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Neo-orientalism?

**A critical appraisal of changing Western perspectives :
Bernard Lewis, John Esposito and Gilles Kepel .**

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NEO-ORIENTALISM?
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF CHANGING
WESTERN PERSPECTIVES: BERNARD LEWIS,
JOHN ESPOSITO AND GILLES KEPEL

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Synopsis

In order to justify and naturalise domination and exploitation of 'others,' some ideologies that theorise 'they are less human' have been invented and employed throughout history. Among these ideologies is the 'West-and-Islam' dualism, which has been comprehensively and critically studied by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Since *Orientalism* was published in 1978, however, the world seems to have become much more interdependent and political interrelations between the West and Islam have changed dramatically. Consequently this dualism, though more or less in place, has been influenced by escalating waves of globalisation and redistributed and reshaped in a different form. To critically appraise this dualism in this new era, three prominent contemporary Western Islamologists, Bernard Lewis, John Esposito and Gilles Kepel, have been selected and different aspects of their perspectives, their methodologies, their views on Islam and modernity, their political propositions and Islamic belief and law in their vision, are closely compared and critically examined. These three scholars are used to describe parts of the fabric of what I call neo-Orientalism; they are exemplars suggesting the existence of a larger whole. This dissertation aims to present the genealogy of some lingering traces of the West-and-Islam dualism in order to know how they were originated and how they can be replaced by an egalitarian perspective. This is particularly important in this new interdependent world, where we are very close to each other and any crisis anywhere can affect human beings everywhere. This thesis also aims to criticise the often unquestioned assumptions of Western works on Islam and to show through a comparative examination that there can be very different routes with healthier outcomes to look at other cultures. In addition to methods used by Said and to avoid his shortcomings, this research is informed by a Popperian methodology, relying on his theory of the growth of knowledge, his situational analysis and his views on framework and ideology. In conclusion, this thesis suggests that if the West-and-Islam dualism is considered as a spectrum of views on Islam, Lewis is the most dualist, perfectly following all principles of dualism, Esposito is the least, and Kepel is (so to say) in between. Moreover, some promising changes in neo-Orientalism as well as some additional dualistic tendencies that can define neo-Orientalism are found in this new era. To portray a better future for our interdependent world some new approaches to identity, global ethics and global civil society are suggested. Eradicating the roots of Orientalism and Occidentalism alike and accepting, protecting and even promoting diversity are first steps towards countering devastating threats that endanger humankind as a whole.

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Introduction

On 20th September 2001, addressing a joint session of Congress and the American people, President George W Bush noted: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. (Applause.)”¹ At first, it seemed that this was merely rhetorical because it was announced in the aftermath of the horrific attacks of September 11. The foreign policy of the United States in the subsequent years, however, showed that President Bush quite intentionally used this bipolar categorisation. By labelling some instances of political struggle as ‘terrorist’ and others as legitimate, American foreign policy contributed greatly to promulgating Bush’s worldview which distinguished, in a simple-minded way, between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘democracy’ and ‘authoritarianism’, and legitimate and unlawful political activities. In practice, such rigid political thinking enabled the US to be the sole judge for determining who is or is not a terrorist, or which regime is authoritarian, and also to be the sole executor of its own verdict. Rather than distancing themselves from such a political philosophy, which was derived from America’s imperial aspirations, some major European powers seemed to have adopted the same ‘crusader’ posture. However, the election of President Barack Obama with the motto of ‘change’ more than anything else highlighted the failure of US foreign policy under Bush.

This way of thinking about today’s world, dividing it up into two opposing poles, ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ or ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’, could be observed in the wider layers of the Western public sphere. As Zachary Karabell suggests: “Ask American college students, in the elite universities or elsewhere, what they think of when the word ‘Muslim’ is mentioned. The response is inevitably the same: gun-toting, bearded, fanatic terrorists hellbent on destroying the great enemy, the United States” (Karabell, 1995). This sense of the ‘otherness’ and ‘inferiority’ of Islam versus the ‘normality’ and ‘superiority’ of the West is rooted in some cultural values, norms and sensibilities.

¹ See the White House Website at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> [accessed on 16/11/2008]

It has been pointed out by scholars that the cultural apparatus that has been representing Islam in the West for the most part is produced by the media, including television and radio networks, daily newspapers, magazines as well as Hollywood movies. Together the powerful focus of mass media on Islam constitutes a communal core of reinterpretations providing a certain portrait, reflecting powerful political interests served by the media (Said, 1997: 47). It is explained that the process of producing headlines is usually performed within a political context made active and effective by an unconscious ideology, which reporters and editors disseminate without major reservation or opposition. In practice, despite the extraordinary variety of Western media, there is a quantitative and qualitative tendency to favour certain views and certain representations over others (Said, 1997: 49). It is further explained, from a perspective with quasi-Marxist overtones, that the role played by the dominant culture is to justify and impose its own standards as “natural”, “objective” and “real” (Said, 1983: 9). Despite a great diversity of forms, in the end the media serve and promote a corporate identity – ‘America’ and even ‘the West’. Within the paradigm of a dominant ideology inherited from that corporate identity, they all share the same central consensus about how to define themselves and others (Said, 1997: 52).

Dualism, an historical overview

In this dissertation I speak of ‘dualism’ in the sense of an ideology that promotes an essentialist distinction between ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ and emphasises unconditional superiority of the former and essential inferiority of the latter. Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary defines ‘dualism’ as “a theory that considers reality to consist of two irreducible elements or modes.”² In the history of thought the term has a variety of uses in different contexts, but generally it shows that in some particular domain, there are two mutually exclusive categories of things or principles. Dualism contrasts with monism, the theory that there is only one fundamental category necessary for the understanding of reality, and with pluralism, the view that there are many legitimate kinds or categories necessary for grasping reality. In theology, dualism can be traced to

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dualism> [accessed 29/03/2009]

the ancient Persian Zoroastrian and Manichean religions, in which all events in the world were interpreted through a bipolar perspective where Good and Evil – or God and the Devil – were independent and more or less equal forces in the world. In modern philosophy of mind, dualism refers to the theory that the mental and the physical – or mind and body – are radically different kinds of thing. In this research, however, the term is used to denote a way of thinking that promotes duality between ‘the self’ (or ‘us’) and ‘the other’ (or ‘them’) in order to justify and naturalise some structured patterns of domination and exploitation. By portraying ‘them’ as lesser in humanity or lower in the great chain of being, dualism is employed to legitimise some implications of hierarchical power and to show who gets what, when and how. By dualism I do not mean everyday dualities between different kinds of people such as the duality between young and old or between different groups like Conservative and Labour. In this dissertation dualism specifically refers to the realm of human interaction for the purpose of exploitation and domination.

Historically speaking, dualism was manifested by different ideologies which attempted to justify the domination of others by theorising dualities based on sex, race, nation and class. The critical part of dualistic thought is not that there is merely a difference which can be found between each pair of men, but a dramatic difference, a ‘difference by nature’, i.e., an essential otherness which makes a specific group of men less human and hence subject to domination by another complete human being. In the social and political realms the main intention behind promoting dualistic thought is usually to justify the way ‘we’ treat them, even if we, as human beings, do not want to be treated in a similar way. The core of a dualistic argument, thus, is that ‘they’ are essentially different, totally dismissing their commonalities with us as members of the human race. It goes without saying that this argument inevitably produces on the other side a counter-response which leads to a counter-counter-response, in a vicious circle of hate. Here, in a brief historical overview, I mainly focus on some modern European examples. Some general characteristics of these dualisms and their dualistic counter-responses, which altogether – though at times disguising themselves as fashionable explanations – are but a primitive way of thinking, will also be discussed.

The duality between masculine and feminine is an example of an ancient dualism which has been transferred to modern world. This brand of dualism characterises

cultural and economic structures which create and enforce the elaborate and rigid patterns of sex marking, which divide humankind along lines of sex into dominators and subordinators (Frye, 1983: 38). According to this type, the biological difference illustrates a difference *by nature*, and thus, inferiority. This attitude was clearly illustrated by some philosophers like Edmund Burke who was convinced that “woman is but an animal and an animal not of the highest order” (Quotes in Plumwood, 1993: 19). Jonathan Swift elaborates such an attitude in “A letter to a very young lady on her marriage” that “I cannot conceive of you to be human creatures, but a sort of species hardly a degree above a monkey” (Swift and Scott, 1814: 422). The interesting point in this brand of dualism is the extent to which it is embedded in culture and in language and has thus become naturalised. This shows how culture and language can systematically and forcefully complement oppression, recognising duality between the powerful and the powerless as something out of the question. This dualism was countered by another dualistic ideology which was represented by some brands of feminism. They tended to exchange the place of the oppressed with that of oppressor to portray a feminine utopia (Plumwood, 1993: 59).

Racism, with its hierarchy of superior and inferior races, is an example of dualism in political, social and cultural life. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* submits that the concept of race for the first time arose within the Iberian Peninsula during the late fifteenth century. During and after the *Reconquista* the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand sought to establish a uniformly Christian state by expelling first the Jews (in 1492) and then the Muslims (in 1502). However, because large numbers of both groups converted to Christianity to avoid expulsion (and before this to avoid persecution), the conquerors distrusted the authenticity of these Jewish and Muslim converts. Thus, to ensure that only true Christians would remain in the territory, they relied upon lineage and purity of blood – characteristics which finally gave birth to the notion of race as a category of religio-political membership (James, 2008).

Later the dualism of races developed as a deep-seated ideology and imposed its standards as ‘natural’ and ‘real’. The great philosopher Immanuel Kant reinforces racism, stating: “The yellow Indians do have a meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them, and at the lowest point are a part of the American people” (quoted in Ward and Lott, 2002: 305). In the nineteenth century, Hegel declared that “Africa is no

historical part of the world.” He further remarked that blacks have no “sense of personality; their spirit sleeps, remains sunk in itself, makes no advance, and thus parallels the compact, undifferentiated mass of the African continent” (Gilman, 1982: 94). Such a philosophical background crystallised a colonial discourse and made possible the history of colonialism for nearly three centuries.

Racism continued to influence Europe and in the twentieth century became the key intellectual foundation for German anti-Semitism, of which Adolf Hitler was simply its most extreme manifestation. This brand of racism was invented through religious tensions between Christians and Jews, which were thus transformed into racial conflicts, for which conversion or ecumenical tolerance would have no healing effect. A similar scenario was provided for American race prejudice against Blacks and Native Americans through the enforcement of anti-miscegenation laws which stayed in force for a number of decades in thirty states (James, 2008).

But racism as an ideology of hate produced many counter-responses from the inferiorised races. Among them I just briefly quote Elijah Muhammad, the prophet of the Nation of Islam, to show how he accepted the logic of dualism but tended to replace the oppressor with the oppressed. His account of creation reads that “We the tribe of Shabazz [(Blacks)], says Allah (God) were the first to discover the best part of our planet to live on. The rich Nile Valley of Egypt and the present seat of the Holy City, Mecca, Arabia.” Then, he adds that another God, Jacob, was born. Jacob who was extremely intelligent managed to produce from the germ of the black man an inferior race, i.e., the Caucasian white with blue eyes. After various changes in fortune, they acquired the knowledge and power to bring every living thing, regardless of its kind of life, into subjection. The situation, however, would change in the twentieth century and “the black nation, including its three other colors, brown, red and yellow, outnumber the Caucasian race, eleven to one,” the prophet predicts (quoted in Kepel, 1997: 24-5).

Nationalism, a product of modernity, is another dualistic ideology that first appeared during the events of the French Revolution. John Keane distinguishes between national identity – a form of identity that crystallises around a common language or dialect, common historical memories and cultural habits and feelings for nature – and

nationalism. The latter is an upwardly mobile power-hungry ideology which makes falsely universal claims. "It supposes that it is the natural order of things and that the Nation is a biological fact." Being based on friend-foe calculations, it attempts to simplify things and tries to show that it has strict boundaries with others, who are seen as unworthy of respect or recognition. This is quite in contrast with national identity which originally emerged as an idea with flexible boundaries, tolerance of difference and openness to others (Keane, 1993). Brutal events of the two World Wars and many other murderous acts of the twentieth century have illustrated how dangerous and counter-productive this dualism can be in world politics.

The dualism between classes in the written history of all hitherto existing societies presents another version of dualism in the realm of human interaction. The rich oppressor and the poor oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another and carried on an uninterrupted fight. Capital through different means tried to show its *natural* superiority over Labour, while Labour attempted to show the reverse. This historically persistent antagonism has portrayed many different forms of dualism. Among all of them, Marxism offers a perfect dualistic version. It systematically appreciates the duality of the classes and tries to show that history will finally change the rules of the game. Marx in his era illustrated how industrial society was becoming increasingly divided into two great hostile camps, two great classes directly facing each other: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx and Engels, 2004). The destiny of this fight between the two sides, Marx predicts, is an inevitable victory of the proletariat in the course of a violent revolution. Other social classes, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry. If they want to protect their future interests, they have to join the proletariat in the course of the revolution. There is indeed only a binary opposition. The historical "mission" of the proletariat is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property and to jettison the whole superincumbent strata of official society (Marx and Engels, 2004).

