A Study of Islamic Perspective on Contemporary Civilizational Issues

CHAPTER — 2

Contemporary Civilization: Making of an Image of Islam and Muslims
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2.1 Civilization

Civilization is currently used in a variety of vague and often emotional senses. The same word is used by anthropologists and historians in a technical sense that should be more precise, but unfortunately there is no complete agreement among these social scientists as to its proper usage. The most accurate and fruitful employment of the term is to denote the highest stage in social evolution.\(^1\)

Andre Marlaux in his book, *Man's Fate* (1933 C.E.), says:

The great mystery is not that we should have been thrown down here at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars; it is that from our very prison we should draw, from our own selves, images powerful enough to deny our nothingness.\(^2\)

Distinct meanings of the term civilization are in common use. Sometimes it refers to the state of being civilized, that is, to the possession of good-manners and self-control, as in the phrase "a thoroughly civilized man". This was the original meaning of the term when it was introduced,

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first into French, during the eighteenth century C.E. by writers like Voltaire\(^1\).

From this meaning, writers of the nineteenth century C.E. expanded the term civilization to mean the growth through time of knowledge and skills that encouraged or allowed men to attain “civilized” behaviour\(^2\).

People slowly learnt to cultivate plants, herd animals and make airtight pottery for storage. Discoveries transformed them from gatherers to producers to lead a settled life. Changes marked the birth of civilization\(^3\).

The term ‘civilization’ has come to have a much more extended meaning than it originally possessed. In its literal sense, civilization (civilis, pertaining to a citizen) implies a social condition existing under the forms and government of an organized state. The citizen (civis) was the unit in the government of ancient Rome, and he occupied a similar position in the organization of the city-states of Greece. From the more limited sense, thus indicated the term “civilization” has gradually been extended in meaning until in current general use it has come to imply all that progress in arts, government, social equipment, social co-operation and culture,

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\(^2\) *Idem*

\(^3\) *Idem*
which separates man as a member of the higher societies from a condition of barbarism¹.

Barbarism is originally a Greek term, *Barbaros*². The name was used among the early Greeks for all foreigners, including the Romans. The word probably represents the uncouth bobbling of which languages other than their own appeared to the Greeks to consist³. Barbarian means an uncivilized or uncultured person⁴.

According to theorists, it soon assumed an evil meaning, becoming associated with the vices and savage natures which the Greeks attributed to their enemies. It is said that the Romans adopted the name for all peoples other than those under Greco-Roman influence and domination. The name *Barbary*, for North-Western Africa, is said to be derived from that of its Berber inhabitants, not from *Barbaros⁵*. It has become synonymous for the general lack of civilization⁶. Other peoples have applied equivalent terms to any alien land, culture or people that they believed to be inferior to their own⁷.

³ *Idem*
⁴ William H. McNeill, “Civilization”.
⁵ “Civilization”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
⁶ *Idem*
⁷ William H. McNeill, “Civilization”.

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Civilization is defined as an ideal state of human culture characterized by complete absence of barbarism and non-rational behaviour, optimum utilization of physical, cultural, spiritual and human resources, and perfect adjustment of the individual within the social framework.

Civilization is all the ways man has found to make his world more beautiful and to make himself more comfortable and happy. Man has built his civilization by changing the world around him, by learning to control it, and by learning to use the materials that nature supplies. Because man is the only living creature that knows how to change the world, he is the only living creature that has a civilization.

Etymologically, 'civilization' means 'perfecting of civil life or of the relations of men among themselves'. It is in this sense that we arrange the order of civilization. The test is the quality of perfection attained; and the higher the quality, the superior the civilization. This quality is determined by two factors, or rather it is a mixture of two ingredients capable of blending into each other. One is this: if civil life is to be perfect, it must represent organized social relations based, on the one hand, on an adequate production of the means of giving strength to society and, on the other, on an equitable distribution amongst individuals of the strength and happiness so produced. This is the primary condition of civilization. There is

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another condition, which should be fulfilled, and this is the Qur'ânic touch to the definition of civilization. The Qur'ânic view is that civilization must also represent a process of perfection of the individual himself, of his faculties, his sentiments, his ideas making organized civil life humane or such as may glorify human nature. A nation or a social group may have attained a high standard of material progress and the distribution of its benefits within its own circle may be equitable; but it may prove a danger to humanity at large all the same. Hence it is that in every society claiming to be civilized, on the presence in some degree of the second quality, which gives to human relations the touch of humanism. And the greater the degree in which this quality blends with the other quality, the higher is the resultant civilization.¹

As historians have often remarked, civilization is a word easier to describe than it is to define. The word itself implied comes from the Latin adjective civilus, a reference to a citizen. Citizens willingly bring themselves together in political, social, economic and religious organizations — they merge together, that is, in the interests of the larger community. Over time, the word civilization has come to imply something beyond organization — it refers to a particular shared way of thinking about the world as well as a reflection on that world in art, literature, drama and a host of other cultural happenings.²


² “Civilization”, Illustrated World Encyclopedia.
Civilization is a highly connotative word, and its use can lead to misunderstanding. It brings to mind qualities such as superiority, humaneness, and refinement. Indeed, many members of civilized societies have seen themselves as superior to the “barbarians” outside their civilization1.

Many scholars avoid the term “civilization” because it implies superiority; they prefer to use “urban society” or “intensive agricultural society”. “Civilization”, however, remains in common academic use, especially when talking about specific societies such as “Mayan Civilization”2.

In the 1930's, V. Gordon Chile tried to relieve the prevailing confusion by connecting civilization with what he called the “urban revolution”. According to this idea, civilization came into existence not once but many times, whenever men gathered into cities, and began to specialize. Occupational specialization, Chile argued, led to the rapid improvement of skills and the invention of new and better tools. The result was a rather sudden elaboration of the material, intellectual and artistic aspects of culture to a level of complexity and refinement that deserved to be called “civilized”3.

A civilization worthy of its name must therefore represent an organized civil life inspired by a culture, which stands for the progress not

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2 Idem

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only of the individual but of humanity as a whole. Where we have this or where the two objects are several together, we have a civilization, which possesses a universal value for all mankind and is a blessing to it. On the other hand, where material progress is confined to an exclusive class or a section of society or community or where the progress, while comprehending the needs of even the entire community depends for its sustenance on the continued exploitation of other communities, we have organized life but no civilization. Again where a community as a community is in the vanguard of material progress, but where the individual has no human status or individual soul is not allowed a free play but it merged or lost in an impersonal mass-soul or mass-soullessness', even here we have no civilization, however, sumptuous the fare of sensuous comfort provided to each individual. Or further, where life is organized on a hierarchical basis, one layer of society rising above another, each again vertically divided into sections on the basis of birth or ethnic consideration or rigid social exclusiveness, however, complacently satisfying the outward material aspect of the entire organization to those from within profiting by this hierarchical order of life or, however, advanced intellectually certain members of sections of such a society, we have not merely no civilization in the strict sense of it, but a deliberate negation of it1.

In the Islamic perspective, a true civilization is one in which all aspects of life point man to the remembrance of God and his own ultimate

1 S. A. Lateef, "Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View", p. 53.
nature so that he can play the role of God's vicegerent for which he was placed here on earth. The grandeur or even authenticity of a civilization is judged by Islam according to the degree in which it is able to provide for men and women an audience to realize the purpose of human life which is to worship God and to act as His vicegerent amidst His creation and not on what means of transportation or clever gadgets a civilization has been able to create or how long it has been able to extend the earthly life of its members. The Qur'an is replete with examples of peoples and civilizations, which were destroyed because of moral iniquity and the corruption of their religion and not because of their lack of power in building laws and roads. The value of any civilization from the Islamic point of view must be based on the criterion of the fulfillment of man's ultimate purpose on earth and in nothing else.

Sayyid Qutb in his book, *Ma‘arakat al-Islam wa al-Rasmaliyyah*, says that there are two ways of understanding the meaning of civilization. Muslims could either claim that we have a unique civilization and have the right to have our share in providing for an authentic civilization, or we could "borrow ready made models... to copy indiscriminately everything we see without thought or assessment". The first meaning, he says, is one

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2 Interview "Sayyid Quth and His Influence", Interview with Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi' from the Religioscope.com website on November, 8, 2001.
understood and followed by human beings, while the second is understood by monkeys who emulate everything they see.

The Qur’ân asks man to imitate the law of Qur’ân in his own personal life. Should he do it earnestly, he is assured that he will be “carried forward from state to state”, from one lower to one higher, both in the present and in the life to follow. Such is the way to a civilized life for man. The Qur’ân therefore, enjoins that every action that one does should conduce to one’s own perfection, as an individual, and at the same time or simultaneously conduce to the promotion of perfection of one’s relationship with every other human being and operate for the conversion of mankind into a single family, the family of God1.

2.1.1 The Future of Civilization

Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington has argued that the defining characteristic of the twenty-first century C.E. will be a clash of civilizations2. According to Huntington, conflicts between civilizations will supplant the conflicts between nation-states and ideologies that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries3.

Currently world civilization is in a stage that has created what may be characterized as an industrial society, superceding the agricultural society that preceded it. Some futurists believe that civilization is

3 “Civilization”, Wikipedia.
undergoing another transformation, and that world society will become an informational society\(^1\).

The Kardashev scale\(^2\) classifies civilization based on their level of technological advancement, specifically measured by the amount of energy a civilization is able to harness. The Kardashev scale makes provisions for civilizations far more technologically advanced than any currently existing\(^3\).

### 2.1.2 Various Views on Civilization

Over the years many members of civilizations have shunned them, believing that civilization restricts people from living in their natural state. Religious ascetics in many times and places have attempted to curb the influence of civilization over their lives in order to concentrate on spiritual matters. In the nineteenth century C.E., transcendentalists believed civilization was shallow and materialistic, so they wanted to build a completely agrarian society, free from the oppression of the city\(^4\).

Karl Marx believed that the beginning of civilization was the beginning of oppression. In addition, some feminists believe that

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2. The **Kardashev scale** is a general method of classifying how technologically advanced a civilization is, first proposed in 1964 by the Russian astronomer Nikolai Kardashev.
4. *Idem*
civilization is the source of men's domination over women. Together, these ideas make up modern conflict theory\(^1\) in the social sciences\(^2\).

Some contemporaries argue that the division of societies into 'civilized' is arbitrary and meaningless. On a fundamental level, they say there is no difference between civilization and tribal societies; each simply does what it can with the resources it has. The concept of "civilization" has merely been the justification for colonialism, imperialism, genocide and coercive acculturation\(^3\).

Many environmentalists criticize civilizations for their exploitation of the environment. Through intensive agriculture and urban growth, civilizations tend to destroy natural settings and habitats. This is sometimes referred to as "dominator culture". Proponents of this view believe that traditional societies live in greater harmony with nature than civilizations; people work with nature rather than try to subdue it. The sustainable living movement is a push from some members of civilization to regain that harmony with nature\(^4\).

\(^1\) In sociology and biology, **conflict theory** states that the society or organization functions so that each individual participant and its groups struggle to maximize their benefits, which inevitably contributes to social change such as changes in politics and revolutions. The theory is mostly applied to explain conflict between social classes in ideologies such as socialism and communism.

\(^2\) "Civilization", Wikipedia.

\(^3\) *Idem*

\(^4\) *Idem*
Primitivism is a modern philosophy totally opposed to civilization. They accuse civilizations as restricting humans, oppressing the weak and damaging the environment. A leading proponent is John Zerzan\(^1\).

2.1.3 Some Civilizations in Human History

Civilizations can be distinguished from one another in several ways, and the member of distinct civilizations, their duration, and extent are the subject of some debate. Historians may emphasize cultural distinctiveness, or may distinguish civilizations by degree of economic, political and diplomatic integration. The list below includes a number of civilizations commonly identified by historians. Many cultures evolve through the fusion of indeed, and subject to varying interpretations. Civilizations may be lumped or split\(^2\).

Most of the civilizations identified below meet the criteria of possessing cities, specialized occupations, political entities larger than a simple settlement, extensive trade networks, and writing, but not all of the civilizations listed below include all of these criteria. A number of cultures that possess certain of these characteristics are not included here\(^3\).

Most of these civilizations are now gone; some disappeared, their people returning to a pre-urban way of life; others were conquered by or

\(^{1}\) "Civilization", *Wikipedia*.  
\(^{2}\) \textit{Idem}  
\(^{3}\) \textit{Idem}
merged into other civilizations\footnote{"Civilization", \textit{Wikipedia.}}. How many distinct civilizations exist at present is a subject of some debate.

