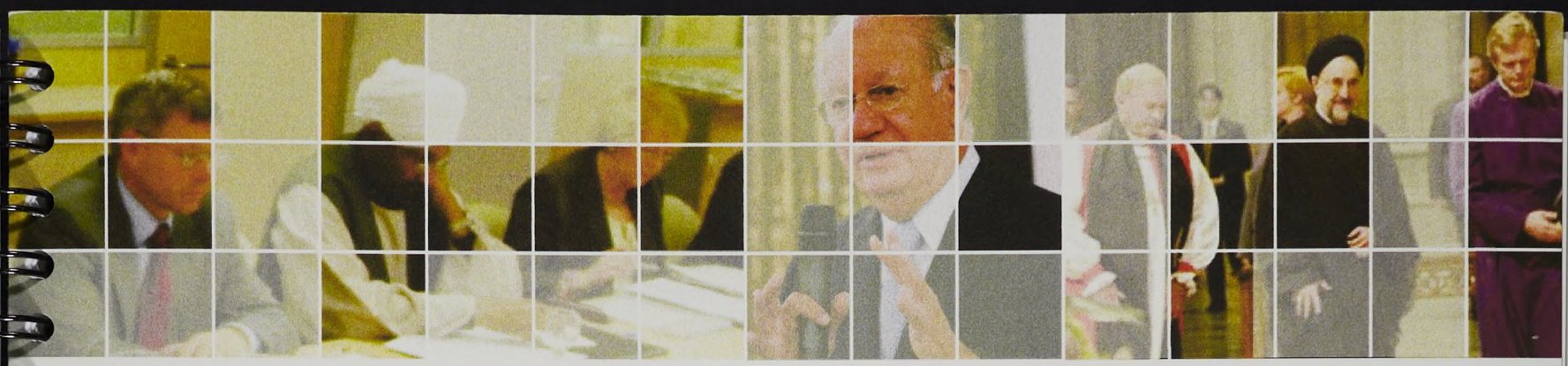

Religion, Democracy and Extremism

Oslo, 15th - 16th May 2007

CLUB DE MADRID

Foundation for Dialogue Among Civilizations

THE OSLO CENTER for Peace and Human Rights

2492

Oslo Conference on 'Religion, Democracy and Extremism'

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AGENDA
CONFERENCE ON 'RELIGION, DEMOCRACY AND EXTREMISM'
Oslo, May 15-16, 2007
Voksenåsen Hotel

Tuesday, May 15

All day — Arrival of participants

19:00 — **Inaugural Reception** (all participants)

Welcome remarks:
H.E. Mohammad **Khatami**, President, Foundation for Dialogue Among Civilizations; former President of Iran
H.E. Ricardo **Lagos**, President, Club of Madrid; former President of Chile
H.E. Kjell Magne **Bondevik**, President, Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights; former Prime Minister, Norway

Welcome on behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Wednesday, May 16

08:30 — **Coffee**

09:00 — **Framing Session – Building tolerance:** *political leadership and religious coexistence*

Keynote Presentations (10 mins each):
President Khatami: *Building tolerance and understanding in Muslim majority states, and between Muslim and Christian states.*
Prime Minister Bondevik: *Building tolerance and understanding in Christian majority states, and between Moslem and Christian States.*
President Lagos: *Political Leadership for Religious Coexistence and Shared Democratic Development.*
H.E. Jimmy **Carter**, Honorary Member, Club of Madrid (video message): *Religion as part of the solution, and not a source of, conflict – nationally and internationally.*

Discussion
Moderator: H.E. Cassam **Uteem**, Member, Club of Madrid; former President, Mauritius

10:15 — **Coffee Break**

10:30 — **Session 1: How can dialogue among Islam and Christianity contribute to peace and reconciliation?**
--Is there common ground between Christianity and Islam on freedom, equality, human dignity, tolerance and peace?
--Religion and tolerance: how to build understanding of and tolerance towards religious minorities?
--How to build tolerance and understanding between predominantly Muslim and predominantly Christian societies?

Roundtable discussion

Moderator: Ms. Lena **Larsen***

*Lead discussants (5 min. max. each): Dr. John Esposito, Dr. Ahmad Jalali, Bishop Dr. Munib Younan**

Political Leader Response: H.E. Sadig **Al-Mahdi**, Member, Club of Madrid; former Prime Minister, Sudan

12:15-13:30 **Lunch**

13:30 **Session 2: Religion, politics and extremism**

--Is there a limit to religion's influence in politics and for the state's influence in religion?

--Sanctifying violence: is extremism inherent in religion? Does religion provoke extremism and violence? Are there different 'Islamic' and 'Christian' views on this?

--What are commonalities in dealing with extremism?

--How to deal with 'religious extremists' within states?

Roundtable discussion

Moderator: Rev. Canon Dr. Trond **Bakkevig**

Lead discussants (5 min. max. each): Bishop John Bryson Chane, Prof. Souad Krafess, Mr. Iqbal Riza

Political Leader Response: H.E. Abdulkarim **Al-Eryani**, Member, Club of Madrid; former Prime Minister, Yemen

15:15 **Coffee Break**

15:30 **Session 3: Democratic Values, Gender and Equality**

--Can religions and religious leaders do more to support democratic values and gender equality, or will they often continue to run counter to these goals?

--Will they only do so if pressed to by political leaders and the State?

--How to enhance equality for women?

Roundtable discussion

Moderator: Dr. Greg **Reichberg**

Lead discussants (5 min. max. each): Mr. Andre Azoulay, Dr. Mohagehgh Damad, Bishop Mano Rumalshah

Political Leader Response: H.E. **Vigdis** Finnbogadóttir, Member, Club of Madrid; former President, Iceland

17:15-17:45 **Closing remarks**

Respect for diversity and human rights as a key benefit and fortifier of democracy and democratic practice: Lagos, Bondevik, and Khatami.

18:30 **Dinner**

**Yet to be Confirmed*

Confirmed Participants

'RELIGION, DEMOCRACY AND EXTREMISM'

Oslo, 15-16 May

MEETING HOSTS

Kjell Magne Bondevik

Prime Minister of Norway (1997-2000, 2001-2005)

Kjell Magne Bondevik is founder and President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights. Mr. Bondevik was elected Prime Minister in 1997, and appointed Prime Minister again in 2001, serving until 2005. Mr. Bondevik was a Member of Parliament from 1973-2005, and served as Minister of Church and Education in Kåre Willoch's government (1983-1986), and Minister of Foreign Affairs during the government of Jan P. Syse (1989-1990). Mr. Bondevik studied at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, and is an ordained pastor in the (Lutheran) Norwegian State Church.

Mohammad Khatami

President of Iran (1997-2005)

Mohammed Khatami is best known for being Iran's first reformist president, leading to conflict with hardliners in the government and religious establishment. His campaign focuses were on law, democracy and the inclusion of all Iranians in the political decision-making process, and he shifted Iran's foreign policy from confrontation to conciliation. Prior to his election as President, Mr. Khatami had been a Member of Parliament (1980-1982), supervisor of the Kayhan Institute, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance (1982-1986, and 1989-1992), Head of the National Library of Iran (1992-1997), a member of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, and Chair of the Islamic Center in Hamburg, Germany. Mr. Khatami holds a Bachelor in Western Philosophy, and has studied Islamic sciences to the highest level possible at Qom.

Ricardo Lagos

President of Chile (2000-2006)

Ricardo Lagos is currently President of the Club of Madrid. Prior to serving as Chile's most recent president, Mr. Lagos served as Minister of Public Works (1994-1998), and Minister of Education (1992-1993), in addition to high positions within various political parties and groupings opposed to Augusto Pinochet. He has worked for the UNDP and the Regional Employment Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to various academic positions, including Professor of Economy in the School of Law at the University of Chile and Director at the University's Institute of Law, and as visiting professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the United States. Mr. Lagos holds degrees in Law, and a PhD in Economics from Duke University, and has published five books.

CLUB OF MADRID MEMBERS

Sadig Al-Mahdi

Prime Minister of Sudan (1966-67, 1986-89)

After graduating from Oxford University in Economics, Politics and Philosophy (1957), Sadig Al Mahdi worked in the Ministry of Finance and resigned soon after the Abboud coup d'etat (1958), joining its opposition. In 1961 he was chosen as the chairperson of the civil opposition's alliance and in November 1964, he was elected as the President of Umma Party. He was elected as prime minister from July1966 to May 1967 in the second democracy (1964-1969), and again during the third democratic period in Sudan. He played major roles in the opposition to the first, second and third military regimes in Sudan in the periods: (1958-64), (1969-1985) and (1989 up to now), suffering from a sum of about sixteen years of imprisonments and exiles during the second and third dictatorships. In 2002 he was elected as the Imam of Al Ansar, and in 2003 he was reelected as Umma Party President. He is the author of tens of books and booklets covering different topics with focuses on democracy, human rights, development, authenticity and Islamic Revival. He is also a weekly columnist in Asharq Alawsat newspaper, London.

Abdulkarim Al-Eryani

Prime Minister of Yemen (1980-1983, 1998-2001)

Abdulkarim Al-Eryani became Minister of Development in 1974, Minister of Education in 1976, and was elected Prime Minister for the first time in 1980. After leaving office he served as Chairman of The Supreme Council for Reconstruction of the Earthquake-Affected Areas in the Central Highland in Yemen. He served as Vice Prime Minister as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1984 until 1993. Later on he was appointed Minister of Development Planning (1993-1994). He became Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1997 until 1998. He was then elected Prime Minister for a second term and left office in 2001. He is one of the contributors to the Arab Human Development Report 2004 and currently serves as a political advisor to the Yemeni President. Dr. El-Eryani holds a PhD in Biochemical Genetics from Yale University.

Finnbogadóttir, Vigdís

President of Iceland (1980-1996)

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir became the first woman in the world to be elected as a head of state in 1980. Prior to her election, she was a known cultural personality, working on various cultural projects in the Nordic Countries and a member (chair 1976-1980) of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Affairs of the Nordic Council. With university degrees in French and English literature, she taught theatre literature at the University of Iceland, established the first experimental theatre group in her home country, GRIMA, and from 1972-1980 she was the director of the City Theatre of Reykjavik. During her presidency, Vigdis Finnbogadottir emphasized reforestation and land reclamation in badly eroded Iceland, education, and care of youth and of the language and the unique old Icelandic heritage. In 1996 she became the founding-chair of the Council of Women World Leaders. In 1998 she was appointed UNESCO´s Goodwill Ambassador for Languages and in 1999, the chair of the newly established UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology. The Vigdis Finnbogadottir Institute for Foreign Languages was established at the University of Iceland in 2002. She is a member of Club de Madrid since 2005.

Cassam Uteem

President of Mauritius (1992-2002)

Mr Uteem started in politics when he was elected Councillor of the City of Port Louis in 1969, continuing in this position until he became the city's Lord Mayor in 1986. Cassam Uteem was as a Member of the Mauritian Parliament from 1982-1992, during which he served as Minister of Employment, Social Security and National Solidarity (1982-1983); and Deputy-Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Industrial Technology (1990-91). After servings two terms as president, Mr. Uteem retired from politics. He is currently very active in the field of international public policy, serving as Board Member of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in Sweden, a Member of the Haut Counseil de la Francophonie as well as the international jury for the UNESCO Prize of Education for Peace, and a Founder-Member of the Global Leadership Foundation (GLF). He holds a Master in Psychology.

FROM IRAN

Mohammed Reza Alborzi

Former Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

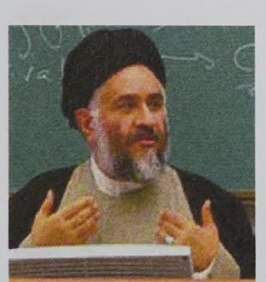
Dr. Ahmad Jalali

Member of the Council of the United Nations University; Professor of Philosophy, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran; Former Iranian Ambassador to UNESCO

Dr. Ahmad Jalali studied Mechanical Engineering from the University of Shiraz and obtained B.Sc. and M.Sc. in 1973. He also studied at the University of Tehran and obtained his MA in Western Philosophy in 1979. He undertook studies in a non-formal traditional setting on Traditional Philosophy and Hermeneutics in Tehran from 1973 to 1979. From 1985 to1991, he studied for his D.Phil. in Political Philosophy at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom.
In addition to working on a number of UNESCO projects, Dr. Jalali has taught at the Universities of Shiraz, Azzahra, Allameh Tabataba'i in Tehran; and Manchester and Oxford Universities in the United Kingdom. Dr. Jalali has authored a dozen of articles in social, cultural, historical, philosophical, political and international fields. He is also the author and editor of over a dozen volumes of university textbooks in mathematics.

Sadegh Kharazi

Former Iranian Ambassador to France



Dr. Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad

Theologian and University Professor, Tehran

Dr. Syed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad is a member of the High Council of the Research Institute of Humanities as well as a member of the Board of Trustee of Iranian Universities. He has also served as Chairman of the Commission of Compiling Judicial Acts and a Judge in the Ministry of Justice. His English publications include Protection of Individuals in Times of Armed Conflict Under International and Islamic Laws and Religion, Philosophy and Law: A Collection of Articles and Papers. Dr. Damad received his PhD in Law from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium and his BA and MA from the University of Tehran. He taught jurisprudence of Law at Shahid Beheshti University in Iran and has guest lectured at several other universities within Iran.

From Norway

Rev. Canon Dr. Trond Bakkevig

Dean and Senior Pastor of Vestre Aker Parish, Church of Norway

Dr. Trond Bakkevig is currently dean of Vestre Aker, a grouping of eight Oslo city parishes, and senior pastor of Vestre Aker parish.He is also a member of the city's largest private social service organization - the "Oslo Church City Mission" board, that works with people living on the streets, in institutions or in other difficult circumstances. Prior to his current appointment, Rev. Bakkevig has served as pastor of the Röa Pansn parish in Oslo (1993-2000); general secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Foreign Relations (1984-93); vice-moderator of the board of Norwegian Church Aid (1985-93); and personal adviser to the Norwegian state minister of foreign affairs (1987-88). Since 1996, Bakkevig has helped facilitate dialogue between Christians, Muslims and Jewish religious leaders in Palestine/Israel, as well as with politicians and international church bodies on the situation there. Rev. Bakkevig has a doctorate in theology from the University of Oslo.

Imam Senaid Kobilica

Head of the Islamic Council of Norway, and the Imam responsible for Bosnians in Norway

Senaid Kobilica has been President of the Islamic Council since February, 2007. Mr. Senaid Kobilica has served as Head Imam for the Islamic community of Bosnia Herzegovina in Norway since 1999, when he was also elected President of the Islamic Council of Norway. In the last six years, Imam Kobilica has twice served as vice president of the Islamic Council of Norway. Imam Kobilica is actively engaged in interreligious activities by being part of the European Council of Religious Leaders and Religions for Peace as assistant to the Grand Mufti of Bosnia Herzegovina, Dr. Mustafa Ceric. Imam Kobilica is a member of General Assembly of Islamic community of Bosnia in Sarajevo; a member of the Executive Committee of Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief; and a Member of the Contact group of Interchurch Council and Islamic Council in Norway. He has participated in several inter-religious missions, including in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Lena Larsen

Research Fellow, University of Oslo

Lena Larsen is currently Research Fellow at the University of Oslo with the research project 'Fiqh facing Everyday Challenges: Fatwas as suggestion for solution on Muslim Women's issues in Western Europe'. Ms. Larsen was the President of the Islamic Council of Norway (2000-2003), and served as a consultant for the quality of presentation of Islam in textbooks (1996-1998). She is associate Editor of "Faciliating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook", and is currently on leave from the position of Project Director of the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo.

Dr. Gregory M. Reichberg

Ethics, Norms and Identities Programme Leader, Peace Research Institute Oslo

In addition to leading the Ethics, Norms and Identities Programme at PRIO, Dr. Reichberg serves as Adjunct Professor at Australian National University, Dept. of International Relations, since 2004. Prior to starting at PRIO, Dr. Reichberg was Associate Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University, New York City, 1995-1999; and Assistant Professor of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America in Washington. D.C, from 1990-1995. Dr. Reichberg's current research focuses on History of ethical thinking about war and peace, contemporary military ethics, religion and armed force, medieval philosophy (especially Thomas Aquinas), Catholicism and just war doctrine, inter-religious dialogue about war and peace. Dr. Reichberg holds a PhD in Philosophy from Emory University.

Bishop Gunnar Stålsett

Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, International Co-President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and Co-Moderator of the European Council of Religious Leaders

Bishop Stalsett is currently deeply involved in the peace process in East Timor, serving as lead foreign policy advisor to both the President and the Prime Minister. He additionally serves the Norwegian government on various international commissions, including the Advisory Council for Arms Control and Disarmament, and the Norwegian UNESCO Commission. Prior to this, he was Bishop of Oslo (1998-2005); chairman of Norwegian Church Aid (1995-1998); Rector of the Practical Theological Seminary at the University of Oslo (1994-1998); and general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (1985-1994). He has also been co-chairperson of the Leadership Program Committee for the 16th International AIDS Conference (2006); Religious Leader Participant, World Economic Forum (2004); chairperson of the Niwano Peace Prize Committee (2003); and former deputy leader of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee (1985-1990 & 1992-2003.)

Dr. Kari Vogt

Associate Professor, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo

Kari Vogt is Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages at the University of Oslo, Norway. In addition to numerous books in Norwegian on contemporary Islam (including a monograph on Islam in Norway, Oslo, 2000); she has published several articles on Middle Eastern issues and is also a contributor to several anthologies and encyclopaedias.

Others

Dr. Al-Tayeb Zein Al-Abdin

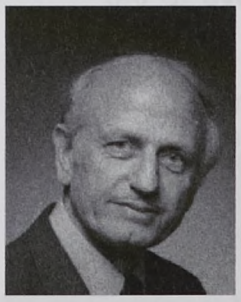
Secretary General of the Sudan Inter-Religious Council

Dr. Al-Tayeb Zein Al-Abdin is an academic writer and scholar. The Inter-Religious Council (SIRC) is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) supported by the Government of National Unity, and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), comprising Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant groups. The SIRC supported peace and reconciliation efforts between Christians and Muslims. The SIRC was established in 2003 to provide a forum for religious leaders in the Sudan (North and South) to seek together solutions to the problems facing their country, especially with regard to religious freedom and prejudice.

Evan Anderson

Deputy Director, International Reconciliation and Peacemaking Program, Washington National Cathedral Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation

Mr. Anderson, currently Deputy Director of the Washington National Cathedral Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation's International Reconciliation and Peacemaking (IRP) program, is actively involved in peacemaking and reconciliation initiatives around the globe. His work emphasizes inter-religious dialogue, interfaith relationship building, Track Two diplomacy, and respectful engagement between estranged parties as mechanisms for creating peace and reconciliation. He is currently involved in projects that are helping to build bridges between and among followers of the Abrahamic faiths, including the healing of US-Iran relations and justice and reconciliation in the Holy Land. Before his appointment as Deputy Director of the IRP program, Mr. Anderson worked with organizations in addressing matters pertaining to conflict resolution, personnel management, and organizational mission. Mr. Anderson also has eleven years' experience in government, having served as a policy advisor to two Governors in the State of Florida and as a Cabinet Aide to Florida's Education Commissioner. Mr. Anderson holds an M.S. in Counseling and post-master's certificate in Organizational Counseling, both from the Johns Hopkins University.



Andre Azoulay

Counselor to His Majesty Mohammed VI of Morocco

André Azoulay was born in Essaouira-Mogador (Morocco) in 1941 and educated in Paris, where he studied Economics, International Relations and Journalism. He has held the position of Advisor to H.M the King of Morocco since 1991, first to H.M Hassan II with whom he initially handled the economic and financial reforms and records of the Kingdom. Mr. Azoulay previously had a long career with Paribas Bank in Paris (1968-1990) where, as Executive Vice-President, he covered Middle Eastern and North African as well as heading the Public Affairs department. Mr.. Azoulay is also known for his input in the follow-up of the peace process in the Middle East and the many initiatives he has been involved in the perspective of deepening the logic of reconciliation between Jews and Muslims ; in addition to his professional responsibilities André Azoulay has always fought for peace and dialogue between the Arab Muslim world and that of the Jewish communities in Europe, the United States, Morocco as well as the Arab and Jewish diasporas worldwide.

Merete Bilde

Policy Advisor, Secretariat General, Council of the European Union

As policy advisor, Ms. Bilde is the horizontal anchor for an internal reflection group on political change and the role of political Islam. Prior to her current appointment, Ms. Bilde served as First Secretary at the Permanent Representation of Denmark to the European Union. During the Danish Presidency of the European Union, she was the Chair of the Political-Military Group and responsible for the pol-mil aspects of the European Security and Defence Policy. Afterwards, she became Head of Unit of the enlargement team dealing with the 2004 accession of the EU. She studied at the University of Cambridge.

The Right Rev. John Bryson Chane

Eighth Bishop of Washington, Episcopal

The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, D.D. is currently the Eighth Bishop of Washington, serving 93 congregations and 45,000 members in the District of Columbia, and in the Counties of Prince George's, Montgomery, Charles and Saint Mary's in Maryland. He is an active member of many boards and advisory committees including the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, The University Council Committee On Religious and Spiritual Life at Yale University, The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, and the Virginia Theological Seminary. In addition Bishop Chane serves as Co-Chair of the "Bishops Working For A Just Society" Coalition and on the Episcopal Church's Committee On National Affairs. He was recently appointed to serve on a Global Anglican Task Force investigating human rights violations in the Kingdom of Swaziland, Africa and his diocese has established a partnership with The Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa. Formerly the dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral, San Diego, California (1996-2002), he has also served as Rector of Saint Mark's Church, Southborough, Massachusetts; Canon Pastor of Saint Paul's Cathedral, Erie, Pennsylvania; and Curate/ Priest in Charge of Saint Paul's Church, Montvale, New Jersey. He holds degrees from Boston University and Yale Divinity School.

Dr. Tariq Chaudhry

UN Political Officer for Somalia; Expert in Inter-religious Affairs; Former Pakistani Diplomat and Representative to the UN

Dr. Chaudhry currently works as political advisor to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Somalia. He has previously served as Director in the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and as First Secretary in the Pakistani delegation to the United Nations Security Council during Pakistan's membership of the Council from 2003 to 2004. He has a special interest in the role played by religions in international politics and proposals for conflict resolution. In this context, he presented a paper entitled "Challenges to conflict resolution for Muslims and Christians – A Muslim's Perspective," at Århus University in Denmark in September, 2006. He holds a Masters degree in Public Policy from Harvard University and a PhD in International Relations from Cambridge University.

Dr. Essam El Erian

Muslim Brotherhood Spokesperson

A medical doctor with a focus in pathology by training, Dr. El Erian has a long and distinguished career as an activist. He is currently a columnist for several local and Arab newspapers, a cofounder of the Islamic National Conference, cofounder of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, and a member of the Arab Organization for Human Rights. Additionally, Dr. El Erian has served as Secretary-General of the Egyptian Doctors Syndicate, and as a member of the Egyptian parliament from from 1987-1990. Profiled as a possible presidential contender for 2011 by Time Magazine in 2005, he has twice been jailed for his political activities. Dr. El Erian holds advanced degrees in Medicine and Law, in addition to a certificate in Koranic recitation, and a BA in Islamic Sharia law, all from the University of Cairo.

Dr. Saad-Dine El-Otmani

Member of Parliament in the Kingdom of Morocco; Secretary General of the Justice and Development Party

Mr. Saad Dine El-Otmani is currently a Member of the First Chamber of Parliament of Morocco, and Secretary General of the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, which he has served in various leadership positions since 1996. Mr. El-Otmani is a psychiatrist by profession, and holds a Master in Islamic Knowledge. He is a leading thinker in bridging Islamic values and democracy.

Dr. Leonardo Emberti Gialloreti

Neuroepidimiologist

Dr. Emberti Gialloreti is currently Professor of Epidemiology with the Department of Public at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", and has been deeply involved with the Sant'Egidius Community for some years. Specifically, Dr. Emberti Gialloreti was been Co-director, since 1987, of the yearly Inter-religious Meetings for Peace, which involved about 6.000 religious and political personalities, as well as 220.000 other participants; and Coordinator, since 1997, of the Department for "Islamic-Christian Dialogue," during which he has organized several "Islamic-Christian meetings". Dr. Emberti Gialloreti has additionally served as a member of the mediators' team in the peace process in Mozambique (1989-92), and in the peace dialogue in Algeria (1994-95) and Guatemala (1995-96). He is presently active in Lebanon. From 2001 to 2005, Dr. Emberti Gialloreti was Managing Director of the DREAM Program for the treatment of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr. John Esposito

Director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University.

Founding Director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. John L. Esposito is University Professor as well as Professor of Religion and International Affairs and of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University. Previously, he was Loyola Professor of Middle East Studies and Director of the Center for International Studies at the College of the Holy Cross. He has served as President of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and of the American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies as well as a consultant to governments, multinational corporations, and the media worldwide. He is currently a member of the World Economic Forum's Council of 100 Leaders, the High Level

Group of the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations and President of the Executive Scientific Committee for La Maison de la Mediterranee's 2005-2010 project, "The Mediterranean, Europe and Islam: Actors in Dialogue." Editor-in-Chief of The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, The Oxford History of Islam, The Oxford Dictionary of Islam and Oxford's The Islamic World: Past and Present, Dr. Esposito's more than 35 books have been translated into 26 languages. They include: Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam, What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam, The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? and Islam and Democracy.

Professor Souad Krafess

Member of Parliament, Morocco

Souad Krafess is a Member of Parliamentary group Rassemblement National des Independents (RNI) of Morocco. She is a doctor in human sciences, a member of the International Society of Functional Linguistics, and the president of the French Aggregation's jury in Morocco. She has published over a dozen scientific articles. In 2002, she was inducted into l´Ordre des Palmes Académiques by the French Prime Minister. She is also a member of the Committee on Social Sectors and Islamic Affairs.

Professor Federico Mayor Zaragoza

Chairman, Foundation for a Culture of Peace

Founder of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Prof. Federico Mayor served as Director-General of UNESCO from 1987-1999, and Assistant Director-General from 1978-1987. Prior to this, Professor Mayor was Member of the European Parliament (1987); Minister of Education and Science (1981-82); Adviser to the Prime Minister (1977-78); Member of the Spanish Parliament (1977-78); and Undersecretary of Education and Science for the Spanish Government (1974-75). Professor Mayor, who holds a Ph.D in Pharmacy from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, has additionally served as Professor of Biochemistry and Rector at the Facultad de Farmacia of the Universidad de Granada; and professor of Pharmacy at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

Ambassador Joseph Montville

Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Ambassador Joseph Montville is currently a Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Distinguished Diplomat in Residence at the School of International Service at American University, an Faculty Member at the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction at University of Virginia Medical School, and a member of the International Council on Conflict Resolution at The Carter Center. He spent 23 years as a US diplomat with posts in the Middle East and North Africa. He also worked in the State Department's Bureaus of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and Intelligence and Research, where he was chief of the Near East Division and director of the Office of Global Issues. Montville has held faculty appointments at Harvard and the University of Virginia Medical Schools for his work in political psychology. He defined the concept of Track II, nonofficial diplomacy. Educated at Lehigh, Columbia, and Harvard Universities, Montville is the editor of Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies (Lexington Books, 1990) and editor (with Vamik Volkan and Demetrios Julius) of The Psychodynamics of International Relationships (Lexington Books, 1990 [vol. I], 1991 [vol. II]).

Fernando Perpiñá-Robert

Secretary-General, Club of Madrid

Secretary-General of the Club of Madrid since 2007, Mr. Perpiñá has served as a Spanish diplomat since 1965. Most recently, Mr. Perpiñá was General Consul of Spain in Paris from 2003-2007. Prior to this, He worked as Ambassador in Special Mission in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2001-2003); and as Ambassador to Germany from 1991 to 1996, and to Hungary from 1996 to 2001. Mr. Perpiñá served as Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1988 and 1991; Technical Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1983-1985); and General Consul of Spain in Boston from 1978 to 1982.

S. Iqbal Riza

Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Alliance of Civilizations

Mr. Iqbal Riza is the Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Alliance of Civilizations. Previously, Mr. Riza has served as Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary General (1997-2005); Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bosnia/Herzegovina (Sarajevo) (1996); Assistant-Secretary-General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (1993-1996); Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (San Salvador), (1991-1993). Between 1988 and 1990, he was also Chief of Mission of the United Nations Transition Team in Nicaragua; Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission for Verification of the Electoral Process in Nicaragua; and Director of the Division for Political and General Assembly Affairs. He has also been Director of the Office for Special Political Affairs (1983-1988), during which he was a senior member of the team for the political negotiations related to the Iran-Iraq war, and also head of the special team which undertook several missions (1983-87) to investigate the use of chemical weapons in this conflict; Principal Officer in the United Nations Department of Public Information (1980-1982); and Secretary of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (1878-1980). Before joining the United Nations, Mr. Riza served in the Pakistani Foreign Service from 1958 to 1977, holding various diplomatic assignments in London, Khartoum, Bonn and Madrid. He was also the Director of the Foreign Service Academy in Lahore and the Deputy Chief of the Mission at the Pakistani Embassy in Paris, where in addition to his other duties he acted as the Deputy Permanent Representative to UNESCO. He holds degrees from Cambridge University, Punjab University, and Tufts University.