A century later, once Marxism found political representation in the Soviet Union, a counter-counter-response to the class struggle emerged in the political theory and practice of the Cold War. For nearly half a century a dualistic clash between the two political paradigms – 'the Free World' and 'Atheistic Communism' – prevailed in world

politics. Philip Wander, an analyst of that period, holds that the Cold War started as a “prophetic dualism” which divided the world into two totally contrasted camps – Good and Evil. He highlights the way in which President Eisenhower, using religious rhetoric, distinguished between the two sides by reinforcing “religious faith” in the Free World and “an ideology which ignores the faith” on the other side. Thus America’s “mission”, Wander adds, was to protect and promote her moral and spiritual superiority. In the divided world of prophetic dualism, one side acts in accord with all that is good, decent, and at one with God’s will. The other acts in direct opposition. Conflict between them is resolved only through the total victory of one over the other. Since Good has to remain unadulterated at all costs, it should absolutely triumph and no middle ground can be imagined. In such an ideology neutrality may be treated as a delusion and compromise, appeasement, and negotiation a call for surrender (Wander, 1998: 157-9).

All in all, a dualism supposes that the two sides of a relationship are monolithic and coherent and in a reductionist way attempts to dismiss the diversity and dynamism of both sides and tends to see things in black-and-white. Dualism does not pay attention to some profound differences within each camp and most of the time exaggerates the homogeneity in the opposing camps for the sake of making the contrast between the two much more clearly defined and apparent. This approach in its variety of forms considers ‘us’ as ‘light’ and them as ‘dark’, promoting the unchallengeable superiority and final victory of light. As Val Plumwood rightly defines it:

A dualism is an intense, established and developed cultural expression of such hierarchical relationship, constructing central cultural concepts and identities so as to make equality and mutuality literally unthinkable. Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of being constructed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders and kinds, and hence as not open to change (Plumwood, 1993: 47-8).

In the final analysis dualism is a way of categorisation which is generally at the risk of being a means for merely achieving the social interests of those who define it. Durkheim and Mauss elaborated for the first time the very influence of social factors upon the categorisation.³ They observed some primitive forms of classification in some Australian tribes and in Zunis, Sioux as well as ancient China. From there they came to the point that the process of classification, which plays a decisive role in human understanding, is not merely logical or psychological, but to a large extent social. They maintained that the first classes of things were classes of men which were of social origin. The totality of universe was regarded as a single system, only because society itself was seen in the same way. Logical hierarchy was only another aspect of social hierarchy. In fact, hierarchical order, which every classification implies, is neither inspired by the tangible world, nor can our minds give us such models without prelogical social presumptions. Gradually the reasons which have led to the establishment of the categories have been forgotten, but the category persists and is applied, well or ill. They conclude: "Thus the history of scientific classification is, in the last analysis, the history of the stage by which this history of social affectivity has progressively weakened, leaving more and more room for reflective thought of individuals. But it is not the case that these remote influences which we have just studied have ceased to be felt today. They have left behind them an effect which survives and which is always present; it is the very cadre of classification, it is the ensemble of mental habits by virtue of which we conceive things and facts in the form of co-ordinated or hierarchized groups" (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963: 88). Hence, dualism, as Durkheim and Mauss illustrate, is but a premature and primitive way of categorising in which the dualist categorises things mainly based on his/her social interests, or in Durkheim's words, on prelogical social presumptions.

This dissertation is a study of a long-standing dualism of the West and Islam, and its performance in the contemporary world with great emphasis on the role played by intellectuals. In the end, it also suggests some alternative ways that can portray a more beautiful future for the humankind. Perhaps the first author who termed 'dualism' in this sense is Jacques Waardenburg. He gives one of his chapters the title of "Is there a Dualism between the West and Islam?" Then he wonders why so many theories have

³ Emil Durkheim (1858-1917) and his nephew, Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), published their essay in *Année Sociologique*, 1903.

developed in the West that claim and explain an antagonism existing between the West and Islam. He then concludes: "My guess is that serious Western interests have been and are at stake in this construction of an Islamic-Western dualism" (Waardenburg, 2003: 495).

The West and Islam dualism, not dissimilar to other dualisms, has also been reflected as a binary opposition of superior and inferior religions, races and cultures. It has also been portrayed as a peculiar epistemological framework through which the world can be seen as a battlefield between 'us' (the West) and 'them' (Muslims), with the former enjoying the absolute superiority over the latter. This framework in its extreme sense in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented itself as a sort of biological view of foreign policy.⁴ Like other brands of dualism, it also produced some devastating and dangerous counter-responses which adopted its logic but replaced the position of the two poles.

The question that has to be answered is how dualism, with its sharp contrast with many Western humanitarian values, has crystallised and survived till the present as can be seen in President Bush's rhetoric and in Western public sphere. What is responsible for keeping alive such a primitive way of thinking in the twenty-first century? No doubt in the complexity of a civilisation many interdependent factors could be suggested to be responsible for the crystallisation of such a perception. It seems, among others, a role played by Western scholarship has been crucial in creating a style of thought based upon which an ontological and epistemological distinction has been made between 'the West' and 'Islam'. The large mass of writers, among whom are Islamologists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, poets and novelists have actually participated in generating the basic distinction which later was recognised by coming generations as the basis for elaborating other theories and seemed to be a 'natural' and 'real' way of categorisation.

To speak of the problem of the West and Islam dualism is naturally to engage with the classic work of Edward Said, *Orientalism*.⁵ His historical observations, his discourse and

⁴ Said observes that based on different varieties of Darwinism the Orientals were put in the second rank of humanity. Thus the inferiority of Orientals was considered as a biological "truth", such as those spelled out in P. Charles Michel's "A Biological View of our Foreign Policy" (1896) and Charles Harvey's *The Biology of British Politics* (1904) (Said, 2003: 233).

⁵ Said, Edward (1978, 2003). *Orientalism*. Penguin Books.

textual analyses and the dogmas he discovered in *Orientalism* shall be employed in my research as a good starting point. But the work also has its limitations. After a critical appraisal of this text and Said's methodology I move to the question of what I call 'neo-Orientalism'. To illustrate some outcomes of dualistic thinking after Said, I bring two prominent examples, i.e., Samuel Huntington and Sayyid Qutb, both influential and inspiring. Critically evaluating and then comparing and contrasting the two, one an exponent of Orientalism and the other of Occidentalism, I come to show why dualism in itself, regardless of being used by whom against whom, is a flawed, dangerous and pernicious logic. Then, I discuss my main thesis and my research methodology before embarking upon the main chapters.

Orientalism

In his masterpiece, *Orientalism*, Said deeply and comprehensively researched the historical construction of the West and Islam dualism (though he never used dualism in this sense) in Western literature on Islam.⁶ Published for the first time in 1978, *Orientalism* traces the various phases of relationship of the West and Islam, from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, through the colonial period and the rise of modern Orientalist scholarship in Britain and France during the nineteenth century. It continues up to the end of European imperial hegemony in the Orient after World War II and then the emergence of American dominance. The term Orientalism, like Latinism and Hellenism, refers to the discipline which now can be equated with Middle Eastern studies. The Orient, in the nineteenth century European usage of the word, meant the Arab world or generally the Middle East; it did not include India, China or the Far East. The Orient, literally the sunrise, meant above all the region that immediately lay to the

⁶ Edward Said (1935-2003) was born in Jerusalem from a Palestinian father and a Lebanese mother. He was raised in a Protestant Christian family but in an overwhelming Muslim society. He never converted to Islam but chose a secular approach in his life (Said, 2001: 437). After the occupation of his homeland, when Edward was just six years old, his family took refuge in Egypt. He, then, in the early 1950s emigrated to the United States where he continued his studies until he received a PhD in English and comparative literature. Then he started his academic career in Columbia University and after a few years became involved in politics. In his autobiography, *Out of Place*, he expresses his deep feeling of being a misfit with his environment throughout his life. During his last three decades, Said was a prominent Palestinian intellectual-activist who never forgot the occupation of his homeland by Israel and its continuous mistreatment of its original inhabitants. In 25 September 2003, he passed away due to cancer.

east of Europe (Lewis, 2004b: 538). In Said's view, the discipline of Orientalism is but a crystallisation of the West and Islam dualism in Western scholarship.

The main thesis of Said in *Orientalism* is not to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient; nor is it to make an assertion about the necessary privilege of an 'insider' perspective over an 'outsider one'. On the contrary, he argues that 'the Orient' is itself a constituted entity, and that the notion that there are geographical spaces with indigenous, radically 'different' inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some essence proper to that space is equally a highly debatable idea (Said, 2003: 322). Without such ideological categorisation, there would be scholars, critics, intellectuals, human beings, to whom the racial, ethnic, and religious distinctions seem less important than the common enterprise of promoting human community (Said, 2003: 328). He further emphasises the fact that he never suggests a dualist approach not because it is against Islam, but because this approach to the world is a flawed ideology in itself, stating: "the answer to Orientalism is not Occidentalism" (Said, 2003: 328).

He pays especial attention to the arbitrary nature of the big notions of 'Orient', 'Islam' and 'the West'. He believes that such concepts have no ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other to mobilise and organise collective passion (Said, 2003: xii). He then elaborates how these terms were manipulated for creating a hostile discourse which is responsible for the current climate of global distrust. So long as there is a well-organised sense that people over there are not like 'us' and don't appreciate 'our' values, he argues, there will be global distrust and conflict (Said, 2003: xv). He remarks that Orientalism mainly sought to follow an idealist philosophy rather than a realist one. Orientalism deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and the Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as a career) despite or beyond any correspondence with a real 'Orient' (Said, 2003: 5). However, he sometimes considers Orientalism as a radical realist philosophy: "Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism" (Said, 2003: 72). He can be right in both assertions, because idealism and radical realism are very similar to each other; both use certain methods and lead to similar extremist results. Indeed, radical realists are idealists who overstate their conjectures and attempt to equate them

strictly with reality. It can be shown that, in an ontological sense, radical realism would end up in the most radical form of idealism, namely solipsism.

Said maintains that in any observation, research or analysis, the intention of doing the job is a decisive factor. There is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful observation and analysis for their own sakes, and on the other hand knowledge – if we can call it – that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation, hostility and outright war (Said, 2003: xiv).

Although Said claims that he had already begun to lose interest in Foucault when he was writing *Orientalism* (Said, 2001b: 267), Foucault's influence over his analyses is obvious throughout the book. Discourse, culture and the network of power make major themes in *Orientalism*. Said, however, goes farther than Foucault to investigate who gains the power and how (Said, 1983: 221). He highlights the role of power relations between West and East, suggesting that the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony (Said, 2003: 5). He adds that although in theory the academic trend is to produce non-political knowledge, in practice the reality is much more problematic. No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the necessities of life, from national identity, or from the fact that he is consciously or unconsciously involved with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position (Said, 2003: 10). His contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness (Said, 2003: 204).

Said highlights the fact that empirical data about the Orient or about any part of it count for very little in Orientalism. Instead what matters and is decisive is what he has called the Orientalist vision (Said, 2003: 69). In fact, he argues, an Orientalist shares with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either displace or alter (Said, 2003: 70). Orientalism regards the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place (Said, 2003: 108). As a result, the

Orientalist expresses his ideas about Islam in such a way as to emphasise his, as well as putatively the Muslims' *resistance* to change, to mutual comprehension between East and West, to the development of men and women out of old-fashioned narratives, primitive classical institutions and into modernity (Said, 2003: 263).

Since it was commonly believed that the whole Orient hung together in some profoundly organic way, Said remarks, it makes perfectly good hermeneutical sense for the Orientalist scholar to regard the material evidence he and his colleagues deal with as ultimately leading to a better understanding of such things as the Muslim character, mind, ethos or spirit (Said, 2003: 255). Thus every discrete study of *one bit* would confirm in a summary way the situation of the rest. Based on this ultra-reductionist vision, which is prevalent in Orientalism, every writer on Islam assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies (Said, 2003: 20). The unity of the large collection of literature produced by Orientalism is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other: Orientalism is after all a mere system of citing works and authors (Said, 2003: 23).⁷

Next to his extensive and comprehensive analysis, Said concludes that Western studies of Islam suffer from four prevalent widely-believed dogmas. He summarises them as follow:

1. The absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior; and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior.
2. Abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a classical Oriental civilisation are preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities.
3. The Orient is eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalised and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically 'objective.'

⁷ See also: Said, 2003: 177.

4. The Orient is at bottom something either to be feared, or to be controlled by pacification, research and development, or occupation (Said, 2003: 300-1).