- Mesopotamia Civilization
- Levantine / West Semitic Civilization
- Hittite Civilization
- Persian Civilization
- Egyptian Civilization
- Indus Civilization
- Vedic Civilization
- Chinese (Sinic) Civilization
- Greco-Roman Civilization
- Western Civilization
- Byzantine Civilization
- Southeast Asian Civilization
- Mesoamerican Civilization
- Japanese Civilization
- Islamic Civilization
- West-African Civilization

Looking at the world as a whole, the history of civilized societies is a history of expansion. There were setbacks and withdrawals. Sometimes regions that had once been civilized became barbarous. The most familiar example is from the history of Western Europe. Part of Europe shared in the civilization of the Roman Empire, but then suffered repeated barbarian
invasions, with the result that city life and many aspects of classical civilization disappeared entirely. Yet civilized life returned, and then it took deeper and stronger root than before.\(^1\)

It is said that people must therefore, act in ignorance and as though people were free. Like all predecessors people have the task and opportunity of modifying mankind's future each day with every task they perform.\(^2\)

'Further, we cannot call it a healthy civilized order where humanity is divided into water-tight compartments or nations grouped under blocs or pacts in the name of security, leaving wavering neutrals for the time being either to wander in their fancied paradises, or to 'eddy about in blind uncertainty', and one and all practicing the art of war in barriers between man and man by means of passports, visas, emigration laws and similar devices.\(^3\)

With this purpose in view, the Qur'\(\text{\'an}\) has prescribed for man a code of ethics subserving this end a plan of economic living, as well as of polity, the entire scheme being regulated at every stage in the sphere of administration by trustworthy workers styled 'Salihin'\(^4\) (men of upright character gifted with the talent and the zest to help others live equally upright lives).

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\(^1\) William H. McNeill, "Civilization".

\(^2\) Idem

\(^3\) Idem

It was meant for all mankind to follow and not meant for any particular section of it, though avowedly styled Muslim. The Qur’ân has made it absolutely clear that if those who have openly given allegiance to it ever fail to uphold it in their daily activity, God will raise others to carry forward His mission in life. The ideology is a Trust of God bequeathed to man as man. If the hands of those who hold it formally begin to tremble, it will assuredly pass on to other hands. Time is bound to work out the destiny of man along the path of unity. The present may not be the hour for fulfillment, but it is sure to come one day. Only man has to develop the mood for introspection and change betimes the attitude that he may have developed of suspicions, distrust or ill-will towards another and begin to behave as a brother to every other and play the shepherd.²

If real peace is to be established on earth and a new civilization trust worthy of man is to take its rise, the United Nations Organization should seriously consider whether it is not high time to resolve at least on one thing, viz., that its members should pledge themselves severally to reorientate their national policies and programmes, not on the basis that they are nations alien to each other, but as members of a single family, each functioning as a shepherd or keeper unto every other, by pooling together their several national talents and the material resources of their respective countries for the good of each other or for the good of mankind as a whole. The hour calls for serious introspection and a return to God.

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² Ibid., pp. 59-60.
2.1.4 The Family as a Reflex of the Stage of Civilization

Literally, the family is the transmitter of the biological heritage; figuratively, it will always be the transmitter of a heritage that is social. In doing that it readapts itself in some degree, usually slight, to the changing character of the age. In brief, it reflects in part the stage of civilization through which it is passing. The eugenists may work out a standard by which the biologically fit alone are permitted to marry. Whether there are other selective or controlling forces actually to improve the biological and the non-biological inheritance, only the future can determine. Even the present seems to show a lessening of the influence of the family in the transmission of social inheritance. The home gives more and more to the child than school, even in that training which is supposed to be the chief social gain of early youth. The fact that the school does not accept children at an early age compels the home and family to continue this useful process of handing down customs or social inhibitions, and preparing children for life in the group. In a real sense, however, the culture of each age will be largely that is possible in the family circle. The non-material civilization may even be what the family makes it.

In times past, customs were largely a matter of tribe. The tribe as a body, however, contented itself chiefly with the initiation of new members, probably in the period of adolescence, and in the determination of standards and ideals to which youth must conform. Before young men

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and women were initiated into the sacred rites, the family was entrusted with practically all of the training held dear by the elders. At his mother’s knee or over it, the child learned what was right and what was wrong, not in his eyes or even in those of his parents but according to the mores of his own people. The mother who failed to follow the dictates of custom and law became an outcast without standing in her own community. Many tribes prohibited marriages with complete strangers, lest irrelevant innovations should destroy the very foundations of that society. A comparison of the customs among different tribes, possibly related in race and not far apart geographically, shows how compelling a force is exercised by taboo or social control. Suffice it to say that originally morals were only the “mores”, that is, the accepted customs of any group of people.

The imperative need of humanity is the creation of a common outlook or mind for humanity which may bring forth a concept of a civilization which shall denote peace on earth established through mutual goodwill between man and man — a civilization which shall promote not only the progress and perfection of the individual but the perfection of human relation all over the world and knit mankind into a single family, the family of God, as the Messenger of Islam, Muhammad ﷺ.

1 R. L. Ashley, Our Contemporary Civilization: A Study of the Twentieth Century Renaissance, p. 480.
styled it a "fold every member of which shall be a shepherd unto every other and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold"\textsuperscript{1}.

### 2.2 Contemporary Civilization

Modern European Civilization has, in some of its aspects, spread over the entire globe, and encompassed every sphere of life. It has no doubt contributed immensely to the material progress of mankind, and the physical comfort of the individual. But in the scale of life its advantages are outweighed by its advantages or the weaknesses which it has introduced in human life. It is why this modern civilization has succeeded neither in bringing to man, even in the West, the inward peace that he needs, nor in promoting peaceful relations between man and man on any lasting basis, the two primary functions which any civilization worth the name has to fulfill\textsuperscript{2}.

Greece is the birthplace of “Western Civilization” and the site of a unique, almost miraculous, spiritual development that supposedly elevates “Western Man” to humanity’s pinnacle\textsuperscript{3}.

The founders of Western Civilization took the writings of Aristotle from Classical Civilization and practically canonized their creator. The


\textsuperscript{2} S. A. Lateef, “Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View”, p. 54.

Greek city-state of Aristotle’s time became the model for the feudal city-states of Western Civilization with one very important exception: a return to a monarchy (appropriate to the earliest stages of almost all civilizations) as opposed to instituting a democracy (only appropriate to the later stages of a civilization, after the franchised populace is sufficiently educated). This gave a tremendous “jump-start” to Western Civilization because it was able to begin its social development at practically the same place where Aristotle left off. However, the Roman Catholic Church acted as gigantic brake on this same social development, so the net result was that Western Civilization languished in the so-called “Dark Ages” for over five hundred years.

Ancient Greece came to represent the childhood of Europe. This notion was partially inspired by Plato in *Timaeus*, where the Athenian law-giver Solon is reminded by an aged Egyptian priest that “you Greeks are always children ... you are always young in soul, everyone of you. For ... you possess not a single belief that is ancient”.

The protagonists of the European civilization claim that it rests on very noble foundations. They say that it is heir primarily to the glories of the ancient civilization of Greece. In a large sense, it is so. But few care to admit that it is heir to its weaknesses as well. Who can deny that the Greeks through their city-state of Athens have given us a high conception

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of a democratic life, of a democracy where knowledge was free and full, where beauty both in form and thought was superb and where the mind of its citizens could reach very high summits? We have been taught by our universities to call this civilization of the Greek city-state as a noble civilization. The charm of its beautiful exterior is so irresistible to its devotees!1

In the 1780s, historians of philosophy agreed that there had been no philosophy before the Greeks. That Greece seemed to excel in poetry, art, and philosophy — that is, in two fields usually identified, respectively, with the youth and the maturity of a "race" — gave the Ancient Greeks a superhuman status as the models of a balanced and integrated humanity. The image of the "divine Greeks" was particularly strong in Germany, where Neo-Hellenism had become identified with a passionate quest for social regeneration2.

We must recognize, instead, that Greece developed at the intersection of Europe, Egypt, and the Middle East. The greatness of Greek Civilization, and the central role Greece played in the formation of European cultures, were the result not of isolation and cultural purity, but of frequent contacts between the many surrounding peoples of the Mediterranean Basin and the already heterogeneous natives of the Aegean3.

1 S. A. Lateef, "Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View", pp. 54-55.
3 Ibid., p. 11.
The mode of classical life was transmitted to Rome only to intensify an already existing exclusive class consciousness on which the Roman state had been reared. This was the cultural strain which through the wreckage of the Roman Empire was transmitted to the Middle Ages and the continental Renaissance, giving rise to geographical or linguistic, regional or racial nationalism converting Europe into a mess of contending rival military camps. This is the strain which generated and exploited the Industrial Revolution to metamorphose the old feudal order of lords and guilds into an industrial order of capitalists, and the professional classes of technicians, administrators and the working classes, and this is the strain which supplied the urge to every geographical nationality in Europe, even the tiniest, to embark on colonial ventures all over the globe outside of Europe, and carve out exclusive colonial zones for exploitation. Such is the strain which originally emanated from Greece and Rome and which has till now held under its grip the mind of the Western man, direct and open. But it is leaving behind for the non-European world a trial of legacies, both in social tastes and political ideology, the ultimate effects of which may not be easy to foresee at this moment.¹

Roman Civilization is the direct ancestor of the modern Western world. Combined with the Greek influence, Roman law and political ideas have had a strong influence on the West².

¹ S. A. Lateef, "Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View", pp. 55-56.
The Roman system was an empire built on conquest with incorporation, but without representation. The secret of Rome's strength lay in the fact that she incorporated vanquished nations into her own political body. Never before had so many people been brought under one government without making slaves of most of them.

Thus the whole Mediterranean world was brought under one government; many people of absorbed nations became Roman citizens and enjoyed the protection of Roman laws. Gradually the Roman Empire became permeated with the philosophy of the Greeks and the religion of the Jews and Christians. Human life was raised to a higher plane. The Greek notion of a democracy was almost realized. As Francis Schaffer comments:

Rome did not fall because of external forces such as the invasion by the barbarians. Rome had no sufficient inward base; the barbarians only completed the breakdown — and Rome gradually became a ruin.

When Rome fell to the invading Germanic tribes, the culture of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire was separated from that of the Western Empire. The first great dividing line in history is the end of the Ancient era and the beginning of the Medieval era. This dividing line is

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1 Jay Rogers, "Whatever Happened to Western Civilization?".
commonly associated with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 C.E. The most influential philosophy at this time was contained in the revamped teachings of Plato, dubbed neo-Platonism. Alfred North Whitehead has remarked that the entire history of European philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. Yet in later centuries, the increasing reliance on Greek thought instead of Scripture led to a distortion away from biblical teaching

Religion came into the life of man as forces for unity by supplying a universal emotional content not only to the individual but to mankind as a whole. They were all meant to establish peace on earth. But their tragedy is that they have in the past been very often exploited by divisional forces at work in life to function as factors for exclusiveness and rivalry between man and man, and consequently become engines of disturbance to the human mind rather than agencies for constructive happiness for man. Now it is for the thoughtful among the followers of every faith to rescue religion from this bondage and let it function again for the purposes for which it first came into being. It is for every one of us all over the world to invoke one's religion and ask its soul to assert itself and release from within it which work for the progress and happiness of the individual and the progress and happiness of humanity as a whole. Indeed, that has been the call of the Qur'ân ever since it was delivered over fourteen hundred

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years ago through that illustrious holy personality, the last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم of Islam¹.

The Western world of the first century C.E. was hungry for religion; yet the classical religions of Greece and Rome had little to offer. Instead many people turned to Eastern mysticism and philosophy².

So the bases on which the Western Civilization rests are purely materialistic and for removed from the spirituality of religion and its intrinsic effects. And the result is that religion is losing its sway and authority in the Western countries day by day, and the man in the West finding himself drifting towards the deepest abyss of degradation, is confronted with the severest distraction and apprehension. Their thinkers and other endued with insight want to review and bring into action the spiritual values of religion, but where are they to come upon them! The evil tree of atheism and materialism is bearing its bitter fruit and is deeply rooted now³.

Christianity undoubtedly has done an immense service to the cause of humanity both in Europe and elsewhere. But it has not withstood the Caesarism in Europe. Christ came to abolish Caesarism. In the 'Kingdom of God' which he earnestly desired to see established on earth, there was absolutely no place for another king in the form of a Caesar. To speak the truth, European Christianity has had the misfortune to witness helplessly

¹ S. A. Lateef, "Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View", p. 56.
² Jay Rogers, "Whatever Happened to Western Civilization?".
the onward march of Caesarism bending all its energy, headless of Christian ethics, to the colonial expansion of Europe giving thereby to the European or modern civilization a distinctly unChristian aspect\(^1\).

The term Western world can have multiple meanings depending on the context. Originally defined as 'Europe', most modern uses of the term refer to the societies of Europe and their genealogical, colonial and philosophical descendants, typically also including those countries whose ethnic identity and their dominant culture derive from European culture. The West is also called the 'Occident'. Historically, the definitions have varied\(^2\).