Bishop Mano Rumalshah

Bishop of the Diocese of Peshawar

In 2003, Mano Rumalshah was named Bishop of Peshawar in the Church of Pakistan. Previously he was General Secretary of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the oldest mission agency of the Anglican Communion. He has become one of the leading Anglican figures for interfaith relations and mission. In the 1980's in England his work focused on multi faith/multiracial ministry in London neighborhoods. He has become a major figure in international religious and political discussions. His recent ministry in Pakistan has included organizing relief efforts after the major earthquake in 2005. He has served as a member of a variety of Anglican and international commissions.

Vladimir Sucha

Director, Directorate-General Culture and Communication, European Commission

Vladimir Sucha is Director for Culture, Communication and Multilingualism at the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. He is responsible for 5 units covering different tasks of the DG. Before, he was Director of the Slovak Research and Development Agency (2005-2006). National body in the Slovak Republic for funding research, promoting international cooperation, research culture, and scientific advise. He worked as well as Principal advisor for European Affairs to the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic (2004-2005). He has been working at the Slovak Representation to the EU in Brussels for 4 years as research, education and culture counselor (2000-2004). At the same time he has a long-term academic and research background – full professor of the Comenius University in Bratislava and visiting professor/scientist at different institutions in many coutries. He is/was member of many scientific, advisory and governing bodies at the national, European and international levels.

Bishop Dr. Munib Younan

President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land; and President of the Evangelical Fellowship of the Middle East

The Rev. Munib A. Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (and Palestine) (ELCJ). Since his ordination, Younan has held several positions within the ELCJ including pastor, synod president and youth pastor. He has also taught Christian education in Lutheran schools. Younan is an active member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), having participated as a member of the youth committee and advisor to the LWF Council and currently as a voting member of the Council; vice president of the board of trustees of the Ecumenical Institute, Strasbourg, France; vice chair of the LWF Department for Mission and Development; and chair of the Asian Regional Church Leaders Conference. He also works with the Middle East Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and the International Christian Committee, among others. He is a recipient of the 2001 Finnish Peace Prize from the Finnish Christian Peace Movement, and of the Human Rights Award from the United Nations Association, Washington, D.C. He is author of numerous articles on the church in the Middle East and has been a presenter at several conferences. Bishop Younan holds a master's degree from the University of Helsinki, Finland, and was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 1976 in Jerusalem

Staff

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With over 30 years experience in the field of international development, particularly in Latin America, she has been part of the professional staff of the Interamerican Development Bank, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, working extensively in these organizations' Washington, Montevideo, Geneva, Brussels and Paris offices, and in their field offices. As project officer, sector specialist and senior adviser in these organizations, she has done considerable project and programme work in a number of different areas, most recently in the fields of governance, State reform and civil society–governmental relations. She has also gathered significant experience on relations between international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, national and international partners and counterparts. Ms. Agüero holds a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service and Master in Latin American Economic Development from Georgetown University, as well as postgraduate studies at George Washington Unviersity.

Rubén Campos

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Rubén Campos currently works primarily the Club of Madrid's programme on Ethnicity, Democratic Development and Intercultural Dialogue, and has previously managed projects on political consensus building in Bolivia and Ecuador. Before joining the Club of Madrid in 2004, Mr. Campos was academic coordinator of International Relations postgraduate courses at Madrid's Complutense University. He is an expert on Asia and conflict resolution, and a professor of International Relations in the postgraduate programs of five Spanish universities. He is currently preparing his doctoral thesis on the non-violent politics of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and is editing a collection of Gandhi's political writings in Spanish.

Sean Carroll

Director of Programs, Club of Madrid

Sean C. Carroll has been Director of Programs at the Club of Madrid since January 2004. Previously, Mr Carroll was senior fellow and director of legislative programs for the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue (2001-2004). Prior to that he was a professional staff member of the International Relations Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. Carroll's democracy assistance experience comes principally through 13 years (1986-1999) working for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs where he was a project director, senior program officer, executive officer, and chief of mission in the West Bank & Gaza. Mr. Carroll holds degrees from Georgetown University and the Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies.

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Prior to joining the Oslo Center, Øistein Mjærum has served as Political Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office; Information Advisor to the Christian Democratic Parliament Group; and Secretary for Information of Christian Democratic Party National Headquarters.

Hilde Salvesen

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Prior to joining the Oslo Center, Hilde Salvesen has served as Secretary of the Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala; in addition to further positions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NORAD, the International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norwegian Church Aid, and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations.

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Address of H.E Seyed Mohammad Khatami at
The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
September 3, 2006
Chicago, USA

In the Name of God
Good Evening, Brothers and Sisters
It's my pleasure to be speaking with you, my fellow Muslims and citizens of the world, in this great city of Chicago. I am truly honored.

Islam is a familiar word that connects the hearts of Muslims in the East and in the West. The focal point of this cohesion and unanimity is the blessed person of the Prophet Mohammad Mustafa (Peace be Upon Him); the Prophet of wisdom, compassion and justice.

It is a pleasure to speak of such unanimity in a gathering of the knowledgeable and cultured Muslims of America, but I regret that such discourse is taking place in a world overcome by the anxieties, apprehensions and frustrations of humankind both Muslim and non-Muslim resulting from the [existing] insecurities and injustices. We must elucidate who "we" are as Muslims in this world and who "they" are and how can this "us" and "them" come together to build a better world.

I do request your permission to present the case of "us" and "them" from the viewpoint of an eastern Christian scholar who resided in the West. It has been rightfully stated that the Islam of the media that is an unrealistic image of Islam is the greatest predicament of our time and is among the concepts that reflect the present injudicious apartness (otherness).

"Media Islam" is the result of a one-sided understanding of Islam that is represented to us in a solitary, clichéd and vicious way. At the same time, the image of the West is revamped and introduced in an assortment of ways; varying and diverse.

The political image of Islam that is displayed is merely an imaginary vision of Islam which is void of compassion, is alien to modernity, and dodges dialogue. It is an Islam that seeks death and fights life. Conversely, the image of the West that is portrayed is one of diverse worlds with logical foundations and procedures with a penchant for freedom where the human being is the focal point.

What Edward Saeed states is a new account of the dark and false perception of Islam and the East, which has prevailed among many Western thinkers and politicians in modern times and has by and large seeped into the mind of the Western public as well.

As you are well aware, "orientology" and "Islamology" are among the most significant fields of research and study that have found their central niche especially within Western scientific and investigative circles. Among the definite theorems taught in the field of orientology is that the West invented the "East". Obviously, they do not mean to imply that the East is a vague and non-existent concept; rather the East being researched by the particular methodology of the Orientalist is a phenomenon, which was first invented by the Westerner and then investigated.

I am not trying to play down the immense volume of studies accomplished by the orientalists in fields such as history, philology (linguistic science), mythology, sociology and the arts, literature, science, religion and geography, etc. Nor, do I intend to deny the years of research accomplished through patience and perseverance, utilizing an enormous amount of knowledge and experience. Rather, what I do mean by the above is that all scientific and historic research is subsequent to and based on a specific eastern world imagined by the western mind.

In this erroneous mindset, East is a mixture of aromas of expensive perfumes, tastes of strong spices, enchanting palaces, ornamented with thousands of pieces of mirrors and gold and turquoise, and people who are at times immensely hospitable and generous, and at times incredibly bloodthirsty and merciless.

The West of the easterners, even though for various reasons "Occidentalism" was never fully understood sociologically, is of the same nature and quality as the East of the westerners.

Such imaginary East or West become problematic when they form the foundation for mutual affairs and regulating relations between the true East and the true West; on the one hand by humiliating the East, and particularly the world of Islam, a struggle is underway with the aim of multilateral domination of this world, and on the other hand the West is seen as the enemy that

threatens the identity of the East and plunders its resources and therefore must be repelled and confronted. Thus, we are witness to war and suppression on one side, and extremist reaction in the form of terror and insecurity on the other. Resulting from this historic misunderstanding is that with the expansion of the media and their false presentation of Islam and the East, in the words of Edward Saeed, the doors to any type of true understanding of reality are closing. In like manner, on the other side of the globe hatred and negation dominates the minds of the dispossessed instead of cohesion and unanimity. The consequence of this chronic misunderstanding is the emergence and reshaping of a closed cycle of violence, the result of which is carnage for vengeance and vengeance for carnage.

It appears that as the opportunities for coexistence in our time are real, the devastating threats are also serious. "Islamophobia" and "fighting Islam" are among the manifestations of this threat, that not only we Muslims, but all individuals and institutions that seek peace, justice, freedom and a world void of all forms of violence, must eradicate its root causes and manifestations. Truly, what can be done? Is there any other path but to change the paradigm of hate and violence and transform the desire for self-serving powers to the desire to seek Truth and Grace?

As one whose greatest concern at this time is the fulfillment of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, this is my belief and everyday I persevere for the opening of the horizons of dialogue, both in the East and in the West. That is why, I diligently ask the scholars of all religions and philosophers and scientists and artisans of the entire world, and all regional and international institutions to stand for this cause and confront the waves of artificial apartness (otherness) that is utilized as a tool by the violence-seeking powers. Most importantly, they must think of effective new international and legal efforts to remove the elements of cultural and political conflict from the holy realm of prophets and sanctified matter in all religions.

We, who are accredited as Muslims, must also engage in new discourse to distinguish our identity and the truth of the faith to which we adhere. How can the foundation of identity be laid upon the man-made borders that create apartness (otherness) rather than the truth and understanding of humanity?

Linguistically, the term "identity" is a derivative of "identitus" that incorporates two apparently contradictory meanings. One denotes resemblance, and the other distinction. These two aspects of identity complete its meaning. The image that an individual forms of himself and the feeling he develops toward himself is a reflection of the way others view him. In reality, identity is the inclination to distinguish the boundary between self and others. Not only does social identity make relationship with others possible, but it gives meaning to a person's life. The fact that identity generates meaning, is proof of its adaptability. Therefore, identity is not a pre-exiting intrinsic phenomenon but is constantly being shaped, deeply impacted by time and continually undergoing renewal and evolution.

Discussion of the nature and dimensions of identity is mostly the dilemma of individuals and societies that are undergoing change and also societies that are facing conflict and that is why we, Muslims, are rigorously involved with it. In traditional societies, identity is not a new concept and the nature and fate of the human being is to a great extend fixed and predictable. It is the past that dominates the future, and the present and now, emerges in tandem with the past.

However, an individual who historically lives in a transient state is quite susceptible to a new life, even if he has his roots in tradition. Subsequently, the different identities are constantly in conflict within such a person and the process of defining identity becomes ever more complicated, diverse and impressionable than other social and cultural elements in such societies. In fact, the current meaning of "identity" depends on one's "self- impression" as well as the perception of "others", and the full meaning of self and others are constantly reinterpreted.

This trend has brought to focus before us, Muslims, issues that cannot be easily dismissed. How does the truth of religion on the one hand and the constantly changing world on the other, portray our impression of "ourselves" and of "others". Before discussing the dilemmas facing the Muslims at present time, allow me to refer to the Quran, and by not taking into account historical Islam, meaning that which historically manifested as Islam and societies and governments and institutions and social principles, point to the image of faith and the piety that is beyond history as instructed by Godly revelation.

Surah Bagharah, verses 285 and 286 state: "The Apostle believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in God, His angels, His

books, and His apostles. 'We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles.' And they say: 'We hear, and we obey: (we seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.' On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns. (Pray: 'our Lord! condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; Help us against those who stand against Faith.'"

According to these blessed verses, first, a Muslim is one who believes in all the prophets and makes no distinction among them. Second, man is a being that is susceptible to error and forgetfulness and is subject to carnal, social, and historic limitations. The meaning of Islam is listening, obeying and submitting to the Almighty God who is absolutely Wise, Compassionate, Graceful and Subtle.

The important lesson that is to be learned from these verses is that even our experience of religion is a human experience. And despite the fact that human beings seek the absolute imperative, they themselves are imperatively relative and subject to limitations and this relativity is prevalent in all their suppositions and motives including their understanding of absolute reality.

The truth of religion, meaning that precious essence that is shared by all Godly religions, is a concept that is beyond history, beyond time and beyond location. However, that which is manifested in history is proportional to human conditions and internal and external circumstances, and a human being is a historical being, and naturally religion that is manifested in a particular age in history will have its limitations and restrictions in comparison to other periods of history.

Among the catastrophes that has inflicted all religions is the fact that human beings who had developed a bond with the essence of religion at a certain time, location or historical exigencies and circumstances, assume that particular manifestation of religion as being the truth of it and by reducing religion to one of its manifestations, they rule out the possibility of other manifestations of religion, at different times and in different places, relative to such circumstances.

Today, as we study history, we take note of governments that were associated with religion, and we see indications of religious civilizations such as Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, etc. and also of knowledge and science and culture that developed in their midst. For example, in the history of Islam, we have witnessed the appearance of branches and sects of Islam and various penchants and practices that consider themselves without exception to be Islamic and are so adamant in such understanding that have at times engaged in clashes and bloody conflicts in the name of religion.

All of this is indicative of the fact that Islam, like all other great Godly religions, has the potential to respond to dilemmas and queries of human beings under different circumstances and at different periods.

But the tragedy lies where one human interpretation of religion is assumed to be the entirety of religion and when irrespective of changes that occur in the lives of people, instead of a renewed reflection on universe and humanity, the old attire that is too tight for the body of the souls and lives of people is imposed on them as a holy edict. And we see that such a point of view and lifestyle has been despised by the Almighty when bigoted worshippers of tradition were depicted as lecturers and condemned:

انّا وجدنآ ءابآنا عليٰ امّه و انّا عليٰ آثٰرهم لمقتدون

Numerous are the examples throughout history when what is assumed to be religion confronts thinking, which has a natural penchant for freedom, and grows in a free environment. History is our witness that any time religion and thinking have been placed against one another, they have both suffered.

Considering the above, we can now point to several basic factors in the current circumstances of Muslims. In our time, we hear various voices that associate themselves with Islam. This includes the progressive, democratic and rational voices as well as the harsh, reactionary and repressive voice. Such diversity of voices can also be heard among other religions and customs. A Muslim must clarity his position and silence or lower the blaring voice of violence and reactionary thinking that is alien to the essence of the religion of Islam.

Islamic societies are undergoing an important transformation that must be guided. This transformation must embrace the future, not through imitation which is undesirable and scientifically will have negative consequences; rather, through pondering and understanding the new world and furnishing the desirable aspects of life while remaining faithful to the rational resources and cultural

traditions of Islam in a way that meets the needs of a human being who is living in the present time and is facing the future.

The empowerment of Muslims is the very concept that can give better expression to the truth of Islam and Islamic identity; so that Muslims can take greater strides in the path of social development and improvement of education for cultural rebirth, and scientific and technological strength. The very civilization, which under the banner of Islam was the torchbearer of the world during centuries past, was a great resource for building Islamic identity. The same is applicable today, and the bright vista whose harbinger is now coming into sight in many Islamic societies can be a source of hope, and attempts must be made to broaden it.

The power of us Muslims, irrespective of our social standing and status, is the outcome of our unity. It is abundantly clear today that the first and foremost need of all Islamic denominations, wherever they may be, is unity among themselves and leniency towards the adherents of all other religions. These are the two issues that are in jeopardy, both due to some internal short-sightedness, and the plotting and machinations of external powers.

The world of Islam was governed by arbitrary rulers for centuries who in many cases justified their despotism by resorting to religion and philosophy. The result of which has been a form of despotic tendency in the sentiment of Muslims both historically and culturally. The domination of despotism that has been reliant upon destructive colonial forces during the last two centuries has instilled habits and perceptions in society that is hard to eradicate, yet, to build a better tomorrow such purification is inevitable.

Among the most important stages of transformation in the Islamic world appears to be liberation from this intoxication with despotism, and transition to an era in which governments are the outcome of the will of the people, and under their supervision and control. Such circumstances require an appropriate culture and mindset and the scientific, educational and cultural confrontation with despotism and its mental tendencies, which dominates the world of Muslims, is among the most important duties of enlightenment, education and culture in the Islamic world. It must be kept in mind that only those who have already liberated their souls from the residues of cultural despotism have the competence to rise and act in this regard.

In our time, the world of Islam is not only facing internal problems in transformation but it is also confronting an external predicament. Meaning that the experience of renewal and transformation is taking place at a time when the most notable aspect of the civilization that is dominating the individual and the world is non-religious (secular). Furthermore, the powers that have risen from this civilization intend to dominate the entire world.

The vast and all-encompassing presence of powers who express concern for the world but implement policies aimed at devouring the world, does not allow the Muslim world to go through this transformation without pressure and machinations from outside.

The power or powers who enjoy access to global and international instruments for securing their supremacy and strengthening their dominance, only seek the total subservience of others. Any popular or democratic change or transformation that is outside the realm of their influence is not acceptable, for they find it far more convenient to deal with non-nationalistic and non-popular trends and regimes rather than the popular ones, who naturally tend to care about the welfare and the physical and spiritual interests of their people, and defend their honor and prestige and fight degradation and backwardness in their respective countries.

The present negativity between the Western world and the Islamic world has its roots in the Crusader wars, and the suffocating period of western colonialism intensified by self aggrandizing policies of the West and the powers created by such perceptions in our time, have formed an acute and horrifying circumstance. On the one hand the process of warmongering against Islam and Islamophobia, which became the political tool of the expansionists after the cold war, and on the other hand, the harsh and severe reaction of parts of the Muslim world resulting from historical marginalization and deprivation, has created such an unfortunate atmosphere that by the passing of each moment the cycle of violence further expands either as war, occupation and oppression, or as terror and destruction; imposing an indescribable climate of fear and destruction on both sides of the world.

The world before us is facing new as well as old predicaments: from the bitter reign of the age of colonialism to today's logic of double standards; from the recurring catastrophes in every corner of

the globe, the most obvious example of which is seen today in Lebanon and Palestine, to generating frightening circumstances in critical spots of the world; from power-mongering and subjugation to the unrestrained support for despotic and racist regimes; from disregard for the rights and repute of human beings to the intensification of poverty and deprivation, and many other instances. To such calamities and trepidations, one must add other harrowing and devastating phenomena such as the tragedy of September 11, misuse of religion as a tool of violence and terror and the emergence of various forms of destruction resulting from extremism and dogmatism.

Amidst all this, the Muslims of today, who believe in the message of a prophet who preached righteousness, justice, compassion, love, liberation and salvation for all mankind at all times and in all locations, have a great responsibility and mission. They must seek to find their new identity under such trying circumstances, in order to deliver humankind from its present predicaments, and prepare the grounds for the establishment of a world in which people feel safe and respected, just because they are human beings.

Our desired and achievable course is insistence on the openness of the world in which Muslims are living, and presenting an open-minded, democratic and just understanding of religion in a modernist world that is void of violence in individual and collective thought, speech and action.

In this regard, the opportunities for Muslims residing in the United States is greater and so is their responsibility. They must be the forerunners in creating such circumstances that allow them to continue professing Islam, and enjoy the benefits of understanding and believing in it, and at the same time live in a new world and society and have dynamic and constructive interaction with western civilization, the greatest hub of which is the United States.

The American nation is a great nation, and this greatness along with awe-inspiring scientific, economic and technological progress, has further elevated their standing. If this potential and capability is utilized correctly, the entire human society can benefit from it and if, God forbid, this unparalleled potential is seized by narrow-minded viewpoints and unfair practices, both the people of the United States and the people of the world will suffer loss.

The Muslim community in America, as citizens of this great country, can and must attempt to enlighten the public, without the support of whom, no policies can be implemented. In this endeavor, the Anglo-American civilization, and the outstanding potentials of the American nation for peace and coexistence, fighting discrimination and improving the material and spiritual living standards of all nations, must be taken into consideration.

All Godly religions in the United States have had spiritual and civil interactions, and the American society has so far benefited from the coexistence and dialogue among various religions and cultures. Many of the thinkers and reformists of this nation have and continue to struggle for the promotion and establishment of freedom and democracy in the world; however, despite such efforts we are unfortunately witnessing the emergence of policies that seek to confiscate public opinion in order to exploit all the grandeur of the nation and country of the United States for subjugation and domination of the world. Policies that are the outcome of a point of view, that despite having no status in the U.S. public arena as far as numbers are concerned, uses decisive lobby groups and influential centers to utilize the entirety of America's power and wealth for promoting its own interest and implementing policies outside U.S. borders that have no resemblance to the spirit of Anglo-American civilization and the aspirations of its Founding Fathers or its constitution, causing crisis after crisis in our world.

The outcome of such behavior is the cyclical increase and even build up of hatred towards the policies implemented by the United States throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East. As America claims to be fighting terrorism, it implements policies that cause the intensification of terrorism and institutionalized violence.

Why should the American people be penalized for such erroneous, biased and violence-triggering policies! I am certain that the American Muslim community, which is the promoter of unity, spirituality, justice and humanity, through active participation in the social arena of America is exercising all the benefits and rights that they and all the other citizens were granted by the Government and Constitution of the United States to form civil lobbying groups and formulate and promote concepts of understanding peace, and isolate concepts based on violence and war, and manifest human and universal ideals and safeguard the well-being and interests of the American people. Through cooperation and reaching consensus with all the people of the United States, public

opinion can be rescued from the grips of ignorance and blunder, and the domination of arrogant, war-mongering and violence-triggering policies will end. The mission of the Muslim American individual and the Muslim individual in America, as a devout Muslim as well as a good citizen of the United States and a citizen of the global community, will thus be accomplished.

As American Muslims, you were the first and most fervent denouncers of the inhumane terrorist attacks of September 11, and as the President of Iran, I was one of the first officials to condemn this barbaric act, since I knew that this inferno would only intensify extremism and one-sidedness and would have no outcome except to retard justice and intellect and sacrifice righteousness and humanity.

And this is my final comment: to build a better world, for Muslims and non-Muslims, we must eradicate self-absolutism, discrimination, greed, arrogance and violence everywhere and under any name so the world becomes a tranquil and secure place for all. The conscientious intellectuals of non-western world, especially the Islamic world, together with sympathetic and fair-minded individuals of the western world can achieve this through dialogue and understanding. Naturally, the role and influence of American Muslims, considering their knowledge, insight, abilities and the unique standing of this country in the international arena, is of extreme importance.

We aspire to be able to take a step forward in this regard and this is a step towards God and rest assured that

«ان تنصروالله ينصركم و يثبّت اقدامكم»

I wish you honor and victory.

Address of H.E Seyed Mohammad Khatami at St Andrews College
November 1, 2006
St Andrews, Scotland

In the Name of God
Mr. President
Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear colleagues

Conferment of an honorary doctorate is an honor to me especially because I see that my request for dialog has been hailed by scientists, intellectuals, academicians and politicians. I first extended such an invitation during a speech at the United Nations where I was representing the people and government of Iran as the elected president of the Iranian nation. Ever since, many significant incidents have taken place in the world. Not only have any of those incidents not cast any doubt about the need to have dialog but they have clearly placed before our very eyes the essential need to dialog. Perhaps today all of those people seeking out peace and justice do stress the need to talk.

In spite of appearing as an obvious, easy, routine, recurrent and undeterred issue at the first glance, dialog is a complex, late-to-arrive and novel subject that hits snags interminably. Sometimes it tends to be impossible. When one concerns the essentiality of dialog, they should also be concerned, simultaneously, about the likely troubles and obstacles facing them in realization of dialog. Otherwise, dialog will either turn into a monolog in the absence of an interlocutor or ends up in silence due to the prevalence of disappointing atmospherics.

Living on a border between haplessness and hope will save us from plunging into either disappointment or excessive optimism. Numerous generations to come should take relentless efforts in order to be possibly able to dilute the thick walls that separate worlds of humans and help sounds and messages to pass through this thick and condensed wall.

Where does this problem come from and what are the roots? How can that be overcome? The history of philosophy has witnessed the efforts great intellectuals have taken, to answer such questions. Some of these intellectuals have been engaged indirectly to answer such questions by pursuing their philosophical work.

What Plato narrates from Socrates' discourses, indeed, paints an image of one of the world's greatest philosophers – one who would involve himself in dialog with others in order to get to know himself, others, the world and God.

Dear friends

Perhaps it would not be inappropriate for me to pursue the discussion with a little debate on the issue of understanding. We see the earth, skies, seas, mountains, waters, soil and trees. We know them and broaden our understanding of them by researching, analyzing and examining. Yes, we get to know and delineate the world by discovering the relationship between cause and effect, by realizing the mechanism of activity and by understanding the relationship between objects and the way they affect one another. All these will lead us to develop knowledge of the world.

We know the world and objects but do not realize them. Human and God can be realized and such realization is made of language, by language and in language. Without language, realization is not made and language is not merely "saying" but saying that is pursued by hearing. A word said but not heard does not make language. Therefore, realization is made through dialog. Yes, poets understand mountains, birds and water because they converse with them.

Our poet says: I saw a poet in conversing
He would address lily as thou

Yes, we can address the lily but in fact that is possible only when the flower is personified. Personification is nothing but to gain qualifications to be addressed as an interlocutor. It is with discourse that humans are matter-of-factly realized and humans can only be addressed by God or fellow humans. Meanwhile, it is also humans and God or things that have become humanized or associated with God that can be addressed.

Addressing is only made through discourse and discourse is only made in language and with language. The language that shares common roots with the sounds animals make but is of a significantly different nature. The distance between sound and discourse marks the distance between animals and humans. The general commonalities that languages share, both in terms of wisdom and numerous similar functions stem from the common humanistic nature of humans. Their difference, however, stem from their historical, geographical and civilizational differences as well as due to their different social and cultural experiences. And since we grow inside cultural and lingual surroundings rather than outside them, realization of this point that the cultural and lingual surroundings of fellow races originally differ from our history, culture and language is extremely difficult. Nonetheless, we may accept these differences, while interpreting them in the context of cultural and religious pluralism. When starting political, economic and social ties, we may act in a way as if such differences never existed. Admitting to differences in words is not necessarily translated into profound realization of such differences emotionally and rationally.

Realization of others' language is indeed an effort to understand others in their own context rather than turn them into someone in our own context. Now we can simply see how strenuous and difficult dialog with others is and that dialog would not materialize unless human ethics and values are used – the ethics that, like theoretical wisdom, is shared by humans in terms of its major perspectives. And human rights can be spoken about only when there are presumably common absolute ethics.

In dialog, it is not merely the other that is discovered. The other is discovered and stabilized with my address and I get to know of myself and become self-conscious by addressing you. Self-consciousness is the process for my stabilization. Therefore, not only the other but "I" become "I" by addressing the other. This is where the profoundness of this comment becomes clear that "the principle issue of human's creation is the human to human connection".

But realization of human to human connection has been classified into two categories since old times: individual relationship and collective relationship. The collective relationship falls into two general forms: "we" and "here" on one side, and "they" and there" on the other side.

Individual relationship depends on emergence of the individual and the individual is not solely a philosophical or mathematical concept. It is also a social and historical concept. Therefore, it cannot be said that the individual has existed since humans were created.

Ontologically and epistemologically speaking, the individual as an individual human, preceded the general human, at least in the tangible world. Of course this Aristotle's theory has a strong rival theory, which believes in general priority of external pluralistic objects. However, priority of individual to human in mathematical and philosophical context is different from priority of individual to human in social and psychological context. The individual in the latter sense is a product of the modern age and its date of birth date is clear. Prior to this period, the individual did not exist and the members of human community would realize themselves as members of a tribe, village, town, religion, and recently nation. There has not been a clear border between "me" and "us". "I," indeed, was the place where "we" was received and realized. It has been said that emergence of the individual and individualism and expansion of an economy that is based on free market has led to a reduction in violence. The birth of the individual naturally becomes simultaneous with a reduction of the extent of "we" to family.

"We" in the first step is no longer a tribe or town, believers in such and such faith, or citizens of such and such country. "We" comprises members of a family who share a life as a household and all they are concerned about is how to guarantee the interests of the household. The new individual is less concerned about the interests of compatriots, fellow citizens or fellow believers in a common faith. "Others," however, are out of the individual's heart because they do not share a house with the individual. And even if they do, their presence is not as colorful as it used to be. It is said that the wealth, well-being and merriment of the family are the main values that the new individual holds. Therefore, realization of others as enemy is a faint subject as much as their presence is not an issue. They are not enemies because they are not there at all.

The individuals' realization of citizenship, too, is proportionate to their general individual concept. The new citizens are less interested in acquiring fighting skills, which is why hatred toward violence is on the rise and compassion toward others has become more profound. When the huge walls of tribes and cities collapse and the borders of anyone's world are not compatible with the borders of

their belief – when the world is a place for different humans with different colors, religions and cities – violence gets undermined.

The last point that should be added to these assertions is that liberal democracy is said to be directly related to expansion of industry and a reduction in violence. The new individual is tolerant and would not beat his rival up over religious convictions or cultural differences.

The birth of the new individual, which means a new "we" is born naturally, leads to the birth of a new "they". Like the individual, "they," too, is a historical, relative, psychological, philosophical, political and geographical concept. The characteristic of "they" geographically is that "they" reside in "there" and "there" is a place outside our borders.