A Critique

Influenced by some postmodernist schools of thought, Said's whole approach suffers from four fundamental problems. First, as it is noted by a number of critics like Bruce Robbins (Robbins, 1992: 54), Bryan Turner (Turner, 1994), Richard King (King, 1999: 84) and Michael Richardson (Richardson, 1990), Said shows some main concerns about the validity of knowledge. For instance, he says that every representation, because it is a presentation, is embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the presenter (Said, 2003: 272). He elaborates his point that Orientalism is not a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence – which he does not believe in. Rather its main weakness is that it operates as other representations, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic context (Said, 2003: 273). This approach to knowledge, however, can only weaken Said's argument against Orientalism. The fact that "all representation is misrepresentation of one sort or another" (Said, 2001b: 237) is, no doubt, the nature of human knowledge. No branch of knowledge can grasp the reality as it is. In Robbins's words: "If everything is a representation, then representation is not a scandal. Or if all representation is a scandal, then no particular representation is particularly scandalous" (Robbins, 1992: 54). Nevertheless, what is expected from a constructive methodology is to produce a more expressive portrait of its subject by generating better theories, not simply refuting other theories as being different from reality. They will be so forever. However, we must not disregard the fact that we can learn from our mistakes and gradually approach a better representation of reality through piecemeal corrections. Said appreciates such a criticism of *Orientalism*, admitting that "I had nothing to say about what the Orient was really like... That's a fair criticism" (Said, 2001b: 268). Perhaps he also points to this fact when he says: "*Orientalism* is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine" (Said, 2003: 340).

Sometimes, Said humbly admits that his methodology merely destroys a corpus of knowledge, nullifying theories suggested for some real questions, but never substitutes a better set of theories. Perhaps the most important task of all, he admits, would be to think about some alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a non-repressive and non-manipulative, perspective. But, influenced by Foucault, he adds that one would have to rethink the whole complex problem of knowledge and power. "These are all tasks left embarrassingly incomplete in this study" (Said, 2003: 24). Indeed, his epistemology will never be able to contradict itself by producing any sort of presentation of the world, so this embarrassment is not just for *Orientalism*, but has deeper roots in the deficiency of his philosophy.

To highlight this shortcoming of Said, David Kopf compares him with Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru in his *The Discovery of India*, written in the Ahmadnagar Front Prison camp, though agrees with many of Said's complaints regarding the destructive impacts of the West, takes a constructive position on India's future and admits the necessity of implementation of some Western inventions.⁸ He, unlike Said, does not merely indulge in a destructive dialectic, but tries to take a constructive position as well (Kopf, 1980).⁹

Second, as noted by many critics like Kopf (Kopf, 1980), King (King, 1999: 86) and Sadik Jalal al-'Azm (al-'Azm, 1981), it is hardly fair to attempt to refute others not in terms of what they say but, as it is most frequent in *Orientalism*, of motives allegedly behind their theories. At times just being in a Western imperial camp has been interpreted by Said as generating a corrupt view of the oppressed Orient. He sometimes supports that a Western scholar cannot produce a neutral research: "For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second" (Said, 2003: 11). Such a person, Said believes, suffers an egoistic will of power that feeds his endeavour and corrupts his

⁸ Nehru, Jawaharlal (1946). *The Discovery of India*. New York: Anchor Books.

⁹ In a similar fashion Aijaz Ahmed has argued that Said's half-hearted Foucauldian analysis is destructive of old regimes rather than constructive of new ones (Ahmed, 1991: 146-7).

ambitions (Said, 2003: 116). In line with this presumption in the context of the nineteenth century he adds: "It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (Said, 2003: 204). Considering his argument one can logically say that apparently Said himself firmly believes in an inevitable ontological dualism between the West and Islam since he affirms that the actuality of a Westerner is dramatically different from his subject of study in a way that he is a Westerner first and a human being second! Al-'Azm calls this way of thinking "Orientalism in reverse" which is a natural outcome of essentialising the occident in the same fashion that was done to the orient by Orientalism (al-'Azm, 1981).

Third, as noted by many critics like Richardson (Richardson, 1990), King (King, 1999: 94) and Robbins (Robbins, 1992: 50), such a perspective is counterproductive. That is to say, one can object that whatever analyses Said has produced has no scientific value but was merely nurtured by a sense of vengeance upon the West which, to Said's eyes, has been responsible for the occupation of his homeland, Palestine, and for making him 'out of place'. Sometimes Said admits to being influenced by such a 'political' motive in the course of writing *Orientalism*: "I don't think I would have written the book had I not been politically associated with a struggle. The struggle of Arab and Palestinian nationalism is very important to that book. *Orientalism* is not meant to be an abstract account of some historical formation but rather a part of the liberation from such stereotypes and such domination of my own people, whether they are Arabs, or Muslims, or Palestinians" (Said, 2001b: 374). One can say that, just based on that motivation and without any scientific and academic foundation, Said lumps together writers, scholars, and journalists of very diverse character and origin, and thereby conveys, rather than asserts, that they are all the same homogeneous, centrally directed, conspiratorial whole.

The last shortcoming that I want to raise about Said's perspective is his dismissal of the fact that Western countries need to study their political rivals, i.e., Islam, Muslims, Islamic countries and Islamism as an ideology. For Said, however, any link between schools of area studies and government departments of foreign affairs can be translated into a corruption of scholarship. He questions why so many Islamic

specialists were and still are routinely consulted by, and actively work for, Western governments whose aspirations are economic exploitation, domination or outright aggression (Said, 2003: 345). Consequently Said's methodology is utterly unable to forecast any real threat against the West. For instance he quotes a statement from *US News and World Report*, July 6 1987 which claims that the martyr complex integral to minority Shia Iran now appears among the youth of the Sunni majority. Then he criticises the approach of the report: "No one bothers to ask, for instance, how verifiable is the statement that martyrdom is spreading among Sunni youth, all several hundred million of them, from Morocco to Uzbekistan, and, if it is, what sort of evidence it is likely to be in the first place" (Said, 1997: xix). Although Said is right that many Orientalists tend unjustly to promote fear of Islam, there are at times some real threats that must be considered. The warning of the journal was shown to be quite relevant when the suicide operations of Sunni extremists happened in the real world and reached its apex in September 11.¹⁰

Neo-Orientalism

Undoubtedly *Orientalism* is one of the greatest titles that have been published in the twentieth century. It significantly challenged the magnificent corpus of the Orientalist literature and showed that what was thought to be a genuine branch of knowledge has been in many ways some grand narratives fabricated in favour of Western political dominance. Hundreds of book reviews, academic papers, lectures, roundtables, conferences, all for or against the thesis suggested by *Orientalism*, abundantly illustrate the importance of its message. In addition to its theoretical significance, the published work was quite timely. As Abdel Malek notes, in the twentieth century specialists and the public at large became aware of the time lag, not only between Orientalist science and the material under study, but also between the methodologies and the instruments of work in the human and social sciences and those of Orientalism

¹⁰ For further analyses on Said and his thesis see: A. L. Macfie (ed.) (2000). *Orientalism: a Reader*. Edinburgh University Press; Valerie Kennedy (2000). *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*. Blackwell Publishers Inc.; Michael Sprinker (1992). *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*. Blackwell Publishers; See also an index of hundreds of papers on Said at <http://www.edwardsaid.org/?q=node/1> [accessed 3/12/2009]

(Abdel-Malek, 1963). And Said at the outset of the Islamic Revolution of Iran notified the West about a serious deficiency in the way it had been considering 'others'. Here I do not want to go further into profound changes that *Orientalism* brought to the Western knowledge of Islam. An examination of its impact on how the West views the rest would require another research.

What I want to argue here is that since its publication in 1978 the position of Islam has changed dramatically and moved ever closer to the centre of world politics. The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, then the hostage crisis of US diplomats in Tehran; the unresolved Palestinian question and using Islam as a main force of resistance in the course of *intifadas*; the victorious resistance of Arab Afghan Mujahedin over the former super power's occupation; the Rushdie affair; and an increasing Islamic resurgence worldwide; all put both the West and Islam in new positions. Additionally, some political and social factors have greatly influenced interrelations between the West and Islam, among them are: the collapse of the Soviet Union and a threat vacuum for the West; the growing presence of Muslims with the full right of citizenship in the West, both in academia and in the marketplace; and the emergence of global mass media, diverse satellite channels and the internet. Likewise, some events of this new era have challenged the traditional Western perception of Islam, such as: the *de facto* democratic participation, and sometimes victories, of Islamic political movements; the growing voices of Islamic modernism; the rise of a democratic government led by Hamas as well as the democratic political participation of Hezbollah, both of which have been regarded as terrorist movements; the emergence of modern global terrorist networks in the name of Islam; and escalating Western publications on Islam with a huge diversity of attitudes that they reveal in Western scholarship.

These events have become intertwined with huge changes brought by unfolding waves of globalisation. Although there are disagreements on how to define globalisation, most contemporary social analyses show a consensus about some basic rudiments of the concept; among them are *detritorialization* and the growth of *interconnectedness* (Scheuerman, 2006). Under the influence of these two important factors, territory, a basic element of civilisation in traditional Orientalist thought, no longer constitutes the whole of 'social space' in which human activity takes places.

Thanks to modern technologies, distance or space undergoes compression or 'annihilation'. Distant events and decisions impact to a growing degree on local life. Hence, what happens to Others nowadays matters to us to an unprecedented extent.

In response to the above dramatic changes two academic trends have emerged. First is an increasing tendency to think of Orientalism as an ideology which belonged to a period of history that is now behind us. We are now moving 'beyond Orientalism' and are in fact in the "post-Orientalism" era.¹¹ The emergence of a global communications system and "the development of a form of global sociology" have ended the history of social-centred analyses (Robertson, 1987: 37). Equally the sharp contrast between Occident and Orient is hopelessly out of date (Turner, 1994).

The second trend, however, holds that although many preconditions which were responsible for crystallisation of the Orientalist discourse are no longer in place, it would be naive to think that the old patterns of human history and destiny which had shaped the West-and-Islam dualism were simply removed. Far from it: they have been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework and have shaped a new paradigm which can be called "neo-Orientalism". Few scholars have attempted to show some features and characteristics of this new paradigm.

Yahya Sadowski shows how after the Islamic Revolution of Iran Western experts quickly reversed their views on interrelation between society and state in the context of Muslim world. Although according to traditional Orientalism the state was stronger than society and thus despotism was a norm in the Muslim context, the 1980s witnessed a dramatic change in Western analyses. "Younger Orientalists" like Patricia Crone, Daniel Pipes and John Hall, whom Sadowski calls neo-Orientalists, though chose to change the appearance of their argument and assumed society to be stronger than state, the core of their idea was similar to that of classical Orientalism. For both groups Islam was incompatible with democracy. They both tried to essentialise otherness – and dualism – in one way or another. He concludes: "It is long past time for serious scholars to abandon the quest for the mysterious 'essence' that prevent

¹¹ See for instance, Eli Franco and Karin Preisendanz (eds) (1997). *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-cultural Studies*. Rodopi; Fred Dallmayr (1996). *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-cultural encounter*. State University of New York.

democratization in the Middle East and tend to the-matter-of-fact itemization of the forces that promote or retard this process” (Sadowski, 1993).

Dag Tuastad regards the new ways of representing the violence of Muslims and Arabs in Western media as “new barbarism”. The new barbarism thesis implies explanations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing violence, and presents violence as a result of traits embedded in local cultures. Tuastad argues that new barbarism has intertwined with neo-Orientalist imaginaries that highlight a deep cultural dualism between Islam and the West. These waves of new barbarism and neo-Orientalism are to serve as hegemonic strategies when the production of enemy imaginaries contributes to legitimise continuous colonial economic or political projects, as can be witnessed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Tuastad, 2003).

Christina Hellmich borrows the term neo-Orientalism from Tuastad. He finds the most important particularity of neo-Orientalism that it neglects local and specific aspects of regional movements and instead attempts to portray a homogenous Islamist terrorist enemy. In this “Manichean model”, al-Qaeda is essentially not very different from Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): they are, first and foremost, enemies of the civilised world. A telling illustration of this perspective can be found in psychological profiling efforts that fuel the image of Islamic terrorists as “crazy madmen” acting under the influence of mental disorders rather than being motivated by a rational logic related to social, political, or religious conditions (Hellmich, 2008).

This research intends to critically investigate crystallisation of the paradigm of neo-Orientalism in a broader sense through close examination of some prominent Islamologists of this era. That is to say whether the above dramatic changes in world politics and global communications and the new conditions they have brought have caused the West and Islam dualism in traditional Orientalism to enter into a new paradigm which, although it inherits a set of structures from the past, it produces some new rules, forms and shapes.

"Islam's borders are bloody"

In world politics perhaps the Soviet Union's collapse, which ended the paradigm of the Cold War, was the most critical change after *Orientalism* was published. Said points to this and compares it with the first confrontation between Islam and Christianity. In the supposed intellectual vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, he argues, the search for a new foreign devil has come to rest, as it did at the beginning of the eighth century for European Christianity, on Islam, a religion whose proximity seemed immensely problematic to the West. The situation is as diabolical and violent now as it was then (Said, 1997: xxxiv). The literal apex of this newly-formulated and revitalised dualism between the West and Islam was devised by Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' theory. Huntington, himself a former Cold War warrior, unconditionally appreciates Said's criticism of Orientalism (Huntington, 2002: 33, 109), but suggests a far more devastating version of dualism as a new paradigm for world politics. Nevertheless, Said is against Huntington's theory of the clash of civilisations, considering it as a "Clash of Ignorance" (Said, 2001a).