The modern Western Civilization, as we know, came into existence from contact of the west with the Islamic culture and other Muslim countries. The scholastics and philosophers of the Islamic world were very much interested in the Greek philosophy, rendered their books into their own language set to study and propagate them, and when the Western people had acquired breadth of vision and they inferred these facts which were diametrically opposed to the knowledge and teachings of the church, a long drawn struggle ensued between the church and science. At long last the philosophers and the thinkers succeeded in this struggle after they had been through an exasperating course of imprisonment, inquisitions, verdicts of heresy and ex-communications and all sorts of troubles and calamities. When this renaissance movement of the West could stand on its

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\(^1\) S. A. Lateef, “Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View”, pp. 56-57.

\(^2\) “Civilization”, Wikipedia.
feet it had the clear stamp of two things: love of the Greek philosophy, formed with purely materialistic and idolatrous concepts, and disgust of religion and animosity of the religious people and rebellion against them. So we find that the opinions of the Western thinkers were formed and developed under these two factors, and it was under the shadow of these powerful elements that all the philosophical and moral schools of the West have developed which pervade the Western mind and heart to this day.  

It is in fact assumed that “Western Civilization” represents a European viewpoint or the viewpoint of people who trace the ancestry back to Europe. Thus, the main failure of this paradigm is always taken to be its limited capacity for inclusion. Even a sketchy excursus through the nodal points of its constitution indicates that accepting the notion of Western Civilization is to accept a historical fiction. It is to accept a concept that (like the “eternal feminine”) is a-prioristically constructed, has no historical referent, and can be legitimized only by political fiat or by the specious postulate of a trans-historical Western Mind.

Western Civilization — and its tantalizing thrusts of Mystery, Majesty, Malevolence, Magnificence, Dynasties, Democracies, Dictatorships — creating enigmas and questions, its mighty achievements

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and dismal failures, its frenzies for freedom and its relapses to brutal repression — form a core of Power and Progress. And in that mix of contradictions and complexities, the portion of the world known as ‘Western Civilization’ remains as a power core of the world. The civilization of this portion of the world, stands on the almost incomparable poles of power and decency.

World War I also consecrated the ascendance of the United States as the leading capitalist power and opened the way to the disengagement of an increasingly international capitalism from territorial Europe, which further undermined the bourgeois identification of the goals of “civilization” with those of European culture. Thus, “Western Civilization”, which until the War had primarily thrived on European soil, became the official ideology of the United States, where it “[became] the answer to international and political struggle”, and the centerpiece of college education.

During the early sixteenth century C.E., explorers and conquerors like Christopher Columbus, Herman Cortes and several others conquered new continents on behalf of the Western nations. Up until the nineteenth century C.E., Europeans settled new lands and thus the term “Western” came to encompass nations and former colonies such as the United States,

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Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc, populated mostly by immigrants from Europe and their descendants¹.

It is true that serious minds in every country have been endeavouring, particularly since the First World War, to place civilization on some stable basis. A League of Nations was at first set up, and when that could not stabilize civilization and the world went again through a blood-bath, a United Nations' Organization was brought into being. Even this has not proved to be a guarantee for civilized relationship between man and man².

In American hands, "Western Civilization" has served a variety of political objectives, as a prop used at different times to bolster the animal spirits of the capitalist class, to guide the newly independent "Third World" nations onto the path of "modernization", to reaffirm Europe's commitment to NATO against centrifugal tendencies, to deflect the danger of the "welfare state", and, pivotal to all, to rally anticommunist crusaders to the defense of the "Free World". At each turn, the appeal to "Western Civilization" has served to dress the mundane objectives connected with the expansion of capitalist relations with a spiritual mantle, playing a role similar to that of Christianity in the political life of the Middle Ages. The vehicles of this cultural politics were innumerable tracts, lecture series, and seminars, produced in the shadows of power, which form a genre of their own, mixing historical overviews, moral

¹ "Civilization", Wikipedia.
² S. A. Lateef, "Culture and Civilization: The Islamic View", p. 56.
considerations, and policy analyses in a standardized format, tailored to American needs. For while in Europe, “Western Civilization” had been vindicated as a Latin or Germanic offspring, stress was now placed on its North Atlantic roots, even though this required attributing a more composite essence to “the ethos of the West”, and devising a long train of steps to establish a credible connection between such hardly compatible phenomena as twentieth-century C.E. American industrialism and Hellenism, Judeo-Christian monotheism, Roman law, and Protestant individualism1. What would Plato have thought in finding himself anachronistically identified as a forerunner of Luther or as one of the forefathers of NATO, as it became common to suggest in the political language of the 1950s, was a question never asked. Indeed, such rhetorical license would not claim special notice, so accustomed have we become to hearing Western Civilization defended in the language of Realpolitik, were not “Western Civilization” still being considered a worthwhile object of study and a cultural norm aspiring to have a canonic value2.

1 Exemplary of the conceptual somersaults that became necessary in order to transplant “Western Civilization” on English and American soil and to bind it to the history of capitalism is the following account offered by Hans Kohn: “Modern Western Civilization has its roots in the Greco-Roman Civilization of antiquity and in the Western Christendom of the Middle Ages. Yet its spirit was unknown before the seventeenth century C.E., being based upon the new realities of liberty, science, tolerance. The roots of the modern West go back to Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome; yet it was a new growth that sprang up in London, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, and Paris”; Hans Kohn, Is the Liberal West in Decline?, London: Pall Mall Press, 1957, pp. 18-19.

Japan in 1955 C.E. (immediately after its occupation by the US) would be considered part of the West while it would not be in 1450 C.E., or 1500 C.E., even — before substantial colonization had occurred¹.

During the Cold War, a new definition emerged. The earth was divided into three “worlds”, numbered “first”, “second” and “third”. The first was NATO-members and other countries aligned with the United States. The second world was the Eastern bloc in the Communist sphere of influence, such as the then Soviet Union, People’s Republic of China, etc. The third world consisted of countries unaligned with either. Hence, the Western world became a synonym for the first world².

Throughout the 1980s, “Western Civilization” was at the center of the controversies that accompanied the demand for multicultural education and pedagogical reform in American colleges³.

There is also a widespread perception that “Western Civilization” is undergoing a historic crisis, and indeed all the trendiest philosophical school — postmodernism, feminist theory, afro-centrism, deconstruction — have defined themselves as alternatives to, or critiques of, “Western Civilization”⁴.

¹ “Civilization”, Wikipedia.
² Idem
The Western Civilization framework can be maintained only through a set of adjustments that violate the very principles of truthfulness and rationality that Western Civilization allegedly promotes. One such adjustment is the exclusion from the history of Europe and its empires of those who did not identify with the political ideology of "the West", of those who struggled against it, or, in J. P. Sartre's words, "knew Western Civilization only through their scars".1

It has also been objected that Western Civilization cannot provide the perspective from which world history is conceptualized, for such a move perpetuates the belief in the cultural superiority of Europe. Few, however, have asked how the concept of Western Civilization has been constructed, what historical status it can claim, or have suggested that Western Civilization is a fiction. More than that, in taking an oppositional stand against "Western values", the new cultural vanguards have contributed to naturalize "Western Civilization", so that the concept is now increasingly used as a self-explanatory term, a term of absolute reference, and above all a neutral term.2

More typically, the term "The West" contains a pejorative meaning — simply to describe and delineate the wealthy and dominant societies from the poorer societies — those who are believe they are subjugated economically, militarily and otherwise, by deliberate restraints placed on

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2 Silvia Federici, *Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Western Civilization and Its "Others"*, p. x.
them by the wealthier ones. "The West" then becomes simply a term to mean "Wealthy, Colonial, Europe — descended (or allied) societies"\(^1\).

However, there are many who question the meaning of the notion of Western values and point out that societies such as Japan and United States are very different. Furthermore, they point out that advocates of Western values are selective in what they include as Western; usually including for example, the concepts of freedom, democracy, and free trade, but not Communism and Nazism, both of which began in the West, or slavery, which reached massive levels in the West and whose history in the West goes back millennia. Therefore, by selecting what values are parts of Western values one can tautologically show that they are superior, since any inferior values by definition are not Western\(^2\).

The exclusionary meaning of "Western Civilization" was consolidated in the post-World War I period, when "the East" began to appear in the eyes of the European bourgeoisie as a rising tide of forces, threatening to destroy its world hegemony. The 1920s were the years when the East/West conflict came to dominate the thinking of the bienpensants in Europe. Several factors contributed to this development. First, the rise of nationalism and anticolonial striving in Asia raised the specter of the decline of Europe's colonial power, metaphorically expressed by the obsession\(^3\).

\(^1\) "Civilization", *Wikipedia*.

\(^2\) *Idem*

\(^3\) Silvia Federici, "The God that Never Failed: The Origins and Crisis of Western Civilization", pp. 67-68.
Historically, one of the interesting question is how did the societies associated with “the West” come to dominate the world between 1750 C.E. and 1950 C.E.¹

We have now what some have called the ‘Contemporary Age’. The direction of change in much of the Western World today involves the rejection of the philosophy of Marxism and its twin worldview: materialistic humanism. Instead many post-Marxist countries will be moving toward a Christian based reform movement. Every feature of many societies — East, West and Third world — will be marked by a revival in interest in the new Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ, surely, the whole concept of progress is an arrogant idea unless Jesus Christ is at the source of all blessings².

Last but not least, an unquestioning, naturalizing approach to “Western Civilization” precludes both an understanding of the reasons for its enduring currency and a proper evaluation of the prophecies concerning its imminent crisis. For it is not the first time that “Western Civilization” has sustained radical challenges. Already in the post-World War I and World War II period, the specter of the “decline of the West” haunted the politics of the European and American elites. Moreover, for almost four decades every liberation movement in the “Third World” has defined its goals in opposition or as an alternative to “Western Civilization”. Yet, in each case “Western Civilization” has endured. While

¹ “Civilization”, Wikipedia.
² Jay Rogers, “Whatever Happened to Western Civilization?”. 

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undergoing changes in rhetoric and objectives, it still managed to present itself as a model, under the guise of “modernization”, to the new nations of the “Third World”

The world is at a very significant juncture of world history. When historians look back at 1989 C.E., 1990 C.E. and 1991 C.E., the last few years will be considered watershed marks in the progress of human history. Just as the year 476 C.E., marked the end of the Ancient Age with the fall of the Roman Empire; and the year 1500 C.E., marked the end of the Medieval Age with the beginning of the Age of Exploration and the Reformation; so 1989 C.E., marked the end of the Modern Age with the downfall of Communism and the beginning of Islam’s slide into turmoil as stated by Silvia Federici

It can also be argued that after 500 years of “Western” intervention in the “Third World”, no world culture has remained intact and, vice versa, that many of the celebrated achievements of “the West” have been obtained through the incorporation of the accumulated knowledge of “non-Westerners”. Where, then, should we draw the line between what is internal and what is external to “Western Civilization”? And to what


extent can we turn to its “Others” as an alternative to the present cultural configuration? Western Civilization is a recent ideological invention, dissimulating under a cultural mantle the worldwide expansion of capitalist relations as stated by R. A. Olguin¹.

There is no “true West” in a sense that is analogous to “true North”, the term used to distinguish the pole of magnetic north from the real position of the earth’s northern pole. However, as the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci argued in the 1930s, citing the authority of English philosopher Bertrand Russell, “because of the historical content that has become attached to the geographical terms, the expressions East and West have finished up indicating specific relations between different cultural complexes”². My present concern is the recent history usually masked by that “historical content” which has come to be attached to the term “the West” and its cognates — “Western Civilization”, “Western history”, or “Western culture”. Everyday usage in such diverse formulations as “Western diplomats”, “Western philosophy”, and “Western food” suggests that there is something essentially “Western”, of longstanding historical continuity, linking all these things from diplomacy to philosophy to food. However, that it was only between the 1880s and the 1920s that “the West” entered the English language as a term linking a contemporary


political bloc, a discrete historical development within world history, and a lived sense of cultural identity.

The seemingly descriptive term "the West" has perpetuated deep-rooted confusions over those "relations between different cultural complexes" it is used to designate. Most important of all is the misconception that the idea of "the West" is a coherent, intelligible idea, an idea whose historical referent is readily available to the users of the term. Such a "true West", is a myth; and to recognize it as such is to pose new challenges for academic study, teaching, and research.

The poetic use of the term "Western" is radically different from the twentieth century C.E. commonplace usage, both in the relation it posits between a multiplicity of "wests" and a singularity of lyrical experience, and in the sort of coincidence it crafts between mythological and geographical references. Today the rhetorical force of "Western" culture depends on assumptions almost uncannily applicable to Keat's linking of Greek culture, literary tradition, translation, scientific discovery and Europe's imperial expansion.

Two contexts help show how the idea of the West, in a remarkably short period of time, came to appear an age-old idea. The first is that of British imperial rhetoric during the 1890s, at the height of the jingoism,

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2 Ibid., p. 38.

