Milestones* Islam is a universal declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other man and from servitude to his own desires.⁵¹ It is a declaration that sovereignty belongs to God alone. It means a challenge to all kinds and forms of systems which are based on the sovereignty of man.⁵² “It is” therefore “necessary that Islam’s theoretical foundation ... materialize in the form of an organized and active group that separates itself from jāhilī society, become independent and distinct from the active and organized society whose aim is to block ...”⁵³ Islam. Here the obvious reference is to Egyptian society and Egyptian government which is ruled by elite and military power. It must employ Jihād. Sayyid Qutb rejects the narrow meaning of Jihād as a ‘defensive war’ or ‘just war’. According to Sayyid Qutb, such a narrow meaning “is ascribed to it by those” (Muslims) “who are under the pressure of circumstances and are defeated by wily attacks of the orientalist” (i.e. the Western scholars of Oriental Studies) who distort the concept of Islamic Jihād.”⁵⁴ He interprets Jihād such as to abolish the oppressive political systems and free those people who wish to be freed from enslavement to man so that they may serve God alone. Sayyid Qutb is speaking here in the Egyptian context and Egyptian society being ruled by

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵¹ Sayyid Qutb, “Milestones” in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader, Selected Writings on Politics, Religion, and Society*, edited by Albert J. Bergesen (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p. 37.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

elites and military power under the pretense of democracy, liberalism and progress rather than the democracy as it should really function. Sayyid Qutb's immediate concern is the Egyptian society and Egyptian state in particular and the Muslim society and Muslim government in general rather than direct challenge to the Western political system and secular institution, though "all the existing societies so-called 'Muslim' societies" have become and "are jāhīlī societies,"⁵⁵ because of the impact of Western idea of secularization and the intrusion of Western values in the Muslim world.

With this, Sayyid Qutb develops the idea of Jihād as being a defensive war to an offensive war in the new light. With Mawdūdī, the idea of Jihād was in the context of first gaining freedom from the British and notion of Jihād as striving toward changing gradually the newly created state of Pakistan into an Islamic government. With Qutb, the matter is in the context of Egyptian government and military rule which the Muslim Brotherhood felt to be increasingly oppressive and which intended to crush the Muslim Brotherhood completely. Hence, the 'offensive war' interpretation of Jihād is to bring radical and revolutionary changes in the country. For Sayyid Qutb, this idea of Jihād as an 'offensive war' becomes justifiable, since there is no other way of realizing the goal of Islamic ideology. In spite of long struggle and striving on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood, there are no signs of success in sight.

In the discourse of all these three Islamic intellectuals, one needs to understand, on the one hand, the positive tone of their Islamic ideology as being universal that is to be read in the background of the Islamic heritage of the 'Golden Age' in the past to which Muslim intellectuals yearn to return. On the other, the increasingly negative tone is an angry reaction to the colonial rule of Muslim countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, followed by the Western hegemony in terms of its impact in secularizing the societies throughout the world which is being felt more intensely and with greater fear than in any other part of the world.

However, the positive aspect of Islamic ideology is that it inspires the Muslim intellectuals to look back into the past and reconstruct an image of that 'Golden Age' of Islam in which, they think, sharī'a—the God given and not man-made—was implemented and because of which and through which the Islamic culture became a high culture in the Medieval ages. But when it comes to construct and interpret afresh this sharī'a in the present age and make it relevant to the changed conditions in modern times, they have yet to provide coherent, comprehensive and realistic programs that take into account this situation. There is a sharp cut off of its tradition at present from its past. Thus there is a vacuum and the Muslim societies are sandwiched between these two polarities, finding no way out. The fundamentalist ideology and the thought of Muslim intellectuals, whether they are seen positively in the light of their past legacy as 'action' to their societies or negatively as 'reaction' against the West, Western secular ideology and its universalization of values, the end result being that the Muslim societies are in crisis, a dilemma that no matter what they do they can not achieve any results. It is a sickness with no name and for which they have found no cure.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 40.