At first Huntington's theory was published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, and then, in 1997 he elaborated his thesis in a comprehensive book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.¹² It is worth looking at his version of dualism here in some detail, because it sheds light on some important aspects of the main thesis of this research.

Huntington's theory is articulated in terms of the following five propositions. First, identity is closely tied in with enmity and conflict. In the process of seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are an essential functional part (Huntington, 2002: 20). We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against (ibid: 21). "It is human to hate" (ibid: 130). In fact, competitions in business, rivalries in achievements and oppositions in politics are behind different kinds of self-definition and motivation. Thus 'us' versus 'them' in political arena is a 'universal' fact (ibid).

¹² Huntington, P. Samuel (1993). "The clash of civilisations?". *Foreign Affairs*, v72, n3; Huntington, P. Samuel (1997, 2002). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster.

Second, in the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among people are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. That is to say, people define themselves in terms of cultural factors such as: ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions (ibid: 21). The role of culture, as the most decisive factor, could be examined in major differences in political and economic developments in different cultural contexts. For instance, East Asian economic success has its source in East Asian culture, as do the difficulties East Asian societies have had in achieving stable democracies. Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of the Muslim countries (ibid: 29).

Taking into account the decisive role of culture, civilisation, the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity, will play the major role in post Cold War era. Civilisations are comprehensive, that is, none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing civilisation. Although a civilisation has no clear-cut boundaries, it refers to the overall way of life of a specific branch of humankind. A civilisation is, therefore, in the first place a cultural entity, but once culture receives its current crucial position in world politics, civilisations become fully political entities (ibid: 40-45).

Among all cultural factors religion is the most pivotal. "Millennia of human history have shown that religion is not a 'small difference' but possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people" (ibid: 254). Certain investigations in the late twentieth century support that there is a contemporary resurgence of religion and it is a global phenomenon, and therefore, requires a global explanation.¹³ The most salient and powerful cause of the global religious resurgence is exactly what was previously supposed to cause the death of religion: the processes of social, economic, and cultural modernisation that swept across the world in the second half of the twentieth century (ibid: 97). The movements for religious revival are anti-secular, anti-universal, and obviously, except in their Christian forms, anti-Western (ibid: 100).¹⁴

Third, the religion of Islam, with its expansionism and extreme sense of violence, constitutes the most profound part of identity in Islamic civilisation. In the post-Cold

¹³ In this issue, he mainly relies on Gilles Kepel and sometimes on Bernard Lewis (Huntington, 1993; 2002: 98).

¹⁴ He will define the 'West' under his fourth proposition.

War era, Muslims have a much greater awareness of what they have in common and what distinguishes them from non-Muslims. The new generation of leaders that take over are not necessarily fundamentalist but will be much more committed to Islam than their predecessors. A sense of anti-Westernisation is being reinforced. The resurgence leaves a network of Islamist social, cultural, economic, and political organizations which promote 'Islam is the solution' to all sorts of problems today's world faces (ibid: 121). Political loyalty among Muslims is mainly religious, then tribal, but not national. That is due to the fact that the idea of sovereign nation states is incompatible with belief in the sovereignty of Allah and the primacy of the *ummah*. Islamist movements reject the nation state in favour of the unity of Islam as Marxists once rejected it in favour of the unity of the international proletariat (ibid: 175).

In the post-Cold War, for the following reasons "Islam's borders are bloody" (Huntington, 1993; 2002: 258):

- Islam from its beginning was a religion of sword. "Muhammad himself is remembered as a hard fighter and a skilful military commander" (Huntington, 2002: 263).
- Indigestibility which is evident in the sharp separation of *Dar al-Islam* with *Dar al-harb* (ibid);
- Victim status caused by Western colonialism and imperialism (ibid: 264);
- Lack of core states and dominant centres, that is to say, "Islam is a source of instability in the world because it lacks a dominant centre" (ibid);
- Demographic explosion, which has produced large numbers of often unemployed males under the age of thirty, as a natural source of instability and violence against fellow Muslims and non-Muslims alike (ibid: 265);
- Oil resources, which greatly increase the wealth and power of many Muslim nations and enable them to reserve the relations of domination and subordination that had existed with the West (ibid: 116).

Fourth, there are civilisations, each of which is unique. The seven existing civilisations are: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Western, Orthodox, Latin American, African (ibid: 45). No civilisation can fully embrace another's culture. For instance, among major industrialised countries, the Japanese economy is unique because Japanese society is

uniquely non-Western (ibid: 226). The West is quite unique. "The West was the West long before it was modern" (ibid: 69). "Europe as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. has said 'the source - the unique source' of the 'ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom...These are European ideas, not Asian, nor African, nor Middle Eastern Ideas, except by adoption'" (ibid: 311). Such ideas are deeply rooted in Western civilisation, shaped by its Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage. Among the most important qualifications of the West, which brought with it freedom, is the separation of the spiritual and the temporal authorities. This quality put it in sharp contrast with Islam where God is Caesar (ibid: 69-70).

Accordingly, the "Westernization of the Universe" is a myth. Only naivety and arrogance can lead Westerners to assume that non-Westerners will become Westernised by acquiring Western goods (ibid: 58). "Modernization, in short, does not necessary mean Westernization" (ibid: 78). Although modern scientists have much in common, the presumption that modern society must approximate a single type, the Western type, that modern civilisation is Western civilisation and the Western civilisation is modern civilisation "is a totally false identification" (ibid: 69). So the popular message, promoted by many Western intellectuals, that 'To be successful you must be like us, our way is the only way' is merely an illusion (ibid: 73).

Huntington further expresses his idea by a figure diagram that illustrates that the processes of modernisation of the non-Western world, though started by Westernisation, ended in indigenisation (ibid: 75). This is to say that in the early phases of change, Westernisation promoted modernisation. In the later phases, modernisation promoted de-Westernisation and the resurgence of indigenous culture in two ways. At the social level, modernisation enhanced the economic, military, and political power of the society and encouraged people to have confidence in their culture and to become culturally assertive. At the individual level, modernisation generated feelings of alienation and anomie as traditional bonds and social relations were broken and then led to crisis of identity to which religion provided a best answer (ibid: 75-6). He gives an example: in 1953, when less than 15 percent of Iranians were literate and less than 17 percent urban, Kermit Roosevelt and a few CIA operatives rather easily suppressed an insurgency and restored the Shah to his throne. In 1979,

when 50 percent of Iranians were literate and 47 percent live in cities , no amount of US military support could have kept the Shah in his throne (ibid: 86).

Huntington claims that only Western power has made Western values and culture appealing to the rest of the world. Increases in military and economic power (hard power) can produce self-confidence, arrogance, and belief in the superiority of one's culture (soft power) compared to those of other peoples. Thus, concepts of human rights, liberalism and democracy continue to be attractive as long as they enjoy Western power behind them (ibid: 92). Every civilisation naturally sees itself as the centre of the world and writes its history as the central drama of human history. Perhaps the West has been worse in this sense. Such mono-civilisational viewpoints, however, have decreasing relevance and usefulness in a multi-civilisational world (ibid: 55).

To justify his argument, Huntington observes the experience of modernisation in non-Western countries. The first generation who attempted to modernise their society in the post-independence era often received their training in foreign universities in a Western language. Partly because they first went abroad as impressionable teenagers, their absorption of Western values and life-styles might well have been profound. Most of the second generation, however, got its education at home in universities created by the first generation, hence they often succumbed to the appeals of the native way of life (ibid: 93). Another case is the course of integrating democracy by non-Western countries. Once a non-Western society adopts Western democratic institutions, it will bring to power nativist and anti-Western political movements. In other words, democratisation, which is a part of modernisation, conflicts with Westernisation, that is because democracy is inherently a parochialising not a cosmopolitanising process (ibid: 94). In the Muslim world, for instance, the paradox of democracy brought an interesting irony. Support for Saddam Hussein was most 'fervent and widespread' in those Arab countries where politics was more open and freedom of expression less restricted (ibid: 248).

Furthermore the prescription of Westernisation is wrong because to date all attempts to alter one country's civilisation have failed. Observing cases of countries which have tried to shift their civilisation, like Russia, Mexico, Australia and Turkey, one can come

to the conclusion that the kind of Kemalist attempt to modernise has been unsuccessful. In Turkey, the growing Islamism of the mainstream, the failure of joining the European Union, and the current situation of democracy are signs of the failure of Kemalism (ibid: 144-9). If non-Western societies are to be modernised, they must do it in their own ways not in the precise way that the West experienced. They have to emulate Japan, build upon and employ their own traditions, institutions, and values (ibid: 154).

Accordingly Western universalism, namely, the universality of Western culture, is a completely wrong and politically immoral attitude. Since the imposition of an alien culture needs power, 'Imperialism' is necessarily a logical consequence of universalism (ibid: 310). If Westerners are to ignore the fact of uniqueness of civilisations, they will inevitably fall into the trap of double-standards. In fact, whenever they wanted to promote values of democracy, free markets, limited government, human rights, individualism, and the rule of law for other civilisations, in practice double-standards were the unavoidable price to pay. As a result non-Westerners are not wrong if they consider universalism as Western imperialism (ibid: 184). In addition Western universalism is dangerous to the world because it can lead to a major inter-civilisational war between core states and it is dangerous to the West because it can lead to the defeat of the West (ibid: 311).

Huntington's final proposition is that the West is in a process of gradual decline. Thirty-five percent of the earth's land surface was controlled by the West in 1800, 67 percent in 1878 and 84 percent in 1914. For four hundred years inter-civilisational relations consisted of the subordination of other societies to Western civilisation. The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organised violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do (ibid: 51). From the early twentieth century, however, the West began to decline. Its decline has been gradual and does not proceed in a straight line. The decline could be illustrated by examining the factors of power such as territory, population, economic product, and military capability. Regarding all of these factors there has been a gradual but considerable decline since the glorious days of the West in the early twentieth century (ibid: 83-91).

The Western ethos, as a result, began to lose its appeal. "Neither Adam Smith nor Thomas Jefferson will meet the psychological, emotional, moral, and social needs of urban migrants and first-generation secondary school graduates. Jesus Christ may not meet them either, but he is likely to have a better chance. In the long run, however, Mohammed wins out" (ibid: 65). Demographic changes are alarming as well. While currently Christianity has more than thirty percent of the world's population and Islam has nearly nineteen percent, by 2025 the situation will change - there will be about twenty-five percent Christians and about thirty percent Muslims (ibid: 66). In sum, one can forecast that the West will remain the most powerful civilisation well into the early decades of the twenty-first century. Beyond then it will probably continue to have a substantial lead in scientific talent, research and development capabilities, and civilian and military technological innovation. Control over other power resources, however, is becoming increasingly dispersed among the core states and leading countries of non-Western civilisations (ibid: 91).

Apart from political, military, demographic and economic decline, Huntington adds that the moral decline of the West could be observed in the following points: increases in antisocial behaviour, such as crime, drug use, and violence generally; family decay, including an increased rate of divorce, illegitimacy, teen-age pregnancy, and single-parent families; at least in the United States, a decline in "social capital", that is, membership in voluntary associations and the interpersonal trust associated with such membership; general weakening of the "work ethic" and rise of a cult of personal indulgence; decreasing commitment to learning and intellectual activity, manifested in the United States in lower levels of scholastic achievement (ibid: 303-4).

An important consequence of these five propositions, Huntington suggests, is an inevitable and dangerous clash between 'the West' and 'Islam'. This clash will be much worse than that of the Cold War. For differences in secular ideology between Marxist-Leninism and liberal democracy could at least be debated, if not resolved. The deep-seated cultural differences, however, could not even be negotiated (ibid: 130). Although some Westerners, including President Bill Clinton,¹⁵ have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with a sector of violent Islamist extremists, "fourteen hundred years of history demonstrates otherwise. The relations

¹⁵ Now we can add President Barack Obama as well.

between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox and Western, have often been stormy. Each has been the other's other" (ibid: 209). The central issue between the West and Islam is 'who is right and who is wrong.' Accordingly, "[s]o long as Islam remains Islam (*which it will*) and the West remains the West (which is more dubious), this fundamental conflict between two great civilizations and ways of life will continue to define their relations in the future even as it has defined them for the past fourteen centuries" (ibid: 212). (emphasis added) Finally he concludes: "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power." On the other side "The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world" (ibid: 217-8).