3 Ibid., p. 43.
propaganda, and politics of the “new imperialism”. The second is that of Russian intellectual debates from the 1860s, which exercised a profound influence over the main currents of Western European culture and politics over the turn of the century. In both cases, it is apparent that the term gained currency in response to major social and political upheavals: in response to revolutions in Russia in 1905 C.E., and 1917 C.E.; and in response to increasing resistance to colonialism. Behind the new rhetorical force attached to the term “the West” over the turn of the century, then, lies a far-reaching contestation of history and tradition — over contending versions of Europe’s cultural heritage, and over the significance of Europe’s colonial entanglement with the rest of the world. In the convergence of British and Russian influences on the term, an idea of “the West” emerged which has since served to reconstitute historical discontinuity as the continuity of “Western history”1.

It was not, however, around the term “the West” that debates were articulated during the period of Europe’s consolidation of worldwide hegemony in the nineteenth century C.E. As Edward Said has shown, it was the term “the East” that dominated almost every area of nineteenth-century C.E. European culture. Summarizing his point early in the study of what he calls the discourse of Orientalism, he writes:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called
the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans

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against all "those" non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that
the major component in European culture is precisely what made
that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of
European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the
non-European peoples and cultures.

It is revealing that almost all of the examples of this sort of
orientalist discourse depend on a contrast between Europe and "the East".
The increasing shift from the use of the term "Europe" to that of "the
West", from around the turn of the century, tells of an important change
in the fundamental shape of the idea of European identity. Increasing use
of the term "the West" by no means uniformly indicates a diminishing
sense of the superiority of a European identity. Nonetheless, a new
awareness of global proportions radically unsettled ideas about what that
European identity was. There is one famous formulation of a "Western"
perspective which helps measure the gap between nineteenth-century C.E.
Orientalist assumptions about Europe's cultural and political superiority
and those connected with the twentieth-century C.E. idea of the West.

The complex echo-effect of Russian nihilism throughout Europe
belongs to a widespread social and political upheaval that was dramatically
transforming the shape of Europe over the turn of the century. Far from a
mere change of names — from "Europe" to "the West" — the adoption of a

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2 Chris Gogwilt, "True West: The Changing Idea of the West from the 1880s to the
specifically Russian idea of the West shows a reaction to the breakup of the old political formations of Central and Eastern Europe¹.

Perhaps the most influential person to articulate an idea of "the West" as the conceptual lever for redefining Europe was Oswald Spengler. In the introduction to *The Decline of the West* (1917 C.E.), Spengler wrote:

> The word "Europe" ought to be struck out of history. There is historically no "European" type.... It is thanks to this word "Europe" alone, and the complex of ideas resulting from it, that our historical consciousness has come to link Russia with the West in an utterly baseless unity — a mere abstraction derived from the reading of books — that has led to immense real consequences. In the shape of Peter the Great, this word has falsified the historical tendencies of a primitive human mass for two centuries, whereas the Russian instinct has very truly and fundamentally divided "Europe" from "Mother Russia" with the hostility that we can see embodied in Tolstoy, Aksakov, or Dostoyevsky. "East" and "West" are notions that contain real history, whereas "Europe" is an empty sound².

Spengler's distinction between "Europe" and "the West" is revealing also for his attempt to overcome the crisis in philosophies of history over the turn of the century. His insistence on striking the word "Europe" from

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¹ Chris Gogwilt, "True West: The Changing Idea of the West from the 1880s to the 1920s", p. 45.
history surfaces in an attack on the provincialism of nineteenth-century C.E. historical perspectives:

Thanks to the subdivision of history into ‘Ancient’, ‘Medieval’, and ‘Modern’ — an incredibly jejune and meaningless scheme, which has, however, entirely dominated our historical thinking — we have failed to perceive the true position in the general history of higher mankind, of the little part-world which has developed on West-European soil from the time of the German-Roman Empire, to judge of its relative importance and above all to estimate its direction\(^1\).

More might be said about the contradictory combination of an evolutionary model — “the general history of higher mankind” — and the attempt to place European history in the relative perspective of world civilizations. If there is nothing new about the general shape of this contradiction, what is distinct about Spengler’s attempt to overcome the limitations of historical relativism is the key idea of the West as a term that can set one fraction of world history in a determined relation to world history. In this methodological maneuver, which in itself carries a certain truth, we might grasp how the insistence on striking the word “Europe” out of history creates a new historical fiction: “the West” — a “true West”

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that can measure historical process as accurately as a compass may be used to judge "true North".\footnote{Chris Gogwilt, "True West: The Changing Idea of the West from the 1880s to the 1920s", p. 51.}

Anticipating Spengler’s life-cycles of civilizations and Toynbee’s\footnote{Arnold J. Toynbee, \textit{A Study of History}, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1947.} justifications of “Western Civilization” as an intelligible field of study, Kidd argued that “to obtain a just conception of Western Civilization, it is necessary to regard it from the beginning as a single continuous growth, endowed with a definite principle of life, subject to law, and passing, like any other organism, through certain orderly stages of development”.\footnote{Benjamin Kidd, \textit{Social Evolution}, London: Macmillan, 1894, p. 147.}

Whatever the exact nature of Kidd’s influence, his idea of “the West” as a contemporary political entity, racially defined and expressing a common historical heritage, sheds light on the increasing importance of the term “the West” in the changing shape of British imperial ideology and policy over the first two decades of the twentieth century C.E., as politicians and policy advisers sought to articulate Britain’s new role in world politics. These changes might for convenience be divided into three stages. The first is marked by the disillusionment with the “new imperialism” of the 1890s following the protracted South African Boer War from 1899 C.E. to 1902 C.E., won by the British at the cost of humiliating defeats. The second stage begins with the end of Britain’s “splendid isolation” from European alliances, marked by the 1902 entente
cordiale (warm and friendly understanding) with France which prefigured
the battlefronts of the First World War when Britain and France
constituted the “Western allies” engaged with Russia on the Eastern front
against Germany. The third stage, in the aftermath of the First World
War, is marked by the effort to establish new international alliances, at
such conferences as the Peace Conference, the League of Nations
Conference, and the Imperial Conference where the formal structure of
the British Empire was refashioned to produce the British
Commonwealth. Between the Boer War and 1919 C.E., as the
administrative structure of formal Empire dissolved, the idea of the West
emerged to re-tailor imperialist assumptions to suit a new politics of neo-
colonialism¹.

Hannah Arendt in a book entitled, Origins of Totalitarianism,
writes:

We can no longer afford to take that which is good in the
past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply
think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in
oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally
come to the surface and usurped the dream of our tradition².

Norbert Elias, 1978, said:

Civilization sums up everything in which Western Society

¹ Chris Gogwilt, “True West: The Changing Idea of the West from the 1880s to the
1920s”, p. 53.

² Silvia Federici, “The God that Never Failed: The Origins and Crisis of Western
Civilization”, p. 63.
of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or "more primitive" contemporary ones. By this term Western society seeks to describe what constitutes its special character.\(^1\)

The concept of "the West" is highly problematic, since it pretends to be constructed by reference to conventional geographical coordinates and yet maps the world in ways that defy "common sense", leaving entire regions in limbo. Moreover, it does not specify from whose viewpoint the partition is made, which in the case of a relative term is generally considered a violation of logical norms. Worse yet, a genealogy of "Western Civilization" demonstrates that this concept has historically developed in the context of military and ideological warfare, as the label for a political reality that could be conceived as unified only by reference to perceived enemies and contenders. Thus, to continue to use this term is not only to validate a view of the world as constituted by opposite blocks, but also to adopt an adversarial self-definition.\(^2\)

The notion of "the West" as a political designation dates back to the sixteenth century C.E., originating from the two major crises Christianity faced during this period, the Protestant Reformation and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which called for the invention of a secular term to


replace the now contentious Christendom. “West”, “Europe”, and “Occident” were for a time used interchangeably. One of the first appearances of “West” was in Edward Fairfax’s translation of Tasso Jerusalem Delivered (1600), an allegorical celebration of the anti-Ottoman League formed by Phillip II, the pope, and the Venetian rulers, which was to defeat the Turkish navy at the battle of Lepanto in 1571 C.E. Tasso used the Crusades as the setting for his allegory, which had the League standing for the Crusaders and the Turks playing the Saracens. In Fairfax’s translation, the Devil’s rallying call introduces us to the first political usage of “Western”:

The Western rebels, with your power withstand
Pluck up these weeds, before they overgroe
The gentle garden of the Hebrewes land . . . \(^1\)

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries C.E., however, “the West” performed primarily a geographical function, differentiating the Eastern from the Western Church, the eastern from the western Empire, the eastern from the western world. It was a synonym with “Occident”, as in the English divine Thomas Becon (1553 C.E.) expression, “The occidental or west churches throughout all Europe”\(^2\). But it never succeeded in replacing “Christendom”. This was to be the fate of “Europe”, a geographical term, already used in Ancient Greek and Latin,

\(^1\) Silvia Federici, “The God that Never Failed: The Origins and Crisis of Western Civilization”, p. 66.

which, until the eighteenth century C.E. (witness the works of Rousseau and Kant, among others), was the preferred political term for transnational self-reference, while “Christendom” became increasingly obsolescent¹, and “West” and “Occident” were left to play subordinate roles, being introduced mainly to refer to the Americas, as in Berkeley famous “Westward Ho!”².

Only in the aftermath of the nineteenth-century C.E. colonial penetration of India, China, and the Middle East did “the West” take on a more prominent political role, as the signifier of Europe’s imperial project. It was at this time that it began to include the United States, previously referred to as the “New World”, and to merge with the concept of “civilization”, the term coined by Enlightenment philosophers to describe the aim of social evolution, which they identified with the processes and

¹ H. D. Schmidt describes some of the reasons behind the expulsion of “Christendom” from English. He points out that the choice of a more neutral “Europe” came from the opponents, in the late seventeenth century C.E. in England, of the foreign policies of Louis XIV, who liked to describe himself, hermetically, not only as the “Sun King” but also as “the most Christian King”. In the 1670s and 1680s, the fortunes of “Christendom” and “Europe” fluctuated with the “Popish Plot”, the succession crisis, and the defeat of the Turks at Vienna. But William of Orange’s successful invasion of England in 1688 C.E. and the establishment of an almost century-long Whig hegemony over British politics condemned “Christendom” to oblivion. Schmidt concludes: “The term Europe established itself as an expression of supreme loyalty in the fight against Louis XIV. It was associated with the concept of a balanced system of sovereign states, religious tolerance, and expanding commerce”; H. D. Schmidt, “The Establishment of ‘Europe’ as a Political Expression”, Historical Journal, Vol.: 9, Issue, 2, 1966, pp. 171-78.

institutions marking the development of private property, the family, and monetary relations.

In becoming “Western”, “civilization”, which had previously been considered (by Enlightenment philosophers) a universal stage in humanity’s “growth”, began to signify a culturally relative state, characterized by unique norms, attitudes, and mentalities. Ironically, however, its exclusionary connotations were only intensified, as “Western” became now an explicit mark of superiority to others.

In reality, today as well the notion of “Western Civilization” depends for its content on the dicta of the dominant capitalist nations, and the annual reports of the U.S. State Department are generally more useful in deciding what the West is and who belongs to it than any cultural map. So instrumentally defined is “Western Civ” that the same countries or ideologies could become “Eastern” or “Western” depending on the context and the shift of political alliances. Marxism, for example, while generally pictured as an offspring of the despotic “East”, has often been vindicated as a “Western” product when the interlocutors were Third World nationalists, who had to be reminded that even for their struggles they were in debt to “the West”, since presumably never would they have rebelled against colonialism had not Marx and other Western revolutionaries equipped them with the idea of human rights. “Western”


in this process has acquired both a denotative and connotative character. To this day, it denotes those abiding by the principles of private enterprise, and, in one stroke, it sets up a cultural norm, in the same way as “German”, during the Third Reich, became a qualification of goodness and superiority, and an indication not only of ethnic origin but also of moral resolve.

Barraclough argues, for instance, that the Roman Empire (one of the pillars of “the West”, together with Christianity and the “classical tradition”) could hardly provide the basis for Western/European coherence, being itself increasingly sustained from Eastern, non-European lands. He adds that the direct heir of Rome was not “the West”, but Byzantium, where Roman civilization and the very structure of the Roman state continued down to the fall of Constantinople. By contrast, “classical civilization” was extinct in Rome; as shown by Christian art, whose anti-classical character gives evidence against the continuity of the classical tradition. Barraclough adds that, far from seizing on what was vital in the Roman world, the Church was hostile to the Roman tradition; and that the places that really mattered in the early Christian centuries

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3 Ibid., p. 35.
4 Ibid., p. 36.
were not in Europe but in Africa or Asia Minor. Most important, he warns that “Much of the apparent unity of thought — presumably characterising ‘the West’ — is due primarily to the fact that the Catholic Church extirpated its opponents (e.g., the heretics), burned their literature, and had the monopoly of writing”.