Nonetheless, expansion of the living area of "they" is totally dependent on the expansion of the living area of "we". When "we" is a village, "they" would be all those people living outside the village. And when "we" is all the people living in Asia, "they" would be the people living in other continents.

What causes us not to take the claims of individualists seriously and doubt their optimism that expansion of individualism is directly related to a decrease in violence? Optimism, if stems from a superficial glimpse at history and politics, is not only provocative but also dangerous.

Dear friends:

Following the expansion and development of prevailing social ideologies in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, who could predict the likelihood of an escalation in religious fighting in Europe in the final years of the 20th century, as a consequence of which men, women, children and the elderly would be but safe and houses, markets, mosques and churches would be subject to attacks and destruction? Where were those tolerant and civilized people who had expanded the borders of their being and absolved themselves from violence before the new individual was born?

Liberal democracy has had a very significant achievement, especially in our time: transforming crime to a static event. Aided by satellites and the very highly advanced telecommunications technology, they have been able to turn the painful air strikes against cities and the killing of the innocent children, women and men into a very picturesque image, which is nice and appealing to watch over afternoon coffee following a day of hard work.

We should wake up from the optimism of the new sociological time, we should ask about the reasons for violence in today's world, we should ask about the reasons for re-emergence of religious wars. We should get to know how come we talk of crusades at the beginning of the Third Millennium in the name of civilization and human rights. We should conduct research about the philosophical roots of new identities and the way in which they are established. We should learn why seven centuries after nonsense bickering and debates we are reckoning that "our religion" is the faith of Logos and compassion and "their religion" is one of violence and insanity.

Distinguished professors,
Dear students,
Esteemed audience,

Human's soul is probably the most complex of all beings in the world. Understanding the human's soul does not come by only through analysis and statistics or by focusing on positivism, pragmatism and behaviorism. Solutions to the calamity humans suffer today will not be made by reducing religion to a social institution or through simplistic individualist assertions. Of course, on the other hand we should avoid accepting any prepared simplistic prescription too.

The path to knowing history, society and politics is an endless and dangerous road which should be trodden with short but sensible steps. History of thought and philosophy has made us pessimistic about all forms of simplistic glance. We cannot simplistically speak of an end to history as liberalism cannot be introduced as the sole image of wickedness or the sole symbol for perfection of social thought. This path is not easy to tread and a very significant point is that realization of peace, security and justice is not conditioned on total understanding of history and society theoretically and philosophically.

If "the other" is the one living outside "my" borders, can "I" not be expanded to the extent so it could also include the land and being of "the other"? "I" and "we" can be not intersecting circles but

consist of aliquot circles so slipping from one to the other would not necessarily need violence and bloodshed.

Dear friends:
Our world is being threatened by all kinds of conflicts. Unfortunately, religious confrontations should be added to this list. There are calls for religious wars today but I want to finish my speech with a comment from the great Imam of Muslims.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him), in a letter he wrote to one of his friends Malik ibn Ashtar when sending him off on mission to assume authority in Egypt as governor, tells him that people should be treated compassionately because "they either share a religion with you or are created the same way as you are".

Sharing a religion and homogeneity in creation are two overlapping circles. He speaks of the two circles as if moving from one to the other is not only possible but also ethically essential. If someone does not share their religion with me, they are definitely respectable and entitled to receiving compassion as human beings. The call by our Imam is clear. He recommends not only tolerance but something beyond that: profuse compassion. One can live inside their religious, geographical and political borders but extend love profusely. Borderless friendship will save the world.

Thank you

Foundation for Dialogue among Civilisations

The Geneva-based Foundation for Dialogue Among Civilisations is an international foundation established in 2007 to promote the institution of regular dialogue between the world's peoples, cultures, civilisations and religions in order to promote peace, justice and tolerance.

The Foundation was founded by Mohammad Khatami, former President of Iran and the initiator and key sponsor of the 2001 United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilisations. The foundation aims to build upon the successes of the United Nations year and further implement the recommendations of the relevant UN resolutions.

Through its work, the Foundation aims to contribute to enhanced and meaningful dialogue, strengthened interactions and exchange among and within different cultures, religions, countries and civilisations. The Foundation believes that dialogue among civilisations is conducive to mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation and security.

Strategic objectives of the Foundation for Dialogue among Civilisations include:

- reconciling tensions between cultures, countries and religions
- promoting and facilitating the much needed dialogue between Muslim societies and western societies around the world.
- promoting and facilitating the peaceful resolution of conflicts and/disputes,
- contributing to academic research and enriching the wider debate around peace in the world

Activities

The Foundation for Dialogue among Civilisations will fulfil its objectives through:

- the organization of diverse cultural, artistic and scientific events including debates, fora, symposia and seminars designed to encourage exchange between cultures and civilisations in the spirit of the Foundation
- maintaining, and when needed, initiating regular communication with experts in the field as well as with all other Foundations or Associations with similar or complementary objectives both within Switzerland and abroad.
- the publication of articles resulting from research carried out by the Foundation's committees

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Seeking Understanding In Our Age:
Georgetown University and Interreligious Dialogue
Washington, 2 March 2007
Lecture by Kjell Magne Bondevik, former Prime Minister of Norway and founder of The Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights

We care for our family, worry about our income, fall in love and cheer our favourite sporting teams, get angry with disobedient children and are proud of them at the same time. We have dreams about our lives, and like to meet our friends and family as often as possible, and we assume responsibility for family and society. So many things are alike in our lives.

The same is true of religious beliefs.
We have something genuine in common. But still we may also see things from a religious perspective very differently.

We are participating, through this series of lectures in the 40th anniversary of the declaration of the Catholic Church to Non-Christian religions, the Nostra Aetate, proclaimed in 1965. This declaration represented a marked shift in The Catholic Church orientation towards other religions, and improved the relations between The Catholic Church and The Jews. It was an important step, and the text of the Nostra Aetate can be an inspiration to us all. And it is important to hold on to all kinds of positive inspiration when we sometimes today can share the feelings of Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the president of Cairo's al-Azhar university, which he expressed at the St. Egidio-seminar in Assisi, namely that time and again the voices of religious leaders who try to promote dialogue seemed like "cries in the desert". I have been looking forward to visiting you today, as I have become curious about you after reading the way you present yourselves: "The spirit of promoting inter-religious dialogue infuses the campus." Then this can be seen as an oasis in the desert, and I will drink from your water.

My words to you today are based on my over 30 years in politics, and especially the different inter-religious dialogues I have initiated and participated in; in the Balkans, in Egypt and Morocco, and the Israel/Palestinian process.

Christian values
When I engaged in politics many years ago, my motivation came from my Christian values. I learned early that both my religious belief and politics, and governance and church are two different things, and should not be mixed up. Christianity is first and foremost a question of my relationship with God, of the belief in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. Politics are on the other hand a way of organising the society to the best for the individual and the community. But still there must be a connection between the two. As a Christian I can not leave my Christian faith and conviction at home when I go to my job. I bring with me some values and principles which also have meaning in political life.

For me these main values are:

- Man is created by God, in God's image, and has an inviolable value. This idea of the human being will in turn lead us to protect human life from conception to a natural death
- The principle of stewardship. God gave us responsibility for taking care of his creation
- The double commandment of love: To love God above all and to love my fellow human being as myself.

My main inspiration to combat an unjust and troubled world, is God's love for the creation and the example of the life of Jesus, with many deep-felt challenges. I still believe that love for my neighbour is the strongest power that any political decision-maker can yield, anywhere in the world. I believe in a God who sees the world from the perspective of the weak, the children, and the oppressed. We cannot shut our eyes to poverty and oppression. We are all part of a global fellowship and we must join together with all those who are struggling for justice.

Common values

Unfortunately, many people around the world carry with them the burden of fear of people different from themselves, and especially if they have another belief. Why? I think that religious and political authorities often have used their position of authority to point to differences more than to similarities. Fear and division are unfortunately widely used tools of power to keep the disciples obedient and loyal. All too often religion is distorted and abused to stir up mistrust and hate, which in turn provide a breeding-ground for conflict and war. A strong religious dimension is often an integral part of unrest and violent power struggles. We have seen this in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in the Sudan and elsewhere in Africa. Few, if any, religions actually have this aggressive characteristic in their scriptures. It is man-made. Religion is always interpreted by someone. But we can act against such negative interpretations by enhancing our efforts to promote understanding between people. We have several common values in all main religions, such as respect for the sacred, human dignity, and the ideas of peace and justice. The knowledge of this helps break down the religious and cultural barriers that have been erected between peoples, societies and individuals. At the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights this is a part of our platform; to promote peace and reconciliation, with strong emphasis on interfaith dialogue.

All major world religions teach the virtue of peace. Not just peace in the sense of absence of war, but peace between people. The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, and the Arabic word, salaam, have the same root. Both have a broader meaning, referring to a state of mind, to relations with other people and relations with God. This is the same as in the Christian blessing: "peace be with you."

The writings of all the world religions call on us to make peace. In the Christian faith we have Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The holy book of Islam, the Koran, says, " If they incline to peace, make peace with them". Mahatma Ghandi, a Hindu, put it like this: "Every human being can be made to change his or her violent behaviour into a peaceful one, by virtue of human nature itself which possesses an inherent partiality for peace." Other religions have similar messages. We all seek God with the same purpose, to live in peace with God and our neighbours. The Gospel in the Bible, and I think particularly of St. Paul, shows us how the reconciliation between God and Man,. due to His mercy, help Men to reconciliation between themselves.

Responsibility of religious leaders

I want to emphasize the importance of mobilizing the religious communities. Religious leaders have the means and resources to reach the believers. No other groups have the same capacity to reach out, down to the most remote groups. The best example of how efficient the communication among religious communities can be, you find in the fight against HIV/Aids.

Today we see a strong worldwide tendency to idealize individualism and egoism, and to emphasize materialism over spiritual and relational topics. Religion can here represent a counterweight – Islam with emphasis on human dignity, social justice and duties, Christianity with focus on love and compassion, Buddhists with their way of seeing through egoism that destroys our lives; and Hindus with their focus on the balance between good and evil in people. People from different religions are familiar with the language of ethics and values, of spirituality and the soul, so important for the lives of common people.

As political and religious leaders we have a responsibility to oppose any attempt to exploit social, economic and other injustices in order to stir up religious hatred and suspicion. The world situation compels us to work hard to reduce tension between religious groups. It can start from the top down and from the grassroots up – both ways, at the same time. The dialogue must be based on reciprocity, confidence and cooperation.

Still, we must be careful not to give religion a too heavy responsibility for conflicts in the world. Former President Bill Clinton stated at the Clinton Global Summit in 2006 the following conclusion:

1. Most conflicts are over power, politics and resources
2. Religion is used and becomes a cover for political differences

3. Therefore we must continue interfaith dialogue

And Pope Benedict XVI also pointed in the same direction when he recognized that religion had sometimes been used to justify war, but said that such violence is not caused by faith itself, " but by the cultural limits with which it is lived and with which it develops in time."
Religious leaders have a strong influence on their followers all over the world. We can use that influence to build bridges and show by our actions that cooperation and friendship are possible with people of all faiths. It is important then that Pope Benedict XVI so clearly also stated that religion should never be used as a justification for war, and appealed to religious leaders to use their faith to bring about peace: " No one is therefore permitted to use the motive of religious differences as a reason or pretext for bellicose behavior toward other human beings."

Knowledge makes dialogue easier
When we feel confident about our own religious belief, it is easier to meet and talk to people from another faith. Knowledge of your own belief is important for the climate of dialogue. We can meet here today and speak freely together, because we feel confident about our positions, confident enough in our beliefs that dialogue does not challenge our position. I have been a politician for over 30 years, but I am originally a clergyman, ordained Pastor in the Lutheran church. I bring with me a message from my religion about love for all people. In my religion, we learn how Jesus, through his good example, healed people from another religion than his own, without requiring that they convert. He did not have a hidden agenda in his actions. He taught us to love all people, including people of other faiths. And he challenged us to love not only our friends, but also our enemies.

People of different faiths are sometimes afraid of losing their religious identity or even their own faith in interfaith dialogue, but my experience and that of others have been the opposite. The archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams said in The World Council of Churches 9th Assembly that two approaches to inter-religious dialogue were unhelpful. One was to claim an exclusive possession of the truth, while the other was to lose confidence in one's faith and "slip into a world-view that assumes every religion is as good as another". He urged his audience to recognize similarities in their own experience of faith and that of others, saying, "Sometimes when we look at our neighbors of other traditions, it can be as if we see in their eyes a reflection of what we see; they do not have the words we have, but something is deeply recognizable." He continued, "When we face radically different notices, strange and complex accounts of a perspective not our own, our perspective must be not, 'How do we convince them of error? How do we win the competition of ideas?' But 'What do they actually see? And can what they see be a part of the world that I see?'"

In my view promoting sound values is especially important in schools. Our schools must foster tolerance and understanding. They must be a means of combating hatred and fear of those who are different. In all schools, also in religious schools, pupils must learn compassion and consideration for others. And I will once more quote Pope Benedict: Never before have we needed this education as much as now, particularly if we look toward the new generations. So many young people in areas marked by conflict are taught sentiments of hate and vendetta in ideological context where seeds of ancient rancours are cultivated and psyches are prepared for future violence. "
The role of education is very important in enhancing confidence and reconciliation. In 1997 Norway changed the religious education in our schools from a mainly Christian focus; to a new and compulsory subject "Christianity, Religions and Life Stance" (the Norwegian acronym is KRL, for "Kristendom, religion og livssynskunnskap"). All Norwegian students now receive a substantial amount of knowledge not only of Christianity but also of Islam and the other world religions, as well as of philosophy and more secular outlooks on life. Apart from ensuring that all students will have a good knowledge of the Christian tradition as well as of other religions and worldviews/life stance, the intention has been to open a space for practicing dialogue in an increasingly multireligious society. The different religious communities have participated in developing this new curriculum.
Religious communities should coordinate mutual development of study programs, textbooks and educational plans to promote confidence building through education

By understanding more about others I also learn more about myself and my own belief. We may be transformed through dialogue, but that is also the intention of the dialogue, to be on the way to greater

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understanding. Rev Dr. Ingo Wulfhorst explained this beautifully: "Trying to understand the others' spirituality, religious experiences and practices, learning from them, and sharing our own faith and understanding in order to also be enriched and transformed, is part of an interfaith dialogue". And along the way we can even become friends with people from other religions, feel companionship and fellowship, and bring down barriers in order to make conflicts easier to solve. To talk about our different faiths, is not a competition any of us can win. More understanding is the goal, and through greater understanding it is easier to live together.

Our challenge is to teach about all religions in a fair and correct way, filled with respect. We must also get correct information about our different worlds, and get away from stereotypes about each other. You find moderate and extreme Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. – and in some respects we can even find that we have more in common with people from another religion than from our own.

Dialogue and diapraxis on the local level

The effect of our dialogue should manifest itself first and foremost in local communities, where conflicts often arise. We can sit here in this meeting, in relative good comfort, meet in civilized settings and have an intellectual sharing of opinions and experiences. But it is in our every day life, where political decisions will be taken and when you and I speak in front of our religious communities, that the result of our sharing of values will materialize itself. There is a lot of mistrust in many communities. And many people do not feel safe in their local environment because of discrimination. To be a minority in a society can be hard, if the society does not find ways to live with and respect differences.

We must face common threats and challenges in the world of today, and we must do it together. Many are interested in dialogue and cooperation, but they do not know how to do it. We must do two things; give them confidence in their reflections about how necessary it is, and give them ideas and tools to do it. There are a lot of experiences of this kind all over the world now. An internet-search will give you many examples and good ideas about how to do it. But it is important that everybody adapt it to their own context, and that all the participants have the possibility to influence the agenda and actions taken.

A Danish theologian and the director of the Islamic-Christian study center in Copenhagen, Lise Rasmussen, introduced the term diapraxis 15 years ago. The main idea is to work together on an equal basis. She defines it like this – Diapraxis is not the application of dialogue, but dialogue in action. It is a process that calls for a contextual approach to dialogue, enabling people to meet in order to try to reveal and transform the reality they share. Religious leaders have a responsibility to give their followers and members of their community room and encouragement to engage in diapraxis.

Religious dialogue must take place on the grassroots, solving practical questions concerning the every day life of the people. Common projects like solving the problems of water supply, lack of security in the neighborhood, conflicts between youths or the need for extra homework assistance for young people or immigrants. Having concrete common problems to solve can help people to develop friendship and fellowship.

Challenges in interfaith dialogue

Still, we must remember that many religious groups are not interested in dialogue, both among Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others. It is safe to stay within our own community, and there may be an inclination among religious and political leaders to hold on to their positions of power. Or to quote Ahmad al- Tayyeb again: " When the guides of humanity and the builders of human history turn their backs on religions and on their sublime philosophies, they become like a group of blind people who are incapable of guiding themselves, let alone others."

Religion may also be used for political and economic purposes. And different interpretations of a religion can also hamper a necessary development in different areas, and conserve attitudes that need to be changed in order to promote a free and just world with equal rights for all:

- Old traditions can stand in the way of necessary development

- Inequality between the sexes can be a challenge, and is often maintained by laws emanating from a doubtful interpretation of the scriptures of a religion
- Certain religious groups are only motivated by the hope of gaining converts, and serve only their own followers
- Cultural and religious history are often closely connected, both in negative and positive ways. An example is the tradition of circumcising girls. A barbaric tradition that has no place in today's world and must be abandoned.

A challenge for everybody working with inter-religious dialogue is to avoid that the dialogue primarily becomes a unity between reactionary forces within the different religions; a unity of conservative forces with the only goal to defend religion against secularisation. And to avoid that universal human rights become a sacrifice on the altar of dialogue and tolerance. We see that leaders from different religions join forces to preserve old paternalistic family patterns. And we must not accept a continuation in the Alliance of Civilisation/UN-report, namely that a lack of respect of religion in the West is a major reason for the differences between Islam and the West.

Challenges in Christian/Muslim relations

We have over the last few years seen a polarization especially between Christians and Muslims. Principal of Indonesia's Christian Batak Church, Rev Dr Jamilin Sirait, when explaining the Indonesian situation, had a disturbing tale to tell of being a Christian minority: "One of our problems is that we (the Christians) are seen as Westerners. Christianity is linked to Western thinking. Many of our Muslim brothers and sisters see us as enemies, and opponents of Muslim thought, while many Christians see Muslims as extremists". He said in a meeting in Denmark that one of the major challenges of the Christian-Muslim dialogue is to eliminate these incorrect views of each other whereby Christians are perceived as representing the West, and Muslims are seen as extremists.

The Muslim writer Tariq Chaudhry says: "Muslims share a common view of a constant onslaught against them and their religion. Their inability to militarily or politically resist external threats and aggression adds to their feeling of humiliation, which Muslims have been feeling since the time of thecrusades and colonial occupation, when large parts of the Muslim world were under foreign domination." He also underlines that after independence one Muslim nation after another have experienced defeat at the hands of non-Muslims, whether it be in the Middle East, South Asia or in the Balkans.

This perspective has also been made a point in the final report of the Alliance of Civilization- High Level Group presented in 2006: Muslim communities share a sense of "discrimination, humiliation, or marginalization against them based on ethnic, religious, or other identity markers."

The philosopher Elie Wiesel points to important root causes to conflict, war and terror in the world. They are based on experiences of humiliation, he says. He shows that occupation creates a feeling of humiliation, and the same happens when a culture becomes undervalued. You also find it among people and in countries that are economically oppressed, and where the redistribution of wealth is very unjust. It is important to fight conditions that make people, individuals and ethnic groups feeling humiliated. It must be a priority to develop strong attitudes and communication systems between and within countries, which in words and actions show respect for different groups and treat people equally, both majorities and minorities. This is also a theme of the important UN-project, Alliance of Civilization., which I support.

There have been many conflicts between Muslims and Christians throughout history, but it is important to remember that there is also a history of cooperation between religions. As far back as the Middle-Ages, goods and merchandise, but not least, ideas and knowledge crossed the divide between the Christian West and the Islamic Orient. Up till today, there are examples such as South Africa and the overthrow of Apartheid, and Muslim and Christian religious leaders working together to build peace in war-ravaged Sierra Leone. We also see in the history of Egypt, that Christians and Muslims worked closely together and built a strong alliance to fight the British colonialists. History also shows that the communities in our part of the world that were most willing to learn from others have developed most rapidly. This, I believe, is indeed an important lesson.

It would be useful to get more insight in the attitudes and organisation of the cultures and countries that have very low internal tension between different cultures, religions or ethnic groups, and try to draw some experience from it that can be used in other countries and contexts. It is furthermore necessary to look at other reasons for violence and conflicts than religious and cultural differences, and seek ways to prevent those combinations of root causes from growing political or military tensions etc.

Learn from good praxis

It is important to develop a line of thought between civilizations, that allows cultures to live side by side, albeit with very different characteristics, where dialogues between different groups are based on respect, and where there is an environment for dialogue about differences and about how to practice different human rights perspectives. A special challenge is to find a way to deal with the gender problem. Discrimination of women can not be tolerated, and it is important to have open discussions about what gender equality means in a human rights context.

Living with differences in religion, ethnicity and identity must be learned, and structures for it must be built. Through greater knowledge about each other and a broad dialogue in all parts of society, we can make wonders. More knowledge reduces fear, and friendship breaks down barriers. In this regard I want to share with you some experiences from my country, Norway. The Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway was established 30 May 1996. Member communities today include: the Holistic Community, the Bahá'í Community, the Buddhist Community, the Jewish Communities, the Humanist Association, the Islamic Council, the Church of Norway, the Council of Free Churches, the Catholic Church, the Sikh Community (Gurduara Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji), the Hindu Community (Sanatan Mandir Sabha), and The Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints).

The goals of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities are defined in the statutes:
- To promote mutual understanding and respect between different religious and life stance communities through dialogue,
- To work towards equality between various religious and life stance communities in Norway based on the United Nations covenants on Human Rights and on the European Convention on Human Rights,
- To work, internally and externally, with social and ethical issues from the perspective of religions and life stances.

This council has played a very important role in Norway as a bridge builder between religious- and life stance communities. And it has evidenced dilemmas related to religion and faith. We also have an organisation called The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, that aims at promoting freedom of religion or belief as a positive right. The Coalition cooperates with international experts and organizations, such as OSCE and UNESCO. The Oslo Coalition bases its activities on *The Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief* from august 1998.

Close dialogue between different religious and faith communities during many years, often connected to current political topics and conflicts, contributed strongly to the non-violent reaction in Norway to the conflict surrounding the Muhammed-caricatures. Knowledge of what is considered sacred for the different religions, as well as of the common understanding of what freedom of speech means in practice, created a good base for dialogue in this critical situation.

My conclusion is this: I truly believe that religious faith can be a part of the solution, not part of the problem. It is our common endeavour that can make this come true throughout the world. Therefore we need to strengthen and encourage inter-religious dialogues, involving both religious and political leaders. I hereby challenge us all to do it together.

THE OSLO CENTER
for peace and human rights

THE OSLO CENTER
FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights was established in 2006 by former Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik. The staff consists of seven persons in permanent positions and six persons on a voluntary basis. The mission of the Oslo Centre rests on two main pillars: peace and human rights. The main area of intervention is at the government level, through contacts and dialogue with leaders in both public and private sector.

Peace and Reconciliation

The Oslo Center is currently engaged in work for peace and reconciliation with the emphasis on **intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.** In many parts of the world, different cultures and religions have been fuelling conflicts. It is our belief that it should be possible to reverse this tendency, and focus on culture and religion as assets for conflict resolution.

The Oslo Center is actively working with the **Club de Madrid** to implement an initiative on intercultural dialogue, focussing on democratic practice. The five major themes will be addressed in a pairing of cities, one in the West and one in the developing world, for a total of 10 regional meetings, leading up to an international summit on Dialogue, Diversity and Democracy in Slovenia on the eve of Europe's Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008.

A collaborative effort has been initiated with the foundation of former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, **The Foundation of Dialogue among Civilizations**. The Conference in Oslo in May will be the starting point in this co-operation.

Mr. Bondevik was assigned as a commission member in the **Inter-Faith Action for Africa, (IFAPA),** where seven different religions are represented and with a special attention to women's participation; and as moderator of the Commission of International Affairs of the **World Council of Churches.**

The Oslo Center is also facilitating a network called "Muslim Women for Democracy".

Human Rights

The Oslo Center is co-operation with and supporting local and international organisations working on human rights issues. Of special concern are:

The right to life and the situation at the Horn of Africa

The countries at the Horn of Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti) have all suffered from drought for four of the six last years, this coming on top of problems related to poverty and under-development. The UN Secretary General appointed Mr. Bondevik as his Special Humanitarian Envoy for the Horn of Africa. This mandate will run through June 2007.

The newborns' right to live:

More than 500,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth and four million children die before they are four weeks old. Almost two out of three child deaths occur from common, easily preventable or treatable diseases and illnesses. Mr. Bondevik was in 2006 asked to become a

goodwill ambassador to the Partnership Programme for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which he readily accepted.

North Korea – Failure to Protect

Together with former President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, and Professor, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel, Mr. Bondevik commissioned in 2006 a thorough report on the humanitarian situation in North Korea. The report, produced in cooperation with the global law firm DLA Piper and the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, applies the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine adopted by the UN Security Council in April 2006 to the situation in North Korea. The report shows that not only is the North Korean government failing to exercise its responsibility to protect its own people. It is actively committing crimes against humanity - against its own people. The report recommends that the UN Security Council adopt a non-punitive resolution urging open access to North Korea for humanitarian relief, the release of political prisoners, access for the special rapporteur and engagement by the United Nations. The Oslo Center is promoting the report and its introduction at the UN Security Council.

Burma

Burma is ruled by a military junta which suppresses almost all dissent and wields absolute power. Prominent pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been in house arrest for more than 11 years. The Oslo Center is actively promoting respect for human rights and democratisation, through international campaigns e.g. for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and for a more coherent international policy towards Burma.

Health as a Human Right

This programme is a co-operation between the Vesper Society, working closely with the Carter Center in Atlanta. The project has a two fold aim: mapping of religious health assets that can be mobilised in the battle against HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa; vulnerable patients' groups and the need for research, prevention and treatment of diseases affecting the brain and the nervous system.

President Ricardo Lagos
East-West Dialogue
23-24 October, 2006
Asia House, Barcelona, Spain

What do we really want to address: dialogue, diversity, and democracy? Is this dialogue, diversity, and democracy, or do we want to promote dialogue for diversity and democracy? Is it a dialogue for diversity and democracy, or is it a dialogue about diversity and democracy?

First, we say that democracy is a political system by which we have learned to process the differences, and it implies a collection of rules that we all accept.

Democracy, of course, is something we apply within our societies, where there is diversity and different values, culturally speaking.

But when we speak of East—West or North—South encounters, when we speak of dialogue, of diversity and democracy, we are clear. We are speaking of the difficulties in today's world, particularly after September 11, 2001 and of the dialogue through which different civilizations and cultures can understand each other.

And sometimes we give the impression that we are going back to the things that you all, here in Europe, left behind because of the Treaty of Westphalia, back in 1650, when you put an end to 30 years of religious war.

How, then, do we conduct a dialogue, if we do not accept, firstly, that there is no culture, religion, or civilization which can dictate to others certain values that are the only valid ones. Because from that moment, we human beings began to confront one another. Consequently, from time to time, we tend to think that democracy is a western invention, or we ask ourselves how to process diversity—what are the limits, where we say "no" to so much diversity?

I believe that humanity, at the end of the 20th century—the short century, according to some outstanding historians, which began with World War I and ended with the fall of the Berlin wall; the century in which in the name of certain values arose their antithesis—has learned to distrust those absolutist paradigms which have an answer to everything.

Why am I saying this? Because I believe that when we say dialogue, diversity, and democracy, what are we saying? We are saying that we want to build a conceptual framework to be able to share common values and experiences in very different environments, and that requires discussion.

Today, in the 21st century, nobody says, "I am against democracy." We can discuss what we understand about democracy, but nobody says, "I am against it." Nobody says they are against transparency. We all understand that we have to have a set of rules, called Rule of Law, and we all understand that the starting point of everything is the human being.

It is because we respect human beings, that there are human rights, and we can speak of first generation, second generation, and third generation rights.

There are human rights and nobody should be against them. If that is so, then dialogue, an encounter, needs to be about how we define them. If we decide this on religious terms, I would be very surprised if somebody told me that there is a religion that does not put the human being at the centre of their concerns. And from that, we have avery clear point of encounter.

Another thing to understand is that, for this dialogue to be fruitful, it can not be under the threat that the most powerful party will impose its point of view if the dialogue fails.

That reminds me of an academic seminar in Cairo, many years back, where somebody spoke with much force and the host said to him, "You speak as if you were the ruler of the world. We know these things. We practiced it 3,000 years ago."

The phrase stays with me, because when you believe that you are the ruler of the world, you can mould the world. But if you are number one, history knows that some day you will stop being it. And the big question is: Is it possible to mould the world, in this moment of full power, so that at the end of being the number one, you live in a comfortable world? I believe that this is a legitimate question.