A Critique

In spite of some deep insights that negate Orientalism, Huntington's main thesis that there is dualism between the West and Islam is seriously flawed. In the following chapters I will examine different parts of this theory in detail. Here, however, it is useful to highlight briefly some of its deficiencies. First, in highlighting enmity and otherness in the constitution of political identity, Huntington, seemingly without knowing it, owes much to a certain school of political philosophy founded by philosophers like Machiavelli and Hobbes. This approach of the friend-foe towards politics better and clearer than Huntington has been theorised by Carl Schmitt, a German philosopher who sympathised for a time with Nazism during the early 1930s.

In a classical essay published first in 1927 and then 1932 (second edition) and later translated into English under *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt considers that all political actions and motives can be reduced to that between friend and enemy.¹⁶ That

¹⁶ Schmitt, Carl (1976). *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Rutgers University Press.

is to say, if we assume that in the realm of morality the basic distinction is between good and evil, and in aesthetics between beautiful and ugly, in politics the main function is to distinguish between friends and foes. As a result, concepts like 'stranger', 'alien', 'other' and particularly 'war' are central to his political philosophy (Schmitt, 1976: 26). For him the world is a dangerous jungle of self-interested partnerships, open disagreements, shifting tactical alliances, even outbreaks of violent conflicts. Weapons are of great importance. The essence of a weapon, Schmitt elaborates, is that it physically kills human beings. Just like the term enemy, the word combat, too is to be understood in its original existential and literal sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean pure intellectual debate, nor symbolic wrestling. Terms like friend, enemy and combat receive their meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. It is the existential negation of that enmity (Schmitt, 1976: 33). He argues that even liberalism, which could successfully change otherness in economics to competition and in intellectual matters to public debates, has failed to remove the essence of enmity of the political (Schmitt, 1976: 28). This concept of the political is not limited to the foreign enemy, but includes domestic enemies as well. Hence, every state has to take into consideration internal enemies and perhaps civil wars (Schmitt, 1976: 46). These phenomena reflect the fact that human beings – here Schmitt acknowledges an insight drawn mainly from Machiavelli – are dangerous creatures (Schmitt, 1976: 64).

From this view dialogue, rational debate, ethical values, acceptance of differences, understanding and compassion for others, all seem to be foolish political acts and values. From here it could be argued that the friend-enemy concept of politics, especially when Schmitt extends it to domestic politics, has some fundamental problems in bearing with democratic systems. Thus, dualists who tend to follow Schmitt and ideologically institutionalise enmity as an essential component of identity cannot be honest proponents of democracy. Although they frequently employ it as a guise or as a tactical consideration, they are not real adherents of democracy. We saw some traces of such an attitude towards democracy in Huntington and will see more from other dualists through the following chapters. Overall, Schmitt's approach

neglects many political achievements employed to minimise violence on the political scene.

The second deficiency of Huntington's theory is that although cultural aspects are important, there are many other important factors as well. If Muslims hate the West, or vice versa, each side is complaining about certain indiscriminate actions, including concrete matters. Politics is responsible for finding appropriate solutions to the problems. The insight into world politics that religion is going to be more important from the late twentieth century is correct. However, the way people understand and interpret religion is relevant to their economic, political, social and international conditions. Thus it is not correct to neglect other concrete factors in play.

Huntington sometimes admits that a single culture can contain two contradictory tendencies. For instance, he elaborates how, paralleling Weber, Chinese intellectuals considered Confucian culture as the main root of their backwardness in the early twentieth century, while in the last decade of the century it was considered as the main root of their prosperity. A similar analysis was proposed regarding democracy which is considered by many Chinese as a foreign imposition while it is, to Taiwanese eyes, rooted in their Sinic culture. Huntington notes: "Whether they wish to justify authoritarianism or democracy, Chinese leaders look for legitimation in their common Chinese culture not in imported Western concepts" (Huntington, 2002: 106).

His observation that culture has tended to play a decisive role in world conflicts has not been confirmed by empirical evidence. Bruce Russett and his colleagues in an empirical research illustrate that Huntington's theory is untenable. All interstate wars between 1950 and 1992 are reviewed by them. They analysed the data in order to understand the possibility of war between each pair of states based on different variables including: civilisation, contiguity, alliance, balance of military capability, level of democracy and bilateral trade. They concluded that such traditional realist influences of contiguity, alliance and relative power, and liberal influences of joint democracy and economical interdependence, provide a much better account of interstate conflict than simply belonging to or not to the same civilisation (Russett, 2000).

Third, Huntington's understanding of Islam is superficial, hostile and unrealistic. He is not an expert in Islam and his ideas just come from the bulk of Orientalist literature as I will show in later chapters. I will also illustrate alternative ways to judge Islam and democracy, Islam and modernity and the role of religion in Islamic identity.

Fourth, both the West and Islam are heterogeneous; they both contain huge diversities and dynamism. It is a grave oversimplification to ignore different and conflicting streams of thought in both Islam and the West. They include both rationalism and religiosity, moral universalism as well as relativism, egalitarian as well as hierarchical tendencies. In addition, it would be unforgivable ignorance to dismiss all historical facts that show frequent exchanges of ideas between Islam and the West throughout fourteen centuries of their encounter, as we will see later.

Last, but not least, his view is biased ideologically. He chooses the worst strand in other civilisations and the best in his own to portray a perfect dualism. Why are the historical facts that show brutal violence in the West like the two World Wars of the twentieth century dismissed, while those of Islam are highlighted? His final conclusion of an inevitable clash is as ideological as the Marxist theory of historicism. As Popper notes, an important distinction should be made between '*scientific prediction*' on the one side and '*unconditional historical prophecies*' on the other. The former is scientific and the latter is ideological (Popper, 2002: 456). As the Marxist prediction of an inevitable conflict between Capital and Labour and its outcome had no scientific value, the clash of two or more tentatively defined entities is merely nurtured by ideological dogmas.

What I appreciate in Huntington's rhetoric is his absolute frankness. His version of dualism is deep, dangerous, devastating but candid, clear and straightforward. One needs not to search among ironies and metaphors to find out that Huntington believes that modernity, democracy and scientific talent are inherent in the West whereas backwardness, authoritarianism and ignorance are essential to Islam. It is evident, for him that the West had all of its capacities even 'long before it was modern' and Islam's disadvantages are rooted in its 'Prophet', in its inherent 'violence' and in its 'bloodiness.' Each is the other's Other. The problem is not the CIA or al-Qaeda – these are just symptoms of a deep hostility – the clash is rather the ontological outcome of

being 'the West' and 'Islam'. His theory, as a result, is an evident expressive and easy-to-understand example of neo-Orientalism.

In many parts, Huntington precisely follows an Orientalist example, but at times he shows profound differences with the school as well. His interpretation of identity and otherness; his ultra-reductionism; his overestimation of the role of culture and religion; his understanding of the religion of Islam as the most decisive part of the civilisation, as a violent, aggressive and unchangeable entity; his neglect of what we *do*; his focus on what they *are*, all are in line with the traditional Orientalist mentality. His theory of the decline of the West seems merely employed to persuade his Western audience by showing that they are in real danger coming from the dramatic economic growth of the Sinic civilisation and the demographic expansion of Islam. Accordingly, the West should follow more conservative policies, develop its military capacities and protect its current cultural and political boundaries. So the decline is used to fuel the engine of dualism, similar to what Said counted as the fourth dogma of Orientalism. However, Huntington also shows some fundamental differences from classical Orientalism. Once he talks of civilisations (in plural) and about *different* ways of modernisation, his philosophy looks contrary to ethos of Orientalism, conveyed in colonialist slogans such as "the white man's burden" and "mission to civilise". Moreover, his relativist opinion about culture (soft power) and his idea that Western organised violence (hard power) has been solely the logic behind the attractiveness of Western ethos is in contrast with traditional Orientalist teachings.

Apart from similarities to, and differences from Orientalism, Huntington's dualism is similar to that of Orientalism. Once he appreciates different ways of modernisation, he then in fact reinforces the otherness of others. If traditional Orientalism employed the above slogans as blanket terms for imperialism and colonialism, Huntington's philosophy suggests that 'others' will never be capable of receiving Western rationalism, rule of law, social pluralism, democracy and individualism. These are exclusive to Western culture. However, he does not believe that the West can leave others as they are. In his view, this cannot happen because of others' essential violence. There will be a clash, this time not to civilise 'others' – because they are incapable of that – but to safeguard superiority of Western culture which is synonymous, for him, with Western hard power.

As mentioned earlier, dualism usually provides a counter-response from the other side. A dualistic ideology and its response are usually mirror images of each other. Both use similar arguments, employ similar rhetoric and suggest similar actions. They are ignorant of the fact that the way they argue for their side and against the other can be precisely employed by the other side with quite opposite outcomes. In a way either side unconsciously justifies the other, because at a first step they commonly reinforce the logic of dualism.¹⁷ This logic, regardless of being conveyed from the West to Islam or from Islam to the West, is dangerous and flawed. In fact, I argue that the West-versus-Islam binary opposition has been misleading and highly undesirable. The less we give credit to such dualistic approach towards others, the better and more positive response we will receive from them. Taking a brief look at an example of dualism in Islam helps us to clarify this aspect of dualism.

“Islam is the Civilisation”

Sayyid Qutb (1906?-1966) is usually considered among the influential authors who made a great impact on Islamic political movements in the post-Cold War era.¹⁸ Although he was not a jurist or, in an academic sense, a scholar in Islamic studies, his many titles translated into several languages and widely distributed all over the Muslim world made him influential. Moreover, Qutb’s execution under Nasser gave him a title of ‘martyr of modern political Islam’ and reinforced the distribution of his message among both Muslim mainstream and extremists. His ideas have been employed later in political movements as diverse as the Islamic Revolution of Iran,¹⁹ the transnational *jihad* against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and later some terrorist

¹⁷ This appropriately explains why Huntington’s theory was welcomed by Islamic extremism and the Arabic translation of his book became a bestseller in Egypt, as Kepel reports (Kepel, 2003a: 133).

¹⁸ Qutb is an influential prolific Egyptian author. In 1948 he visited the United States and lived there for three years. During his stay, he witnessed racism which he experienced directly because of his dark skin, observed the free sexual relations that seemed heinous for one who had grown up in an Islamic society, saw alcoholism, and the lack of human sympathy and personal responsibility except under the force of law. His observation of the United States was a turning point in his life as it changed him from a pro-western to an anti-western intellectual. Furthermore, he suffered from Egyptian nationalism and secular socialism under Nasser. He was imprisoned, tortured, and witnessed the massacre of members of the Muslim Brotherhood and finally was executed in charge of an alleged plot of assassination of Nasser (Esposito, 2003d: 57).

¹⁹ Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and one of influential clergies in the course of the Revolution, is the translator of three titles of Qutb into Farsi.

attacks under the name of Islam. Here I briefly look at his version of dualism in *Signposts* (it is also translated under *Milestones*), a title authored within Nasser's concentration camp.²⁰

With a utopian perspective Qutb believes that a pure Islam is the Truth and any minor deviation from it is *Jahiliyya*, a strong Quranic term which means ignorance and is originally used for the pre-Islamic pagan society. Thus, for him, even contemporary Muslim societies ruled by secular systems are examples of *Jahiliyya*. The callers to Islam should not have any doubts in their hearts concerning the nature of *Jahiliyya* and the nature of Islam, and the characteristics of *Dar al-Harb* and of *Dar al-Islam*. Indeed, there is no Islam in a land where Islam is not dominant and where *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) is not established. The state is not of *Dar al-Islam* where Islam's way of life and its laws are not practiced. There is nothing beyond faith except unbelief, nothing beyond Islam except *Jahiliyyah*, nothing beyond the Truth except falsehood (Qutb, 2005: 79).

Islam says that the Truth is one, Qutb argues, and cannot be divided; if something is not the Truth, then it must be falsehood. The mixing and coexistence of the Truth and falsehood is impossible. Command belongs to God, or otherwise to *Jahiliyya*; God's *Shari'ah* will prevail, or else the people's will (Qutb, 2005: 80). Islamic life is the opposite of all modes of *Jahiliyya*, whether ancient or modern. It is totally wrong to present Islam to the people under the names of 'Islamic Democracy' or 'Islamic Socialism', or sometimes by saying that the current economic or political or legal systems in the world need not be changed except a little to be acceptable Islamically (Qutb, 2005: 82-3). There is either unbelief or belief, either *Jahiliyya* or Islam. This ought to be made clear. Indeed, people are not Muslims, as they proclaim to be, as long as they live the life of *Jahiliyya*. If someone wishes to deceive himself or to deceive others by believing that Islam can be brought in line with this *Jahiliyya*, it is up to him. But this cannot change anything of the actual reality. This is not Islam, and they are not Muslims. Today the task of the Call is to return these ignorant people to Islam and make them into Muslims all over again (Qutb, 2005: 84).