Nevertheless, the terminology that characterizes the Western Civilization discourse shows that Western Civilization is still conceptualized as an organic form. We hear of the “Western Mind”, or “the genius of the West”, as if the West were an individual organism; it is asked whether Western Civilization “must decline”, or will continue to “grow”. Western Civilization, we are told, can at times abscond, lie in wait for a more propitious environment, then it resurfaces invigorated in a new soil, it suffers setbacks, occasionally it fails to stand up to its principles, changes its abode, is cross-fertilized, and so forth.

The lesson to be drawn from these statements is that we cannot maintain the “Western Civilization” framework as a matter of convenience, if we want to teach history in a coherent and nonapologetic manner. Moreover, as a tool of historical and cultural interpretation,

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"Western Civilization" constantly confronts us with contradictions and unsolvable aporias.

Greece was an essential part of "the West" — in fact, it "gave rise to the West" — six centuries before Christ, but soon apparently lost its "Western" vocation, to the point that no account of "the West" would nowadays strive to include its more than 2,000-year-old history.

Today "Western Civ" serves at best as an abbreviation for a series of "required" historical facts to be "covered" between the first and last day.

As for civilization, it is usually used in the singular to mean modern Western Civilization which since the twelfth/eighteenth century C.E. has been in the West as the civilization; one that has set about to destroy and obliterate systematically all other civilizations including the Islamic. The modern world is moving rapidly towards a fatally dangerous precipice even if still its champions call this movement progress as stated by S. H. Nasr.

Modern civilization has not succeeded, despite its claims, in becoming global and succeeding completely in destroying other civilization. Something of other traditional civilization still survives, especially the Islamic which for that very reason poses the greatest challenge by its very existence to the claim of modern civilization to world

1 Silvia Federici, "The God that Never Failed: The Origins and Crisis of Western Civilization", p. 75.
2 Ibid., p. 75.
3 Ibid., p. 77.
beginning. Nor is the Islamic conception of man completely forgotten despite the encroachment of various forms of modernism and secularism into the Islamic world\(^1\).

### 2.3 Islamic Civilization

Islamic Civilization as a whole is, based upon a unique point of view: the revelation brought by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the "pure" and simple religion of Adam عليه السلام and Abraham عليه السلام, the restoration of a ultimate and fundamental unity. The very word Islam means both "submission" and "peace" or "being at one with the Divine Will"\(^2\).

There can be no doubt that the essence of Islamic civilization is Islam; or that the essence of Islam is *tawhid*, the act of affirming Allah to be the One, Absolute, Transcendent Creator, Lord and Master of all that is\(^3\).

These two fundamental premises are self-evident. They have never been doubted by those who belonged to this civilization or participated in it. And only very recently have missionaries, orientalists, and other interpreters of Islam subjected them to doubt. Whatever their level of education, Muslims are absolutely certain that Islamic Civilization does

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have an essence, that this essence is knowable and capable of analysis or description, that it is *tawhid*.

The creed of Islam "there is no divinity other than God and Muhammad صلی الله علیه و وسلم is His Messenger" summarizes in its simplicity the basic attitude and spirit of Islam. To grasp the essence of Islam, it is enough to recognize that God is one, and that the Prophet صلی الله علیه و وسلم, who is the vehicle of revelation and the leader of the *ummah*, was sent by Him. This simplicity of the Islamic revelation further implies a type of religious structure different in many ways from that of Christianity. There is no priesthood as such in Islam. Each Muslim being a “priest” is himself capable of fulfilling all the religious functions of his family and, if necessary, of his community; and the role of the Imam, as understood in either *Sunni* or *Shi'a* approach of Islam, does not in any way diminish the sacerdotal function of each believer. The orthodoxy based on this creed is intangible, and therefore not so closely bound to specific formulations of dogmatic theology as in Christianity. There have been, to be sure, sectional fanaticism and even persecution, carried on either by rulers or by exoteric theologians, against such figures as al-Hallaj and Suhrawardi. Yet the larger orthodoxy, based on the essential doctrine of unity, has always prevailed and has been able to absorb within the structure of Islam all that is not contradictory to the Muslim creed.

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Traditionally and simply expressed, *tawhid* is the conviction and witnessing that "there is no god but God". This negative statement, brief to the utmost limits of brevity, carries the greatest and richest meanings in the whole of Islam. Sometimes, a whole culture, a whole civilization, or a whole history lies compressed in one sentence. This certainly is the case of the *kalimah* (pronouncement) or *shahadah* (witnessing) of Islam. All the diversity, wealth and history, culture and learning, wisdom and civilization of Islam is compressed in this shortest of sentences "*la ilaha illa Allah*" (There is no god but Allah).¹

Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses upon mankind².

Islam was destined to become a world religion and to create a civilization which stretched from one end of the globe to the other. Already during the early Muslim caliphates, first the Arabs, then the Persians and later the Turks set about to create classical Islamic Civilization. Later, in the 13th century C.E., both Africa and India became great centers of Islamic Civilization and soon thereafter Muslim kingdoms were established in the Malay-Indonesian world while Chinese Muslims flourished throughout China³.

² Al-Qur‘ân, 2:143.
It is time to look at the civilization as a whole. The civilization is Islamic because the religion of Islam brought together the various peoples — mainly Arabs, Persians, and Turks — who took part in it. The religion also affected its politics, commerce, life-style, ideas, and forms of artistic expression. But, for much of the period, Muslims were still a minority within the lands of Islam. Since the Muslims were relatively unlettered at first, it is hardly surprising that many of the scholars and scientists active within the world were Muslims whose ideas lucidly bore the stamp of their religion. The civilization evolving in the Middle East drew on many ethnic and philosophical traditions based on single faith: Islam. The Arabic language emphasizes its importance in the development of the culture. Not only because of its prestige as the language of the Qur’ân and the elite, but also because it could easily assimilate new things and ideas, Arabic became the almost universal language of arts, sciences, and letters between 750 C.E. and 1250 C.E. But do not assume that all the artists, scientists, and writers were Arabs inspite of being Muslims. The builders of the civilization came from every ethnic group within the ummah. Although many were Arabized Berbers, Egyptians, Syrians, and Iraqis whose present-day descendants would call themselves Arabs, only a few were wholly descended from Arab tribesmen\(^1\).

History testifies that the followers of the Islamic Revelation, which came to reform peoples’ practices, were able to triumph over the forces of

Arab paganism, and later over the Persian and Roman dynasties. History also testifies that the triumph of Islamic reform led to the advancement in social and material conditions, resulting, ultimately in the establishment of an Islamic Civilization, exceeding in its expansion, resilience, and achievement of all previous civilizations, including the Roman.

For Muslims, there must be first of all the will to preserve not only their religion but also the Islamic Civilization which they have inherited and to which they must add a new chapter as did their ancestors, a new chapter considering all the present challenges which the Islamic world faces. In no case should they duped to the idea of an amorphous global civilization which cannot but be at best a common denomination of various civilizations and at worst the final phase of the destruction of all non-Western civilizations few centuries after the European expansion over the globe. In fact the preservation and contrivation of a living Islamic Civilization cannot but enrich the whole humanity and help directly those in the West who realize that their existing civilization and its dominating paradigm are terminally ill and that another world view must be adopted if there is to be even physical survival of humanity.

Following this primary task, it is essential for Muslims to realize the seriousness of the environmental crisis brought by modern civilization, a crisis whose proclamation is not simply a Western ploy for further

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domination of other nations, but one, which is terribly real. If there is to be any future civilization, human beings must learn to live in harmony with God’s creation and not simply to rape nature for shortsighted satiation of never-ending worldly desires. Islam produced a vast civilization, which lived in harmony with nature. The Islamic sciences and technology as well as the Islamic philosophy of nature so glibly forgotten by so many so-called champions of modern Islamic thought, must be resuscitated and implanted in our educational systems as a sine quo non (without which not) of a future civilization. Without them, the blind imitation and adoption of Western science and technology cannot help in the process of the destruction of the natural environment with which modern Western Civilization has been occupied for several centuries and cannot lead to any future whatsoever.\footnote{S. H. Nasr, “Reflections on Man and the Future of Civilization”, p. 259.}

As Muslims spread their rule and faith, they proved to be great learners as well as doers. Muslim rulers upheld the principles of justice in their polity, even in the new lands and cultures they encountered. Local institutions, ideas, and personnel were assimilated or retained, and adopted or adapted to Islamic norms, as Muslims explored Qur’ân and more advanced subjects. Great libraries and learning centers were established; the great books of science, medicine, and philosophy of the West and the East were collected, reasoned out and delivered into more reliable form
but into the Universal language: Arabia. Thus the best works of literature, science, and medicine were made more accessible¹.

To the Muslim, history is a series of accidents that in no way affects the nontemporal principles of Islam. He is more interested in knowing and “realizing” these principles than in cultivating originality and change as intrinsic virtues. The symbol of Islamic Civilization is not a flowing river, but the cube of the Ka‘bah, the stability of which symbolizes the permanent and immutable character of Islam².

The age of learning was followed by a period of great creativity, as a new generation of educated Muslim thinkers and scientists now built upon their received knowledge and made their own contributions to learning³. It had released tremendous creative energies. The high Caliphal Period was one of great cultural florescence⁴.

Finally, we have the level of pure knowledge and understanding. It is that of the contemplative, the ‘arif (gnostic), the level that has been recognized throughout Islamic history as the highest and most comprehensive. The gnostic is Muslim in that his whole being is surrendered to God; he has no separate individual existence of his own. He is like the birds and the flowers in his yielding to the Creator; like them,

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³ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat Myth or Reality?*, pp. 31-32.
like all the other elements of the cosmos, he reflects the Divine Intellect to his own degree. He reflects it actively, however, they passively; his participation is a conscious one. Thus "knowledge" and "science" are defined as basically different from mere curiosity and even from analytical speculation. The 'arif is from this point of view "one with Nature"; he understands it "from the inside", he has become in fact the channel of grace for the universe. His Islam and the Islam of Nature are now counterparts¹.

Although the casual linkage between Islamic reform and Islamic Civilization cannot be denied, the patterns of progress from the moment of initiating the reform to the moment of reaching the climax of Islamic Civilization are quite complex². The following three points underscore some of the essential patterns of Muslim historical change.

First, Islamic Revelation was directed at replacing the distorted beliefs and values of people with ones in conformity with the Truth. Second, by committing people to the ideas and principles of truth and rightness, Islam reformed individual actions and societal institutions. Third, by freeing people from superstition and social bondage, and by mobilizing individual and collective energies and channeling them towards productive and creative activities, Islam established the psychological and societal conditions conducive to progress.

² Louay Safi, "Developmental Trends in Contemporary Muslim Experience", p. 32.
Islam was the major source contributing to the value-orientation of Islamic civilizational action, technical rules were generated, with some hints from other civilizations\(^1\). However, as the process of Islamic Civilization progressed, it gradually proved to be problematic, especially in these areas where the value orientation and technical orientation of action were at the lower degree.

Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. That is why Islamic Civilization is based on a unity which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination. Such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese and Malays in addition to numerous smaller units embraced Islam and contributed to the building of Islamic Civilization. Moreover, Islam was not opposed to learning from the earlier civilizations and incorporating their science, learning, and culture into its own world view, as long as they did not oppose the principles of Islam. Each ethnic and racial group within embraced Islam made its contribution to the one Islamic Civilization to which everyone belonged. The sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was so much emphasized that it overcame all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language — all of which became subservient to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam\(^2\).

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\(^1\) Louay Safi, "Developmental Trends in Contemporary Muslim Experience", p. 33.

In its universal sense, Islam may be said to have three levels of meaning. All beings in the universe, to begin with, are Muslim, i.e., "surrendered to the Divine Will". (A flower cannot help being a flower; a diamond cannot do other than sparkle. God has made them so; it is theirs to obey). Secondly, all men who accept with their will the sacred law of the revelation are Muslim in that they surrender their will to that law. When 'Uqbah, the Muslim defeater of North Africa, took leave of his family and mounted his horse for the great adventure which was to lead him through two thousand miles of conquest to the Moroccon shores of the Atlantic, he cried out: "And now, God, take my soul". We can hardly imagine Alexander the Great having such thoughts as he set out eastward to Persia. Yet, as conquerors, the two men were to achieve comparable feats; the "passivity" of 'Uqbah with respect to the Divine Will was to be transmuted into irresistible action in this world\(^1\). In his worldview and practice 'Uqbah proved himself to be the liberator of Spainyards etc from the clichés of superstition, injustice, unfairness, bias, while as Alexander's invasion proved him to be nothing more than an unpredictable conqueror grabbing the lands and plundering the people.

Meanwhile, Islam both as a religion and as a civilization is still alive, especially its religious teachings. Therefore, the traditional Islamic conception of man as at once 'abd Allah and Khalifatullah (vicegerence) is still very much alive among Muslims, more than the Christian conception of man is in Western society, at least in those segments of Western society

which generate and sustain the ruling paradigm over modern civilization. This is an advantage of the greatest importance because it makes the religious and spiritual forces necessary to create and sustain any civilization worthy of the name and without them civilization turns to barbarism of a much more dangerous kind than those of old which could not and did not at least destroy the atmosphere and the oceans\footnote{S. H. Nasr, “Reflections on Man and the Future of Civilization”, p. 258.}.