In short, I believe that for the theme of dialogue, diversity, and democracy, we have an excellent opportunity to advance a little more. And just as within our societies we are proud—some more and others less—of how much we have advanced in democratic terms, somebody could ask: Can we advance towards a democracy on more global terms? Towards a more global felicity of governance?

I do not doubt that we will progress in that sense, because a group of problems are arising that can only be solved on a global level. I speak of climate change, and that is a global theme. No single individual society is going to resolve climate change. Some are more responsible than others because they emit more carbon dioxide, of course, but that does not mean that we are going to be able to resolve it if not globally.

To summarize, I believe that, yes, there is a dialogue that, more than about diversity and democracy, serves us to process the diversities and the democratic conceptions, and in that dialogue, unfortunately, we have gone back more than advanced.

And we have lost ground because we tend to take definitions that, in my judgement, haven't kept up with the times. How does it make sense that a congress votes on if it can speak or not in favour of the Holocaust? The Holocaust existed; it is a fact of history. In another place, in Turkey in 1915, there was a genocide against a clear sector of that society. But it is a theme of the historians. Where are we going to arrive if we legislate about history? To me, it seems like a backward movement. You all, in Spain, had a clash that began in 1936 and ended in 1939. During how many years did only an official truth exist? That ended and an explosion of books about the Civil War began.

I believe that what we have to do is try to understand what it is that presents problems. Does it present problems? Then it presents problems. In a debate about the veil, as there are in so many places, you said: Is it an expression of religion or it is more profound, an expression of a sense of culture? And, how do we reconcile these? To me, it seems that we are in the position to approach each other, because with the same force that you can say, "no to the veil," others are going to say to you, "Yes, and you want to impose your viewpoint on me."

The progress that we have made in these years has not kept up with the times. That is why we are having this debate, to say how we are capable of advancing.

At the Club of Madrid, we have brought up the possibility of having a dialogue of this nature in different places of the world, with the advantage of meeting those that at some time directed their countries. We unite the advantages of having experience with the freedom that we are not leaders in office now. But I believe that the action must happen quickly, because each day that passes, the dialogue becomes more deaf.

With each day that passes, diversity is questioned more, because it is not according to "my" way of seeing how things should be, and from that moment, the rules for maintaining a dialogue begin to disappear. We are not going to persuade and we are not going to convince, unless we are going to want to defeat. And in all societies, when some want to defeat and not convince, they find themselves at odds. It has happened to us, it happened in my country at one time, but it is much more serious when it occurs on a planetary scale.

In that context, when you say, here in the Asia House, "How to progress?", that advance is that item on the order of business of the international agenda—obligations. And sometimes, maybe, one must use force. But that it can only be done through the multilateral entities that humanity has given to itself.

When it was my turn, I put it into practice: we discuss and we approve the things that must be approved, in the Security Council of the United Nations. We will support it, because we believe in the rules that we have given ourselves. Because of this, we said "no" to Iraq, because it was outside of the Security Council. And when that same council, nine months later, said, "We need troops in Haiti," the government of Chile unanimously sent troops to Haiti in 72 hours.

There has to be coherence. If there is not, neither can there be dialogue, and much less acceptance of diversity.

Thank you very much.

CLUB DE MADRID

The Club of Madrid was launched following the Conference on Democratic Transition and Consolidation, held in Madrid, Spain, in October 2001. At that unprecedented gathering, 35 Heads of State and Government from Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa addressed the problems of building democracy from both a theoretical and practical point of view with more than 100 of the world's most respected scholars and policy experts.

The Club of Madrid is an independent organization dedicated to strengthening democracy around the world by drawing on the unique experience and resources of its members - democratic former heads of State and Government. In partnership with other organizations and governments that share its democracy-promotion goals, the Club of Madrid provides peer-to-peer counsel, strategic support and technical assistance to leaders and institutions working towards democratic transition and consolidation.

The Club of Madrid's value-added is its membership – currently 66 distinguished former presidents and prime ministers of democratic nations. The Club of Madrid seeks to leverage the first-hand experience of its members to assist leaders and countries with critical elements of democratic transition or consolidation. A distinguished group of scholars, former policy makers and political practitioners provides additional support on a wide range of issues. The Club of Madrid brings three principal resources to its work:

- A unique and extraordinary mix of former Heads of State and Government and leading practitioners and experts in the workings of democratic governance
- A focus committed to democratic transition and consolidation
- Programs with a practical approach and measurable results

The Club of Madrid's President is Ricardo Lagos, former President of Chile. The Secretary General is Spanish Ambassador Fernando Perpiñá-Robert. The Secretariat of the organization is in Madrid, with offices in Brussels and Washington.

Since its creation the Club of Madrid has completed projects at the regional and national level in five continents, with activities in Bolivia, Ecuador, Georgia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Timor-Leste, amongst others. These projects have had the financial backing of various institutions, including the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional* and Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Spain), City and Regional Governments of Madrid, *Corporación Andina de Fomento* (CAF), European Commission, Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, U.S. State Department, UNDP, and the governments of Greece, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden.

CLUB DE MADRID

In March 2005, in commemoration of the terrorist attacks in Madrid the previous year, the Club of Madrid organized an International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security. More than 1,200 leaders participated, amongst them 200 experts; 17 Heads of State and Government; the Secretaries General of the United Nations, NATO, OSCE, and the European Council; the presidents of the European Union's Commission and Parliament; many other leaders from international organizations, and official delegations from more than 70 countries. At the Summit, Club of Madrid members drafted the Madrid Agenda, with practical recommendations on confronting terrorism within a framework of democratic values.

The Club of Madrid's General Assembly and Annual Conference is held annually with the participation of its Members to analyse in-depth an issue relevant to the mandate and objectives of the organization. At its most recent General Assembly (October 2006), members approved a program focus for 2007-2009 on two major global challenges for democracy: 1) Energy and Democratic Leadership; and, 2) Dialogue, Identity and Democratic Development.

In 2007, following the Fifth General Assembly and Annual Conference on "The Challenges of Energy and Democratic Leadership," the Members of the Club of Madrid established a **High Level Task Force on Climate Change** (HLTFCC) which will engage with the G8 process in 2007-2008 to provide critical leadership for the establishment of a framework for international agreement on climate change post-2012. Members also resolved to work on **energy poverty alleviation**, seeking to provide a series of guidelines that will mitigate the drastic effects energy poverty has upon the developing world.

Also this year, the Club of Madrid launches a global program on **Dialogue, Identity and Democratic Development**. The initiative aims to promote and support social cohesion, providing leaders and policy makers with the tools and options to manage diversity towards socially inclusive, shared societies. The program will call on the leadership experience of its members to address issues critical to common understanding, social cohesion and democratic coexistence both within and among societies and nations, including:

A) Democratic Dialogue & Freedom of Association in Middle East/North Africa

B) Women, Political Participation and Leadership

C) Religion, Democratic Leadership, and Intercultural Dialogue

D) Developing Next Generation Political Leadership for Shared Citizenship

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CLUB DE MADRID

Managing Diversity and Dialogue for Shared Societies and Democratic Development

Effective Political Leadership Strategies for Social Cohesion

DRAFT Concept Note

Without social cohesion, a nation is lost - H.E. Ricardo Lagos, CoM President. President of Chile (2000-2006)

Development of effective political leadership strategies for social cohesion, a starting point for the democratic development of societies and nations, is the focus of a major Club of Madrid effort over the next two years. The proposed project –**Managing Diversity and Dialogue for Shared Societies and Democratic Development**: *Effective Political Leadership Strategies for Social Cohesion*– comes in response to a widespread call from leaders for effective policies and practices that will improve social inclusion and increase community dialogue.

Averting cultural conflict in and among nations and communities is an urgent priority for many cities and nations. The program is designed in the belief that societies are most likely to be peaceful, democratic and prosperous when leaders and citizens recognize the value of diversity and actively develop means to work together to build a shared society based on a set of shared goals and common values. The program:

- Responds to leaders who recognize that social inclusion and cohesion are imperative for peaceful, prosperous, democratic development and are looking for policy and leadership advice to instil and promote shared citizenship successfully;
- Highlights the central role of national and local leaders in advancing social cohesion and addresses the potential for governments at all levels to include an office that holds responsibility for fostering social cohesion;
- Offers leaders a "Social Cohesion 'tool box'" of applicable academic research, shared experiences, leadership strategies, best practices and outcomes achieved from which to choose. The tool box will include options on how to design and implement effective, holistic – 'whole government' - strategies that can contribute to improved social cohesion and democratic development.

'You have to be like us!' is an unintelligent and unsustainable National Identity approach. Valuing and respecting difference – as nations proactively develop a new national identity through consensus building around agreed shared value – can provide a hopeful and socially cohesive future. - Rt. Hon. Jenny Shipley, Prime Minister of New Zealand (1997-1999)

Political Leadership

The program will be carried out with partners and through the leadership of Club of Madrid (CoM) members – nearly 70 current and former Presidents and Prime Ministers with a millennium of political leadership experience among them. More than 20 Club of Madrid members are part of a Working Group to steer and participate in the program, including, among others:

Rt. Hon. Kim **Campbell**, Canada
Hon. Lionel **Jospin**, France
Hon. Wim **Kok**, Netherlands
H.E. Ricardo **Lagos**, Chile
Hon. Zlatko **Lagumdzija**, Bosnia
H.E. Jorge **Quiroga**, Bolivia
H.E. Mary **Robinson**, Ireland
Rt. Hon. Jenny **Shipley**, New Zealand
H.E. Hanna **Suchocka**, Poland
H.E. Cassam **Uteem**, Mauritius

The Club of Madrid members will work with leaders to identify existing experiences that have been effective in creating and sustaining social cohesion through dialogue, leadership, and policy and institutional mechanisms. They will design effective leadership strategies for use in situations where securing social cohesion and shared citizenship remains a challenge. The goal is to provide leaders with greater understanding of the incentives and means to enhance social cohesion and with it, democratic development. At the end of our program **a tool box of practical, realistic options will be available from which leaders can seek inspiration, select alternatives and plan future strategies for their nations and cities to best suit their particular circumstances.**

A pragmatic four-step process is envisioned to achieve this:

Step One: 'Tools' Collection - Experts and Members

A group of 6-12 high level experts and members work to establish principles, context, definitions and challenges and then begin to identify and collect options for the social cohesion tool box. The purpose of the tool box is to bring together the best thinking, practises and examples of inspirational leadership and innovative policy options leading to social cohesion for democratic development. These will form a set of 'tools' for social inclusion policy and action.

Current leaders can then choose practical, implementable options that best suit their political, social, economic and cultural circumstances given their own political challenges and realities. This will be done through dedicated research, interviews with (and reports from) members and other leaders, as well as through related programming (see below).

Timeline: May 07 - November 07

Step Two: CoM Members Meeting
filling tool box, peer review, and seal of approval
Convene a number of CoM Members (at least 6-12, including at least two members who are back in high office) with experts, policy makers, IOs (EU, OAS, OSCE, SEGIB, UN), to complete construction of tool box, check contents against political reality, and endorse.

Tentative Date: December 07

Step Three: INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT –
Creating irreversible movement towards leadership for shared citizenship

Modelled on the Club of Madrid's 2005 International Summit on Democracy, Security and Terrorism (http://summit.clubmadrid.org/), this meeting will bring together world leaders to confront one of the most important challenges of our time – that of fostering dialogue and social inclusion to build equitable democratic development and avoid cultural conflict among civilizations. The Summit will convene presidents and prime ministers, experts, policy makers and international organization leaders to agree on principles and a set of tools for social cohesion that will improve democratic development. They will endorse and agree to apply and disseminate the tools wherever they are needed, including making the 'tool box' visible internationally. More than 50 current and former heads of state and government would participate and give voice and political weight to a campaign for shared citizenship.

Date: June 2008. Proposed venue: Slovenia, other EU country or Southern African.

Step Four: Market the Social Cohesion
Tool Box to City and Country leaders world-wide

Following the Summit, the Club of Madrid –through its members– will bring the 'tool box' to international organisations, governments, cities and communities where challenges of cultural division, marginalisation of minorities and a lack of social cohesion persist.

Timeline: 2008-2009. Sites: International Organisations, Governments, cities and communities.

During this entire process, CoM will nourish and validate the central, global program - and check its progress against political reality – through effective programming in four issue areas that are subcomponents of the Program. Through the use of relevant, carefully crafted framing questions, dialogue activities in these projects will provide valuable opportunities to gather information, insights, and examples of effective and workable strategies to improve social inclusion. Challenges in some areas will be relevant for others, and solutions found in some places may be useful to other leaders' efforts for democratic development and social cohesion within and among societies and nations. These related program activities then allow for valuable input to the global program, and provide possibilities for dissemination and multiplier effects:

A) **Democratic Dialogue & Freedom of Association in Middle East/North Africa**
Chairs: Abdulkarim **Al-Eryani**, Yemen; Sadig **Al-Mahd**i, Sudan.
B) **Women, Political Participation and Leadership**
Chairs: Benjamin **Mkapa**, Tanzania; Mary **Robinson**, Ireland.
C) **Religion, Democratic Leadership, and Intercultural Dialogue**
Chairs: Sadig **Al-Mahdi**; Kjell Magne **Bondevik**, Norway; Milan **Kucan**, Slovenia.
D) **Developing Next Generation Political Leadership for Shared Citizenship**
Chairs: Philip **Dimitrov**, Bulgaria; Antonio **Mascarenhas Monteiro**, Cape Verde.

We are already engaged on each of these issues, with approximately €2.2m in funding from the European Commission, the Norwegian Government, and the UN Democracy Fund. Another €400,000-500,000 will be sought to complete funding for the component pieces.

Funding for the global **Effective Political Leadership Strategies for Social Cohesion** program, which ties these four elements together, will be sought from the European Commission, the Norwegian Government, the Summit host government the Alan B. Slifka Foundation and additional partners and donors. The global program has an approximate budget of €3.9m ($5.5 million) – which includes €1.6m for Steps 1-2, plus approximately €2.3m (for the Summit – Step 3 - TBC). The project should bring in revenue during the follow-on (Step 4) phase as IOs, governments, and cities would fund workshops and presentations.

Justification

Cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity within the borders of any nation can be forged into communal interdependence and a shared society or manipulated into inter-communal conflict and destruction. Which path a society chooses is determined in large measure by the political, military, religious, economic, and professional leaders within each country. Leaders must be engaged in a dialogue about their role in building and sustaining societies that embrace coexistence.

The issue of a nation's accommodation of diversity is not a topic of minor consequence. How nations, individually and collectively, approach the issues of social cohesion and

cultural diversity will have implications for political and economic development, human security, social stability, and peace throughout the 21st Century and beyond.

More than ninety percent of all nations in existence today have a minority population of at least ten percent. In any one of these countries, the failure to proactively and positively manage diversity has the potential to produce tangible negative consequences:

- The mismanagement – or outright manipulation – of diversity can play a significant role in the development and escalation of violent conflict.
- Failure to address issues of inequality and intolerance, and to create a sense of shared citizenship, can undermine a nation's economic well-being.
- The failure to recognize and harness the potential strength in diversity can inhibit a country's ability to create credible, effective, sustainable governing institutions that are deemed to be representative of, and responsive to, all citizens – a condition essential to a nation's stability and development.
- The failure of leaders to convince different groups within a society that inclusiveness is a positive social value may seriously inhibit a country's ability to reap the shared benefits of a socially inclusive society, such as overall economic growth, effective social networks, and a more stable and peaceful society.

The most direct threats to a national framework for coexistence and social cohesion are not inter-personal but institutional: the exclusion of groups from the economic life of a country; the proscription of cultural expressions of minorities such as customs or language; inequalities and inequitable treatment related to identity; or the lack of representation or participation of minorities at all levels of governance and in the social networks that are essential to the shared ownership of a national project for development.

The purpose of social cohesion is to avoid having to send the Blue Helmets in
- H.E. Jorge Quiroga, President of Bolivia (2001-2002)

Program Goal and Related Activities

The program's overall goal is to support effective leaders as they seek out strategies that will assist them to implement best practices, and improve the responsiveness of mechanisms and institutions that will assist them to promote intercultural diversity and tolerance in their cities and nations successfully.

The 'Social Cohesion tool box' would provide research, strategies and policy options from around the world as to how majority populations, indigenous minorities or majorities and migrant populations can be seen as a rich source of social, cultural and economic wealth creation rather than a socially divisive force within cities and nations. Our objective is to provide leaders with ideas and strategies they may wish to consider as to how they might enhance the social cohesion between different ethnic and cultural and religious groups, promote democratic development and improve the economic growth and social development of their people.

The Club of Madrid will use a set of framing questions across all our programmes that will also assist us in collecting valuable data, insights and analysis for the further development of and inclusion in the 'Social Cohesion Tool Box'. These programs include:

Democratic Dialogue and Freedom of Association

In February 2007, CoM began a project on democratic dialogue and freedom of association in several Middle East and North African countries, funded by the EC's European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR) and the UN Democracy Fund. This two-year, €1m, project begins in Bahrain, Jordan, and Morocco and will later

share the experience of these countries in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. Focused on Arab countries, this project will allow us to bring together leaders from the Arab world and consolidated democracies in intercultural dialogue on issues critical for democratic participation.

Dialogue activities

February 7	Project Planning Meeting	Cairo*
May 12-14	Plenary Meeting: strategies in 1st target countries	Cordoba*
Jan. 2008	Plenary Meeting: expand to 2nd set, 'multiplier' countries	Amman*
2007-2008	Several missions to six target countries	Various*

Women, Political Participation and Leadership

A project on Women's Political Leadership in Africa also began last month, funded as well by the EC's EIDHR. Target countries are Nigeria and Sierra Leone and a third country to be determined (likely Mauritania, Mozambique or Uganda). This 18-month, €1m project, responds to a call by CoM's General Assembly in Oct. 2005, to focus on women's political participation. In addition to the African project, plans to focus on women and politics elsewhere have already included a seminar with Iranian women leaders in Barcelona, March 12-13, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy. We also hope still to work with recent women candidates from Mauritania, for which we seek funding.

Dialogue Activities

March 12-13	Women's leadership in Iran	Barcelona*
March 25-26	Project planning meeting (AWLP)	Abuja*
June 2008	Final Project Conference	Brussels*
2007-2008	Several missions to three target countries	Various*

Religion, Democratic Leadership and Intercultural Dialogue

The Norwegian Government has granted CoM €300,000 for two DIDD activities. Former Prime Minister Bondevik was instrumental in securing this support and has proposed, through his Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, and with President Khatami's (Iran) International Foundation for Dialogue among Civilisations, a high-level conference on Religion, Democracy and Extremism in Oslo in May 2007, and a further proposed meeting in Tehran in 2008. Several members have put this issue at the top of the priority list.

Dialogue Activities

May 15-16	Religion, Democracy and Extremism	Oslo*
2008	Religion, Democracy and Extremism (II)	Tehran

Developing Next Generation Political Leadership for Shared Citizenship

We plan to follow up on preliminary work begun through the Council of Europe on youth and political leadership, perhaps also with the European Commission and in cooperation with the European Youth Forum. Also, we are discussing with the EC possible collaboration between the Commission and the Club of Madrid in the lead-up to and during the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. This would likely have a large component on youth.

Dialogue Activities

May 26–June 3	EU-Med Youth Parliament	Berlin
Date TBC	Youth, Dialogue, Political Leadership	Dili, Timor*
Summer 2007	Council of Europe: Summer Democracy Univ.	Strasbourg
November 2007	League of Arab States-EU Youth Forum	Cairo
2007-2008	CoM Member participation in CoE political schools	various

*These activities are already budgeted/planned/scheduled as part of ongoing projects.

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MIT CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Audit of the Conventional Wisdom

April 2006
06-07

Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror

Nichole Argo
MIT Center for International Studies

Suicide terror has become a daily news staple. Who are these human bombs, and why are they willing to die in order to kill? Many observers turn to Islam for an explanation. They cite the preponderance of Muslim bombers today, indoctrination by extremist institutions, and the language used in jihadi statements.

But these arguments fall short. At present, bombers are primarily Muslim, but this was not always so. Nor does indoctrination play a strong role in growing today's self-selected global jihad networks. Rather, militants and bombers are propelled by social ties. And even when jihadis use the Qur'an and Sunna to frame their struggle, their justifications for violence are primarily secular and grievance-based.

So what is religion's role? Almost 100 years ago, Emile Durkheim contended that religious ideation is born of sentiment.[1] This is worth considering in the current context. Against the repression, alienation and political helplessness of the Muslim world, jihad speaks of individual dignity and communal power. 'Against the Goliaths,' martrydom says, 'even one bursting body can make a difference.' The Muslim street is buying it, though sometimes ambivalently. To stop the bombers of today and tomorrow, we need to figure out why.

A Different Profile

Suicide attacks have been a prominent tactic in insurgent movements since the 1970s. Then, analysts believed that bombers and their masterminds were irrational, if not crazy, or had given up on life because of desperate circumstances such as poverty, depression, or social failure. However, data that have since been compiled show that suicide attackers come not from the criminal, illiterate, or poor, but from largely secular and educated middle classes.[2] They do not exhibit signs of sociopathy or depression, nor do they appear to have suffered more than their respective populations.[3] Surprisingly, many are volunteers, rather than recruits. There is, in short, no individual-level profile for a suicide bomber. Human bombs are a product of structural, social, and individual interactions.

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Audit

Audit of the Conventional Wisdom

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citation
Nichole Argo. "Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror," MIT Center for International Studies Audit of the Conventional Wisdom, 06-07 (April 2006).

Rather than evince suicidal tendencies—as the term "suicide bombers" connotes—psychological autopsies of past and would-be bombers[4] show many of these individuals to be wholly, even altruistically invested in life.[5] As a result, it is more apt—and less misleading—to refer to these individuals as "human bombs" rather than "suicide bombers."

Why Religion, and Why Not

Since 9/11, the notion that terror is bound to religious extremism has almost become an implicit assumption. This is easy to understand. If bombers were once "normal" people, then religious indoctrination could explain their fanatical behavior. Moreover, the numbers are powerful: 81 percent of suicide attacks since 1968 have occurred after 2001, with 31 out of the 35 organizations responsible being jihadi.[6] Even the London and Bali (II) bombers who acted independently of terror organizations were Muslim. It would be difficult to deny that Islamic inspiration is at work in the motivation and mobilization of rising terror. But how? Inspiration is not causation, and a growing body of data suggests that Islamic indoctrination and belief are not the answer. Below, I audit several arguments commonly offered in support of the religious terror thesis.

1. *Muslims perpetrate most of today's terror, so most terror must be motivated by Islam.*
At present, 31 of 35 organizations perpetrating suicide terror are Muslim. But five years ago, a majority of attacks were carried out by secular rather than religious organizations. Because religion-terror correlations have changed over time, they tell us little about causation. Even if the statistics were stable, it is not possible to infer bomber motivations from organizational charters. Rather than ask who is perpetrating the attacks, we need to ask why.

Here history can help. Martyr missions made their official twentieth-century debut in the Second World War with the Kamikazes; they showed up again in the 1960s, when Viet Cong sympathizers exploded themselves amidst U.S. troops.[7] Their debut in the Islamic world was not until the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq war. Facing a far superior Iraqi military, Ayatollah Khomeini rounded up children by the tens of thousands and sent them in "human waves" to overrun the enemy. While Persians accrued losses in the war against Iraq, the role of the martyr in defensive jihad was exalted. As in U.S. wars, the dead became heroes.

The Iranian example had seismic effects. Lebanese groups appropriated the notion of a martyr's death almost immediately, employing human bombs against Israeli and international presences in Lebanon as early as 1981. Half of the human bombs in Lebanon were perpetrated by secular organizations. The Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka perfected the tactic, becoming the most professional cadre in the world. Human bombs were also used by the Kurdish PKK against Turkey, the Sikhs in India, and the Palestinians against Israel, to name a few.

When we think of suicide bombers, we think of extremism. But the cases above locate the bomber as one popularly supported element in a coherent campaign of resistance against a perceived occupier, and such was true for 95 percent of the bombings prior to 2003.[8] Note that allegiance to resistance appeared to trump allegiance to religion. And most important, for bombers and for the publics that exalted them, the notion of self-sacrifice would not have existed except for the context: a perceived necessity for group defense.

2. *Indoctrination: madrassas, mosques and terror cells manufacture suicide bombers.*
Indoctrination suggests brainwashing. In popular parlance it can happen emotionally, when intense bonds are forged in a cell-like setting, or ideologically, where students are exposed to one rigid view of the world. If such mechanisms have been at work in fomenting global terror, we should see it in the data. Bombers would: a) spend significant time "training" with terror organizations; b) exhibit organizational allegiance, and probably share political views with their mentoring institutions; and c) come disproportionately from extremist madrassas or mosques. Above all, we would expect to locate the genesis of the twenty-first century surge in martyrdom in such institutions. But this is not what we find.

Consider the lack of organizational attachments revealed in a 2003 study of 15 would-be Palestinian bombers in the second intifada. Sixty percent had no prior experience with ter-

ror organizations, much less a history of violence against Israel.[9] Twenty percent started their mission within one week of accepting it, while 80 percent set out on their mission within a month. Indeed, half of them volunteered for missions, while those recruited were usually approached to take on the mission by family or friends. Organizational allegiance was slim: 20 percent originally attempted missions independently, turning to local groups to help them when matériel or logistics became difficult. Three switched organizations when it appeared another group had better capabilities. These numbers, which ran parallel to findings in a similar Israeli government study, suggest that bomber convictions in the second intifada existed with little or no organizational priming. Terror organizations served as facilitators, not indoctrinators. Most bombers came to them through friends, and many times, friends engaged in operations together.

Neither organizational recruitment nor madrassa training figured heavily in former intelligence officer Marc Sageman's 2004 study of 172 members of the global Salafi jihad. Sageman found that discipleship, a kind of mentor-student indoctrination, accounted for only 8 percent of the network. Although the study included networks from Europe, the Mideast, the Maghreb, and Asia, that entire 8 percent came from only two Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and Malaysia.[10]

The remaining network came to jihad informally through kinship and friendship bonds, 20 and 70 percent respectively. Like the Palestinian case, many joined in groups. Importantly, 78 percent of the network joined jihad in a country other than their homeland. Many of them met in mosques—the primary local community centers for Muslims. Alienated and alone, they bonded over a feeling of Muslim victimhood as observed on television and in pictures of wars involving Muslims. Religious devotion did increase for most individuals prior to their missions, but it is difficult to say what that means: growing devotion could be a cause or an effect of engaging the jihadi network.

How does this compare to what we see in Iraq? Little evidence is available, but according to Saudi and Israeli investigations of 154 foreign fighters in Iraq, "The largest group [of foreign fighters] is young kids who see the images [of war] on TV and are reading the stuff on the internet. Or they see the name of a cousin on the list or a guy who belongs to their tribe, and they feel a responsibility to go."[11] This suggests that foreign fighters come self-motivated, ready to sacrifice before funneling themselves into insurgent networks within the country.

What of hate-preaching madrassas throughout the Muslim world? Consider Pakistan, known as a "Jihad U" of sorts, with its ten thousand-plus madrassas, many of them sending students to Afghanistan for the war there. We would expect Pakistan to produce bombers in the early stages of global jihad, but there were only two. Rigid worldviews were not enough to push students to strap on bombs. They needed an emotional impetus. One had existed in Afghanistan; another was with the invasion of Iraq. Images of humiliation and needless death were ubiquitous on television, and in stories from friends and family.[12] By the end of 2004, the number of Pakistani martyrs reached at least 10.[13]

In sum, until 2004 and despite their hate-mongering, religious institutions did not contribute significantly to the rise in global terror.[14] Instead, the empirical data parallel neuroscientific inquiries into how people acquire beliefs: First, emotion and social ties precede acquisition of ideology;[15] second, joining the jihad does not appear to be an explicit decision, but a social and emotional process that happens over time.

"By itself, religious and cultural infringement on Islam was not enough to spur individuals to the risk and sacrifice of jihadi terror."

3. *Terrorists justify their violence with the language of Islam.*
What about Islamic texts and martyr statements? By designating the non-Muslim West as an infidel enemy, do they not endorse a "we hate you for who you are, not what you do" belief? A closer examination of three words—infidel, jihad, and martyr—calls this into question.

Infidel. Abu Bakr Ba'asyir may be the most qualified "zealot" to teach about infidels. As the Emir of Jema'ah Islamiyya in Indonesia (an affiliate of al Qaeda), he is arguably responsible for at least 202 deaths, many from the Bali bombings in October 2002. But he says the logic of jihad is not against non-believers: "There are two types of infidels; the infidel who is against Islam and declares war on Islam is called *kafir harby* [enemy infidel]. The second type is *kafir dhimmi* [protected infidel]. These are people who don't fight against Islam, but don't embrace Islam or remain neutral...As long as other communities don't fight against [us], we won't fight them." Ba'asyir says that the people in power today "do not tolerate [Islam], as in the case of America now which pushes its idea to change Islam with its weapons and dollars."[16]

What does it mean to "fight" against Islam, and is the U.S. guilty? If "fighting" Islam means dictating what is preached in mosques, or disallowing headscarves in France, it was happening long before today. By itself, religious and cultural infringement on Islam was not enough to spur individuals to the risk and sacrifice of jihadi terror.