It is this crisis which has created the extremist groups within the Muslim world. There have sprung many extremist Islamic groups throughout the Muslim world, from Morocco to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Among these extremist groups are takfīr wa hijra founded by Shukri Mustafa (1942-1978) and al-Jihād founded by ‘Abd al-Salām al-Farag (1952- 1982) both from Egypt. They advocated radical change whereas the Jamā‘t-e-Islāmī and Muslim Brotherhood recommended slow change through education and information, contrary to which al-Farag categorically declares in his book, *al-Farīda al-Ga’iba (The Missing Religious Precept)* that Egyptian society and its rulers are infidels and Egyptian society has become corrupt in so far as it has been influenced by a Western lifestyle and ruled by secular laws. For al-Farag, the Egyptian government leaders are distant from Islam, because they grew under the imperial system. The governing body of rulers and the so-called Egyptian society are Muslims only in name. The only solution to be found is in ‘missing religious precept’—Jihād—which has been long forgotten and forsaken by the religious leaders (namely, ‘ulamā) of the day. These radical extremist groups being disappointed by the present conditions of society contend that the road to liberation is to overthrow these rulers who provide the basis for imperialism in the Muslim countries through Jihād. Their goal consists in both the leadership and the system of government through successive elimination in order to install new leadership that implements sharī‘a which he calls the ‘perfect law of God.’ This shows again that the Islamic fundamentalists are basically concerned with bringing changes within their own societies. The West comes into configuration when it tries to impose its own secular values, which it considers to be universal, upon the Muslim world. Therefore one can safely say that much of terrorism is relative to the Western encroachment upon their values and meddling of Western powers in the internal affairs of the Muslim world by supporting corrupt regimes, military rulers and monarchs. These extremist groups feel that the West is violent and their response to this violence is violence, because they do not find any other way to deal with this dilemma. In that sense and to this extent, one can say that the cause and consequence of Islamic fundamentalism was colonial rule, and so is the cause and consequence of Islamic extremist groups a neo-colonist world order in imposing its ideology of secularization by direct or indirect interference in the internal affairs of the Muslim world.

Concerning the Muslim intellectuals of this generation, there is found among them an intense consciousness and striving to revive Islamic ideology in the light of newly created conditions of modern life. This can be said of all the intellectuals in the entire Muslim world. We shall mention here, as an example, a few Egyptian intellectuals and their basic contentions. These intellectuals include the Islamic scholar Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, the journalist Fahmi Howeidī, the jurist of Islamic sharī‘a Muhammad Selim ‘Awā, the judge and historian Tareq al-Bishrī, the Islamic scholars Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazālī and Abūl Magd. These new Islamic intellectuals are identified as the Islamic centrist mainstream (Wasatīyya).⁵⁶ In their view, Islam is not only a system of religious beliefs, but also an intellectual, cultural, social, political reservoir and a moral

⁵⁶ Raymond William Baker, *Islam without Fear* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 10-11.

and practical guide.⁵⁷ They have a strong Islamic ideological orientation, only broader than that of the intellectuals of their previous generation. They directly link core questions such as democracy, pluralism, citizenship and human rights to the Islamic value of justice⁵⁸ which in Islam is, according to Howeidī, “an absolute and not a relative value. It must be adhered to in all cases and under all conditions.”⁵⁹ What is common and constant among them and the intellectuals of the previous generation is that, according to them, Islam, Islamic ideology, its cultural and social values are universal and ‘Islam is the solution’ (Hall Islāmī)⁶⁰ to all problems which the Muslim world faces in dealing with the modern life of today. For them, the comprehensive and substantive understanding of the higher purpose of Islamic ideology provides a hope and optimism to get out of the situation of crisis which the Muslim world is experiencing. But these intellectuals are also constrained, as was the case with the intellectuals of their previous generation, to act within authoritarian and repressive political conditions, as Howeidī’s comment quoted by Sana Abed-Kotob shows: “We support pluralism and reject violence. Who antagonized whom? Has democracy antagonized,” referring to Sadaat’s and Mubarak’s regimes, “the Muslim Brotherhood or have the Muslim Brotherhood antagonized democracy.”⁶¹ Thus their goal, in the first place, is to build and structure their own societies according to the authentic Islamic ideology based on sharī’a within their own societies and without the interference of the West, Western values and Western powers.