As far as modern and even what some people now call postmodern civilization is concerned, it must be realized that this civilization is based upon purely terrestrial man for whom no “future” can go beyond the matrix of this worldly life nor any “tomorrow” beyond the confines of historic time. This civilization, having to all practical purposes ghettoized and marginalized the earlier Christian civilization based on the concept of man as an immortal being created by and responsible to God, is now in the process of carrying out three different but interrelated processes: one, the final destruction of all other civilizations including the Islamic in the name of a world order which is completely based on the modern and Western ethos; two, the destruction of the natural environment by the application of a technology wedded to unlimited greed of a human collectivity torn away from all ideals of asceticism and abstention; and three, the dissolution of itself from within by bringing to a conclusion the destruction of what remained of the Christian ethics which provided the final fibre for Western society until recently despite the marginalization of Christianity and its banishment from so many domains of modern life.
One does not have to be very perceptive to observe openly the results of all these three processes going on simultaneously. What is more difficult is to predict from the human point of view which of these processes will be terminated first. All that one can say as a Muslim is that the best word will be God's and that He knows best.

During the past two centuries the onslaught of the modern West has destroyed much but not all of Islamic Civilization while the religion of Islam which created this civilization, one of the greatest ever known in human history, has fortunately remained strong and now seeks to reassert at least to some extent its primacy in the domain of culture and civilization where it was somewhat marginalized during the recent period of Muslim history. As a result of the challenges posed by the West, however, there have been diverse reactions within the Islamic world not only to the misreading Western Civilization but to Islamic Civilization itself.

2.3.1 Some English Words Derived from Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADIMIRAL</td>
<td><em>Amir al-bahr</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOBE</td>
<td><em>al-tub</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALCHEMY</td>
<td><em>al-kimiya'</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 Ibid., 255.
2.3.2 Major Dates of Islamic History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth of the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ</td>
<td>570 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First verses of the Noble Qur'ān revealed</td>
<td>609 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophet’s hijrah (migration from Makkah to Madinah), beginning of Islamic calendar</td>
<td>622 C.E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Timeline of Islamic History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demise of the Prophet</td>
<td>632 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Khilafah al-Rashidah (The &quot;Rightly Guided&quot; Caliphs)</td>
<td>632-661 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ummawiyah (The Umayyads)</td>
<td>661-750 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Abassiyah (The Abbasiyah)</td>
<td>750-1258 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spanish Umayyads (Ummayad Emirate at Spain)</td>
<td>756-1031 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fatimids</td>
<td>909-1171 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Seljuqs</td>
<td>137-1300 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saladin's Liberation of Jerusalem</td>
<td>1187 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mamluks</td>
<td>1252-1517 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mongol Conquest of Baghdad</td>
<td>1258 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ottomans</td>
<td>1299-1924 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Timurids</td>
<td>1369-1500 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation of Constantinople (Istanbul)</td>
<td>1453 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fall of Granada</td>
<td>1492 C.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Safavids</td>
<td>1502-1736</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Napoleon Bonaparte comments upon Islamic Civilization:

Moses has revealed the existence of God to his nation. Jesus Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent...

Arabia was idolatrous when, six centuries after Jesus, Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, of Ishmael, of Moses, and Jesus. The Ariyans and some other sects had disturbed the tranquility of the east by agitating the question of the nature of the Father, the son, and the Holy Ghost.
Muhammad declared that there was none but one God who had no father, no son and that the trinity imported the idea of idolatry...

I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of Qur'an [Qur'ân] which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness⁴¹.

Sir George Bernard Shaw comments upon Islamic Civilization:

If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam.

I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity.

I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it

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would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today¹.

Bertrand Russell comments upon Islamic Civilization:

Our use of phrase ‘The Dark Ages’ to cover the period from 699 to 1000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe...

From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary...

To us it seems that West-European civilization is civilization, but this is a narrow view².

Phillip K. Hitti comments upon Islamic Civilization:

During all the first part of the Middle Ages, no other people made as important a contribution to human progress as did the Arabs, if we take this term to mean all those whose mother-tongue was Arabic, and not merely those living in the Arabian peninsula. For centuries, Arabic was the language of learning, culture and intellectual progress for the whole of the civilized world with the exception of the Far East. From the IXth to the XIIth century there were more philosophical, medical, historical, religious, astronomical and geographical works written in Arabic than in any other human tongue³.

On the Holocaust of Baghdad (1258 C.E.) perpetrated by Hulagu it was said:

The city was systematically looted, destroyed and burnt. Eight hundred thousand persons are said to have been killed. The Khalif [Khalifah] Mustasim was sewn up in a sack and trampled to death under the feet of Mongol horses.

For five hundred years, Baghdad had been a city of palaces, mosques, libraries and colleges. Its universities and hospitals were the most up-to-date in the world. Nothing now remained but heaps of rubble and a stench of decaying human flesh¹.

Gerald Butt comments,

When the Christians recaptured Granada, they burnt all 80,000 books from the palace library - as if to expunge the memory of Islamic rule².

Carly Fiorina, CEO of Hewlett Packard comments upon Islamic Civilization:

When we study Europe's Middle Ages, we seldom include Spain (at least not until after the "reconquest"). Our libraries abound with books on the Middle Ages, but try to find in any of them a single word about daily life and customs in Spain. It is as if later historians, in order to justify a uniquely "European history", ignored the fact that a vibrant and brilliant civilization created by "Others" — by Arabs, by Muslims, by Jews — by brown and

² Gerald Butt, A BBC brief history of Islamic Spain (711-1492)
black people — not only existed in Europe, but without whose contributions the region could not have become what it did. When we talk about “Europe’s” Renaissance, we never think of its beginnings in Spain several centuries before it reached Italy. It’s as if we lopped off a good 1000 years of history — or at least amputated it from Europe. Nothing could be farther from the truth.1

And this civilization was driven more than anything, by invention. Its architects designed buildings that defied gravity. Its mathematicians created the algebra and algorithms that would enable the building of computers, and the creation of encryption. Its doctors examined the human body, and found new cures for disease. Its astronomers looked into the heavens, named the stars, and paved the way for space travel and exploration.2

Its writers created thousands of stories. Stories of courage, romance and magic. Its poets wrote of love, when others before them were too steeped in fear to think of such things.

When other nations were afraid of ideas, this civilization thrived on them, and kept them alive. When censors threatened to wipe out knowledge from past civilizations, this civilization kept the knowledge alive, and passed it on to others.

Although we are often unaware of our indebtedness to this other civilization, its gifts are very much a part of our heritage.

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2 Idem
The technology industry would not exist without the contributions of Arab mathematicians. Sufi poet-philosophers like Rumi challenged our notions of self and truth. Leaders like Suleiman contributed to our notions of tolerance and civic leadership.

And perhaps we can learn a lesson from his example: It was leadership based on meritocracy, not inheritance. It was leadership that harnessed the full capabilities of a very diverse population — that included Christianity, Islamic, and Jewish traditions.¹

Finally, to speak of a future of a civilization, Muslims must be able to understand in depth and to evaluate thoroughly modern civilization on the basis of Islamic principles. It is only on the basis of this critical attitude that Muslims can preserve their own civilization and interact in a positive and creative manner with modern civilization rather than serving simply as a docile receiver or more or less obedient servant. Muslims have been given the spiritual possibilities through the Qur’anic revelation to preserve to the end of time the message of God’s Oneness of human nature on the basis of the doctrine of oneness or *al-tawhid*. In this crucial moment of Islamic and, in fact, world history, it is essential to announce loudly and clearly the Islamic doctrine of a man and on the basis of that doctrine to preserve and continue that civilization which has always been based on the celebration of the Majesty and beauty of the One and man’s role as His servant and vicegerent on earth. If there is to be a future for civilization, it

¹ Audrey Shabbas, “In praise of Islamic Civilization”.

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must be based on this conception of man which, being eternal, knows of no past or future. It is true in all times and climes. Without the correct understanding of man, there can be no future for any civilization as the failing apart of modern civilization demonstrates so clearly. It is for every Muslim to carry out the *jihad* (strive in the way of Allah) to preserve Islam as well as the great civilization which it created and which has reflected and echoes the message of God and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم over the ages and inlands stretched from the east to the west. The duty of carrying out this *jihad* in such difficult circumstances is the duty of Muslims. As for its results, it resides in the Hands of God who alone knows the future and what He has destined for all, for Islamic Civilization and for the whole of humanity.

2.4 Stereotyping

The operational definition of stereotyping is “an idea, expression, lacking in originality or inventiveness. A simplified and standardized conception or image of a person or group held in common by members of a group”.

Jacques Ellul, in his classic book, *Propaganda*, describes a ‘stereotype’ as “a seeming value judgment acquired by belonging to a

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group, without any intellectual labor, and reproducing itself automatically with each specific stimulation”\(^1\).

A phenomenon called ‘stereotype-threat’ has been described where minorities feel a sense of threat when in a situation where a negative stereotype applies to their group. The sense of threat in turn leads them to under-achieve. Analysts’ findings demonstrate that “negative responses by their teachers and by their non-Muslim peers towards identifiable Muslims do appear to affect some of those students quite painfully”\(^2\).

Stereotyping is not something, which happens naturally, but rather something that is complex and purposeful. “It is a tool of control and sometimes of intervention in the Muslim world”\(^3\). Politics does seem to be at the heart of the issue when it comes to stereotyping Muslims. The stereotyping of Muslims extends from the printed press to video games.

Negative stereotyping is hypothetically used to instill hate and desensitization in people young and old. Negative stereotyping is as equally a serious issue when it is used against people as a result of their religious beliefs\(^4\). Negative stereotypes serve a function. The heavy media

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\(^3\) Omaya Abdel Latif, “Imaging the Future”, Al-Ahram Weekly Online, Al-Ahram Organization, http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/

\(^4\) “Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.
coverage of the World Trade Center has practically stopped all foreigners from Arab and Muslim countries including Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia to obtain visas into the land of power, America. When the traits depicted in media message are repeated and not contradicted, negative stereotyping is very effective.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'ân:

And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies — Shayatîn (devils) among humans and jinns, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or deception). If your Lord had so willed, they would not have done it, so leave them alone with their fabrications.

"Image distortion disorder" is one of the main consequences of anti-Islamic media coverage. The study decries the perception that stereotypes cause Muslims (especially youths) to experience a loss of self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, and even suicidal tendencies. Similarly, the stereotyping of Muslims can incite suspicion, hate crimes, vandalism, and racial profiling. And, of course, media stereotyping of a particular group can be seen as just plain racist.

Western stereotyping of Islam is assured when uninformed and biased leaders present myopic positions to the media and their

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1 “Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”

2 Al-Qur'ân, 6:112.

constituents. Former Vice President of America, Dan Quayle, once spoke of the dangers of radical Islamic fundamentalism, grouping it with Nazism and Communism in a speech given at the United States Naval Academy. And when a respected national newspaper, The Boston Globe, runs a four-part series on Islam whose general tenor is captured by the title of the piece, "The Sword of Islam"¹, it becomes difficult to know where reality ends and myth begins.

A Western woman once remarked:

I don't know much which jolts people more: to say my child is autistic or to say my husband is Muslim? To be a Muslim in the West is at times to be denied an identity and dignity².

The news media are also prone to stereotyping through their generalizations of big issues. In Unequal Relations: An Introduction to Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada, Augie Fleras and Jean Elliot argue that stereotyping "simplifies the media process". This simplification becomes a problem when it results in negative images³. It is also an issue because dominant groups run the newsrooms in the West and are deciding on how to portray minorities.

"Language is power, and words have very long-term implications", says Shaheena Siddiqui, senior director of the Canadian division of the Council on American Islamic Relations. When writing about Muslims, a

³ Aiden S. Enns, “Questioning Our Images of Islam".

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journalist should check his/her assumptions with credible local sources\(^1\), which they never do. This can help avoid any unnecessary negative repercussions for minority groups. It is important that media should work accurately and know the consequences of their homework because repetitive and non-contradictive images in the media are an effective form of propaganda and opinion making in the public of the portrayed minority group. Thomson, (1977 C.E.) reveals the results of negative stereotyping as Polarization, Trivialization, Tension, and Depoliticisation\(^2\).

Negative stereotyping was earlier applied to arouse anti-Japanese emotions in the United States, which resulted in mass genocide in Hiroshima after a very short period. Hitler used similar negative stereotypes as a portrayal of the Jews to justify concentration camps tortures and genocide. The United States government used propaganda to incite anti-German emotion. The government paid to build a movie studio specifically to create movies that would create hate towards the Germans. A short time afterwards, America entered World War I\(^3\). Similarly the mass genocide of the Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs Christians has been active for over ten years. Present genocide of hundreds of thousand humans, including children in Iraq, Palestine, India to name a few, which proves the West is “desensitized and depoliticalasized and polarized”. Today and at least for the past forty years, the negative stereotypes are

\(^1\) Aiden S. Enns, “Questioning Our Images of Islam”.