Rather, it seems that most Muslims, including terrorists, justify defensive jihad in response to violent social injustices. For instance, Osama bin Laden's statements are shrouded in religious references, but he cites the persecution of Islam in communal terms: "Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked."[17] Such are the images and arguments that accompany most bomber wills and videos. Such are the images invoked in polling questions that ask whether Islam is under "threat": moderate Muslims who respond in the affirmative tend to support terror against the West.[18]

Jihad. The Islamic debate over jihad—greater and lesser, collective vs. individual, offensive vs. defensive, and ethical concerns—is too complex to capture here. But most of those joining jihad today have not captured it either. They are not religious scholars, and the jihad that originally appeals to them appeals on the emotional basis of defense. The jihadi narrative solves a pressing emotional problem:

Why are my people dying, or oppressed? What can I do?

In Palestine, psychologist Brian Barber found that adolescent participation in the struggle against occupation is correlated with higher esteem and pro-social in-group behavior, despite its risks and sacrifices.[19] In contrast, unorganized Bosnian Muslim youth studied during the Balkans conflict exhibited lower self-esteem, anti-social behavior, and general feelings of depression. Irrespective of the chances for success, in certain conditions it may be psychologically harder to not act.[20]

We know that suicide bombing and jihad are statistically unlikely where there are civil liberties and constructive political channels for action.[21] That said, even in democratic countries opportunity is a matter of perception. Thus wrote Mohammad Khan before he became the leader of the London bombers, "Our words have no impact upon you. Therefore I'm going to talk to you in language that you will understand. Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood."[22] In short, emotions matter to the creation and embrace of radical beliefs, especially the beliefs worth dying for. "Emotions create new beliefs… [because they] entail an appraisal based on currently salient concerns."[23]

Martyrdom. In Arabic, the root for martyr has two meanings. Westerners know the term in its offensive sense: those who "sacrifice their lives"—often against us—in jihad (*istish'hadiyyin*). But the foundational meaning is "those who are killed by the enemy" (*shuhada*)—often noncombatants, *i.e.,* civilian casualties. The distinction is important because most terrorists and their communities will tell you that in the locale, state or homeland they identify with, *shuhada* (innocent casualties) came before the *istish'hadiyyin* (bombers). Whether or not they agree with the tactic of terror, these populations understand the *istish'hadi* as giving his life for those who fell before, and to prevent those who would fall in the future.

Those who interview terrorists often hear about the role that media images have played in their conclusions that Muslims are threatened. A militant in Gaza once remarked to me about the power of television: "The difference between the first intifada and the second is television. Before, I knew when we were attacked here, or in a nearby camp, but the reality of the attacks everywhere else was not so clear. Now, I cannot get away from Israel—the TV brings them into my living room…And you can't turn the TV off. How could you live with yourself? At the same time, you can't ignore the problem—what are you doing to protect your people? …We live with an internal struggle. Whether you choose to fight or not, every day is this internal struggle."

For all of us, images we view on television prompt two separate processes: affective reactions and cognitive appraisals.[24] We feel the characters onscreen, but the feelings are turned off with an appraisal of reality.[25] If the images were of your group under attack, however, it is highly plausible they would remain salient. We see this in the new terror. Global jihadis, like 78 percent of Sageman's network, often don't come from war zones. Like descriptions of Iraqi foreign fighters, they see images of injustice, have friends or family there, and feel obligated to help.

Sacred Values, Social Networks

Religious beliefs do not simply mold individuals. They exist as "sets of ideas that 'are there,' as if on the shelves of a supermarket waiting for someone to make them their own."[26] Individuals pull them off the shelf when their old frames no longer make sense of the world around them.

If beliefs are not born of sacred texts alone, neither are behaviors like marytrdom. Rather, would-be bombers place jihadi values—fighting for life, dignity, equality—above all else. It is not the commandment that is sacred, but the emotional reward it bestows.

We need to be asking new questions: For what are normal individuals able to kill? A plausible answer is: their community, under threat. When does a person make costly sacrifices to do so? Within a social structure—a terror cell, a military unit, a family, or group of friends—that continually regenerates conviction to a cause, a feeling of obligation to do something about it, and a sense of shame at the idea of letting each other down. Whether one lands in a social group with jihadi tendencies may be random. But the prerequisite for this path is perceived injustice.

Policy Implications

Are we capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?
—Donald Rumsfeld, Internal Memo, National Security Council, 2002

The Bush administration argues that a violent ideology is at the root of terror, and that eradicating it and its believers is the way to a better world. But people aren't joining the jihad because of ideology. It is true that there are radical leaders capitalizing on the emotions of anger and resentment that seethe throughout the Muslim world—but they could not foment something that did not resonate with many normal people. In today's terror mobilization story, demand is as strong as supply. Understanding why this is so is the first step to defusing terror mobilization.

The social networks theory has several implications for policy. First, because commitment to jihad is rarely a cost-benefit decision, or an explicit decision at all, military deterrence will likely fail. Terrorists and insurgents forge loyalties that are difficult to betray, and like our own military units, many would prefer to fight to the death rather than leave their brothers. Second, under urban conditions of asymmetrical engagement, military missions almost inevitably entail civilian casualties. Military leaders must re-conceptualize the effect civilian casualties have on the populations surrounding the terrorist or insurgent. They are frequently interpreted by the population as offensive, and thereby engender an impulse to fight back. As one Palestinian told a reporter: "If we don't fight, we will suffer. If we do fight, we will suffer, but so will they."[27]

Lastly, findings about the way in which people acquire beliefs suggest that a war of ideas will mean nothing unless it resonates emotionally with our targets. Emotional resonance only comes when the values we promote reflect our role in the local realities on foreign ground.

The Audit of Conventional Wisdom

In this series of essays, MIT's Center for International Studies tours the horizon of conventional wisdoms that animate U.S. foreign policy, and put them to the test of data and history. By subjecting particularly well-accepted ideas to close scrutiny, our aim is to re-engage policy and opinion leaders on topics that are too easily passing such scrutiny. We hope that this will lead to further debate and inquiries, with a result we can all agree on: better foreign policies that lead to a more peaceful and prosperous world. Authors in this series are available to the press and policy community. Contact: Amy Tarr (atarr@mit.edu, 617.253.1965).

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MIT Center for International Studies

More than fifty years ago, MIT established the Center for International Studies to conduct research to help the United States in its cold war struggle against the Soviet Union. Before long, the Center broadened its focus to include research and teaching in a wide range of international subjects, among them development studies, comparative politics, international relations, social movements, security studies, and international science and technology. MIT and the Center sought to bridge the worlds of the scholar and the policymaker by offering each a place to exchange perspectives with the other, and by encouraging academics to work on policy-relevant problems. Center scholars, and the students they helped educate, have served at senior levels in every administration since the Kennedy years. They are today among the nation's most distinguished analysts and executives in government and the private sector.

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article footnotes

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Audit of the Conventional Wisdom

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Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror

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Audit

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EXCLUSIVISM, TOLERANCE AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Politicians and policymakers in the West continue to be stunned by the violence committed in God's name that is directed at civilian targets in the US (the 9/11 event) and more recently in Great Britain. They—or some of them at least—have also turned to scholars of religion to assist in analyzing the situation. Indeed understanding the factors that can and do lead some religious people into destructive and evil patterns of behavior must be a high priority on the world's agenda. One of the factors that scholars of religion often, correctly in my view, point out that cause these and also less horrible events is the exclusivist stance towards other religions (or worldviews) endorsed by many religious activists. Moreover, most scholars of religion also seem to agree that people of faith should reject exclusivism. In their writings they frequently try to convince religious people to adopt a different stance towards other religions instead, such as inclusivism or pluralism. Many scholars even think that we should go beyond simple tolerance and celebrate religious diversity and embrace it as a source of strength.

On many of these issues I find myself in agreement with these advocates of a non-exclusivist stance, but I think there is a strong pragmatic reason why we should not reject exclusivism out of hand. Most people would simply not listen to arguments against their exclusivist stance or at any rate see these arguments as unconvincing, especially if the alternatives presented are too distant, so to say, from their original convictions. But we simply have to find ways to live together in peace, despite our different ideologies and faiths. In this essay I shall therefore try to develop a different approach to the matter. The basic idea is that *we as scholars of religion should analyze the resources available within exclusivism itself to deal with religious violence, to support tolerance and even to learn something from the religious other*. If such resources exist, there is a greater chance of persuading religious leaders within the exclusivist camp to adopt more peaceful and non-confrontational views than there is of transforming them into inclusivists or pluralists.

The first thing we must take into account is that there are different forms of exclusivism and that too often scholars of religion have failed to see this in their urgent attempt to combat the position. My thesis is that some of these forms of

exclusivism actually allow interreligious dialogue, a dialogue that we desperately need these days, and it might—as I already pointed out—also prove easier to convince "religious extremists," "religious conservatives" or "orthodox believers" that these are the stances they should adopt towards other religions living in a pluralist society. Exclusivism, at least in some of its forms, therefore needs to be reconsidered in the interreligious dialogue and its resources for mutual understanding and for peaceful coexistence with people of other faiths requires analysis. What I shall do first is distinguish between different forms of exclusivism and second discuss the implications of some of these forms for interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Exclusivism about Truth

Exclusivism has been severely criticized by a number of theologians and philosophers of religion—and especially by those who are engaged in interreligious dialogue. Some of the criticism is justified but not all. However, it is important that we realize that there are different forms of exclusivism and that some of them are more plausible than others, so that we are able to evaluate exclusivism properly and understand its implications for interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Quite frequently it is assumed in the interreligious dialogue literature that exclusivists claim that the beliefs of their religion are true and that the beliefs of other religions are false. Thus Sane M Yagi and A.R. Rasheed maintain in their argument against exclusivism that both Christians and Muslims have "used the same tactic misconstruing the very books they hold dear to substantiate the argument that 'our religion is true and theirs is false'" (Yagi and Rasheed 1997: 5). Adnan Aslan writes, "A religious exclusivism, let us say, an Islamic exclusivism, by definition must rule out the possibility of the occurrence of truth and salvation in other traditions" (Aslan 1998: 103). Wilfred Cantwell Smith claims that

> except at the cost of insensitivity or delinquency, it is morally not possible actually to go out into the world and say to devout, intelligent, fellow human beings: "… we believe that we know God and we are right; you believe that you know God, and you are totally wrong." (Smith 1976: 14).

Hendrik M. Vroom maintains that the "characteristic point of exclusivism … is its holism: if my tradition is true, yours is wholly false; if my tradition knows God, yours does not" (Vroom 2000: 211). Lastly, Paul J. Griffiths writes, with respect to this question about religious truth:

> exclusivists are concerned to emphasize that true religious claims are found only among the doctrines and teachings of the home religion, which is the same as to say that no alien religion has any true claims among its doctrines and teachings. This is the

central exclusivist idea. It amounts to the view that, for whatever reason, the home religion is uniquely privileged with regard to the possession of religious truth. (Griffiths 2001: 53)

In my view, these theologians and philosophers misconstrue exclusivism or at least they do not offer us the most plausible interpretation of this view. That is to say, when exclusivists such as R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips write, "Christianity is uniquely true, and explicit faith in Jesus Christ is a necessary condition for salvation" and "to be saved, a specific confession has to be made, a specific set of truths must be believed," these statements cannot be taken to exclude the possibility of religious truths in other religions (Geivett and Phillips 1995: 235, 243). They certainly believe, at least, that Judaism contains many true beliefs about God and God's revelations, which is, of course, not to deny that some exclusivists adopt holism in the way that Vroom defines it. But the point is that they do not have to do this and, moreover, many of them do not adopt such a view. William Lane Craig, another exclusivist, is in fact quite explicit on this point. He writes, "The orthodox Christian has no reason to think that all the truth claims made by other world religions are false, but only those that are incompatible with Christian truth claims" (Craig 1995: 77).

Hence, exclusivists do not have to deny that other religions contain or could contain true religious beliefs. They only need to think that what is inconsistent with what they believe themselves is false. We can therefore distinguish between a naïve and a broad form of exclusivism.[1]

> *Naïve exclusivism* is the view that only my own religion contains true religious beliefs and consequently that the beliefs of other religions (or of any secular worldview) are false.
> *Broad exclusivism* is the view that the religious beliefs of my own religion are true and consequently, to the extent that beliefs of other religions (or of any secular worldview) are incompatible with those beliefs, they are false.

Naïve exclusivism is naïve because the idea that only my own religion contains true religious beliefs commits its advocates to holding that no beliefs or claims to be found in an alien religion is identical with the beliefs or claims of the advocates' own religion. But a merely superficial acquaintance with other religions makes it obvious for a Christian or a Muslim, for instance, that the others' religion also teach that there is a God, that God is almighty and merciful, that it is wrong to kill other people, that human beings have an intrinsic value and are made in the image of God, that there is life after death and so on. Naïve

[1] The reason for calling it "broad" exclusivism will become clear as we proceed.

exclusivism is therefore a real alternative merely for those believers who, because of social and geographical reasons, are effectively fenced off from people of other faiths and from knowledge about their beliefs and teaching. We can therefore expect that very few Christians or Muslims who live in a religiously pluralistic society, at least after being exposed to this line of reasoning, would say that they are (what I have called) naïve exclusivists.[2] Naïve exclusivism in fact contradicts the Christian view that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God of Jesus the Christ and the Muslim view that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus is also the God of Mohammed.

If they hold on to any form of exclusivism we can rather expect it to be broad exclusivism. They would then not deny that other religions contain or could contain true religious beliefs. Rather, they would merely think that what is inconsistent with what they themselves believe is false. So *pace* Aslan, Islamic exclusivists do not rule out the possibility of the occurrence of truth in other religious traditions. On the contrary, they can affirm that whatever Christians, for instance, believe about God that is not in conflict with what they as Muslims believe is true. What Islamic exclusivists deny is that those Christian beliefs that are incompatible with their own beliefs are true. Hence, they agree with Christians that God has created heaven and earth, but they deny that Jesus Christ is God's son or God incarnated. Jerome Gellman's definition of exclusivism make it plain that at least some of the exclusivists are themselves aware of the distinction between what I call naïve and broad exclusivism. In his defense of exclusivism he writes that we should understand a religious exclusivist as "a person who, in recognition of the diversity of the world's religions, believes that her religion is true, and that other religions are false insofar as they contradict her home religion" (Gellman 2000: 401).

But not only is it so that an exclusivist does not necessarily need to be a naïve exclusivist, he or she does not even have to be a broad exclusivist. The reason is that it is possible, for instance, for Christian exclusivists to think that *not everything* Muslims believe, which contradicts what they themselves believe, is false. I take it that at least some religious believers would want to limit their exclusivism to a core of central claims. What I mean is that it is likely that some of them are aware that their own religious tradition could contain false ideas about God or God's relationship to the world and to human beings. Hence, a Muslim, call him Amir, might notice that Sarah, who is a Christian, believes that "God is eternal." On this matter they both agree. But Sarah also believes that this means that God exists in time like persons and things, but, unlike the others, God's existence has neither beginning nor end. Amir, on the

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[2] This is something of which Griffiths (2001: 54), in contrast to Yagi, Rasheed, Aslan and Vroom, is well aware.

other hand, believes that God actually exists outside of time altogether. On such a view God does not experience the world's history as we do but experiences it all at once in a simultaneous present. On this issue Amir might admit that Sarah could very well be right and he himself wrong. But Amir also believes that "Muhammad is God's last prophet" and that "Allah wanted to give humankind a revelation (the Qur'an) through Muhammad that corrected all previous distortions and which cannot itself be distorted." Amir may consider these beliefs to be central to his religion and he also may know that Sarah and other Christians do not share these beliefs. Nevertheless, he still thinks that on these particular issues he is right and Sarah and other Christians are wrong.

Thus, we must make a distinction between broad exclusivism, which means that the exclusivists believe that all of their religious convictions are true and "limited exclusivism," which means that the exclusivists think that at least the central tenets of their religion are true. More exactly, we can define it as follows.

> *Limited exclusivism* is the view that the central beliefs of my own religion are true and consequently to the extent that the beliefs of other religions (or of any secular worldview) are incompatible with those beliefs they are false.

Alvin Plantinga is a good example of someone who endorses this kind of limited exclusivism. He writes, "the exclusivist holds that the tenets or some of the tenets of one religion—Christianity let's say—are in fact true" (Plantinga 1995: 194). In his case this means that he at least believes that the following claims are true:

> (1) The world was created by God, an almighty, all-knowing, and perfectly good being … and (2) Human beings require salvation, and God has provided a unique way of salvation through the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of his divine son. (Plantinga 1995: 192)

Consequently, Plantinga believes that any propositions that are incompatible with these propositions are false.

Exclusivism about Salvation

The forms of exclusivism we have considered so far are all forms of exclusivism about religious truths. But, as Yagi and Rasheed and many others point out, exclusivism has often to do with a particular view about salvation (Yagi and Rasheed 1997: 6-8). *Exclusivism about truth* should therefore, it seems, be distinguished from *exclusivism about salvation*, what we might call "salvific exclusivism." According to salvific exclusivists, the path to salvation, liberation or enlightenment is found in only one particular religion. There are perhaps truths in other religions, but only one religion provides the way to God or

whatever else the aim of the religion is taken to be. A Christian who holds this view might think that only those who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and trust in him explicitly can be saved. A Muslim of a similar type would instead believe that it is necessary that one confess that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet and that one be willing to live in accordance to the teaching of the Qur'an, in order to obtain life in the hereafter. The way set forth by the prophet Muhammad is the one and only way to God.

Nevertheless, it is not appropriate to define salvific exclusivism in the way Yagi and Rasheed do. They write, "Exclusivism is used here to refer to the attitude of keeping out members of other religious communities from the redemption, justification and salvation accorded to the adherents of their faith" (Yagi and Rasheed 1997: 6). This is not appropriate because salvific exclusivists typically have no intention of preventing other people from obtaining salvation. Rather, they want everyone to become a Christian or a Muslim or to adopt the particular religion that is believed to offer salvific success. To see this more clearly one should consider the following analogy. Suppose Peter believes that the only water to be found in the desert is at place *X* and Peter disagrees with John who thinks that there are a number of different springs in the desert. If this is what Peter believes then it could not be said that Peter is keeping others from having access to the water. That would be the case only if Peter fenced off the water and threatened to kill people who did not belong to his tribe. Thus, if salvific exclusivists did not allow others access to their own religion, they would hold the view Yagi and Rasheed describe. But since Christian and Islamic exclusivists, in particular, do not subscribe to such a view, Yagi's and Rasheed's definition ought to be rejected. Instead, I propose the following definition:

> *Salvific exclusivism* is the view that only one's own religion's path to salvation, liberation or enlightenment is efficient and actually leads to God, the Sacred, *Nirvana* or whatever the ultimate goal of religion is taken to be.

The idea is that if people want to be cured of their "spiritual sickness" (their sin or disobedience against God, ignorance of Brahman, etc.) there is only one cure —one efficient path of salvation—and it is to be found in one and only one of the religions of the world, namely the believer's own religion.

Salvific exclusivism should be distinguished from the *cognitive* forms of exclusivism we have identified so far (naïve, broad and limited exclusivism) because it is possible, for instance, to claim that only my own religion offers a successful path to salvation but to deny that (a) only it contains true religious beliefs or that (b) any religious teaching that is incompatible with the teaching of one's own religion is false. The only thing that salvific exclusivists are

bound to believe is the religious claim that "only my own religion's path to salvation is valid" together with all the assumptions that this claim in its turn presupposes to be true.

Exclusivism about Rationality

I suggest that what is characteristic for many exclusivists is that they think that at least the central tenets of their religion are true and that other religious (or secular) beliefs are false insofar as they contradict these central tenets and—this is the most essential element—that people can be saved, liberated or enlightened only by explicitly being committed to the exclusivists' own religion.

Nevertheless a stronger claim open to an exclusivist is to maintain not only that these things are true but that it is also irrational to believe something else. Thus in addition to *exclusivism about truth* and *exclusivism about salvation*, we have *exclusivism about rationality*. The latter comes in at least two versions.

> *Strong exclusivism* is the view that it rarely, if ever, is rational for people to believe that any other religion than the exclusivists' own can offer a valid path to salvation or can contain central tenets that are true.
> *Weak exclusivism* is the view that it can often be rational for people to believe that a religion other than the exclusivists' own can offer a valid path to salvation or that the central tenets of this other religion are true.

Aslan questions, however, the possibility of being a weak exclusivist. He writes:

> A religious exclusivism, let us say, an Islamic exclusivism, by definition must rule out the possibility of the occurrence of truth and salvation in other traditions. That is to say, an Islamic exclusivism, instead of endorsing that other religions can have the same right, by definition must invalidate any other religion's religious exclusivism. (Aslan 1998: 103)

There are at least two ways to interpret this claim. On the one hand, it can be read as if Aslan maintains that exclusivists cannot consistently claim that their religious beliefs are true and that other people with different beliefs have the right to claim that their beliefs are true. But this is incorrect because "claiming that one's beliefs are true" does not entail "claiming that I am the only one who has the right to maintain that my beliefs are true." It only entails, as we have seen, the claim that "other beliefs are false in so far as they are incompatible with my beliefs." On the other hand, the idea might be that if one believes that only the central tenets of one's own religion are true then that precludes one from accepting that it is rational to subscribe to any another religious faith. The claims of a religious exclusivist *qua* exclusivist must in this sense invalidate any other religion's exclusivism. Therefore one cannot be a weak exclusivist.

John Hick argues in a similar way. He claims that

> we [cannot] reasonably claim that our own form of religious experience, together with that of the tradition to which we are a part, is veridical whilst others are not. We can of course claim this; and indeed virtually every religious tradition has done so .... [But] persons living within other traditions ... are equally justified in trusting their own distinctive religious experience and in forming their beliefs on the basis of it. (Hick 1989: 235)

It follows that if one thinks that it is rational for others to believe that the central tenets of their religion are true, then one cannot reasonably believe that only the central tenets of one's own religion are true.

However, this cannot be right. Suppose I told my wife before she leaves our house that I am going to the office, but for some reason I decide to stay home. I know that my belief that I am at home is true, but that does not prevent me from thinking (rightly so) that my wife is rational in believing that I am at the office even though this belief is false. This is possible because truth is not a necessary condition for rationality. What a person believes may be rational but false or irrational but true. Rationality is a person-relative notion in a way that truth is not.[3] Thus an exclusivist might very well affirm that it is rational for many people to take their religious experiences as veridical and the beliefs they form on the basis of these experiences to be true but nevertheless reject the veridicality or truth of these experience and beliefs and the same goes, of course, for an atheist or an agnostic. This would be akin to admitting that it was rational two thousand years ago for people to believe that the earth was flat but that this belief nevertheless was and still is false. Therefore, it is possible to be a weak exclusivist.

But note that exclusivism about rationality does not merely apply to exclusivists but to inclusivists and pluralists as well. Hick writes that "the only reason for treating one's tradition differently from others is the very human, but not very cogent, reason that it is one's own!" (Hick 1989: 235). Arguing along these lines, one could maintain that it is not rational to believe anything else than that all world religions are equally true or offer equally valid paths to salvation, liberation or enlightenment; in this way one would exclude the possibility of adopting religious exclusivism and inclusivism as rational stances with regard to the religious diversity encountered by many people today. Thus, a *strong pluralist* is roughly someone who maintains that it is rarely, if ever, rational for people to believe anything other than that all the world religions are veridical or true. In contrast, *weak pluralists* hold that it could often be rational

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[3] See Stenmark 1995 for a discussion on the nature of rationality and the relationship between truth and rationality.

for people to embrace religious exclusivism or inclusivism, although they believe these positions to be mistaken.

Exclusivism and Absolute Truth Claims

Charles Kimball identifies a form of exclusivism as one of the five factors he maintains can and do lead people of faith into destruction and evil patterns of behavior. It is a form in which exclusivists make *absolute truth claims*. He talks about a "rigid exclusivism" and writes: "When zealous and devout adherents elevate the teachings and beliefs of their tradition to the level of *absolute* truth claims, they open a door to the possibility that their religion will become evil" (Kimball 2002: 28, 44). Kimball affirms that truth claims are essential ingredients of religion, but he insists that "authentic religious truth claims are never as inflexible and exclusive as zealous adherents insist" (Kimball 2002: 41). Kimball is not arguing against exclusivism *per se* (Kimball 2002: 46), but he identifies the need for fixed stars, for certainty, for religious claims rigidly fixed and uncritically appropriated as absolute truths as an important cause of conflicts and violence in the world. His worry is not that exclusivists make truth claims but that they make *absolute* true claims.

It is not quite clear what he means by absolute truth claims, but I suggest that we take "absolute" to indicate the certainty and the unquestionable way in which these exclusivists hold on to their beliefs or claims. If this is correct, a different kind of exclusivism than those we have hitherto considered can be distinguished on the basis of how *firmly* religious people hold on to their religious beliefs.

This is also true in general. People hold some of their beliefs more firmly than others. I am more certain that I had breakfast this morning than that I will be alive in 2020. I believe more firmly that people have intrinsic value than that other living things on this planet have intrinsic value. In a similar way one can believe with a higher level of epistemic confidence that God exists than that the Bible or the Qur'an is God's word or that God is love than that God is omnipotent. Hence, we can talk about different degrees of epistemic confidence or strength of belief.

Sometimes we mark our epistemic confidence or strength of belief with certain words. We say that something is "necessarily" the case or "certainly," "undoubtedly," "evidently," "probably," "presumably," "maybe" or "possibly" the case. I suggest that we think that everything we believe can be indexed on a scale where one extreme consists of those beliefs we hold with maximal confidence and the other by those that we hold with minimal confidence

What worries Kimball are exclusivists who hold their exclusivism with maximal or almost maximal confidence. We could call this kind of exclusivism "absolute exclusivism." What characterizes absolute exclusivists is that it looks like nothing whatsoever can count against what they believe or at least that they see no need to listen to other people's views on this issue. Hence,

> *absolute exclusivism* is the view that one is completely certain—beyond a shadow of doubt—that (a) only my own religion contains true religious beliefs, (b) the religious beliefs of my own religion are true, (c) the central beliefs of my own religion are true or that (d) only my own religion's path to salvation is valid.

But of course exclusivists do not have to make absolute truth claims; they can limit themselves to making "mere" truth claims (perhaps even tentative truth claims). That is to say, they could admit that it is possible, perhaps even quite likely, that they could be wrong, but that they still believe that their exclusivism is correct. In a similar way I might be convinced that Paul is telling the truth about his father but simultaneously realize that I could be wrong and that some things even seem to point in that direction. We could call this kind of exclusivism "non-absolute exclusivism." In fact there is a variety of different possibilities as we move on the scale from maximal towards minimal epistemic confidence.

Let me here merely identify what I shall call "full exclusivism" and "tentative exclusivism" as two possibilities. What characterizes *tentative exclusivists* is that they take their religious exclusivism to be true and let it influence their beliefs and behavior but are interested in investigating it further. Perhaps one could say that they treat their view as a working hypothesis that has to be further confirmed, but they believe it to be superior to any alternative view. *Full exclusivists* take their religious exclusivism to be true and let it influence their beliefs and behavior but think that there is no need to investigate it further or no need to doubt its credibility. They are aware that they could be wrong but consider the case closed, at least for now. The distinction between tentative and full conviction could be applied to inclusivists and pluralists as well as to religious exclusivists. It is possible, for example, to meet religious exclusivists who are less convinced that they are right than some pluralists; exclusivists who would be less surprised that they were wrong than the pluralists. Thinking about my own studies and the students I have had, I can recall discussions between students who were tentative religious exclusivists and those who were full pluralists. But, of course, the opposite has been much more common!

The possibility that the degree of epistemic conviction varies among exclusivists as well as among inclusivists and pluralists makes it necessary to distinguish between at least two axes when we try to locate religious people's cog-

nitive stance towards other faiths. One axis has naïve exclusivism as one extreme and broad pluralism (the view that all religions offer equally valid paths to salvation) as the other. On this axis we can find, for instance, limited exclusivism, inclusivism, and limited pluralism (the view that at least the so-called world religions offer equally valid paths to salvation) as interim positions. The other axis has absolute epistemic confidence as one extreme, full epistemic confidence as one interim possibility and tentative epistemic confidence as the other extreme. Perhaps the weakest form of tentative confidence or acceptance would be analogous to Louis P. Pojman's concept "faith as hope," where hope involves belief in the possibility of a state of affairs obtaining (Pojman 1991: 188). Applied to our case, a pluralist of this kind, for instance, would accept pluralism in the sense of hoping (but not really believing) that it is true that all world religions offers equally valid paths to salvation.

The Implications for Tolerance and Interreligious Dialogue

Let us now consider the implications of these different forms of exclusivism for interreligious dialogue and tolerance. What resources are there within exclusivism itself to deal with religious violence, to support peaceful cooperation and even to grant the possibility that its advocates can learn something from the religious other?