Qutb, like Huntington, considers the Other in its worse and Islam in its best to easily portray dualism. Attacking the Western *Jahiliyya*, he mentions its shaky religious

²⁰ Qutb, Sayyid (2005). *Signposts*. <http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/MILESTONES.pdf> [accessed on 09/11/2008].

beliefs, its corrupted social and economic conditions, and its immoralities. He reduces the West to monopolies of capitalism, usury, lack of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law, materialistic attitude without spirit, animal-like sexual permissiveness, unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce. Islam, in contrast, is based on logic, beauty, humanity and happiness, reaches the horizons to which man strives but does not reach. It is a practical way of life and its solutions are based on the foundation of the nature of man (Qutb, 2005: 85). "Islam is the civilisation" (Qutb, 2005: 49).

A mirror image of Huntington's philosophy, Qutb's theory is that political or economic issues between Islam and the West are superficial – the problem is rooted in the contrast between belief and unbelief. The enemies are angered only because of their faith, enraged only because of their belief. This was not a political or an economic or a racial struggle; had it been any of these, its settlement would have been easy and the solution of its difficulties would have been simple. But essentially it was a struggle between beliefs: either unbelief or faith, either *Jahiliyya* or Islam (Qutb, 2005: 97).

A striking point about *Signposts* is that the reader sometimes feels it is originally written to counterattack Orientalism. Western Orientalists are described in the book as 'treacherous', 'shrewd' and 'vicious' attackers of Islam (Qutb, 2005: 31, 34, 37). Qutb wants to give confidence to Muslims who, under the bad conditions of the time, felt defeated by the Western invented ideologies such as atheist communism and monopolist capitalism (Qutb, 2005: 41, 85). In a sense, he wants to employ the methodology of Orientalism and its discourse against it.

A deeper insight into dualism

So far, I have tried to explain the notion of 'dualism' in the realm of human interactions through some telling and openly expressed examples. As argued above, a dualism usually manifests itself as an intellectual fashion, an entrenched ideology and a substitute for religion. Once theories, in whatever field of inquiry, turn into ideologies they imprison their proponents (Popper, 1996: 61). They act as prison in the sense that they impose a strict 'regime' or 'norm' on those who are trapped inside.

They cannot explore the outside world (i.e. the rich realm of reality). Like the Plato's cave prisoners they are confined to a restricted space and are forced to view distorted images of reality in place of the reality itself while all the time being told that what they are observing is 'the reality' and there is nothing beyond it.

Theories are basically our way of constructing, for the purpose of exploring, in a given field of inquiry, some particular aspects of reality pertinent to the field in question. However, if theories become ideologies, instead of enlightening us about the nature of the reality, they furnish us with a distorted image of reality and hence entrap us in a web of belief whose frame of reference is defined by ideological prescriptions and not truthful (albeit approximate) description of reality. A Marxist literally sees class struggle everywhere in the same way that a Freudian sees in every case of psychoanalysis repression and sublimation, desire and civilisation. Ideologies have a ready-made black-and-white answer for any question. What they do is to suggest to their advocates to wear a coloured spectacles and then see everything in its colour. Ideologies seem to be irrefutable theories. Yet, as Popper remarks, irrefutability is not a virtue of a theory, but a vice (Popper, 2002: 48).

Rumi, the famous Persian poet, in one of his collections, called the *Mathnawi*, narrates the following anecdote which elaborately illustrates the way ideologies work:

One day an old man visited a doctor and said: "I usually suffer from headache." The doctor advised: "It is natural in your age." The old man added: "I cannot see well." The doctor said: "Because you are an old man!" The old man cried out: "I have a bad backache." He again received the same answer. The old man continued: "My stomach cannot digest what I eat... I am very short of breath." The doctor repeated wisely: "Oh miserable old man! They are the pains of the elderly. There are many sorts of pains that are related to getting older." The old man shouted out: "Stupid doctor! Have you learnt from medicine only to reply in this way? God has created a treatment for every pain. Simply, your stupidity led you to answer my questions in such a way." The doctor told him with empathy: "Such anxiety is again related to your age!"

Any dualistic ideology, no matter who uses it, whether a capitalist or a Marxist, a feminist or a masculinist, an Orientalist or an Occidental, a Huntington or a Qutb, in

the final analysis is merely to perpetuate the hostility between two rivals which are portrayed as two allegedly monolithic entities. As we saw in the aforesaid examples from racism to Occidentalism, dualism in a technical sense has three intertwined dimensions. Sometimes it is used as a political ideology like the rhetoric of the Cold War. At times it is used descriptively as in feminism. It can also be employed from a moral angle, as Qutb used it against the corruption of the West. Nevertheless, as quoted from Said, dualism is originally a political categorisation. Yet it is then justified – as mentioned in Orientalism, in Huntington and in Qutb – by some descriptive and moral arguments, both have behind them the original political motive of categorisation. The core of dualism, the radical Otherness, however, remains the same from all angles. The interconnectedness of these different angles (political, descriptive and moral) explains how dualists can easily switch from one angle to another and replace one rhetoric with other, using the requirements of one category in another. It also shows why a perfect dualist should cover all these angles, like Huntington did, to justify his overall theory.

I argue that dualism is a flawed ideology from all political, descriptive and moral angles. Politically it is flawed because, firstly, it dismisses many political achievements reached after centuries of trial and error. These achievements include rational debate, civil society, democracy and tolerance. That is because, as Schmitt has shown us, once we talk about enmity as the main criterion of the political, it does not stop only between the two sides considered as divided by dualism, but logically covers all other dimensions of our political perspective, including domestic affairs. Secondly, dualism as a political view is counterproductive. As with the case of Huntington and Qutb, though each originally intended to argue for himself, he simultaneously argued for his rival. Hence, dualism – if not in a short term, in a long run – can inflame the other side against the dualist. Under Bush's presidency, as I shall show in following chapters, a similar scenario happened between the hardliners of the White House and Islamic extremists. Thirdly, politics more often than not requires compromise. No political system can remain in constant war with an enemy. By activating this vicious circle of hate, the dualist portrays the enemy as unworthy to negotiate with and incapable of compromise, removing any chance of any prospective peaceful settlement. In addition, since dualistic politics is between Good and Evil, and since Good through any sort of

compromise, negotiation, intimidation or weakness will be at risk of losing its purity, for a dualist an absolute confrontation seems to be the sole solution between absolutes.

Dualism is flawed descriptively; firstly, since dualism as an ideology has nothing to do with man's cognitive need to place entities in contrasting categories in order to comprehend reality. Rather, like other ideologies it has a normative force and a value-judgement behind it, whereas categorisation is (or more accurately it has to try its best to be – as is the case with any knowledge pursuit) value-neutral. Secondly, dualism neglects the fact that all human beings basically have equal intrinsic value and worth. As Bhikhu Parekh puts it, worth is not something natural, like hands and legs, but rather a status we give to someone or something. Human beings have worth because they are basically able to do worthy things and they have equal worth, since there are an infinite number of worthy things that each human can basically do and there is no superiority of any sort in their capacities over the other. Although some philosophers assumed reason to be the most superior capacity of humanity, there is no evidence to show that reason is superior to love, emotion or art. Thus, all human beings have an equal natural, pre-birth, capacity for doing worthy things. "Indeed, the very idea of grading human beings and establishing a hierarchy among them is logically incoherent," Parekh adds (Parekh, 2008: 217-9). Thirdly, as mentioned in earlier examples, all dualisms, in a positivistic way, neglect the wide diversity and dynamism on the both sides. History has clearly shown that many presumptions of all hitherto existing dualists have been wrong. A slave could change the situation and be in time a good master. A black person could be elected as the President of the United States. And a Westerner could become Muslim.

Dualism is flawed normatively as well, because it is neither plausible nor desirable to alienate a human, who shares with us the core of humanity, confronting him with unending hostility. Any alternative position to this equal worth is morally objectionable and socially dangerous. Western normative values such as the acceptance of plurality and tolerance can never be ignored by any Orientalist, just as Islamic norms dealing with other believers and non-believers by Occidentalists. Dualism not only neglects but also negates the history of actually existing ethical agreements and many patterns of ethical solidarity between all human beings.

The Principles of the West and Islam dualism

So far I have briefly talked about some traces of dualistic mentality with regard to the relationship between Islam and the West among different classes, including Western policy-makers, media and scholars. The crucial role played by the latter and the impact of their epistemological and ontological analyses on other social classes about how to look at 'others' was also briefly discussed.

Nevertheless, it is not always an easy task to assess dualism in one's perspective. Although in the case of Huntington and Qutb the idea of dualism between Islam and the West was evident, in many other cases one needs to analyse many metaphors and ironies and look in depth to grasp the elements of dualism. Hence to start studying dualism in this new era, at first the main elements of dualism should be investigated. Perhaps the best sketch would be the four dogmas suggested by Said (quoted earlier under *Orientalism*). Yet these dogmas are somehow overlapping: the first dogma is dualism itself and therefore overlaps the others; the second dogma refers to an epistemological problem that should be further highlighted and its roots need to be investigated; the third dogma can be separated into two important presumptions, i.e., the Orient is monolithic and it is eternal. In addition, these dogmas originally belonged to traditional Orientalism and do not include recent debates, such as considering the West and Islam as two cultural bodies or civilisations and the importance of religion since the late twentieth century as highlighted by Huntington. As a result of all these considerations as well as my additional studies of the history of dualism, it could be argued that the Western brand of the-West-versus-Islam dualism is based on the five following principles. A perfect dualist like Huntington follows all of these interconnected principles and a quasi-dualist follows some.

First Principle: The West and Islam are two monolithic entities, best fit with civilisations, and the modern West is the superior. Diversity, particularly in Islam, is superficial, so there is no need for empirical research. 'Islam' is seen as a coherent and closed set of dogmas and anthropological patterns, embodied in a common society

and territory, which allows the dualist to use the term as an explanatory concept for almost everything involving Muslims.

Second Principle: Others are eternally the same, so they could be judged on their history, on their classical attitudes, on their so-called ageless essence. There is no major dynamism particularly in Islam. Historical studies, classical texts, conflicts of centuries ago, all are relevant to today's affairs. There is no need for empirical studies of contemporary Muslim affairs, of contemporary literature, of everyday changes of life because changes are simply superficial; Islam is what it has been since its advent.

Third Principle: Religion is a crucial factor in stoking the differences between the two rivals. As we saw in the aforementioned examples, religion has been a decisive factor in a dualistic ideology. From feminism to racism, from nationalism to Nazism, from Marxism to the Cold War, religion lies in one way or another at the core of the dualistic ideology. In the course of the West and Islam dualism, the role of religion is even more decisive. Islam is portrayed as a holistic religion with a rigid legal and political system. Islam is a given not a choice. It captures the whole identity of its believers. Thus studying religion will suffice to illustrate the whole civilisation. All the complexity of Muslim minds and attitudes is dismissed by the dualist; rather he chooses to follow *his own* reading as a direct method of interpreting the Quran, of course, usually in a dualistic paradigm.

Fourth Principle: Islam is politically radical, irrational, threatening the West and must be feared. Islam is uncivilised, primitive and therefore dangerous, threatening our way of life, our culture, our civilisation and our hard and then soft power. This principle was clearly explained by Huntington, who followed Schmitt's philosophy. To their view, since Islam is the enemy, first and foremost, the West has to fear it and think about some central issues like weapons, war and killing.

Fifth Principle: Thanks to historicism, positivistic methodology and a biased ideology, for a dualist 'history', 'reality' and 'truth' are simplified things and easily accessible. Dualists, in a fashion not dissimilar to that of Marx and Comte among others, claim that they had discovered the laws governing the changes in the history of mankind. This is particularly important in dealing with big notions like modernity, democracy and liberalism. Dismissing the huge complexity of the humanities and social sciences,

dualists in a positivistic way tend to objectify the West and Islam as mathematical digits: one and nil. Thanks to their universal ideology they always have a ready answer to all questions in history, in politics, in culture, in religion, in everything. If their ironies and metaphors are set aside, it would be evident that they act precisely as the doctor in the Rumi's anecdote.

Thesis

In this dissertation I aim to investigate the role of dualistic thinking within Western scholarship and its materialisation in the form of neo-Orientalism. I also want to suggest some alternative ways to look at Others with healthier outcomes for our interconnected future. Edward Said divides up Orientalism into its manifest and latent forms. Then in the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries he observes that whatever changes occur in Orientalist literature are found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism, "the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant" (Said, 2003: 206). This dissertation aims to make a critical appraisal of Said's theory in this new paradigm of neo-Orientalism. In other words I am going to show that the latent dualism, i.e., the underlying belief in the inferiority of Oriental subjects is still alive in works being published about Islam. Of course, in this new paradigm a tension seems to have developed between some traditional dogmas of Orientalism on the one hand and the increasing number of facts being revealed and some new factors involved on the other. We saw some signs of the change in Huntington and there are still many others to be investigated.