To conclude, such a framework of sharī’a as a pre-ordained set of rules raises the critical questions: how the development of democracy and functioning of state, government and legislation in modern times can be developed by sharī’a which after the sixteenth century has, literally, ceased to function except for the Muslim personal laws that are mostly concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance. That situation is painfully felt by the Muslim intellectuals, but they have not yet been able to overcome this difficulty. This is the real cause of the crisis in the Muslim world rather than the violence caused by the Islamic extremists in the Muslim world and in other parts of the world.

Section Four: Concluding Remarks and Search for a Solution

From our discourse concerning Western and Muslim intellectuals, it becomes clear that they really do not address the issue of terrorism and place it in the proper context. Their discourse is entirely on a different level and in a different context. The references to 9/11 in their discourse are, at best, oblique. Their discourse does not seek to explain the cause, consequence of terrorism or how to rectify it. Instead, their discourse is on the ideological premises, permeated by their own cultural and philosophical backgrounds without any focus on the emergence of terrorism in the last few decades. Neither does the discourse by the Western intellectuals address the

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 171; Fahmi Howeidī, *al-Islam wa Dīmoqrātīya* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām, 1993), 125.

⁶⁰ See Muhammad ‘Imāra, *Hal al-Islam, huwa al-Hall? Li mā dhā wa kayfā?* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995).

⁶¹ Sana Abed-Kotob, “The Accommodationists Speak: Goals, and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, Number 3, August 1995, p. 325.

concerns of Muslim intellectuals nor do the Muslim intellectuals show any awareness of Western ideology and its concerns. Both conceive of their own ideologies, values and norms as being universal for all human beings, regardless of the culture, values and norms of the other. The intellectuals in both groups are looking at the issue, if one may say so, from the long range ideological standpoint which is to be realized sooner or later, if not today, then surely some day in the future, forgetting that the purpose of their entire discourse is to address the immediate issue of terrorism at present. Western intellectuals have great confidence in human reason, human progress, the material well being of human societies and the rational approach toward realizing individual freedom and liberty through its universal ideology. They think that somehow the phenomenon of terrorism would disappear by itself as if it does not need to be cut from its roots which are growing stronger day by day without making any distinction whether it was planted by Islam which is against the West, or Islamic fundamentalists or Islamic extremists. For them, it is all the same and if the West continues its course of the Enlightenment project of universal values and norms, event such as 9/11 would somehow disappear by itself. The event of 9/11, though shocking as it was, does not count in the grand scheme of Western Enlightenment project of universal values.

The scenario from the side of Muslim intellectuals is equally disappointing. They are as self-centered as the Western intellectuals. The Muslim intellectuals have great hopes, though their confidence is at present shaken, but because of their faith in God and the religion of Islam, and its universal ideology of values and norms, they believe they are surely bound to triumph, no matter how bad their situation is today. Some day in the future ‘Islam is going to conquer Rome,’⁶² no matter how progressive the West is, one day it is bound to see doomsday. One can discern from their discourse that they are not much concerned with the West, but are overwhelmingly concerned with safeguarding their own cultural values and wish to put them into practice, but feel that they are not able to do so because of past colonial rule and today’s Western neo-colonialism and its hegemony. The Islamic fundamentalist movements strive to implant their own ideology slowly and gradually, but radical groups among them being impatient with this slow process react and revolt against the West. Hence, there is the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism.

To deal with and overcome this situation, it is suggested here briefly that the best course for both the West and the Muslim world is to let Muslim societies develop their own image of culture and legacy based on Islamic ideology, which they consider to be universal, without any interference from the West. In time with a gradual transformation of their societies in adjustment with modern conditions and in interaction with international communities, Muslim intellectuals will find the way to deal with their situation.

Thus the West should run its own course of universal values without imposing them on the Muslim world under the umbrella of secularization, wherein pluralistic cultures and societies

⁶² <http://www.investigativeproject.org>. This statement was made by Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī which is taken by some out of context. He means Rome is going to be conquered by d’āwa (preaching) and not by sword or power.

are allowed, and Islam should pursue its own ideology of universal values and let the West follow its own course under the umbrella of Islamic doctrines of religious freedom and tolerance without fearing any intrusion of the West in the Muslim world. Let both of them run their course and with time let both of them learn how to co-exist. This might be easier said than done, but the basic principle is sound and the only possible viability, though beset with difficulties. This idea will not be developed here as it is beyond the scope of this article.