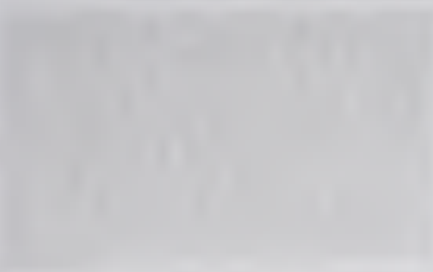
One of the most problematic form of exclusivism (that is, if we—as I indeed do—wish for peace in the world, tolerance and cooperation between people of different ideologies and faiths) is clearly one in which its advocates make absolute truth claims and at the same time assume that their religious tradition is completely true and others are wholly false. In short, a warning sign that serious trouble may lurk just ahead is when people embrace a form of exclusivism that, in my terminology, is both absolute and naïve. But it may be worthwhile pointing out, as I have already suggested, that exclusivists do not need to embrace naïve exclusivism because it commits its advocates to deny that the beliefs or claims to be found in any alien religion are identical to the beliefs or claims of the advocates' own religion. Merely a superficial acquaintance with other religions makes is obvious that they share common beliefs and values.

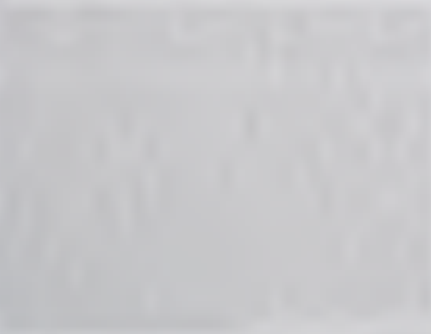
More problematic is perhaps convincing these people that their exclusivism should not be absolute: that there are good reasons to be less than maximally certain that every one of one's religious beliefs is true. One argument would run roughly as follows. Suppose that everyone in my neighborhood shares with me a certain belief, for instance, that Paris is situated in France or that it is summer now in France on June 25. In such a situation it must not be permitted even to think that one could be wrong but, rather, to take what one believes as obviously and unquestionably true. But I maintain that a rational person's conviction that what he or she believes true ought to be affected in such a way that

its strength decreases to some extent, if many other apparently reasonable and honest people happen to believe something quite different. Suppose that I believe a certain thing about my grandmother, but when I talk about it with my parents and my sister it turns out that they do not share my view. Or suppose that in conversation with my colleagues, I express some of my political ideas, but it turns out that many of them have a very different opinion. In both cases it would be peculiar if I did not let this difference of opinion affect my attitude to my beliefs, at least in the sense that I realize that what I believe is not obviously or unquestionably true. The same I believe to be true for religious practitioners. I therefore suggest that we should accept that *in a situation where we meet many other apparently reasonable and honest people who happen to believe something other than we do, this should affect the strength with which we hold on to our belief at least in such a way that we realize that there is a real chance that we actually could be wrong*. So, it seems reasonable at least in a situation of religious diversity that this strength-of-belief-principle should also guide exclusivists.

But does a weakening of one's exclusivist stance really make any significant difference? I think so. Suppose I am out walking in the street and meet a person who prevents me from going any further. He explains that just behind him there is an invisible abyss. I shake my head and keep walking. If he tries to stop me, I first tell him to move out of the way and, if that does not work, I perhaps simply push him aside so that I can keep on walking. What I maintain is that my way of treating this man is strongly affected by the fact that I can hardly imagine that I am wrong and he is right. This assumption justifies my way of treating him. In other words, we have a justified tendency to ignore fools and sometimes even take the liberty of locking them up. We also often assume that we know better than they what is in their interest and that even in cases when they object. My suggestion is that it is likely that things are similar with respect to religion. The way religious activists treat other people and what they believe is strongly influenced by whether they assume that it is almost totally out of the question that these other people could be right and they could be wrong. But the strength-of-belief-principle I propose blocks the possibility in a pluralistic culture of treating (even if one does not say this) other people of another faith or people who are secular as "fools" or as "not quite right in the head" or something similar, thereby justifying the view that one does not need to respect those people and what they believe.

Even if this argument fails to convince the religious activists, the danger of absolute exclusivism (that is if the goal is peaceful cooperation and respect between people of different faiths) is still reduced if they abandon naïve ex-





clusivism and embrace broad or narrow exclusivism instead.[4] This is so because broad exclusivism entails that alien religions might well contain true religious beliefs. A particular religion could even contain a great number of true religious beliefs. The only condition that must be satisfied is that they are not incompatible with the exclusivists' own religious beliefs. Limited exclusivism even makes it possible that alien religions could contain true religious beliefs even if they are incompatible with some of the exclusivists' own religious beliefs, as long as these beliefs do not contradict the central tenets of the home religion. But this means that there are forms of exclusivism that permit a genuine interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding because limited exclusivists cannot exclude the possibility that there could be things of significance to be learned from people of other faiths. (One enters, in my understanding at least, into a genuine dialogue only if one assumes that it possible to learn something from the other person.) Here there is room, in a dialogue or an encounter with the religious others, not merely to tell them important religious truths but also to learn something new of religious significance from the others —even if it might contradict some of the teaching of the home religion.

Griffiths makes a distinction between open and closed inclusivism that is very helpful on these issues (Griffiths 2001: 59). Given my (but not his) definition of exclusivism, it can be applied to exclusivism as well. We could say that:

> Exclusivism is *closed* if it entails that one's own religion teaches all the religious truths which are knowable by human beings, even if some of these might be found in other religions as well.
> Exclusivism is *open* if it permits the possibility that religious truths might be found in other religions that are not yet known or fully understood by one's own religion.

Religious believers who adopt closed exclusivism assume that they have nothing to learn of significance from people of other religions since their religion already teaches all truths that people of other faiths could possibly know. For this reason there is no need to get to know other religions, other then perhaps as a means to successful missionary work. On this view, as Griffiths writes, the "impulse to study the particulars of what alien religions teach will therefore not be encouraged and may be seriously called into question ...." (Griffiths 2001: 59). Open exclusivism, on the other hand, grants the possibility that something of religious significance could be learned by studying the particulars of alien religions. Christians, for instance, might think that God's universal presence and God's desire that all people should come to know and love God make it possible—perhaps likely—that people of other faiths know some truths about

[4] Other arguments have been offered in Basinger 2002: 11-27 and McKim 2001: 138-53.

God. It is possible at least that some of these are not known to Christians because they typically have not considered the particular church to which they belong as explicitly teaching *all* the religious truths that are knowable by human beings.

Hence, people who adopt limited exclusivism can, because it is compatible with open exclusivism, be a part of a genuine interreligious dialogue. They are prepared to allow the possibility that they can learn something important from people of other religions and therefore people of other faiths cannot be ignored or disrespected. Here we have found grounds within exclusivism itself for tolerance and even mutual understanding of "the religious other."

It could be objected that no known exclusivist today accept open exclusivism. Although that is true, it is worth pointing out that even if exclusivists like Craig, Gellman and Plantinga do not embrace open exclusivism, their understanding of the exclusivist stance is still compatible with it. Thus it is possible for exclusivists of their kind to move in this direction. This supports my general thesis that there are resources (admittedly undetected) within exclusivism itself for learning something from the religious other and to become a partner in a genuine interreligious dialogue.

Another rejoinder might be that open exclusivism looks a lot like inclusivism. There are, of course, a number of ways of defining inclusivism and also different forms of inclusivism and there is no space here to go into that discussion. But let us briefly look at two definitions. Griffiths writes that inclusivists "think that while belonging to the home religion is advantageous for salvation, belonging to an alien religion may sometimes suffice." (Griffiths 2001: xv). Joseph Runzo maintains that

> Religious Inclusivists jointly hold two theses: That other religions convey part of the truth about Ultimate Reality and the relation of humanity to Ultimate reality, but that only one's own tradition most fully provides an understanding of Ultimate reality, and most adequately provides a path to salvation. (Runzo 1988: 348).

However, inclusivists do not also have to believe that religious truths might be found in other religions that are not yet known or fully understood by their own religion. These definitions do not entail such extra claim. So both exclusivists and inclusivists can embrace an open stance but neither of them must to do so.

More needs of course to be said, but what I have offered is a first sketch of the possibility that there actually are resources within an exclusivist stance to deal with religious violence, to support tolerance and even to learn something from "the religious other." Here we perhaps can find some hope for a brighter future.

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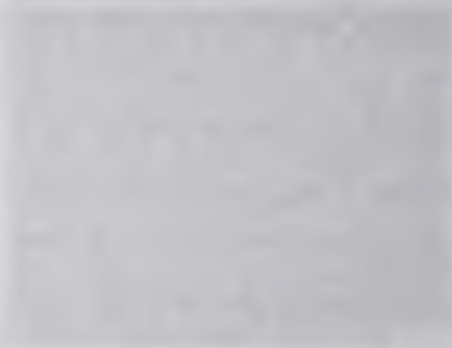
GEORG EVERS

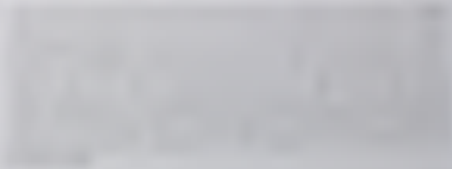
TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Interreligious Dialogue in Stormy Waters

At the time of writing this overview on developments in the field of interreligious dialogue, the armed struggle between Israel and the Hizballah—with Israeli troops bombing and attacking villages and cities in Lebanon and the Hizballah firing rockets into northern Israel—had just been halted by a shaky cease-fire. In Sri Lanka the civil war between Singhalese and Tamils, which is not only an ethnic conflict but also in some ways a conflict between Buddhists and Hindus, has been resumed with fierce fighting and severe loss of life after several years of trying to turn a cease-fire into a permanent peace agreement between the different ethnic and religious groups in the country. In Europe and the USA the plans of Islamist terrorists to explode bombs in planes flying from the United Kingdom to the United States had caused shock and anxiety. In Teheran the exhibition of a caricature competition on the theme of the Holocaust had just opened. This competition had been instigated by the Iranian President Ahmadinedjad, who had challenged "artists" to show by means of their work that the Holocaust never happened and was nothing more than an invention by the Zionists and their partners. In Poso, Indonesia, three Catholics convicted on charges of murder in the conflict between Catholics and Muslims were awaiting execution by firing squad amidst calls for clemency from religious leaders such as Pope Benedict XVI and others. In Germany a plot to explode two bombs in commuter trains failed due to some fault in the detonator, and the primary suspect, a Muslim student from Lebanon, who was said to be part of an Islamist cell operating in Germany, was arrested.

The overall picture and outlook on interreligious co-existence is, therefore, rather bleak and the prophets of a more or less inevitable "clash of civilisations" seem to be gaining the upper hand. The acts of violence committed in the name of religion have, undoubtedly, increased in recent years. Also on the increase is the attention of the mass media, which are only too eager to report on terrorist attacks wherever they occur. This sharpened attention has the effect that, for the general public, an impression is created that terrorism is advancing rapidly, a development that has the boomerang effect of encouraging would-be terrorists to plan new attacks, because they can thus profit from the publicity their acts will receive in the mass media.





There is, however, another side to the story of religious pluralism and the way people react to the fact that different religions co-exist. There are a few countries in the world where only one religious tradition is the determining factor in society, but in most societies today people of different faiths and cultural as well religious traditions co-exist and are faced with the task of developing new forms of harmonious co-existence in accepting and respecting the differences of diverse traditions and customs.

The present article intends to show some of the difficulties encountered in this process by describing some incidences of conflicts based on religious differences. But at the time it takes a greater effort to collect examples of initiatives of intelligent and creative charting of new paths in the field of interreligious harmony, dialogue and encounter.

Commemorating 40 Years of Nostra Aetate*: A Sign of Hope?*

In recent months several conferences were held and articles written commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II declaration on the "Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." Among the many activities surrounding this event, the international conference held in Rome, September 25-28, 2005, can be considered to have been exemplary in the way it reaffirmed the new approach of the Catholic Church to other religions that had started within with *Nostra Aetate*. The conference was jointly organised by the Gregorian University (Rome), Georgetown University, Catholic Theological Union (Chicago), Boston College and Sacred Heart University (Fairfield). The emphasis of the conference was on Jewish-Christian relations, thus echoing the focus of *Nostra Aetate*, a fact deplored by some who would have liked a greater participation by members of other religions. The contributors highlighted the continued significance of *Nostra Aetate*, even if its "inclusivist" position was said to have become somewhat of a burden, because it has been proved to be deficient for serving as a good theological basis for dialogue. One of the positive results of the new orientation of the Catholic Church towards other religions and their traditions has been the movement of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, which has led in recent decades to numerous and continued encounters between Christian nuns and monks with their Buddhist and Hindu counterparts, deepening insights into the nature and spirituality of monasticism in these traditions. The conference also recalled the strong impetus the late Pope John Paul II had given to interreligious dialogue through his many activities and personal encounters during his long pontificate. The seminal encounter in Assisi in October 1986, where representatives of the world's religions met to pray for peace, has given a strong impetus to interreligious dialogue, which has been continued up to the present by the Community of Sant' Egidio which regularly organises the series on International Peace Prayer. The latest of these conferences was held in April 2006 in Washington and attend-

ed by many religious leaders, politicians and young people from different traditions, countries and ethnic groups.

Right from the beginning of his pontificate, Benedict XVI has made interreligious dialogue—together with ecumenism—one of the primary tasks of his pontificate. In March 2006 Benedict XVI asked cardinals from all over the world for their views on the Church's dialogue with Islam. The answers he received reflected the different situations in which Christians and Muslims are encountering each other in countries all over the world. There was, however, agreement that the Catholic church should continue to be "constructive and positive in approaching Muslims" (Cardinal Toppo of Ranchi, India), while at the same time insisting on "reciprocity" in securing the same basic religious freedom for Christians as minorities in Muslim countries that Muslims as religious minorities enjoy in the West (Cardinal Sodano).

In November 2005 Benedict XVI asserted, in a message for an interfaith meeting between Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in Istanbul, Turkey, that "interreligious dialogue is clearly indispensable to overcome confrontation as well as harmful conflicts and tensions between cultures and ethnic groups." The pope reaffirmed his strong commitment "to work tirelessly for cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions." Benedict XVI was officially invited to visit Turkey, an invitation which he accepted and plans to realise late in 2006.

The implications of the reorganisation of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) which was integrated "for the time being" with the Pontifical Council for Culture still have to be seen. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, who had headed the PCID, was named Apostolic Nuncio to the Arab Republic of Egypt, while Cardinal Paul Poupard became president of the new organisation. One might speculate why the PCID was merged with the Pontifical Council for Culture, rather than with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In most national bishops' conferences in Asia e.g. we find commissions for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, as is also the case with the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) which has an Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA). Should one conclude that by integrating interreligious dialogue into the office for culture, non-Christian religions are seen more as "cultural" than truly "religious" phenomena, in line with the description in the document *Dominus Jesus*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on August 6, 2000 under the leadership of the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, today Pope Benedict XVI?

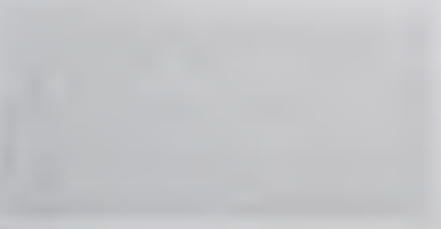
Controversy on Caricatures Depicting Prophet Muhammad

In September 2005 a Danish newspaper published caricatures depicting Prophet Muhammad as an active supporter of terrorist violence. It took some time before

local Muslim organisations reacted and demanded apologies, first from the publishers and later from the Danish government. After a few months, the issue of these caricatures escalated and became a matter of international controversy in several Muslim countries. In Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and in the Palestinian Territory protest demonstrations were held and demands made to boycott products from Denmark. When, in some European countries such as Norway, France and Germany, the caricatures were reprinted, the protests and boycott demands were extended to include these countries as well. The whole issue had many similarities to the affair surrounding the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, which resulted in a *fatwa* being issued by Ayatolah Khomeinei calling for Rushdie's death. The issues at stake in this affair have to do, on the one hand, with the different understanding of the freedom of expression and of the press in the West and in most Muslim countries. The protesting Muslims are convinced that the state authority is entitled and obliged to control the press and to stop publications from violating the religious feelings of Muslims. Failing to do so is interpreted as endorsing such damaging publications. In the West it is agreed that the press should avoid offending believers, but, if it happens, the seriousness of the offence needs to evaluated and balanced against the high value attributed to the right of free expression in literary and artistic publications. The other issue, which is probably more important, has to do with the general question of whether the religious rules forbidding Muslims to depict the image of the Prophet Muhammad have to be respected globally by non-Muslims as well. In countries and secular societies where Muslims co-exist with members of other faiths and where they constitute small minorities, Muslims cannot expect that the rules of the Shari'ah will be respected by people belonging to other religions or no religion whatsoever. It is already a problem in Muslim countries where the Shari'ah laws are in force, that the application of these laws and regulations is often extended to non-Muslims as well.

The End of Multiculturalism?

In the Netherlands, France, Denmark and other European countries we find a growing realisation that the present forms of multicultural co-existence, which have been propagated for a long time by the media, intellectuals and politicians, have come to an end. The dream or ideal of a new form of a multicultural society was shaken and destroyed by acts of violence, such as the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Van Gogh, the revolts erupting in the suburbs in France, the terrorist attacks in the USA, the UK and in Spain, and the affair concerning the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in Denmark. What was it exactly that came to an end? Was it the phenomenon called "multiculturalism," that is, a program that envisaged creating a new form of society where people of different cultural and religious background were living and working together in ways hitherto unknown and of a totally new quality? Looked at closely, one soon comes to realise that most of the slogans, the projects and the rhetoric connected with multiculturalism were

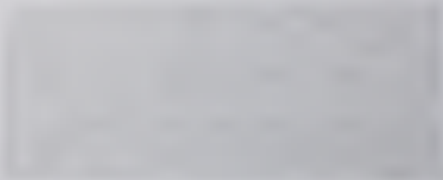


not much more than wishful thinking and make-believe. Defenders of the idea of multiculturalism were often people who belonged to the intelligentsia and who were not grounded in any cultural tradition. Their idea of multiculturalism consisted rather in a patchwork culture drawing on elements from Europe as well as from outside, mostly from the Muslim world but also from other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and others.

Muslim Leaders Critical of Jihadists

More and more often Muslim leaders make statements criticizing radical Muslims who have committed acts of violence in the name of Islam. They contradict the attempts of these terrorists to justify their use of violence against the enemies of Islam by claiming to have acted in full accordance with Muslim religious traditions. These Muslim leaders insist, on the contrary, that, according to Islamic teaching, the use of armed force is justified only when defending the Muslim community against attacks, and that indiscriminate acts of violence against non-combatant innocent civilians are never permitted. When in June 2006 a group of Islamic terrorists was apprehended and taken into custody in Canada the supreme Muslim body of the country welcomed the arrests and admonished all Muslims living in the country to abide by Islamic law and to refrain from all acts of violence. Earlier, King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan had published a statement in a special edition of *Newsweek* in December 2005, in which he calls the position of Muslim extremists, advocating the indiscriminate use of force in fighting enemies of Islam, a distortion of true Islamic traditions and teachings. King Abdullah makes it clear that to hold this position there is no need to "reform" Islam's fundamental doctrines but that a "reaffirmation" of the principal teachings of Islam is entailed, which always excluded the killing of innocent civilians "in the name of God." King Abdullah points out the similarities Islam has in common with Judaism and Christianity, namely the two basic principles of "loving God" and "loving one's neighbour as yourself." The principles of traditional Islam concur with the best of Western traditions and condemn terrorism, forbid aggression in the name of religion and respect other religions.

It was widely noted and acknowledged when the Mufti Abdal Aziz Al Scheich, the highest authority of Islam in Saudi Arabia, clearly condemned terrorism committed in the name of Islam in a sermon directed at the two million pilgrims during the festival of sacrifice (Id al Adha) at the end of the Haj in 2006. It was the first time that such a clear condemnation was made by an authority of the Wahhabi Islam in Saudi Arabia which often has been accused of having fostered the growth of radical Islam in the past. Mufti Abdal Aziz accused the terrorists of having committed great crimes against Islam, because their deeds have had the effect of making the concept of "terrorism" almost exclusively synonymous with the religion of Islam. The strong and clear condemnation of Islamic terrorism by the *mufti* was weakened, however, when he accused "the West" of waging a war



against Islam under the pretext of combatting terrorism, an attitude that the Mufti put on a par with the terrorist activities of Muslim terrorists.

Can Suicide Bombers be Called Martyrs?

There is obviously an urgent need within the Muslim world to redefine critically the concept of "martyrdom" (*shahid*). This term has been somewhat hijacked by Islamist and jihadist extremists for describing the suicide bombers who indiscriminately kill and maim people in trains, aeroplanes or shopping mails. When Tantawi, the Sheikh of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, condemned suicide bombings in a *fatwa* as incompatible with Muslim teachings and tradition, which strictly forbids suicide in any form, he was accused by radical Muslims of having betrayed Islam. Tantawi himself watered down his seemingly categorical condemnation of such acts by pointing out the desperate situations in which many youth in, for example, the Gaza strip have to live and which explain, if not justify, the terrorist activities, including suicide bombings, that they commit.

In November 2005 various Muslim organisations in Indonesia, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council and the mass organisations of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah explained in a joint statement the true meaning of *jihad* and condemned terrorist activities and suicide bombings as violating basic Islamic principles. Nahdlatul Ulama, the country's largest Muslim organisation, instructed all its boarding schools (*pesantren*) as well as its affiliated groups to explain to the public that terrorism is not a legitimate form of *jihad*. This statement was qualified, however, by adding that *jihad* is acceptable only in war-torn regions, where Muslims are evicted from their homeland, as in Palestine, but not in Indonesia which is a peaceful state. Prior to this statement there had been a public condemnation of the renewed bombings in Bali on October 1, 2005, by Buddhist, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Confucian and Taoist religious leaders. In response to these terrorist attacks, the religious leaders launched an Anti-Terrorist National Movement to improve mutual trust among different faiths.

Summit of Religions in Moscow, July 3-5, 2006

From July 3 to July 5, 2006, some 200 leaders of the world's religions from forty countries met in Moscow to discuss common problems that afflict contemporary society today—such as terrorism, extremism and intolerance, drug trafficking, as well as dialogue between civilisations, the protection and promotion of the family and respect for religious differences as well as ecological responsibility. This gathering of Orthodox metropolitans, Roman Catholic cardinals, Islamic *muftis*, Buddhist monks, Jewish rabbis and Shinto priests was organised by the Russian Orthodox Church with the official support by the Russian government as part of the preparation for the G-8 summit that was held July 15-17 in St. Petersburg. During the opening ceremony, the Russian President Vladimir Putin promised that

the results of the conference would be introduced into the agenda of the meeting of the world's most powerful leaders later. Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow, who acted as official host of the conference, expressed the hope that the assembled religious leaders would formulate a common approach for addressing the problems that at present disrupt the peaceful co-existence of people of different cultural and religious affinities. Ayotollah Ali-Tashiri from Iran, speaking on behalf of the Muslim delegates, called for finding common denominators for exploring new ways for religions to co-operate with one another in the cause of peace and understanding and in combatting terrorism, a sickness that can be healed only by stressing the common moral values in all religions. Chief Rabbi Jonah Metzger, representing the Jewish delegation, also condemned terrorism by stressing that killing in the name of God and religion must never be allowed. The Chief Patriarch of the Buddhists in Cambodia, Tep Vong, declared that Buddhist monks, faithful to the teaching of the Buddha, condemn terrorism and all forms of violence in the name of religion. The Vatican was represented by a very high-level delegation, led by Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Ecumenism, and included Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the newly established joint Pontificial Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Culture, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, and Bishop Joseph Werth, President of the Russian Episcopal Conference. The delegation from the People's Republic of China was led by Ye Xiaowen, the director of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs who supported the aim of the summit of religious leaders. Ye Xiaowen introduced, however, the controversial topic of the religious and political situation in Tibet, when he expressed his satisfaction that the Dalai Lama was denied entry into Russia and thus excluded from the meeting, accusing the Dalai Lama of using his religious status for dissident activities against his country. After having met with Patriarch Alexy II during the conference on July 6, Ye Xiaowen announced in a more conciliatory gesture that the Russian Orthodox Church will be given permission to build a church in Beijing and will shortly be officially recognised by the Chinese government.

The conference concluded with a joint message from Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Shintoists, in which the religious leaders demanded an end to the constant increase of opposition between people, with violence, cruelty and terrorism. Every religion has a mission to remind the world of the imperishability of the moral values that each religion and confession professes. Furthermore, they postulated that interreligious dialogue should be maintained by religious leaders and experts and enriched by the contributions of ordinary believers.

Interreligious Dialogue at the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 14-23, 2006

Looking back on the assembly of the WCC held in February 2006 in Porto Alegre, Hans Ucko, the secretary of the Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue, concluded on a rather positive note by stating:

> Interreligious dialogue is now more than ever an expression of Council's essential identity, engaging in the world, diffusing tensions, peacemaking, protecting human dignity and the rights of religious minorities. The Policy Reference Committee appreciated the strong reaffirmation of this work of the council outlined in the reports of the Moderator and the General Secretary. It concurs that forming and deepening constructive, respectful, intentional relationships with others in this pluralistic world is one of the most important efforts the WCC can model for its ecumenical partners and for member churches at the international and grassroots levels.

Already prior to the assembly a working paper "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" was jointly prepared by the three WCC commissions, Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, and Interreligious Relations and Dialogue. This unprecedented co-operation within the WCC underlined the importance of interreligious dialogue as an issue that touches on multiple programme areas and thus constitutes a topic to which all activities within the WCC can and have to contribute. The working paper on "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" set the tone of the discussions during the assembly but was not intended to be officially adopted by the members, which, given its theological open stance would have been difficult, if not impossible. The assembly passed a more modest "Minutes on Mutual Respect, Responsibility and Dialogue with People of Other Faiths" which acknowledges the need to foster respectful dialogue and co-operation among people of different faith traditions while touching on different specific problem areas, such as the political abuse of religion, violations of human rights, racism, the caste issue, xenophobia, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the like, all of which are rather practical and not theological in their nature. The ecclesiological diversity of the membership churches of the WCC makes it very difficult to formulate common theological responses to the phenomenon of religious plurality that are acceptable for all. After all, the WCC has to find ways of presenting the issue of interreligious dialogue to its 348 member churches in such a way that the many different theological strands within these various traditions can live with the challenge marked by religious plurality as a permanent reality in the global world of today. At the assembly "guests of other faiths" were present and invited to contribute to the discussion on interreligious relationships and dialogue entitled "Religious Plurality is Embraced and Feared," focussing on religious plurality as an unprecedented challenge to Christians in most parts of the world.

Interreligious Consultation on "Conversion: Assessing the Reality," Lariano, May 12-16, 2006

The consultation on "Conversion: Assessing the Reality", held May 12-16, 2006, in Lariano, Italy, was organised jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue of the WCC. It brought together 27 people from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the Yoruba religion. In the past, the topic of "conversion" has been a bone of contention and a recurring obstacle for dialogue and peaceful relations among members of different religions. Only recently in April 2006, there was the case of Abul Rahman, who, as an Afghan refugee, had converted to Christianity while living in Germany. On his return to Afghanistan, he was arrested in Kabul and accused of apostasy. Rahman escaped being condemned to the death only through the intervention of the United States, the Vatican and other Western countries. The court case against him was suppressed when he was declared to be mentally unfit for trial, while the court upheld the legitimacy of invoking the death penalty for all mentally sane and responsible Muslims committing the offence of apostasy. Also in 2006, there was the case of a Muslim woman in Malaysia who converted to Christianity and whose conversion was not acknowledged by the Malaysian government, because all Malay people are considered to be Muslim according to the regulations issued by the government. In India and in other Asian countries the fact of people converting from one religion to another is often viewed with suspicion and alleged to be induced by the promise of material gains or other opportunities directly connected with the fact of conversion.

The meeting in Lariono, however, was held in an atmosphere of cordiality, mutual respect and commitment to learn from one another's spiritual heritage, which together constitute the common inheritance of the entire humankind. The problem of conversion was put in the context of interreligious dialogue which all participants agreed is necessary and useful and should be expanded in the present globalising world to promote peace, harmony and conflict solutions, especially because religions have often been misused to shed blood, spread bigotry and expound divisive and discriminatory practices. To the nature of interreligious dialogue belongs the readiness to take on controversial or sensitive matters, because avoiding them would impair genuine dialogue and lasting understanding. Exchange in the spirit of true dialogue can enlighten and deepen common understanding, even on the most controversial issues. The participants of the consultation were aware that the problem of religious conversion constitutes one of these controversial issues and, therefore, rarely or never has been made the topic of an international interfaith conference before. After the consultation the participants agreed that

> our own comprehensive deliberations during the five days on religious conversion in its theological as well historical and contemporary contexts have testified to the value and

usefulness of sharing our reflection on an issue which is often the cause of misunderstanding and tension among communities in many parts of the world.