In this new context, in the era of globalisation, I want to examine whether it still matters more, in understanding contemporary world affairs, to know that X and Y are Westerners or Muslims or that they are examined in certain concrete ways. This is of course a debatable question, and we are very likely in rational terms to insist on both the religious-ethnic and the socio-economic descriptions. Dualism, however, clearly posits the former categorisation as the dominant one, and this is a main consideration about its retrograde intellectual tactic. I also try to expose the epistemological roots of misunderstanding in order to promote the possibility of a mutual respect and dialogue

between the cultures. I have pursued my research with three ends in mind: one, to present the genealogy of some traces of dualism to know how they were originated and how they can be removed; two: to criticise the often unquestioned assumptions Western works on Islam for the most part depend upon; three: to show, through a comparative examination, that there can be very different ways, perhaps sometimes with healthier outcomes, of looking at 'others'. To portray a better future for our interdependent world some new approaches to identity, global ethics and global civil society are suggested. Eradicating the roots of Orientalism and Occidentalism alike and accepting, protecting and even promoting diversity are first steps towards countering devastating threats that endanger humankind as a whole.

Although, as mentioned earlier, dualism is a two-way road, in this research I focus on Western brands of the West and Islam dualism and the study of dualism in Islam will be left embarrassingly incomplete. In line with Said, I focus on scholars of Islam, because they seem to be seriously influential in the way other Western scholars, policy-makers, media and public sphere look at Islam. As Said remarks, in many periods of European history the traffic between what scholars and specialists on Islam wrote and what poets, novelists, politicians, and journalists then said about Islam is striking (Said, 2003: 344). Of course, Islamologists, though influential, are only a part of Western culture and there are many other factors at work. All I am going to say in this humble research is that Western leading scholars can describe parts of the fabric of what I call neo-Orientalism; they are examples suggesting the existence of a larger whole. This research can show some development and advancement, as well as regression and corruption in the way the West deals with others. I do not support the idea that Western scholarship is solely responsible for the dualism. Neither do I claim that Western scholarship is homogenous. Quite the opposite, my research shows the very complexity of what is vaguely called the West and that there is a rich diversity and unending dynamism, generally in Western culture and particularly in Western Islamology.

As pointed out earlier, Said in his criticism of Orientalism to a great extent owes much to Michel Foucault. Orientalism is regarded by Said as a discourse which is a combination of abstract thought and social action and has general features described by Foucault in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, that is “composed of signs; but what they [discourses] do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this ‘more’ that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe” (Foucault, 2002: 54).

By the mid twentieth century there were a number of structural theories of human existence. In the 1960's, the structuralist movement attempted to synthesise the ideas of Marx, Freud and Saussure in economic, psychological and linguistic structures. For the structuralist every individual is shaped by the above structures over which he/she has no control, but which could be uncovered by using their methods of investigation. Originally labelled a structuralist, Foucault came to be seen as the most important representative of the post-structuralist movement. He agreed that language and society were shaped by systems of power, but he disagreed with the structuralists on two points. Firstly, he did not accept that there were definite underlying structures that could explain all human conditions and secondly he held that it was impossible to step outside of discourse and survey the situation objectively.²¹

By virtue of Foucault's works, Said also appreciates that culture is a body of disciplines having the effective force of knowledge linked systematically, but not immediately or intentionally, to power (Said, 1983: 220). Said, however, attempts to extend the role of culture to the realm of definition of the self and other, of the West and the East. In this way he considers culture as a system of discriminations and evaluations – mainly aesthetic, but at the same time forceful and tyrannical (Said, 1983: 12). “The large cultural-national designation of European culture,” he argues, “as the privileged norm carried with it a formidable battery of other distinctions between ours and theirs, between proper and improper, European and non-European, higher and lower: they

²¹ For further information see <http://www.philosopher.org.uk/> [accessed on 29/11/2009]

are to be found everywhere in such subjects and quasi-subjects as linguistics, history, race theory, philosophy, anthropology and even biology” (Said, 1983: 14).

Nevertheless, Said criticises Foucault in two ways. First, Foucault takes a very passive view of how and why power is gained, used and held onto. In other words, ascertainable changes stemming from who holds power and who dominates whom is totally dismissed by Foucault’s philosophy (Said, 1983: 221). And just highlighting this very dimension enables Said to show the extent to which the Europe could use Orientalism as a discipline to administrate, study and reconstruct, then subsequently to occupy, rule and exploit almost the whole of the non-European world. Second, Said, unlike Foucault, emphasises the role of individual authors. Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for little. Said, however, argues that empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else), he finds this not to be so (Said, 2003: 23). That is because Orientalism is mainly a system of citing works and authors and an Orientalist’s authority as well as propagation of his works by the network of power could give his ideas significant currency.

In this research I employ Said’s approach to stress the role of individual scholars. I assume that leading authors who write about Muslim societies have a political effect: what these authors say influences what others think and do, and thus shaping power relations. Considering the limits of a doctorate dissertation, I apply the principle of selectivity and study only three prominent scholars, highlighting traces of dualism in their perspectives, comparing them with each other and with the traditional school of Orientalism as described by Said. It is a difficult task to select the three among many prominent authors of this age and this selection will remain conjectural and even arbitrary because there is no indicator that can show precisely which scholars enjoy the most prominence.²²

To make a short-list, I made a database from the authors whose books were published between 1990 and 2005 and were available in the British Library.²³ This could give me

²² Unfortunately there is still no citation index or impact factor on books and papers written on Islamic studies. Therefore there is no way to assess how the authors’ works would impact upon academic circles.

²³ I stress on the point that I only wanted to make a short-list and this list does not show any meaningful prominence of the authors who published more titles. I chose 1990 as the starting date because many particularities of neo-Orientalism had crystallised by then. I ended in 2005 because I started my research in the early 2006.

a list of contemporary authors on Islam in English. The authors worked in many different subject fields of Islamic studies including “Muslim countries’ politics, Islam and politics”, “Islam – Relations – Christianity”, “Women in Islam”, “Islamic history”, “Islamic Art and Literature”, “Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism” and “Islam – Doctrines and law”. Considering the subject of my research I should select the Western authors who have written on themes that were somehow related to my thesis. I could not include titles on Arabic grammar, classical historical studies, Islamic mysticism, or researches on particular themes like Islamic finance and banking. After removing irrelevant titles as well as non-Western authors, I can select among only less than fifty authors who published three books or more.²⁴

To choose among the list I keep an eye on Said’s various categorisations of Orientalists and his judgements on some of the contemporary authors, and an eye on potential factors of change in neo-Orientalism. That is because I seek to trace possible changes in Western Islamology in response to the dramatic changes of this era. Thus I have to find three authors who once examined and compared with each other and with traditional Orientalism, they can clearly illustrate any possible paradigm change. Accordingly, I choose three cases as follow.

I start with Bernard Lewis because he seems to be a very good link between the paradigms of Orientalism and neo-Orientalism.²⁵ On the one hand he is a genuine Orientalist, as Said describes him: “One of the worst offenders in the cultural war against Islam has been the senior British Orientalist – now a United States resident, and retired Princeton Professor – Bernard Lewis” (Said, 1997: xxix). On the other hand he has been influential, as we shall see, in reinforcing the views of Huntington, US neoconservatives and hardliners who planned the War on Terror. In this period Lewis’s style, methodology, and discourse to a great extent remained as it was but sometimes operated under a new guise. In such a way Said describes him in an Afterword written in *Orientalism* seventeen years after the first publication: “[I]t is entirely correct to read recent Orientalist authorities such as the almost comically persistent Bernard

²⁴ To find books on Islam I searched “Islam” in both title and subject fields. In the period there were 5955 books on Islam available in the British Library (of course, this number includes some multiple editions/copies of the same books). Altogether there were 5006 authors (considering the fact that some books have had multiple authors and some authors have had multiple books).

²⁵ According to the British Library Catalogue Lewis has published 13 titles in 1990-2005. He has the second place in the short-list.

Lewis as the politically motivated and hostile witnesses that their suave accents and unconvincing displays of learning attempt to hide” (Said, 2003: 327).

Then I will examine the work of John Esposito, whose route, trajectory of thinking and analysis seem to run in the opposite direction.²⁶ His training in Islam was not from an Orientalist source, but through a Muslim activist scholar resident in America. His overall approach to Islam, his methodology, his perspective and his orientation seem unprecedented in Western scholarship. Said, who rarely appreciates any Western Islamologist, describes Esposito’s argument as sensible and cogent (Said, 1997: xx) and his methodology as different, because, Said notes, Esposito stresses the variety, complexity and diversity of Islamic world (Said, 1997: xxvii). But, apart from all such positive points that could be counted as a definite advantage of the neo-Orientalist paradigm, Esposito too sometimes has fallen into the trap of dualism, as we shall see.

Gilles Kepel, a French scholar who specialises in contemporary Islamic political movements, is my third chosen scholar.²⁷ I choose him because of three important characteristics in his work. First, he comes from a French Orientalist tradition which is different from the Anglo-Saxon one. Said extensively compares the two (Said, 2003: 245-6) and we will also see some fundamental differences. Second, as Said observes, there is in each scholar some awareness, partly conscious and partly not, of national tradition, if not of national ideology. This is particularly true in Orientalism, additionally so because of the direct political involvement of European national interests in the affairs of one or another Oriental country (Said, 2003: 263). Studying Kepel’s perspective, compared with Lewis and Esposito, can clarify some possible alterations in the national sentiments of Islamologists in the era of globalisation. Third, Kepel has close relations with his subject of study. In this sense Kepel is innovative, because he actually avoids one of the old methodological problems of Orientalism. As investigated by Said, Western attitudes towards Islam are sent not first to Oriental sources for correction and verification, but rather to other Orientalist works (Said, 2003: 67). The prevalent approach is “the old Orientalist truism that Islam is about texts, not about

²⁶ According to the British Library Catalogue Esposito has published 25 titles in 1990-2005, including the works that he co-authored and the ones in which he was the editor. He has the first place in the short-list.

²⁷ According to the British Library Catalogue Kepel has published 6 English titles between 1990-2005. Olivier Roy, the other French author has only published 3 books in the period and has covered a far limited area of study in comparison with Kepel.

people” (Said, 2003: 305). Kepel, however, being fluent in Arabic and being in frequent contact with Islamic countries, to some extent has been able to make many direct interviews, to narrate many original observations and to be in close contact with many Islamic activists.

My work involves an extensive and in-depth analysis of the relevant literature produced by these prominent and influential scholars to look for traces of any of the aforementioned five principles of dualism in their perspectives. Writing many books and articles along with presenting interviews and lectures, they have produced a huge literature by which various aspects of their perspectives – their methodologies, their tools for gathering information, their particular view points (methodological, political, theological), and the like – could be assessed by means of conceptual and situational analysis. The deficiencies and points of strength of their approaches can be demonstrated through a close comparison and examination. My main concern is to probe their essays, books, interviews, to look for traces of dualism in their perspectives, illustrating how they adopted any of the above principles. Furthermore, I elaborate causes and consequences of the dualism in their approaches. Of course, the three are very different from each other and – except for Lewis – from traditional Orientalism and this is a telling sign of the diversity and dynamism of this field which can be called neo-Orientalism. Finally I try to find better theories for interrelations between the West and the rest in our globalised interconnected world.

In theory, there were two possible ways of developing my chapters. The first was author-based. Each author could be introduced in a complete chapter and then compared with the others in the concluding chapter. The main advantage of this way was that each author could be introduced in a best way suitable for his perspective, but the main weakness was that close comparison between the three seemed difficult. The second possible way was a thematic order. That is to say, their methodological, political and theological approaches are dealt with in different chapters. For instance, in one chapter all their detailed political views could be discussed in comparison with each other. This way seemed ideal for comparative purposes, but poor for expressing each author’s overall perspective. After considering these two ways, I finally decided to choose a hybrid way through which a theme-based structure could be presented within each author’s chapter. This hybrid way seemed to do both authors’ introduction

and comparison well. In this way, at first I critically analyse Lewis in a thematic order, studying different aspects of his perspective, his methodology, his views on Islam and modernity, his political propositions and the way he views Islamic belief and law. Then in Esposito's chapter, I follow the same order and at relevant times I compare him with Lewis, and then in Kepel's chapter I analyse him and critically compare the three in relevant themes. In the concluding chapter, in addition to a final comparison of the three perspectives, new patterns of Islamology and the advent of neo-Orientalism are under consideration. Finally some healthier approaches to identity and global interrelations in the era of globalisation will be suggested.

Since this intellectual journey is similar to Said's *Orientalism*, I have the opportunity to learn from his successes and failures. Having this in mind, to complement methods used by Said and to avoid the problems I mentioned in criticising his methodology, I need to look for some healthier research methodologies. The main problem with Said's methodology is, as noted by Richard Rorty, that postmodern epistemologies do not promise an alternative orthodoxy and reject the possibility of 'true' description of the 'real' world. Their philosophical scepticism is not capable of producing any better-working framework (Rorty, 1986).

To rectify this problem, I rely on Karl Popper's philosophy. This furnishes my research with an objective way to assess the views of the three scholars whose theories are under consideration. The model proposed by Popper for the growth of knowledge, i.e., critical discussions via conjectures and refutations, seems to be much more suitable for dialogue between Islam and the West than the methodology employed by Said. In the Popperian model, not only are all theories welcome, but theories based on false presumptions can be critically assessed, refuted by reference to relevant evidence, and replaced with new theories which, while still being conjectural and remaining so forever, can bring us closer to the reality and truth (Popper, 1996: 158). I take this route to avoid the problem of Said's methodology which apparently regards Western prejudices as some sort of incorrigible weakness of Western Orientalism.