\(^2\) “Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.

\(^3\) Idem
strongly focused on the Muslims based on fear of a growing Islamic thought. Consistency of negative stereotyping for forty years is believed by media theorists to be a key factor in shaping public opinion. There is a famous saying of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, “The first thing which Allah created was pen. He commanded it to write. It asked: What should I write? He said: Write the Decree (al-Qadr). So it wrote what had happened and what was going to happen up to eternity”\(^1\).

As Western leaders attempt to forge the “New World Order”, Islam has increasingly come to be regarded as the new global monolithic enemy of the West\(^2\). There might be another reason for this as well. There is support concerning political involvement negatively stereotyping. “For the West particularly, the need for an [enemy] to replace the Soviet specter”\(^3\).

The cold war was actually a proxy war of the two superpowers that used the rest of the world to advance their own ambitions or protect their own interests. Each of them needed a nemesis as the raison d’être of their expansionist and domineering agenda. As the red Soviet bear bade farewell and went into a permanent hibernation, the need of a nemesis of the other

\(^1\) Tirmidhi, Hadith No.: 23; Isnad of this hadith is said to be gharib.


superpower was not gone. Islam conveniently fell in place to fit the shoe of the old nemesis.

To declare Islam an enemy of the United States and the West is to declare a Hot War because for more than a decade the vision of Islamic fundamentalism or 'militant' Islam has gripped the imagination of Western governments and the media.

"[The] Russian army in Chechnya is fighting for us, too, and for everyone who does not want to live under the oppression of Islam". Anyone who does not view Islam as merely a religion of personal faith or mysticism is dubbed as belonging to fundamentalist Islam. Daniel Pipes writes: "With the decline of Marxism-Leninism, fundamentalist Islam now stands as the world's leading anti-American ideology".

Europe discovered Islamic thought in two phases of its history. In the medieval phase, before and after St. Thomas Acquinas, it was anxious to discover, to translate and to assimilate a thought that was to inspire and guide its steps towards Renaissance. In the modern and colonial phase, Europe rediscovered this same Muslim thought, no longer with a

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utilitarian end but for adjusting its own culture, or simply, its politics with a better understanding of the culture of the people it ruled⁴.

Since the nineteen-seventies the West is more than expected taking interest in Islam and Muslims because of few subjects such as “Islamic Revival”, “Islamic Fundamentalism”, “The Salman Rushdie Affair”, and “Women in Islam”, rather than on understanding “the World of Islam”⁵. This interest is being positively motivated thus erasing widespread negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims in the West.

According to Professor J. A. Progler in *The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West*, “Most people seem to be familiar with stereotypes and negative imagery of Arabs and Muslims — indeed, some are so firmly entrenched that the consumers of these images are unable to distinguish them from reality”³. Even before Islam has been promoted to the status of the new nemesis by the West itself, “the West has consistently constructed and perpetuated negative images of Islam and Muslims”⁴.

The full extent of the problem is unknown and will probably never be known. Certainly the main culprit in perpetuating and constructing

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⁴ Dr. Mohammad Omar Farooq, “Islam, Race and Justice: Reconciling the Irreconcilable”.

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negative and destructive images of Islam and Muslims in the West is the Media¹.

Muslim historians view the history of Islam and of the Muslim’s world dealings with the West as one of victimization and oppression at the hands of an expansive imperial power. Thus, many counter that it is “militant Christianity” and “militant Judaism” that are the root causes of failed Islamic societies and instability: the aggression and intolerance of Christian-initiated Crusades and the Inquisition; European colonialism; the breakup of the Ottoman empire and the artificial creation of modern states such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine; the establishment of Israel; Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and its invasion and occupation of Lebanon; and the extent to which oil interests have been the determining factor in support for autocratic regimes². Moreover, the Western governments do not condemn the mixing of religion and politics in Israel, Poland, Eastern Europe or Latin America, yet a comparable level of discrimination is absent when dealing with Islam.

But, in this historical context, the Muslim world itself received the harsh impact of the Western culture with a double result: an inferiority complex on the one side, and an effort to compensate it, on the other. Among certain Muslim intellectuals, the impact caused a sort of an immediate tetanisation of their system of auto-defence. Their inferiority

¹ Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.

complex led them to an almost total surrender. They laid down their arms on the spot. They were, in fact, the first deserters in the ruthless ideological struggle that began between the Muslim society and the West whose culture they started to adopt unconditionally\(^1\). Such was the case in India, after the war of the Sepoys in 1858 C.E., of the founder of Aligarh University, Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

Phrases like “Muslim militants” and “Islamic terrorists” used by the media reveal media as significantly a dangerous weapon to 8 million Muslims in America, 48 Muslim nations worldwide, 1 billion Muslims on Earth, and the fastest growing religion. More humans have died because of their religion than any other cause of death\(^2\). These phrases reinforce a negative stereotype. When journalists repeatedly use the words “Islamic” and “terrorist” together, the terms become synonymous in the mind of the reader\(^3\).

Propaganda and media effects the viewer’s attitudes. Myers (1992 C.E.) claims that just half an hour can effect the viewer. David Pearl, Chief of the National Institute of Mental Health’s Behavioral Science Research states, “Today’s children are spending twice as long in front of a television than a classroom”\(^4\). Children are the most susceptible and the largest group

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\(^2\) “Has the NewYork Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”

\(^3\) Aiden S. Enns, “Questioning Our Images of Islam”.

\(^4\) “Has the NewYork Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.
of media absorption. Children are exposed to this propaganda in the comic book\(^1\) and cartoon plays.

Negative stereotypes are up to forty years old. The children who read the comic books in the sixties have grown up with the consistent message of a negative stereotyped group. Negative stereotyping is effective when the message is not contradicted and the portrayal is believed. The negative stereotypes are implanted in the many facets of mass media including movies. This outlet alone gives the American mass media one billion viewers, children and adults. Movies with big box office sellers such as Goldie Hawn, Eddy Murphy, and Arnold Schwarzeneger to name a few, have been used to stereotype the Muslim Arabs. In the film \textit{Protocol}, Goldie Hawn warns that the Muslims threaten America’s security. In the movie \textit{Best Defense}, starring Eddie Murphy, Kuwaiti children throw stones at Eddie Murphy’s tank. Murphy yells “Okay you desert rats, now you die!”. Chuck Norris, and Arnold Schwarzeneger went from fighting the Vietcong to fighting the “Muslim terrorist groups”\(^2\).

Some of the factors behind distortions are mentioned below:

a) The Palestine-Israel Conflict.

b) Cultural and religious differences.

c) Absence of Muslims from the Western media and entertainment world.

\(^1\) “Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Forty Years?”.

\(^2\) \textit{Idem}
d) Lack of interest and sophistication on the part of the Muslim embassies and information offices abroad, and their own media in addition to failure of the Muslims to understand the Western media and how they operate in the Muslim countries and abroad, and

e) A highly sophisticated and organized pro-Western lobby¹.

Stereotyping resulted in discrimination manifested in very subtle ways. Some students reported being regarded as alien, others were excluded from class activities, singled out or marginalised. One female student said: “I’m on my guard all the time here”. Another student said: “It really hurts when (they say): ‘Are you wearing this (the hijab) because you’re married and your husband forces this on to you?’”².

A non-Muslim religion student of 11 years age prepared an assignment for school entitled “How does the Sydney Morning Herald present Islam in Australia and how accurate is their representation?” Her report was published in Famsy’s Salam magazine in the Nov - Dec 2000 C.E. issue. She states that: “Australia’s predominantly Christian community stereotypically perceives Islam as oppressive, fanatical and severe; a negative view that is often manipulated through the perspectives of media coverage. The Sydney Morning Herald articles ‘Aussies Under Cover’, ‘High fives and hajibs as Australian Muslims flock to suburban

¹ A. W. Ata, “Arabs, Images and the Western/Australian Media”, pp. 16-17.

² Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.

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Mecca’, ‘Month of Revelation’ and ‘Ramadan poses dilemma for Hungry Muslims’ present an unsavory image of Islam by conveying values that do not correspond with the essence of Islam”

As many analysts point out, negative constructions of Islam have existed for centuries – “since the Crusades,” notes Karim, “when the so-called ‘dark lines’ of the Muslim Other were drawn and emphasised.” Pessimism comes easily when confronting stereotypes with such a long history, and with American military efforts in the Middle East just beginning, an end to anti-Islamic coverage seems nowhere in sight.

The West carefully choose words and subtly generalize radical individuals into a selected group. An example of negative stereotyping of Arab Muslims is Shaheen, (1985), “TV Guide use of language, when the Palestinians were attacked, they were labeled as “targets” suggesting that military areas were being hit. When Israelis were attacked the reporter referred to it as “the state of Israel” a civilian area.

On April 21, 1995 C.E., almost all the print media referred to the Middle East concerning the Oklahoma Federal building bombing that’s classified as worse than the World Trade Center bombing. This comparison implied Middle Eastern involvement. When the accused Tim McVay was detained, no reference was made concerning McVay’s

1 Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.
2 Kirsten Weld, “Anti-Islamic Stereotyping in the Canadian Media”.
3 “Has the NewYork Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.

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religious, ethnic, or place of origin, background. Tim McVay was not labeled an American Christian terrorist, nor was his name an issue or analyzed for Biblical significance\(^1\), representing the entire faith of Christianity. Serbian leaders are not labeled as Serbian Christian terrorists. The rabbi who went on a shooting spree inside a masjid (a place of worship for Muslims) was not labeled as an Israeli Jewish terrorist\(^2\). An example of negative stereotyping occurs when three individuals blow up a building and are labeled as Arab Muslim terrorists, or Islamic fundamentalists.

Until 11 September, 2001 C.E., Islamophobia was not a term used or even understood in Italy. However, the phenomenon has now reached tragic proportions. Scholars had warned the rise of Islamophobia in Italy, a country which has a Muslim population of approximately 500,000, the majority of whom are not Italian citizens. Islam is considered as a threat to Western identity, without properly defining that identity. The church is giving the society the tools it needs to increase Islamophobia\(^3\).

Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilization" framework provided a newer foundation and impetus for understanding Islam. Bernard Lewis has elevated that framework of antagonism, where, for example in *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, Islamic revivalism and Muslims, are presented in its relationship with the West, in terms of rage, aggression, hate, and

\(^1\) "Has the NewYork Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?"

\(^2\) Idem

\(^3\) Omaya Abdel Latif, "Imaging the Future".
irrationality\(^1\). The message is simple: “The world must be saved from the threat and evil of Islam!”\(^2\).

In 1991, in the wake of the Gulf War, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Council (HREOC) National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia, found that while the Australian Arab and Muslim communities are very heterogeneous, the media represented all Arabs as Muslims and all Muslims as Arabs. It also found that ‘media portrayals were seen as demonstrating fundamental ignorance of Islam and as perpetuating negative and destructive stereotypes\(^3\).

In Sydney — one of the world’s most multicultural cities — the media’s coverage of “ethnic crime” brings this into sharp focus. *Kebabs, Kids, Cops and Crime* looks at the aftermath of two events which occurred in Sydney’s South-Western suburbs (the Muslim heartland) in 1998 C.E. — the murder of a 14-year old schoolboy, Edward Lee, in Punchbowl and two weeks later, the drive-by shoot-up of the Lakemba police station. The NSW Premier and the NSW Police Commissioner blamed “Lebanese gangs” for both crimes and media coverage emphasised the “Middle Eastern appearance” of the alleged perpetrators. A high-profile “zero


\(^2\) Dr. Mohammad Omar Farooq, “Islam, Race and Justice: reconciling the Irreconcileable”.

\(^3\) Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.

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tolerance” crackdown by police in the Bankstown area was then directed against young people of Arabic-speaking background in public places¹.

A non random article review shows New York Times article following the World Trade Center bombing is loaded with negative stereotypes. The description used by the New York Times on June 25, 1993 C.E. section B:3:3 are as follows “Muslim Extremists”, “Violent faction of militant Muslims”, “Terrorist uses a Muslim name”, “mysterious people”, “Radical Islamic Extremists”, “fundamentalists”, “Islamic Sect Linked to string of crime in the United States”, “Clinton Administration officials say arrest of Muslims accused of plotting bomb”². These quotations are but a few that reflect the biased labeling that its political roots go as far as the President.

Every morning proves that the media is biased. Particular media outlets have unique agendas. They create stories which reflect individual reporters’ views, and editors shape stories according to their own opinions of right and wrong³.

“The media should be promoting tolerance and understanding rather than trying to project an image of a subset of Western society as ‘those who are not like us,’” says Wahida Valiante, the national vice-president of the Canadian Islamic Congress. “These days, kids come up to

¹ Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.