Many differences and disagreements remained at the end of the consultation, starting already with the definition of what "conversion" denotes and signifies. There was agreement to continue interreligious dialogue as a means to meet the many challenges before humankind today. That religious freedom is a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of every human being and consists in the freedom to practice one's religion, to propagate its teachings and also to embrace another faith out of one's own free choice. The freedom to propagate one's religion should be exercised without violating other's rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion includes the responsibility to respect other faiths and not to denigrate or vilify them. The participants acknowledged that in the past errors have been committed by the adherents of every faith which should lead to self-criticism and necessary reforms. As regards conversion such a reform would include refraining from the use of all "un-ethical" means when propagating one's religion. This also implies that in social and humanitarian activities ulterior motives of conversion should be excluded and no advantage should be taken of vulnerable sections in society, such as children and the disabled. A further reform should include the need to be sensitive to the religious language and theological concepts used in different faith traditions to avoid misunderstandings and to better appreciate the values in the faith of others.

Interreligious Activities in Asian Countries

International interreligious activities are still rather rare events in the People's Republic of China. In April 2006 such an event took place in Hangzhou when more than eighty Buddhist monks and scholars from thirty countries met for the "World Buddhist Forum," jointly organised by the Buddhist Association of China and the China Religious Culture Communication Association. The main theme of the conference was harmony. The conference prepared a final statement that called on Buddhists around the world to strive for a state of harmony in which families are in concord, society in harmony and the world is peaceful. To commemorate the four-day assembly the participants went to Mount Putuo, a famous Buddhist site, where, in a solemn ceremony attended by many monks and the public, they engraved the "Putuoshan Declaration" in stone. The event was later attacked on the internet by members of Falun Gong who objected that the conference as a government-sponsored event was not representative of true Buddhism.

In South Korea, the Catholic Committee for the Reconciliation of Korean People organised a seminar on "North Korea's Religious Terrain" in June 2006 to explore together with Protestant and Buddhist religious leaders the impact South Korean religious groups have had in influencing the religious situation in North Korea. For several years, different religious groups have tried to establish contacts with

fellow believers in North Korea and to assist in their efforts to establish some forms of religious institutions. The many aid activities by religious organisations to alleviate hunger and depravation in North Korea have led to a general improvement of the image of religions in the Communist country. Contacts have been established with the official religious bodies recognised by the North Korean government. But there is an unknown number of Christian and Buddhist believers who refuse to co-operate with the religious organisations recognised by the government, preferring to live in underground structures. The conference participants agreed that in working with believers in North Korea prudence and sensitivity are needed. Sectarian competition and arrogance would lead to deepening the existing divisions between south and north.

On the occasion of the Buddhist feast Vesak, which fell this year on May 5, the highest representative of the Jogye Order, Venerable Jikwan, visited a Catholic social centre in Seoul and made a monetary donation in appreciation of the work done there by Caritas for orphaned babies. Cardinal Nicholas Jeong Jin-Suk was present to receive the high-level Buddhist visitor who congratulated Nicholas Jeong on his recent appointment as the second Korean cardinal and at the same time expressed his conviction that Buddhists and Catholics have common religious sentiments. Cardinal Jeong noted the significance of the visit by the Buddhist head monk, which showed that the relations between the Catholic Church and Buddhism in Korea have improved considerably.

To make interreligious dialogue meaningful and practicable for people on the grassroots level, the centre of the Consolata Missionaries in Bucheon near Seoul has started a series of activities aimed at bringing young Christians and Buddhists together for the purpose of exploring together some elements in their religious traditions. The first of these activities was a meeting in November 2005, when a group of twelve Catholic laypeople spent a few days in a Buddhist temple, exchanging experiences on how they try to put their faith into everyday practice. Others activities for laypeople are planned in an effort to prepare young laypeople to enter into dialogue with people of other religious traditions in an informal and personal way.

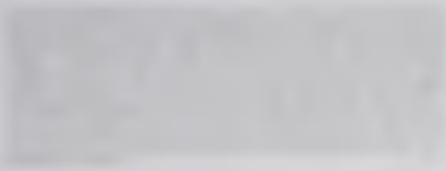
In Indonesia, tensions between the majority Muslim population and the minority groups of Christians and Hindus have been growing and led to a number of incidents of arson, murder and other forms of violence. To counter these adverse tendencies, leaders from five religions gathered on January 27, 2006, in Makassar (Sulawesi Island) to pray for unity and peace. This form of interreligious prayer was started in 1999 after Christians and Muslims had engaged in heavy fighting. This year the prayer meeting was held for the first time in a building belonging to one religion, in this case the hall of the Makassar Catholic diocese, in order to facilitate mutual visits in one another's religious buildings.

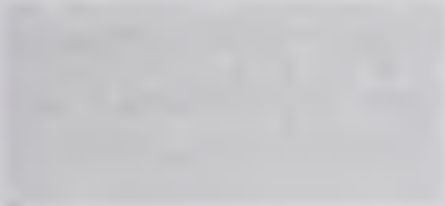
On a more informal level, closer to the grassroots, was a meeting of forty young people of different religious backgrounds from several conflict areas in Indonesia, who met in Denpassar, Bali, in March 2006 for a two-week "Bali Peacebuilding Course," which was jointly organised by the Bali Protestant Church and Allan Walker College (Australia). The course consisted in learning skills and strategies for peace-building, non-violence and reconciliation, and included visits to different religious communities and case studies. Public lectures on the theme of national integrity and harmony among members of different faiths were held, among others, by former Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri and former vice-president Try Sutrisno.

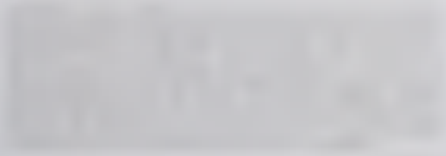
On May 15, 2006, about 2,500 young people from different faiths came together to pray for peace in Manado in North Sulawesi. The event was organised by the recently established "Youth Forum of North Sulawesi." At the closing session the young people pledged to promote peace and tolerance among the different religious communities. Another similar meeting was held on May 23, 2006, in Purwakarta in West Java, bringing together Muslim and Christian young people who are committed to building interreligious and inter-ethnic harmony and to making pluralism an asset rather than a cause for conflict. When former president Abdurrahman Wahid was speaking, he was interrupted by some radical young Muslims and police were needed to re-establish order. This event showed that dialogue and tolerance are values not necessarily shared by everyone but are to be achieved by a long process of mutually listening to one another with patience and understanding.

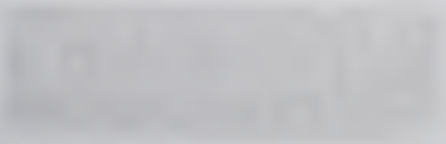
That there is a general readiness among Indonesian people to assist one another beyond the boundaries of religious and ethnic belonging becomes obvious, when natural calamities such as earthquakes and floods occur. In the wake of the devastations wrought by the earthquake that hit Yogyakarta and Central Java on May 27, hundreds of Javanese of different religious affiliations joined a march of silent meditation and prayer. The marchers were Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics and Protestants, Hindus and followers of Javanese mysticism. The march was organised by the Fraternal Forum of Religious Believers of Yogyakarta and the Committee of Humanity of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta.

In the Philippines about 200 religious leaders from fifteen countries in Asia and Oceania met for three days in Lapulapu City in March 2006 for the "Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith Cooperation for Peace Development and Human Dignity." In a final statement the delegates postulated that value-based interfaith education should be included in the curricula at all levels, including postgraduate studies and the non-formal education for youth and adults. They further recommended that media organisations should engage experts from various religions to train journalism students in the field of religious and cultural diversity.









For many years the Silsilah Dialogue Movement, based in Zamboanga in the Philippines, has insisted that efforts in interreligious dialogue and understanding must be based on a spirituality of dialogue. In this context, praying for peace and understanding among religions has a special place in a spirituality of dialogue. For some time Silsilah has been advocating a chain of prayer for peace, called "Harmony Chain," which invites people to commit themselves to a specific time to pray daily for peace, individually or in groups, and to remain faithful to this commitment. The ideas behind this initiative are summarised in the word HOPE which is used as an acronym for: H = hospitality in giving space to others in one's heart; O = openness to people of other cultures and religions; P = prayer for peace and understanding; E = experience in living in a spirit of dialogue with people of other cultures and religions.

In recent years, incidents of religiously motivated violence have increased in Thailand. These developments prompted about forty religious leaders from Buddhism, Christianity and Islam to meet on February 24, 2006, in Bangkok to discuss the topic "The Role of Religious Followers in the Crisis of Ethics in Leadership," organised by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Avoiding direct references to current political events, the seminar focussed on the failings in the political leadership of Thailand since becoming a constitutional monarchy in 1932. The participants stressed the prophetic role religious leaders have to play to ensure that political life respects ethical standards when fostering economic growth and welfare. The participants called on all political groups to adhere to political ethical principles such as non-violence, tolerance and respect for diversity.

On March 20, 2006, another interreligious meeting was organised by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture in Bangkok, which brought together Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh representatives for a seminar entitled "Interreligious Dialogue for Unity" on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession to the throne. All religious leaders stressed the important role religions can and must play in preserving national unity and to ensuring that ethical standards are observed in political life.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in violence against religious minorities in India, often supported by politicians of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wherever they are in power. In the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh Christians have gained increased acceptance and support by members of political opposition parties following acts of violence aimed at them by radical Hindu groups. In February 2006 a group of opposition political parties established a "National Secular Forum" (*Rashtriya Secular Munch*) to oppose the sectarian politics of the ruling BJP and to demand protection for the Christian minority. On February 26, 2006, the forum held a public meeting in Bhopal, the state capital, in protest against the policy of the BJP to gain political power through communal polarisa-

tion, which had led to sixteen incidents against Christians in the first two months of 2006 alone. Archbishop Pascal Topno of Bhopal welcomed the unprecedented support, which was especially significant because the political parties took the initiative without any request from the church.

In another example of interreligious co-operation in combatting violence against religious minorities hundreds of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians set out for a peace march of 2.5 kilometres to the state's legislative assembly building in Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. The marchers presented a memorandum to Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje in which they accused the government of abetting the violent attacks against religious minorities, notably against Christians and demanded a change of policies as well as government officials who had neglected their duties in failing to stop the violence.

In Bangladesh, 1,500 representatives and leaders of the four major religions issued a call for tolerance and unity at the country's first national interreligious convention, held on February 15, 2006, in Dhaka, organised by the Council for Interfaith Harmony. Speeches were made by the different religious leaders, all of whom urged greater tolerance, co-operation, and respect of religious diversity. The meeting was also addressed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who invited the religious leaders to join in the common national task of eradicating poverty and to bring positive changes in education, health and women's development.

In another interfaith meeting about thirty representatives of the four main religions in Bangladesh met for a workshop in Dhaka on October 12, 2005, to outline concrete plans to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. There was agreement that respecting the differences of the various religious traditions in the field of medical ethics there was ample room to co-operate and to co-ordinate the efforts undertaken by different religious bodies to help AIDS patients and to work towards preventing the spread of the disease.

In Pakistan, about 140 Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh representatives and religious leaders met on June 21, 2006, in Lahore for a conference "Interfaith Dialogue: Past, Present and Future." The participants agreed that all religions represented at the conference condemned violence and that, based on their principles, peaceful co-operation and mutual respect should be seen as a common task and challenge. Concretely, the participants demanded that the government provide textbooks for all school types in which the basic tenets of the different religions in Pakistan should be presented in a fair and objective manner. In a resolution the participants asked the government to repeal all laws that discriminate on the basis of religion, gender and territory.

On May 9, 2006, the ecumenical Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi organised a "Peace and Religion" seminar in Peshawar which was attended by 150 Christians, Hindus and Muslims. The seminar was held against the backdrop of increased violence against Christians and attacks on church property in the last few years after US-led action in Afghanistan and Iraq. Muslim religious and political leaders asserted that Islam is a religion of peace and does not condone the use of violence in the name of religion. The director of the Christian Study Centre, however, held the government responsible for the increase in violence in society through legislation, the police and security forces and urged the government to provide equal rights for all citizens and repeal discriminatory laws.

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Report of the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations

(Extracts that refer to the role of religion and the importance of interfaith dialogue)

2.8 Religion is an increasingly important dimension of many societies and a significant source of values for individuals. It can play a critical role in promoting an appreciation of other cultures, religions, and ways of life to help build harmony among them. (p.6)

Emergence of Extremism

3.8 The exploitation of religion by ideologues intent on swaying people to their causes has led to the misguided perception that religion itself is a root cause of intercultural conflict. It is therefore essential to dispel misapprehensions and to give an objective and informed appraisal of the role of religion in modern day politics. Indeed, a symbiotic relationship may be emerging between religion and politics in our time, each influencing the other. As an example from the past, the seemingly secular colonial enterprise of the 'civilizing mission' or the nineteenth century conviction of 'manifest destiny' in reality had deep religious roots. Conversely, the overtly religious platforms of some contemporary movements conceal political ambitions that appropriate religion for ideological ends. (p.9)

3.9 From the mid-nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, many intellectual and political elites assumed that modernization would extinguish religion's vitality. As people became wealthier, enjoyed greater political freedom, and attained higher levels of education, the argument went, secularization and secularism as a legal and political principle would also advance, relegating religion to a much less significant role in world events. But in recent decades almost every major world religion has challenged this assumption, and has established a role in politics. There is increasing support in some societies for a greater role for religion in public life. Most express this desire in peaceable ways, persisting in a world that many view to be increasingly hostile to faith. But a tiny proportion of religiously motivated groups worldwide take part in acts of violence. (p.9)

3.10 At this juncture, it is important to clarify our understanding of certain commonly used terms. "Fundamentalism" is a Western term coined by Protestant Christians which is not readily applicable to other communities. It is frequently used to describe movements which are disturbed by the marginalization of religion in secular society and seek to reinstate its central role. Even though all these movements are in fact highly innovative and even unorthodox, they often call for a return to the roots of religious tradition and a literal adherence to basic texts and principles irrespective of historical factors. Notwithstanding the imprecision with which the term is used, what is important to note here is that such movements exist across most faith traditions. Moreover, they are not inherently violent. What is common to them is a deep disappointment with and fear of secular modernity, which many of them have experienced as invasive, amoral, and devoid of deeper meaning.
Extremism, on the other hand, advocates radical measures in pursuit of political goals. It is not, by nature, religious, and can also be found in secular movements. In some cases, fundamentalist and extremist ideologies can be used to justify acts of violence and even terrorist attacks on civilians. (p.9)

3.11 It is imperative to recognize that none of the world religions condones or approves the killing of innocents. All promote the ideals of compassion, justice and respect for the dignity of life. However, in a wide range of recent conflicts in many parts of the world religion has been exploited to justify intolerance, violence and even the taking of life. Recently, a considerable number of acts of violence and terrorism have been committed by radical groups on the fringes of Muslim societies. Because of these actions, Islam is being perceived by some as an inherently violent religion. Assertions to this effect are at best manifestly incorrect and at worst maliciously motivated. They deepen divides and reinforce the dangerous mutual animosity among societies. (p.10)

Historical Narratives

4.2 Notwithstanding historical periods of tension and confrontation between adherents of the three major monotheistic religions – conflicts which themselves were often more political than religious in nature – it is important to note that peaceful co-existence, beneficial trade and reciprocal learning have

been hallmarks of relations between Christianity, Islam and Judaism from their earliest period until today. During medieval times, Islamic civilization was a major source of innovation, knowledge acquisition, and scientific advancement that contributed to the emergence of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in Europe.
Historically, under Muslim rule, Jews and Christians were largely free to practice their faiths. Many rose to high political positions and Jews in particular took refuge in Muslim empires at different times in history to escape discrimination and persecution. Similarly, in recent centuries, political, scientific, cultural, and technological developments in the West have influenced many aspects of life in Muslim societies and many Muslims have sought to immigrate to Western nations in part for the political freedoms and economic opportunities found there. (p.11)

Relations Between Societies of Western and Muslim Countries
4.3 Selective accounts of ancient history are used by radical movements to paint an ominous portrait of historically distinct and mutually exclusive faith communities destined for confrontation. Such distorted historical narratives must be countered. More important for the purposes of this report is the fact that this history does not offer explanations for current conflicts or for the rise in hostility between Western and Muslim societies.
On the contrary, the roots of these phenomena lie in developments that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, beginning with European imperialism, the resulting emergence of anti-colonial movements, and the legacy of the confrontations between them. (p.11-12)

4.14 In some cases, self-proclaimed religious figures have capitalized on a popular desire for religious guidance to advocate narrow, distorted interpretations of Islamic teachings. Such figures misportray certain practices, such as honor killings, corporal punishment, and oppression of women as religious requirements. These practices are not only in contravention of internationally-agreed human rights standards, but, in the eyes of respected Muslim scholars, have no religious foundation. Such scholars have demonstrated that a sound reading of Islamic scriptures and history would lead to the eradication and not the perpetuation of these practices. (p.14)

4.18 For many Muslims, the only perceived successes in shaking off occupation or political domination by Western countries over the past thirty years have been those led by religiopolitical-military movements and non-state actors. The ability of such groups, which are perceived to be militarily, economically, and politically overwhelmed by Western nations, to succeed through asymmetric warfare in resisting invasion and occupation, generates feelings of solidarity and support. Fear of Western domination is so acute and widespread that support for resistance movements exists even among some who do not share the broader political or religious ideologies of these groups, or who are concerned about what the long-term effect of their ascendance might be on political and social liberties. It is therefore not surprising that among the most alienated and frustrated segments of Muslim societies where feelings of powerlessness and victimization are most acute, the revolutionary rhetoric of the most radical religio-military movements find some traction and support. (p.15)

p.17- 18 *Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

Main fields of action
6.5 *Global and cross-cultural education*: Nations with increasingly multi-religious and multiethnic populations must recognize the need for more inclusive education about the world and its peoples. In the past few decades, many prominent universities and research centers around the world have been advancing efforts to develop "world history" or "history of humanity" programs with multi-polar approaches. Growing efforts to teach interdisciplinary world history in colleges and schools contribute to developing knowledge and appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of global cultures, and to building a sense of shared human experience. (p.26)

6.6 *Exchange programs, particularly at the post-graduate level and in the sciences:* Recent experience has shown that exchange programs at the scientific level – i.e. involving postgraduate students and professors – can have wide-ranging impact. Not only do they help to overcome cultural misunderstandings, but they also contribute to the transfer of knowledge which is a key factor in the

promotion of development. Significant progress would be achieved by ensuring that exchange programs include a greater degree of reciprocity so as to ensure an increase in North to South flows of scientific exchange and knowledge transfer. (p.26)

6.8 *Education and religion:* The right to choose and practice one's faith without coercion is enshrined in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and within most religious traditions. Education systems, including religious schools, must provide students with an understanding and respect for the diverse religious beliefs, practices and cultures in the world. Not only citizens and religious leaders but the whole society needs a basic understanding of religious traditions other than their own and the core teachings of compassion that are common to all religions. (p.26)

6.13 *Exchange programs:* Youth exchange is an effective method for overcoming cultural barriers, enhancing intercultural awareness and fostering individual development. There is an urgent need to dramatically scale up youth exchange programs between young people of different cultural backgrounds - drawing on the successful models and lessons learned from the European and the Euro-Mediterranean experiences11 and with particular emphasis on exchanges between Western and Muslim countries. (p.27)

6.24 *How the media shape our views:* The media in all its forms holds the potential to serve as a bridge between cultures and societies. The frequently stated goal of the media is to inform and educate viewers and readers. Yet, some of the strongest pressures in today's world – political control and market forces – hamper the production of both quality news and entertainment programming that present a well-balanced portrayal of foreign cultures. Increased access of Muslim populations to news produced by Muslim sources has raised popular awareness of events in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. News that highlights the victimization of fellow Muslims fosters public sympathy and solidarity. In the West, an appreciably more nationalistic and at times anti-Muslim tone has become evident in news and commentary, especially since the events of 11 September 2001. (p.30-31)

Source: http://www.unaoc.org/repository/HLG_Report.pdf

UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF CONCERNED ABOUT TREATMENT OF FOLLOWERS OF BAHA'I FAITH IN IRAN

20 March 2006

The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, made the following statement today:

"The Special Rapporteur is highly concerned by information she has received concerning the treatment of members of the Baha'i community in Iran.

A confidential letter sent on 29 October 2005 by the Chairman of the Command Headquarters of the Armed Forces in Iran to a number of governmental agencies has been brought to the attention of the Special Rapporteur. The letter, which is addressed to the Ministry of Information, the Revolutionary Guard and the Police Force, states that the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, had instructed the Command Headquarters to identify persons who adhere to the Baha'i faith and monitor their activities. The letter goes on to request the recipients to, in a highly confidential manner, collect any and all information about members of the Baha'i faith.

The Special Rapporteur is apprehensive about the initiative to monitor the activities of individuals merely because they adhere to a religion that differs from the state religion. She considers that such monitoring constitutes an impermissible and unacceptable interference with the rights of members of religious minorities. She also expresses concern that the information gained as a result of such monitoring will be used as a basis for the increased persecution of, and discrimination against, members of the Baha'i faith, in violation of international standards.

The Baha'i community has an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 adherents throughout Iran. However, members of the Baha'i community are not recognized as a religious minority in the country and do not have the right to practice their religion. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities in Iran, and has long been concerned by the systematic discrimination against members of the Baha'i community. Since taking up the mandate in July 2004, the Special Rapporteur has intervened with the Government on a number of occasions regarding the treatment of the Baha'i community.

The Special Rapporteur is concerned that this latest development indicates that the situation with regard to religious minorities in Iran is, in fact, deteriorating. She takes this opportunity to emphasize that the fact that a religion is recognized as a state religion must not result in any discrimination against adherents to other religions. She calls on the Government of Iran to refrain from categorizing individuals according to their religion and to ensure that members of all religious minorities are free to hold and practise their religious beliefs, without discrimination or fear".

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Iran: Amnesty International seeking clarification of official letter about Baha'i minority

Amnesty International is seeking information from the Iranian government about a letter which calls for government ministries and the Republican Guard to compile information and report to the Armed Forces Command on the activities of adherents of the Baha'i faith (also referred to as Babism), an unrecognized religious minority in Iran, and the authorities' intentions if they are compiling data relating to members of one of Iran's minority religious communities.

The letter, dated 29 October 2005, purportedly was written by the Chairman of the Armed Forces Command, Major General Seyyed Hossein Firuzabadi acting on instructions from Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The letter directs the Ministry of Information and the Commanders of the Army, Police and Revolutionary Guards, among others, to provide information to the Armed Forces Command as it has been "given the mission to acquire a comprehensive and complete report of all the activities of [Baha'is and Babists] for the purpose of identifying all the individuals of these misguided sects".

As an independent non-governmental organization that works throughout the world for the protection and promotion of universal human rights, Amnesty International is greatly concerned when it receives information about steps taken or being considered by governments against racial, religious or other minorities or vulnerable groups or which suggest that discriminatory measures or other actions which would violate human rights are being contemplated. Amnesty International has been concerned for many years about violations of human rights committed against Baha'is in Iran and was therefore particularly concerned to learn of this letter and has taken steps to seek clarification about it. Amnesty International wrote to Major General Firuzabadi and those named as intended recipients of the letter in mid-May 2006 but, to date, has not received any response.

Baha'is and members of other religious minorities have suffered extensive persecution in the past. Many Baha'is were executed amid the political convulsions which occurred in the early years after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979, and they and other religious minorities continue to be subject to widespread discrimination and recurrent bouts of repression at the hands of the authorities. Most recently, 54 Baha'is were arrested in Shiraz on 19 May 2006 while engaged in teaching underprivileged children, for which they had official permission. Most were released by 26 May; the remaining three were released on 14 June 2006. None was formally charged but all risk facing unspecified charges in the future.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the letter referred to above should contact the Iran Research Team at the International Secretariat on +44-20-7413-5500.

THE INDEPENDENT

Iran's Jews struggle in the shadow of Holocaust denials

By Angus McDowall in Tehran

Published: 22 May 2006

When Ciamak Morsathegh chose to take up a position as the medical boss of Sapir hospital, he did not regret the "big opportunities" he was giving up in an already high-flying career. "This hospital is part of our identity as Jews," he says. "It is the practical point of interaction between us and non-Jews in Iran. We help anybody. We don't ask them their religion."

The pictures on opposite walls in Dr Morsathegh's office tell their own story. The stern features of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, father figure of Iran's Islamic revolution, glower down from above the desk, as they do in almost every office in the country. Facing the desk is a painting of Moses, Aaron, and a tablet bearing the Ten Commandments.

At more than 20,000, Iran remains home to the largest Jewish community in the Middle East outside Israel, despite post-revolutionary emigration that saw tens of thousands leave. Those who remain say emigration has slowed and those who have stayed are unlikely to change their minds.

Sapir Hospital is a venerable institution of Iranian Jewish life. Founded 60 years ago as a charitable body, it provides free and heavily subsidised care for people in its working class neighbourhood. In some ways, it continues a medical tradition in which Jewish physicians have been celebrated in Iran for centuries. Only a few staff are Jews - most Jewish doctors in Tehran run their own practices - but it is funded by Jewish donations.

Now, Iranian Jews are worried and angered by their President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust. Haroun Yashayaie, head of Tehran's Jewish Committee, wrote to him in February, saying his comments caused "fear" in his community.

"It worried us, it was disrespectful," said a woman who did not want to be named. "Everyone knows six million Jews were killed and burnt but the President denies this. How does he know if something happened or not?"

The fact that she did not want to be named shows the tightrope on which minorities walk in Iran. Jews, Zoroastrians and Christians have rights and limitations enshrined in the constitution. They each elect their own member of parliament and are entitled to worship freely but not to proselytise. They are not bound by Muslim dietary proscriptions and can make, but not sell, alcohol. Iranian Jews talk of repeating patterns of discrimination - the difficulty of securing a government job and anti-Semitism in state media - but say they do not face active hostility.

"Everyone thinks the Islamic republic is killing us, but this is wrong," Dr Morsathegh insists. "As a minority we have some problems, but they are not as bad as people outside the country think. We can live here, study here, work here."

It is early morning in Yusuf Abad, an old middle-class neighbourhood home to many of Tehran's Jewish families, and as the city stirs itself awake a low chanting pervades the mulberry-lined street. It is a weekday and the synagogue has attracted few worshippers. About 40 men, all in skull caps and the traditional tallit shawl, read from the Torah as the rabbi gently intones from a dais. These, or similar, words have been recited every morning in Iran since about 700BC.

Since the revolution, synagogue attendances have soared. Jews say this is in part because of the more religious atmosphere propagated by the Islamic republic and partly because minorities have drawn in upon themselves. "Before the revolution people were less religious and mixed more between faiths," a customer in a kosher butcher said. "Friendships with Muslims happen but they are more difficult. Things aren't how they used to be."

In 1998, 10 Jews from Shiraz, home to the second largest Jewish community in Iran, were imprisoned for spying for Israel. Analysts said the arrests were intended to sabotage the growing rapprochement between a then-reformist government and the West. The last were freed in 2003, but the trial demonstrated the vulnerability of Jews and lingering Muslim suspicions that they represent a fifth column for foreign powers.

"This President has shown his extremism in all respects," the man in the butcher's said. "Some people think it doesn't apply to them because he's talking about Jews outside Iran. But a Jew is always a Jew."

Iranian Jews have learnt the hard way that they must publicly renounce any connection to Israel or Zionism. In the first days after the revolution, several Jews were executed on charges of Zionism and relations with Israel. Since then, spokesmen for the community have protested their antipathy to Israel.

Most of those spoken to professed their fundamentally Iranian nature, something they say would make it difficult for them to live as émigrés abroad. "Iranian Jews have been good Iranians for 2,700 years," Dr Morsatheghi says. "I can speak in English, but I only think in Persian. This is my language and my native culture. I'm not going to leave."

Oddbjørn Leirvik (research associate), Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo:

State, Church and Muslim minority in Norway

Paper presented to the conference "Dialogue of the cultures", Berlin 21-23 April 1999

Abstract:

Although Norway has endorsed a strong commitment to human rights and the principles of non-discrimination, the Church of Norway is still a state church, and the Norwegian state is formally "a state with a religion". But the state church system has been substantially modified through steady reform, and compensatory measures have been introduced to the effect that Norway is also in a sense "a state with many religions". Since the 1970s, religious pluralism has increased in Norway, partly because of Muslim immigration. In the same period, the majority population has tended to reaffirm its adherence to the "Christian cultural heritage" - a notion that along with expressions like "Christian and humanist values" has also become a political slogan. In primary schools, a new and compulsory subject termed "Knowledge of Christianity with information about Religions and World Views" has been introduced. Although the new subject was meant to be inclusive and accommodate for inter-religious dialogue in public schools, it has been met with resistance from most minority communities in Norway, organised Muslims included. At the same time, Norwegian churches and Norwegian Muslim communities have engaged each other in a living dialogue. Although many native Norwegians are anxious about the new Muslim presence, examples of more inclusive discourses in the general public may also be cited. With a view to the future, and a possible abolition of the state church system, the question arises: will religion be considered merely as a private matter, or can we foresee a society that actively values and supports religions and life stances in their pluralist expressions - as a matter of communal concern?