However great the zeal of Muslim intellectuals of Islamic ideology is for creating the image of universal values of the ‘Golden Age’ of Islam, they need to reconstruct and interpret afresh sharī‘a that views it not merely as God-given, but also as man-made to meet the needs of modern life.⁶³ Specifically, as Charles Adams points out in his article “The Ideology of Mawlana Mawdudi,” which also remains true of the entire Islamic fundamentalist ideology to this day that “(T)he basic sources,” namely, the Qur’ān and the Sunna, “are silent on many matters of concern to the Muslims...” that “need to be understood in the light of whatever historical circumstances may prevail”⁶⁴ in the modern world, such as, constitutional, legislative and administrative governance of the Muslim national polity in global relations with other international communities. In the same vein, the classical idea that the ‘House of Islam’ (Dār al-Islām) is in a perpetual conflict with the ‘House of Unbelievers’ (Dār al-Harb) needs to be revised in the light of the concept of nation-state and changed conditions of modern life that aspires and gives hope for the co-existence of different cultures and communities in spite of their differences.

In the same way, the West has to come to terms and acknowledge that modernity is not simply of Western kind and Western intellectualism is not the only intellectualism. There are different modes of modernity and there are different kinds of intellectualism in different cultures and traditions. On the part of the West, this involves giving up its ideology of universal values in relation to other cultures, as well as its hegemony and power at least for the sake of world political order.

Reference List

- Abed-Kotob, Sana. “The Accommodationists Speak: Goals Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, Number 3, August 1955.
- Archibugi, Danial and Young, Iris Marion. “Envisioning a Global Rule of Law” in *Terrorism and International Justice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- Adams Charles. ‘The Ideology of Mawlana Mawdūdī’ in *South Asian Politics and Religion*, edited by Donald Eugene Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).
- Baker, Raymond William. *Islam without Fear* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁶³ Husain Kassim, *Legitimizing Modernity in Islam: Muslim modus vivendi and Western Modernity* (Lewiston, N.Y: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), p. 40; Rahman, Fazlur, “Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. I (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 332.

⁶⁴ Charles J. Adams “The Ideology of Mawlana Mauwdudi,’ in *South Asian Politics and Religion*, edited by Donald Eugene Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p.386.

- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Spirit of Terrorism* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).
- Borrandi, Giovanna. "Deconstructing Terrorism" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Derrida, Jacques. "A Dialogue with a Jacques Derrida with a Jacques Derrida" in *Philosophy in Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Habermas, Jürgen. "A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Howeidī Fahmī. *Al-Islām wa Dimocrātīya* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām, 1993).
- Imāra Muhammad. *Halal-Islām, huwa al-Hall? Li mā dhā wa Kayfa?* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995).
- Jan, Abid Ullah. "Wanted Honest Muslim Intellectual," <http://usa.mediamonitors.net>.
- Kassim, Husain. *Legitimizing Modernity in Islam: Muslim modus vivendi and Western Modrnrity* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).
- Maudūdī, Abū al-A'la. "Nationalism and Islam" in *Islam in Transition* edited by John Donohue and John Esposito (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- Nussbaum, Martha. "Compassion and Terror" in *Terrorism and International Justice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- al-Qaradāwī, Yūsuf. <http://www.investigativeproject.org>.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966).
- Sagiv, David. *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt 1973-1993* (London: Frank and Cass & Co. LTD, 1995).
- Sayyid, Qutb. "Milestones" in *Selected Writings on Politics, Religion and Society* edited by Albert J. Bergesen (New York: Routledge, 2008).
- Strawser, Michael. "A Derridean Response to Terrorism" in *Politics and religion in New Century Philosophical Perspective* edited by Philip Quadrio and Carrol Besseling (Sydney: Sydney University Press, forthcoming).
- Tal, Nachman. *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2005).
- Virilio, Paul. *Ground Zero* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

Published by the Forum on Public Policy

Copyright © The Forum on Public Policy. All Rights Reserved. 2009.