² “Has the NewYork Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.

³ Kirsten Weld, “Anti-Islamic Stereotyping in the Canadian Media”.
Muslims on the street and say ‘Please don’t kill me. I’m afraid of you.’ And I doubt it’s the parents that are teaching this to their children”1. Most Muslims are depicted as violent, predisposed to committing acts of “terror”, whereas, the world has witnessed the insensitivity of the Christian world to the horror of Bosnia where a genocide was being perpetrated on the Muslim community. Time after time the West has promised to intervene only to back away and watch the slaughter continue. To the Muslim community this is inexcusable. No such procrastination was present when the oil supply of the Western world was challenged by Saddam Hussein. Led by the United States, the West moved multi-laterally to protect their interests. And where is the outrage over the punitive operation by the Israeli Defense Force in southern Lebanon, which displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians and killed hundreds of women and children? And where is the concern for a nation that defeated communism and the Soviet Union on the battlefield at a cost of two million lives and a shattered infrastructure that will require twenty years to rebuild? Yes! where is the concern for Afghanistan and Iraq? Is it any wonder then, that the Muslim world views the West with cynicism, suspicion and contempt?2

To be a Muslim in the West is treated as an object of ridicule, violence or suspicion by the Western media. The word Muslim has been plastered with countless labels, denoting the cruel and the decadent,

1 Kirsten Weld, “Anti-Islamic Stereotyping in the Canadian Media”.
2 Idem
masters of camels and Cadillacs, slave-traders, and lords of veiled harems. The context of events is far less important than the events themselves, with priority being given to the extraordinary and the scandalous as Sir Thomas Hopkinson once said.

Often times, eyecatching “events” are reported as sober and impartially viewed facts. Such prejudgment is the result of the in-built biases of the reporter, or from editing which conforms to the national interest of the country in which the report appears.

The relationship between the Muslim world and the West is more dependent on images now than at any earlier time. Any attempt to break down such negative stereotyping is sorely needed.

The routine portrayal of Islam as a religion spread by the ‘sword’ and characterized by “Holy War”, and of Muslims as ‘barbarous’ and ‘backward’, ‘frenzied’ and ‘fanatic’, ‘volatile’ and ‘violent’, has led, in recent times, to an alarming increase in “Muslim-bashing” — verbal, physical as well as psychological — in a number of Western countries.

Shaheen Siddiqui writes that “The Sydney Morning Herald ‘Aussies Under Cover’ (17/7/96), by Helen Pitt attempts to express an objective view of Islam, but it contains concealed criticisms. Language such as “Under Cover” and “veil” carry negative connotations of malice and

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1 A. W. Ata, “Arabs, Images and the Western/Australian Media”, p. 16.
2 Idem
3 Omaya Abdel Latif, “Imaging the Future”.
4 Rifat Hussain, “Western Perceptions and the Portrayal of Muslim Women in Western Societies”.
deceit"¹. The *Daily Telegraph*, a Sydney tabloid newspaper, labelled the photo, ‘DIAL-A-GUN: Gang says it’s easier than buying a pizza.’ The story was part of the newspaper’s probe into ethnic youth crime in southwestern Sydney. The fiction of this photo and the extremist headlines that accompanied it highlight the role of some of the media in manufacturing and constructing negative images².

Inspite of such portrayed image of Islam, many renounce Islam, many cease observing it and become acculturated into the mainstream society. Others believe the picture they are shown reflects Islam and think that violence, intolerance, xenophobia and extreme Hollywood style macho behaviour are what is expected of them.... The attack is so sustained that many wonder whether the media is correct and that we are incorrect in our understanding of Islam³.

Shaheena Siddiqui said that Muslims are also portrayed in opposition to everything positive about the West. They are “anti-democracy, anti-pluralism, anti-freedom and anti-civil liberties”. At times, she said this is taken to the extreme where, “Israeli life and Western life is more worthy than Muslim life”⁴.

According to Siddiqui, Muslim youth are also targeted in these portrayals as deprived because they can’t engage in Western relationship

¹ Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.
² *Idem*
³ *Idem*
⁴ Aiden S. Enns, “Questioning Our Images of Islam".

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rituals, such as dating, drinking, dancing and partying. Like all stereotypes, these representations of Muslims are produced by many factors. As people from different cultures and backgrounds encounter one another, it is natural to develop stereotypes as a way for one group to distinguish itself from another. It is also an easy way to avoid thinking more deeply.

In media coverage, Muslims worldwide often suffer the fate of being lumped together into one monolithic category - a ridiculous and inaccurate case of group identification, as Muslims make up one fifth of the world's population, practise many different strains of the faith, and are a highly heterogeneous group1.

"The report featured in *The Sydney Morning Herald* 'High five and hajibs as Australian Muslims flock to suburban Mecca' (18/4/97) portrays Islam in a condescending and insolent manner. The almost scornful attitude of journalist John Huxley consequently results in his composition reading more like "an anecdote rather than an article" as it communicates a strongly patronising tone, hence reflecting Islam impertinently"2.

'Month of Revelation' (11/4/90) by Sigrid Kirk and Danielle Cook, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* endeavors to exhibit a neutral view of Islam, but it contains subtle criticisms and misleading information... The reference to "fundamentalist" in describing the convert

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1 Kirsten Weld, “Anti-Islamic Stereotyping in the Canadian Media”.
2 Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.
to Islam has negative connotations, insinuating that “only a loony would convert” and that Muslims are stern extremists.1

These and many other articles clearly depict Islam unfavorably, ... communicating epitomised Islamic values as conservative and dominant, reinforcing the stereotype that classifies Islam as ‘rigid’ and ‘oppressive’. With such widely accessible newspapers, an unjust portrayal of Islam has infiltrated into the Western community and have a strong impact on the opinions of its audience. The inaccurate illustrations damage not only the Muslim identity in the West, but also impose unnecessary tension on relationships amongst culturally and religiously diverse Westerners.2 Although a celebration and embracing of Islam is not expected from non-Muslims in such places but still Islam is the fastest growing religion in the West.

Even the Webster Dictionary is participating in negatively stereotyping. The definition of an Arab in the 1947 C.E edition of Webster's New International Dictionary is: “One of the oldest and purists of people and with the Jews constitute the best modern representative of the Semitic Race”. Then the comparisons to today’s dictionary use of slang for Arab: “Vagabond”, “Peddler”, “Bum”, “Derelict”.3

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1 Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.
2 Idem
There is scope to reverse the negative shift in the image of Muslims. That image was once positive, Schmidt said, but has drastically changed recently. "A few years ago, before the waves of immigrants which swept Italy during the 1990s, the Arab world was seen as romantic, as compared with rigid stereotyping of Islam elsewhere in Europe"\(^1\), said Schmidt. In southern Italy, the Arab heritage of Sicily was used by intellectuals to stress their Mediterranean identity, against more Euro-Nordic tendencies elsewhere\(^2\). Allen Palmer, a media professor, suggested that it was futile to continue to simply protest the negative images of Arabs and Muslims in Western media. "Instead of drawing battle lines between cultures", Palmer told participants, "we should recognise the opportunities these encounters represent. We have to understand the processes of communication as dynamic, open and fluid". "There are strong Catholic and Jewish lobbies in Italy which are always alert to whatever is written about the church or Israel but when it comes to the Muslims, the story is different". The media can get away with saying anything about Islam "without having someone to answer back to"\(^3\), Schmidt explained\(^4\).

Education is the answer to the tumultuous but subtle stereotypes the West has been using since long to stereotype Islam. Most Europeans

\(^1\) H. D. Schmidt, "The Establishment of 'Europe' as a Political Expression", pp. 171-172.
\(^2\) Omaya Abdel Latif, "Imaging the Future".
\(^3\) H. D. Schmidt, "The Establishment of 'Europe' as a Political Expression", p. 172.
\(^4\) Omaya Abdel Latif, "Imaging the Future".
are unaware of the Islamic beliefs and values. Therefore, when a message is presented, the Europeans do not have the fundamental tool to decide on their own.

According to a report one Muslim student in Melbourne reported about a Management course in which her lecturers had been encouraging discussion of topics such as Islamic law, she said: 'Actually with a lot of my non-Muslim friends, many have said to me, “We’ve learned so much more about Islam than anything else in this course”1.' Universities need to make increasing efforts to eliminate the differences of the two civilizations.

Allah (swt) says:

Verily! Those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink one to another (in mockery). And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting. And when they saw them, they said: 'Verily! These have indeed gone astray!' But they (the disbelievers) had not been sent as watchers over them (the believers). But this Day (the Day of Resurrection) those who believe will laugh at the disbelievers. On thrones, observing. Are not the disbelievers paid for what they used to do?2

Muslims have to keep shouting until they are heard and hit them some way. With time the West will itself feel the need to make some

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1 Dr Zachariah Mathews, “How Muslims Negatively are Negatively Stereotyped: The Australian Experience”.

2 Al-Qur’ân, 83:29-36.
changes. The process will be slow, and the struggle long and hard. But in order to survive such kind of social cohesion has to happen.

All peoples, believers and non-believers, Muslims and Jews, Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus ... become enraged when their survival or interests are threatened. In reality rage against evil and hatred of enemies are a normal response to heinous crimes, wartime enemies, and terrorism¹.

This preoccupation with a monolithic, “militant” Islam, is obvious with Western attitude towards the nuclear capability of Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Iran. These are characterized as “Islamic bombs”, implying the existence of a pan-Islamic world that threatens Israel and the West. Do we characterize Israeli or American nuclear capabilities in terms of a Jewish or Christian bomb? How often do we see articles that speak of Christian militancy or Jewish fanaticism?²

Our challenge today is to appreciate the diversity of Islamic actors and movements, to ascertain the reasons behind confrontations and conflicts, and thus to react to specific events and situations with informed and reasoned responses, rather than predetermined presumptions and reactions. Moreover, we must address the horrors of Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq and seek justice for our Muslim brothers and sisters, speak out against Israeli brutality in the “Occupied Territories”, speak out against repressive regimes that stifle democracy and human rights no matter that

² *Idem*
said regime supplies the West with oil, speak out against a biased and inflammatory media, and make a collective yet determined effort to render aid to the people of Afghanistan who have been abandoned, dehumanized, and dislocated while assuring the West a victory over Soviet communism. Humanity and the continuation of civilization demands no less of us.\footnote{1}

In the hands of experienced specialists, stereotyping is the means of distracting the Muslim world from its fundamental problem of civilization— and to hook its attention on false problems and false solutions whose inanity is tragically revealed in a crucial even following a failure, a disaster or a capitulation.\footnote{2} In fact, the problem of these ideas of diversion and distraction has been posed for a long time, since before the First World War. Today, it is posed before the Muslim world in the present phase when it is passing through the greatest crisis of its history.

The orientalist literature under its dual form has proved harmful to Muslim society and inhibitive to its intellectual development. Under its apologetic form, it has moved Muslims away from subjects of reflection of the present and plunged in the delights of the past moving away from true problems and absorbing in the discussion of pseudo-problems.\footnote{3}

Indeed, the technological progress that has today culminated in the chapter of nuclear physics could not be conceived without the methods of


\footnote{2} Malek Benabi, "The Algerian Perspectives: Orientalism", p. 9.

\footnote{3} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 12.
ultra-rapid calculus that have become possible only with the development of these electronic brains known as computers. But, could these brains function without the prior development of an appropriate numerical system? Only the decimal system which enables one to write a constant, like the number of Avagadro, with only five figures, could allow it. Now this essential prior development was achieved by the Muslim Civilization, that is to say, more precisely, in the intellectual climate formed by the Qur’anic notion. The West needs to be concerned about how Islam is to be treated in Western classrooms, textbooks and media as Islam becomes a more integral part of Western society.

If history and theorists conclude propaganda is a tool to justify killing thousands of people it’s the tool of the devil. The minds of society are currently being worked on by this tool. To leave children susceptible to this tool is being the devil’s advocate such as Hitler was. Mass media is commonly accepted as a very dangerous weapon and it have been rightly proven so. The majority of the people do not recognize these subtle vicious attacks, that’s why they continue and that’s why they are believed. If all people are created equal, they should be portrayed as equal.

3 “Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?”.
Not one group labeled evil and another group good, inferior and superior, ugly and beautiful, weak and strong\(^1\).

The West wants the world inside itself to recognize and the world outside to understand that the non-Western world needs to follow the beacon of the West and save themselves from the pitfalls of Islam\(^2\).

The impact of the Western Civilization on the Muslim consciousness in the course of the nineteenth century C.E., has been particularly harsh in the scientific field with the result that its effects can be felt even in the modern Qur'ânic exegesis\(^3\).

\(\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\) "Has the New York Times Negatively Stereotyped Muslims for the Past Fourty Years?"

\(\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\) Dr. Mohammad Omar Farooq, "Islam, Race and Justice: Reconcile the Irreconcileable".

\(\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\) Malek Benabi, "The Algerian Perspective: Orientalism", p. 11.