The new religious Norway

Traditionally, Norway has been a relatively homogenous country in cultural and religious terms, with a firmly established state church system. Out of 4.3 millions Norwegians, 88 % are still members of the Lutheran Church of Norway, which is often referred to as "folkekirken", the church of the people. About 3,5 % of the population belong to other churches, the largest of which are the Catholic church and the Pentecostal movement which amount to some 1% of the population each. Only about 10 % of the population, however, would consider themselves as regular church-goers, and recent polls show that not more than 38% of the population consider themselves to be "religious" people. The major part of those who belong to the Lutheran state church would only make use of the services of the church at the main cross-roads of life. Nevertheless, most of them would probably consider the so-called "Christian cultural heritage" to be part of their identity. During recent years, increased pluralism within and among the churches has in fact coincided with a widespread tendency towards reaffirming the "Christian cultural heritage" as part of one's personal and collective

identity. Notwithstanding a rather pervasive secularism in practical life, and a low percentage of confessedly "religious" people, there are many indications that Christianity has reinforced its importance as a cultural symbol of national unity. The need to reaffirm one's own identity faced with growing immigrant religions, and increased awareness of the role of religion in the shaping of cultures, might be parts of the explanation.

Since the 1970s, the religious scene in Norway has changed substantially, mainly because of the growth of immigrant religions. At the end of the 1990s, Norway is the home of about 67 000 immigrants and refugees of Muslim background, which amounts to 1.5 % of the total population. Among the 67 000, statistics show that more than two thirds (46 500) have also organised themselves by becoming member of a Muslim congregation in Norway. The level of organisation among Muslims in Norway has been rapidly increasing. In 1980, 10% of those with a Muslim background were members of a Muslim organisation. In 1990, the percentage had increased to 50%, and in 1998, as much as 70% of immigrant Muslims had a formal affiliation to an organised Muslim community in Norway.

The dominant nation groups among Muslims in Norway are Pakistanis, Bosnians, Kosovo-Albanians, Turks, Iranians, Moroccans and Somalians. In some parts of the capital, the concentration of the Muslim population has resulted in a Muslim majority in a few city centre schools, and a substantial percentage of Muslim pupils in several other schools all over the city. Oslo alone counts for almost 30 mosques. Only one is purpose-built, the rest of them are more modestly accommodated in converted industry or office premises.

During the last ten years, Norway has also witnessed a considerable growth of Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh communities, which would amount to 20 000 / 10 000 in all when counted by religious background / formal affiliation respectively. The oldest non-Christian community in Norway, the Jews, only amounts to about 1 500 people.

A particular feature of the Norwegian situation is the relative strength of the secular Humanist Federation, which engages 1,5 % of the population as their members, and represents more than that with their alternative ceremonies (name-giving, confirmation, burial) and their articulation of a non-religious ethics. Already in the 1970s, they succeeded in establishing a "World Views" alternative to Christian education in public primary schools.

If we add widespread, non-confessional and New Age-oriented spirituality among native Norwegians, one can really speak of a new religious Norway. A growing tendency of organised pluralism coincides with an increased number of "wandering souls", less loyal than before to their formal religious affiliation (if any).

So far, Norway has only got some 25 years of experience with being a truly multi-religious society. Popular as well as official responses to the new situation vary a lot. Some people are ready to embrace post-modern pluralism without fearing to lose their own identity. Others would like to reinforce the state religion, or what most politicians and church leaders invoke as "the Christian cultural heritage" of Norway. As we shall see, this tendency has led to recent clashes in the field of religious education in school - between the cultural majority and a minority alliance of secular humanists, Muslims, Jews and others.

The state church system

The (Lutheran) state church systems in the Scandinavian countries have several parallel features, but increasingly distinguishing marks as well. Sweden has recently decided to abolish its state church system (as from 2000), but the Church of Sweden will probably retain many of its characteristics a nation church, and seek for new kinds of formalised interaction with the state. In Denmark, Folkekirken ("the church of the people") remains a state church without major reforms. In legal terms, Church of Norway lies somewhere in between Sweden and Denmark: the state church system will remain at least for a while, but has recently been subject to several reforms that have transferred authority from state and municipal authorities to legally independent church bodies.

The state church system in Norway implies something more than just a pragmatic ordering of the affairs of a nation church. Constitutionally, one might in fact say that Norway is a state with a religion. At the same time, Norway subscribes to the human rights principle of a non-discriminatory freedom of religion. As the constitution of Norway stands today, many would say it is rather contradictory in the field of religion - prescribing a rather solid alliance between church an state and simultaneously affirming an unfettered freedom of religion.

The second paragraph of the Norwegian constitution reads as follows (in my translation):

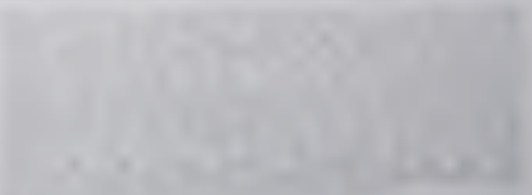
All inhabitants of the kingdom shall be free to exercise their religion. The Evangelical-Lutheran religion remains the public religion of the state. Inhabitants confessing this religion, are obliged to raise their children in the same.

Other paragraphs prescribe that the King must confess and protect the Evangelical-Lutheran religion (§ 4), and that half (originally all) of the members of government are required to be members of the Lutheran church (§ 12b). Additional paragraphs gives the King the prerogative to supervise religious services and doctrinal purity, as well as the right to select the clergy (§§ 16 and 21). But these have been put in brackets by a far-reaching reform process which has delegated most of the internal matters of the Church of Norway to democratically elected church bodies. But the government still elects the bishops.

As for § 2 of the constitution (cited above), the second part - a state with Lutheran religion - came long before the first - freedom of religion. Freedom of religion was only inscribed in the constitution in 1964, and followed by a Law of Faith Communities in 1969.

Before the time of the constitution (1814), Norway had little or no experience with other religions, or even with other Christian confessions than Lutheranism. Catholicism was severely restricted after the Lutheran Reformation, that took place by royal decree and in accordance with the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* (control of religion corresponds to territorial control). Almost 300 years later, in 1814, the fathers of the constitution found it necessary to state explicitly that neither (Catholic) Jesuits nor Jews should have any access to the kingdom. The ban on Jewish presence was lifted in 1851. Curiously enough, it should take another hundred years before the prohibition of the Jesuit order was removed from the constitution, in 1956. And only in 1964, the principle of religious freedom was explicitly stated as part of the Norwegian constitution. Notwithstanding the legal delay, faith communities outside the state church have in general been able to express themselves freely and organise their affairs without any interference from the authorities.

Compensatory measures to the state church system



At the structural level, Norway remains a state with a religion. Different from Sweden, where the decision has recently been taken to abolish the state church system, the state church system of Norway still enjoys considerable popular and political support. But different from Denmark, where the notion of the nation church and the state church system has remained without major changes in the 20th century, there has been a steady work for increased church self-determination in Norway. During the 80s, the reform process culminated in the establishment of a church synod with wide-ranging authorities, and regional church bodies (dioceses) were given the right to elect and appoint most of the clergy and church personnel. But two important aspects of state rule still remain, also in Norway. First, the government still appoints the bishops and the deans, by which it may exercise considerable influence on the profile of church leadership. Second, almost the entire church budget (most salaries, much of other running budgets, as well as maintenance and raising of new churches) remains part of the general state and municipal budgets. Thus, Norway remains one of very few nation states in which the finances of a particular faith community is fully integrated in the public budgets.

Church of Norway-budgets are financed by the general tax bill, which means that there is no separate "church tax". Without compensatory measures for tax payers outside the Lutheran church, this system would, of course, threaten principles of non-discrimination rather dramatically. But here comes the paradox: The same Norway that faithfully pays the salaries of all her Lutheran priests (as well as most other church personnel), offers the same amount of money per member to other faith communities as the state church receives per capita. Following an amendment to the law of 1969 that laid the ground for these compensatory measures, even secular humanists are entitled to the same amount of financial support.

In 1997, the combined state and municipal support amounted to 342 NOK (about 50 USD) per member/year for Oslo's part (the municipal part varies). State and municipal support according to this principle is accessible for any faith community that is willing to sign up for support. This means that also the steadily growing Muslim organisations in Norway are to some extent financially supported by the state. In addition to the general support per member, the municipality of Oslo has given considerable financial support to Muslim qur'anic schools through the school budget, for Muslim pupils that have opted out of Christian education as well as the alternative subject "World Views" in public schools.

In this way, the state church of Norway finances its own vigorous opposition. Although the system may seem to be very generous, it is of course only a matter of justice. This is the way Norway has chosen to refund that part of the official budgets that are set apart for the Church of Norway: not by refunding individual non-members, but their faith communities. The only condition is that individuals let themselves be registered. Since there is no membership fee in the state church, no membership fee is required as part of the registration of members in other communities neither.

Given the fact that 88% of the Norwegian population are still members of the Lutheran Church of Norway, and no other single faith community amounts to more than 1.5%, it goes without saying that there are still huge differences in the infrastructure of the overwhelming majority religion on one side and that of the numerous and relatively small minority communities on the other. Those who want to raise purpose built mosques or temples, face financial challenges far beyond what the membership fee can cover. But the principle of membership support may still be patent enough. Since this system of compensatory measures was introduced by law in 1969, Norway may be said to have not only one, but numerous state supported faith communities and religions - a wide range of free churches, but also Judaism,

Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhs and the Baha'i faith, as well as the likewise state-supported non-religious association of secular humanists.

Partly because of this system of compensation, many faith communities in Norway - Muslims included - tend to have a rather pragmatic approach to the question of whether the state church system should stand or not. Many fear that in a state without an officially supported majority religion, there would be no political will to support any faith community. All communities would then have to raise their money directly from their members. That would, of course, be the normal global procedure, but a scenario looked upon with some apprehension by some of those now enjoying state support in Norway.

Is everything concerning freedom of religion in well order, then, in the kingdom of Norway? Probably not. Although rather content in financial matters, most minority communities would still argue that the state church system constantly threatens some fundamental human rights principles of non-discrimination. As indicated above, half of the ministers of the Norwegian government are still required to be members of the Lutheran church. By convention, only Lutheran priests are employed as hospital and prison chaplains, and cemeteries are under church administration.

As for the relation between state and civil society, faith communities are treated as a protected zone of civil society in one particular respect: The Law of Equality between the Sexes does not apply to internal affairs of faith communities (not even to the state church).

State, church and school

Most of the problems related to freedom of religion have been linked to the system of religious, or rather Christian education in schools. Until 1969, only Lutheran Christians were allowed to teach religion (or "Knowledge of Christianity", as the subject was named until recently) in public primary schools. The underlying idea would be that only Lutheran teachers could properly aid the (at that time) maybe 95% Lutheran parents to fulfil their constitutional duty (!) to raise their children as good Lutherans. Until then, confessional Christian instruction was the only teaching in religion offered by the state schools. Many non-Lutheran pupils used the long established right to opt out. Only from 1971, an alternative was organised in some schools, under the more neutral label of "world views" or "life stances" (in Norwegian: "livssyn"). Behind the organisation of a world views-alternative in primary school there was the pressure not of the other churches, but rather of the secular humanists in Norway.

Private schooling is a very weak tradition in Norway, and private primary schools encompass only 1.5% of all pupils in Norway. Public schools in Norway, as well as public kindergartens, still have a Christian objects clause, stating that kindergartens and schools should help the parents to raise their children in accordance with the basic values of Christianity. For primary schools, the formulation runs as follows (in my translation):

In co-operation and understanding with the home, primary school is supposed to help in giving the pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their talents both spiritually and bodily, and to give them a good all-round knowledge so that they may become beneficial and independent human beings in home and society.

In 1997, a new system of religious education was introduced in primary schools. Until then, parents had three options as to religion in school: either (1) Christianity with a confessional, Lutheran basis, or (2) "world views" with a neutral or even secular flavour, or (3) nothing at all (with qur'anic schools as the only alternative for some Muslim children). From 1997, pupils are supposed to take part in the new and compulsory subject "Knowledge of Christianity with Introduction to Religions and World Views". Full exemption is not possible, only so-called "partial exemption" from activities that parents might deem to run contrary to their own faith (i.e. reading prayers aloud, or participating in other worship-related activities). As the name indicates, there is a difference in ambition between "knowledge" (of Christianity) and "introduction" (to other faiths). However, the law presupposes that all religions are taught with the same pedagogical approach, and treated on their own terms as "a living source of faith, morals and life interpretation".

When first introduced, the new subject was met with considerable suspicion and protest from the non-Christian minorities. Some concessions, however, were made to minority interest in the course of the process, and resource persons from the minority communities were engaged to take part in revision the curriculum that was first suggested. The new curriculum implies that for the first time, all Norwegian pupils will receive a substantial amount of knowledge of Islam and the other world religions, as well as of philosophy and more secular outlooks on life. Apart from ensuring that all pupils will have a good knowledge of the Christian tradition as well as of other religions and world views, the intention has been to open a space for dialogue-training in an increasingly multi-religious society.

Despite these good intentions, to which most parents and faith communities would probably subscribe, minority representatives initially saw the new subject as a just another way of reinforcing "the Christian cultural heritage" or "Christian and Humanist values". Although several adjustments have been made to accommodate for minority interests, many minority representatives still struggle for the right to opt out of the new subject entirely, and - if necessary - to organise alternatives as before. Both the Humanist Federation and the Islamic Council will bring the case to Norwegian courts in 1999, and if necessary, take it to the European Court in Strasbourg.

Some parents in the minority groups, however, seem to have become slightly more positive, and there are some indications that the subject (with further major adjustments) may eventually become rather flexible and pluralistic in practice. But the majority of Muslims - many of them have taken to the streets (in Oslo and some other cities) to demonstrate against the new compulsory subject - are still suspicious towards the original design of the subject ("Christianity plus"), and critical of the idea of a compulsory subject which is mainly Christian in quantitative terms.

The case is replete with potentially wide-ranging consequences. Within say ten years, we will know whether a unified school system - including a unified system of religious education - will survive the new pluralism in Norway, or whether people will organise themselves differently in order to ensure their freedom of religion. With a view to religious freedom, the situation is aggravated by the fact that the only application so far for a state supported Muslim private primary school was turned down by the Social Democrat Government in 1995. The reason given by the Ministry of Church, Education and Research was that such a school would not be beneficial when measured against the over-riding ambition of integrating language minorities in public schools. The reference to the integration of immigrants and "language minorities" indicates that the principle of religious non-discrimination was

considerably downplayed. Although only 1.5% of primary school pupils go to private schools, new schools with a Christian basis have steadily been introduced and accepted, raising the suspicion on the Muslims' part that they may not enjoy equal rights with Christian minorities.[After this paper was prepared and delivered, the application for a Muslim private school was finally approved by the Christian Democrat led government i December 1999, with reference to the principles of religious freedom and the right of parents to chose the education of their children].

Religion and politics

It could be argued that religion in school is not primarily a issue between the Church of Norway and the other faith communities, but rather a question that relates to a new kind of (moderate) religious nationalism which is often voiced more forcefully by politicians more than by church leaders. As of today, several competing versions of a public discourse reaffirming the "Christian cultural heritage" of Norway can be identified: a social democratic version emphasising the need to ensure that the church does not discriminate between regular church-goers and more passive members; a Christian democratic version which has sometimes a slightly more revivalist touch; a traditional conservative version; and even some recent versions voiced by the extreme right that tend to use "Christian values" as a protective shield against the "foreign cultures" of the newcomers.

The social democratic movement (the Labour party) has been the major political force in Norway during the last 50 years. In the social democratic tradition, there has been a strong backing of a unified school system, in accordance with the vision of a society with a maximum of equality (or even "likeness") both in social and cultural fields. The application for a state-supported Muslim private school in 1995 was turned down by the then social democratic government. The Labour party was also a major force behind the new and compulsory version of religious education in primary schools, in alliance with the Christian Democrats. In general, the social democrats have left their earlier view of religion as a private matter. They have intervened actively in church matters (in particular, through the election of bishops), in order to ensure that the Church of Norway remains a national church that accommodates for both liberal and conservative tendencies. Many would see the general thrust of their recent politics of religion as reaffirmation of the Christian cultural heritage in a liberal and inclusive interpretation, and as a bond of national unity.

Since 1997 [until 2000], Norway has had a government made up by the three parties that are considered to constitute the political "centre" of Norwegian politics, with the Christian Democrats as the major force. The Christian Democrats have traditionally regarded themselves as political representatives of the more conservative brands of Christianity in Norway, but have recently changed their image towards a more liberal and inclusive vision of Christian culture.

In a sum: through the combined influence of the social democrats and the Christian democrats, and in accordance with a general political consensus, the focus of politics of religion has been upon integration of different beliefs into one "Norwegian" culture, rather than upon minority rights. Whereas integrative visions may entail measures intended to ensure that Norwegians of different beliefs will still have common cultural arenas (e.g. public schools), minority concerns would rather point in the direction of the right to opt out and to establish alternative or parallel arenas.

With only 25 years of experience to accommodate for extensive religious pluralism, Norwegians enter the future with a mixed heritage of state religion and a strong subscription to human rights values. Many people committed to human rights issues would like to abolish the remnants of the state church system as soon as possible. This is also true of many church leaders, that in general tend to be more critical of the state church system than the political parties and the majority of the population.

But it is not at all sure that a state without a religion will give better opportunities for faith communities to express themselves. In my opinion, the alternative to the state church system should not be a society in which religion is regarded entirely as a private matter. What should be sought for, is rather a society and a state that actively values and supports religion and existential conviction in its pluralist expression. How can religion be treated as a public matter in a more inclusive way? Hopefully, the strong tradition in Norwegian society to regard religion as a public matter may prove to be not only a problem, but also a resource - in a new, multi-religious context.

For a pluralist society to thrive, however, the majority population of Norway will have to learn to live more comfortably with differences. Although Lutheran Christianity has become more sensitive of minority issues, much of the impetus will have to come from the minorities. 150 years ago the joint efforts of a tiny Quaker minority and radical democrats within the majority church opened the door to freedom of religion in this country. The historical lesson might allow for some optimism as to the possibility of minorities to generate slow, but in the end wide-ranging change in society.

Towards more inclusive discourses in society?

During the 90s, several initiatives in the direction of Christian-Muslim dialogue and inter-religious dialogue has been taken. Some of them have been initiated by the churches, such as the regular Contact Group between the Church of Norway, the free churches and the Islamic Council in Norway. In the general public, inclusive attitudes compete with mounting anxiety towards Islam and Muslims. In the cultural and political debates centred around Christianity and Islam, church leaders have unambiguously defended Muslim minority rights. In 1997, Christian leader of all confessions and theological tendencies joined hands with the Muslim community and warned publicly against the enemy images of Islam produced by the extreme political right.

Also on the political level, the challenges of inter-religious dialogue are gradually recognised. In the wake of the hot debate over religion in schools, a Coordination Committee for Faith- and Life Stance Communities has been established - by formally elected representatives of the churches, the Islamic Council, the Buddhist Association, the Jewish community, the Baha'i community, the Humanist Federation and the so-called Alternative Network. Two government sponsored dialogue projects with representatives of all major faith communities have been carried out, one about "Communal Ethics in a Multicultural Norway" (1992-93) and another about "Religion, Life Stances and Human Rights in Norway" (1996-97). Muslim leaders have been active in both projects. In 1997, the Christian Democrat-led government set up a "Human Values Commission", a political novelty meant to be an invitation to all sectors of civil society to initiate communal and general ethical discussions. Behind the initiative, there is the recognition shared by large sectors of Norwegian society that values, life stances and religion are matters of public concern. It is not only the sake of the individual - it matters for the community. In the "Values Commission", representatives of the Islamic Council and

some other religious minorities sit together with church people and representatives of the general public.

Slowly, Norway is getting accustomed to being a multi-religious society. There are several challenges to be faced, both by the religious majority and the minorities. A major challenge might be the tendency on the part of the majority population to equate "Norwegian" with "Christian" (alternatively "Christian-humanist") values. Although it is not always clear what this would imply (considering the wide array of value positions within the Christian majority population), minorities are apprehensive of a public discourse that is sometimes heavily marked by a distinction between "us" and "they".

Hopefully, the churches will be in the forefront of a process towards more inclusive expressions of national unity - acting not only as representatives of the "Christian cultural heritage", but just as much as defenders of minority rights. The regular dialogue between the churches and the Muslim communities in Norway may be a good start.

Source: http://folk.uio.no/leirvik/tekster/state,%20church,%20muslim.html

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Norwegian Religious Education

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BENTE SANDVIG

Religious education in Norwegian schools

A battle has taken place in Norway over religious education in schools. A law has been passed removing the right of exemption from religious education and ensuring that religious education is preponderantly Lutheran. Bente Sandwig, who writes about the conflict, is Head of the Research Department for the Human-Etisk Forbund in Norway.

SINCE THE beginning of the last century dissidents and other nonmembers of the Norwegian state church have had the right to exempt their children from their school's religious education. The main principle has been freedom of religion and because religious education is so closely linked to the state church and the Evangelical-Lutheran confession, it seemed natural that non-members should be excused. This right is now at stake.

For the last twenty-five years, there has been offered an alternative subject to the traditional religious education. The Human-Etisk Forbund has, among others, fought for this possibility. The situation today is that when religious education is on the agenda, some of the pupils go to another class to receive their non-confessional education. In these alternative classes humanist [0]s, Jews, non-believers, Buddhists and some Muslims take part on an equal basis. There are also some pupils who don't receive any religious education at all - either because their school doesn't have sufficient financial resources or teachers to establish it, or because their parents don't want them to attend.

On 3 May 1995, a committee appointed by the Minister of Church, Education and Science presented a government report which suggested that all pupils -- whether Christians, Muslims, Jews or humanists should receive a religious education which should be common for all. The committee was led by Mr Erling Pettersen, who was at the time, head of the Institute of Christian Upbringing. (And I may add: At a later stage -- January 1996 - he was appointed manager of the Church Council. Maybe as a token of appreciation from the Christian community for the good work of making seemingly good Christians of all Norwegian school children?)

The idea of joint education is not new in the debate on religious education. This is an option the Norwegian Humanists have been advocating for a long time. In fact, we see the alternative

non-confessional classes as a good starting-point for joint education. There are, however, some important obstacles that must be overcome before this is possible to attain. First of all, the Christian-aim clause for the school in general must be altered. Secondly, the obligation to teach according to the Evangelical-Lutheran confession must be abolished. But maybe most importantly, the whole curriculum must be renewed and reflect the fact that there are different religious and non-religious views in contemporary Norwegian society. Thus ethics should be taught without necessarily always being presented in a specific religious context.

Without making any of these crucial changes, the committee and later the majority in the Norwegian Parliament decided to establish a Christian Evangelical-Lutheran subject in which all pupils are obliged to participate. This subject is meant to be introduced into the school-system as the only alternative from August 1997. From that date, there will no longer be a general right to exemption for any pupil - despite the fact that their family's beliefs differ from what is taught in school.

Only in a very small degree will there be the possibility of being excused when the class is taking part in religious practice, such as taking part in a ceremony or reciting creeds. The exemption must be agreed in advance in a close discussion between the school and the parents. And the exemption does not imply that the pupil in question is excused from knowing the contents of a ceremony, a confession, or a hymn. In other words: the majority has introduced a system of exemption which is practically non-existent and extremely difficult to maintain.

How is this possible in Norway today? It certainly did not happen without a massive protest from practically all religious and non-religious minorities outside the state church. And there were also important critical voices raised against the proposal from within the church itself. The most influential minorities consisting of the Jews, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Alternative Network (a New-Age umbrella organisation) the humanists, one of the teachers' unions, several unions of students and other groups, soon formed a campaign against the proposal.

20,000 postcards protesting against the new subject were handed over to the leader of the Parliamentary Committee that was handling the proposal. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Children's Ombudsman claimed the proposed kind of education to be in conflict with the international obligations Norway has accepted by ratifying various human rights [0] declarations and conventions. The proposal was passed in Parliament despite all these protests and serious objections.

The committee and the political majority seemed to claim that this new subject is the answer to practically all the problems in society, such as racism, ignorance, and social instability. Therefore it was actually possible to create a political alliance between the Social Democrats, the Christian People's Party, the Centre Party [conservative, rural) and to a certain extent the Conservative Party. The latter left the alliance at the second round in Parliament, accusing the other parties of not having taken into consideration the serious impact the new subject would have on parents' right to decide what sort of religious education their children should receive. As the spokesman for the Conservatives pointed out in the debate, it seemed that no one in the political majority was able to differentiate between the old and the new subject. Therefore, he claimed, the same possibility of exemption as was accepted in the old subject ought to prevail in the new one.

Finally, the majority admitted that they had not carefully considered all the different aspects of the matter and added a demand for the Minister of Church, Education and Science to give the problem a serious legal evaluation before any law on the exemption is passed. The matter will later be dealt with in connection with an imminent political discussion of the educational laws

But the rest of the alliance seems to live comfortably with a very differing view of what they have actually decided. When you listen to a Social Democrat describing the new subject, it sounds like she or he is in fact talking about the same non-confessional education that is being offered to non-church-members today. At the other end of the alliance the Christian People's Party's spokesman has expressed how pleased he is that the new subject is deeply rooted in the Evangelical-Lutheran confession and ensures that new generations will base their beliefs in the Christian faith. It is clear that they are talking about two different subjects, and only time will show which one the new subject will be.

So this is the situation today: Parliament has passed a proposal that no one really knows the consequences of, and they don't even seem to agree on what they have actually decided. The minorities claim that fundamental rights have been neglected and that if a law reducing the right to exemption will be passed later, it will be illegal. In that case the Norwegian Parliament will be ignoring the international obligations of human rights conventions. The last word has definitely not been said: the protests continue and the Human-Etisk Forbund is ready for the next battle.

Thursday, 30 March, 2000, 13:07 GMT 14:07 UK

Oslo's rooftoop religious rivalry

Oslo's Muslims will now be called to prayer every Friday

Muslims in the Norwegian capital Oslo have for the first time been granted the right to broadcast calls to prayer, a daily tradition in much of the Islamic world.

Six months ago the World Islamic Mission applied to the city's authorities to allow a mosque in the old town - Gamle Oslo - to call the faithful to prayer through loudspeakers.

Now the permission has been granted, on the condition that the calls - or azzan - are no louder than 60 decibels, roughly the level of normal conversation.

I don't think the atheists will climb on the roof and shout too often

Jan Willy Lang, Oslo councillor

And at the same time the Norwegian Heathen Society - which claims there is no God - was also granted the right to broadcast its calls from a rooftop once a week, including the call: "God does not exist."

Heathen Society secretary, Harald Fagerhus, said that one's religion was a personal matter, but that "since the church bells and the preaching from the mosques have taken over the public space, we want to be able to do the same".

Until now, the only legal prayer calls in Norway, where Lutheran Protestantism is the state religion, have been the ringing of church bells.

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Mari Linlokken
"I hope that other mosques in Norway will be able to call to prayer too"
real **28k**

Olof Bergren
"We have clocks on every church here and they are much more disturbing"
real **28k**

Olof Bergren, head of the Gamle Oslo library, has been campaigning for the prayer right to be granted in Oslo which has a population of about 500,000, including 36,000 Muslims.

He said: "We have clocks on every church here and they are much more disturbing.

"The call for prayer is supposed to be only on Fridays at noon, whereas you hear the church bells every day and night."

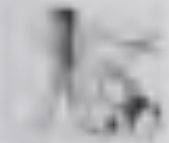
The call to prayer is limited to conversation level

Mari Linlokken, deputy director of the Anti-Rasism Centre in Oslo, said the decision was of great symbolic importance.

"All over Norway you have churches and their bells are tolling every Sunday and by giving permission to this mosque, I hope that other mosques in Norway will be able to call to prayer too."

Jan Willy Lang, a Labour member of Oslo council, said the atheists would not cause too much trouble for the Muslims.

"To give fair treatment we had to say "yes" to the atheists, but I don't think they will climb on the roof and shout too often."



INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Norwegian soccer game between priests and imams canceled

The Associated Press
Saturday, May 5, 2007

STOCKHOLM, Sweden: A soccer game bringing Muslim imams and Christian priests "shoulder to shoulder" on a field in Norway was canceled Saturday because the teams could not agree on whether women priests should take part.

The game was to mark the end of a daylong "Shoulder to Shoulder" conference in Oslo that encouraged religious dialogue between the two faiths.

Church of Norway spokesman Olav Fykse Tveit said differences began when the imams refused to play against a mixed-gender team of priests because it would have gone against their religious beliefs in avoiding close physical contact with women.

"We found that out two days before, but because we thought it would be a nice conclusion of the conference we didn't want to call it off, so we decided to stage an all-mens team game instead," he said.

But when the church decided to drop its female players, the priest team captain walked out in protest.

Just hours before Saturday's scheduled game, the church released a statement saying it had called it off because it was sending the wrong signal.

"We realize now that it will be wrong to have a priest team without women... The reactions we have had today shows us that this is being interpreted as a gender-political issue. This is why we cannot go through with the soccer match."

Fykse Tveit said that, despite the differences on the field, "one very good lesson we've learned from this is that when we cooperate, we also enter each others boundaries, and that's a positive thing."

- Religion, Democracy & Extremism
- Clerics de Madrid
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- 2 distinguish Pol. leaders + Clerics
- + Academics, Journalists, intellectuals.
- An area that is becoming

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