Furthermore, unlike what sometime appears from Said, Popper does not believe in any necessary incommensurability between two different frameworks, (Popper, 1996: 56) or as we have dealt with it so far in this context, two civilisations. By this, dialogue

between the Orient and the Occident sounds more reasonable than it does in Said's philosophy, where cultural attachments sometimes seem to be everlasting obstacles to mutual understanding. The influence of culture is shown differently in Popper's philosophy. He argues that we always start not with observation but with theories, or with problems which have arisen against a previously believed theory, or one can say against *background knowledge*. Observations and reports of observations are under the sway of our theories. Indeed there is no such thing as an un-interpreted observation, an observation which is not 'theory-impregnated' (Popper, 1996: 58). We never start fresh, with nothing, with a completely innocent mind, or *tabula rasa*, or an empty state. The growth of knowledge is always based on earlier knowledge, through raising problems against previously accepted theories. Historically, science begins with pre-scientific knowledge, with pre-scientific myth, and pre-scientific expectations, with traditional prejudices, beset with error (Popper, 1996: 140, 156). A more detailed analysis would show that a problem, by which knowledge begins to grow, is picked up against a *background*, and consists of at least a language with many theories incorporated in its structure and its usage. The *background* also consists of many theoretical assumptions, unchallenged at least for the time (Popper, 1979: 165). Therefore, the intellectual endeavour of an Orientalist, such as selecting a starting point, a way of categorisation and selection of evidence, all are meaningful and show underlying presumptions, among which I am going to find traces of dualism. This could be paralleled by what Foucault and Said regard as the influence of culture. Nevertheless, Popper's approach gives further space to the possibility of correction and growth of knowledge (based on conjectures and refutations), and therefore, can better open channels of dialogue and mutual understanding between the two sides.

The final method that I borrow from Popper is his reliance on situational analysis, which he proposes for social studies. By situational analysis, he means a certain kind of tentative or conjectural explanation of human action which appeals to the situation in which the subject of study finds himself/herself. In this method, to analyse a social event, a text, individual and group behaviour, or organisational practices, we have to rebuild the *problem situation* with all objective factors – but not subjective factors like arrogance and dogmatism – involved. Physical things, some of their properties and states, some social institutions and some of their properties, some aims and some

elements of knowledge have to be built in this reconstructed situation. All of these factors are employed objectively and, unlike the “re-enactment of historical events” suggested by Collingwood’s hermeneutics, or psychoanalysis, no subjective factor is directly included in the reconstructed situation.²⁸ As a result, situational analysis can be objectively assessed, because each of the elements involved can always be refuted and then can be substituted by other conjectural elements to enhance the model (Popper, 1996: 149, 168). Using this method, I critically analyse the way each of the three writers under consideration has acted as a rational player in different intellectual situations. A situation will be defined for each author and I will ascribe aims and objectives and problems, in addition to background knowledge to each of the actors whose involvement in a situation shall be analysed. Institutions and other useful background and contexts will also be under consideration. Moreover, this methodology can be strengthened by incorporating other effective methods – namely other interpretative methods like discourse analysis – that are appropriate for specific purposes and contexts.

For instance, in the situational analysis of an American scholar who encouraged US policy-makers to wage the war in Iraq, subjective factors in his personality as an imperial agent, such as arrogance, aggressiveness and Western prejudices, would never be a pivotal part of the analysis. Instead objective elements that impacted on his judgment have to be considered and the procedure of the decision making by a rational player reconstructed. For instance, his academic background, his assessment of US military might, the US position in the post-Cold War era, the sources of his knowledge about Islam, his perception of others and his perception of world politics

²⁸ In his philosophy, Popper supports that ‘the world’ consists of three separate sub-worlds. The first is the physical world or the world of physical states; the second is the mental world; and the third is the world of intelligible objects like language, ideas and theories. The three worlds are so related that the first two as well as the last two can interact. The first and the third world, however, cannot interact, save through the intervention of the second world (Popper, 1979: 154-5). Entities of the third world, including ideas and theories conveyed by language are all objectively accessible in the process of thinking, unlike subjective senses which belong to the second world, such as jealousy and arrogance. Popper distinguishes between the personal activities of understanding and the outcome of these activities, i.e., the resulting interpretation. The former belongs to the second world and thus is subjective and the latter to the third world and thus is objective. Accordingly, all important things that we can say about an act of knowledge consist of pointing out the third world objects (Popper, 1979: 163). There is no difference in this process between understanding in the realm of natural sciences and that of social sciences. At the end of the day we have to deal with the objective ideas and theories of the third world even though they may be used to express entities of the first or the second world in the natural and social sciences respectively (Popper, 1979: 179).

on the one hand, and his academic and personal interests, his involvement in any political wing, on the other can suggest why he decided to support the war or not. In this method there will be always some opportunity for objective assessment and advancement and there will be always a chance of a constructive dialogue and debate. Using all these methodologies and methods, I start my work with Bernard Lewis, critically analysing his approach towards the world of Islam.

Chapter One: Bernard Lewis

Escalating violence in Iraq and the increasing number of civilian victims along with the rising number of US casualties reinforce the perception that after a victorious start, the Western coalition's military action has faced a heavy defeat in its 'Mideast Democracy Promotion'. Although the war has been waged under the illusion that there were close links between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda as well as some invented reports of unconventional weapons, after a few years, it seems that there were other ambitions being pursued by this imperialist war. The factors that misled Americans, who throughout their history have been convinced that they lack the desire and, one may add, the skills to take an imperialist role, so as to engage themselves in this deadly game, should be investigated.

Obviously there was not a simple cause behind the war but a series of different links including the post-Cold War slogans of Huntington's clash of civilisations, the aggressive ideology of the neoconservative ruling lobby, and the September 11 attacks among other suicide bombings followed by an increasing Islamophobia in the West. To be workable, the links required an intellectual engine, an illustrator of the rage rooted among Muslims,¹ an eminent Orientalist who suggests to "get tough", (Lewis, 2004b: 438) who can decipher the "license to kill",² a narrator of "a history of hatred",³ a Bernard Lewis.

Professor Lewis, for his admirers, 'a sage in Christendom',⁴ 'doyen of Middle Eastern studies',⁵ 'the prophet from Princeton'⁶ and for his critics, a demagogue, (Said, 2001b: 351) 'vulgar propagandist'⁷ and the 'Orientalist tiger',⁸ has been an intellectual theorist

¹ "The Roots of Muslim Rage" is one of Lewis's much-cited papers, published in *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1990.

² Published in *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1998. The paper is about Osama Bin Laden's famous declaration published in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* on 23/02/1998.

³ "Targeted by a history of hatred" published in *The Washington Post*, 10, September, 2002.

⁴ "A sage in Christendom: a personal tribute to Bernard Lewis," by Fouad Ajami, published in *The Wall Street Journal*, 1st, May, 2006. Fouad Ajami was another influential figure in encouraging US administration to invade Iraq. His articles and seminars in this respect were widely publicised.

⁵ A *New York Times* reviewer once called him (Hirsh, 2004).

⁶ Named in *Haaretz Daily* newspaper of Israel, 25, September, 2006

⁷ Noam Chomsky describes him so in an interview available at http://www.cbc.ca/hotttype/season02-03/middleeast_chomsky.html [accessed on 17/12/2008]

behind the war, representing a prominent sector of America's reading of Islam. Born in London, 1916, he studied mainly in his hometown up to 1939 when he did his PhD at the University of London under Professor Sir Hamilton Gibb, (Lewis, 2004b: 3), a senior Orientalist who has been thoroughly criticised by Said (Said, 2003: 264-7). During World War II Lewis was working with the Intelligence Service from where he was attached to a department of the Foreign Office dealing with Middle Eastern matters (Lewis, 2004b: 4). Later in 1949 he was appointed to the chair of the history of the Near and Middle East at the School of Oriental (later also 'and African') Studies, University of London, up to 1974, when he immigrated to the United States, to start his career at Princeton University (Kramer, 1999).

More than anything else Lewis took prominence through his many publications on Islam. His first title was his dissertation published in 1940 entitled *The Origins of Ismilism*, dealing with the historical and religious background of the Fatemid Caliphs, a dynasty that came to power in Egypt in the tenth century.⁹ The second title, *The Arabs in History*, published in 1950, covering the Arab world from the pre-Islamic period till the present.¹⁰ Although he intended to continue his study on the Arabs, being a Jew, after the constitution of the state of Israel and subsequent Arab-Israeli wars, he was not allowed to use the historical archives of Arab countries, but the gates of secular Turkey were open. In Istanbul Lewis was the first Westerner who was allowed to access the central archives of the Ottoman Empire. "Feeling rather like a child turned loose in a toy shop, or like an intruder in Ali Baba's cave," he concentrated on the Ottoman reform period and the origins of modern Turkey which later formed one of his main fields of research (Lewis, 2004b: 6). In 1961 he published his research under *The Emergence of the Modern Turkey*.¹¹ After that, perhaps personally motivated by the challenging history of the Assassins, the ambitious historian worked on this controversial sect and in 1967 published *The Assassins: a Radical Sect in Islam*.¹² Once he settled in the United States he published many more titles in his main field of

⁸ Named by Shahid Alam in: <http://www.counterpunch.org/alam06282003.html> [accessed on 17/12/2008]

⁹ Lewis, Bernard (1940). *The Origins of Ismilism: a study of the historical background of the Fātimid Caliphate*. Cambridge: Heffer & Sons.

¹⁰ Lewis, Bernard (1950, 1993). *The Arabs in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Lewis, Bernard (1961, 2002). *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Third edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹² Lewis, Bernard (1967, 2003). *The Assassins: a Radical Sect in Islam*. London: Phoenix.

expertise, i.e., the classical and medieval history of the Middle East. More than twenty books and a large number of papers concerning the Middle East and Islam made him well-known in the field. Being on the chief editorial board of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (published 1960-2005 by Brill), which is the most authentic encyclopaedic work on Islam (of course, from an Orientalist point of view), also shows his high scholarly position in this field.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran and subsequent events including September 11 changed the role of Islam in world politics and brought it to the centre of Western attention. Although all of these emerging issues dealt with contemporary, not classical and medieval, Islam, they provided a good market for Lewis's knowledge. Nevertheless, his expertise was in fact irrelevant to this new field. Taking this role, he appeared to be like an archaeologist talking about satellite communications, based on his knowledge of ancient tribal interrelations. True, regardless of many critiques, Lewis can be counted as a leading Orientalist expert in medieval Islamic history, but he, who "hasn't set foot in the Middle East, in the Arab world for at least 40 years",¹³ has neither the sufficient intellectual apparatus nor an adequate research background to speak authentically about the contemporary political aspects of the region. Of course, he has published some works on the present history, the most important of which is his study of modern Turkey under Ataturk. Yet Lewis in this field is a chronicler and, as it will be discussed in this chapter, his observation is superficial and ideological. At any rate, seemingly the lack of learned scholars – or more precisely the fact that his hostile approach towards 'others' better served the ruling ideology of the neoconservatives – on the one hand and increasing questions about contemporary Islam on the other, encouraged him among others to publish countless titles, many of which consisted of old colonial narratives about 'Muslim subjects'. Not surprisingly, these works became international bestsellers in this new millennium.

In the course of an interview with Booknotes Lewis admits to this fact. He says that he has been writing about the Middle East "for years and years and years", mainly in the form of books, or articles in learned journals. What suddenly catapulted him into this kind of prominence, he adds, were two articles: "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *Atlantic*

¹³ Said describes him so in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 27 March - 2 April 2003 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/631/focus.htm> [accessed on 17/12/2008]. He means that in last forty years Lewis has not stayed in the Middle East for a meaningful period of time.

Monthly, September, 1990 and “License to kill”, *Foreign Affairs*, November 1998 (Lewis, 2001b). From an academic point of view, these two are of the lowest rank of his works; nevertheless, understanding the vacuum left by the ending of the Cold War threat and using his scholarly brand, the learned sage could sell these journalistic products well.

According to Leen Boer, the founding father of contemporary ‘American culture talk’ that attempts to find for everything between Islam and the West a cultural root is Bernard Lewis (Boer, 2004). In 1993 Huntington borrowed the phrase of ‘clash of civilizations’ from the above *Atlantic Monthly* article, in which the phrase was used as a chapter title. Although the ‘clash of civilisations’ propelled Huntington to global prominence and ‘brand’ recognition among many people, the genesis of the phrase lies in the writings of Bernard Lewis. He began developing the theme as early as the 1950s in order to explain (or explain away) Arab national resistance to colonialism (Salt, 2008).

During the post-September 11 years, by publishing several articles in *The Wall Street Journal* such as “A War of resolve” and “A time for toppling” Lewis attempted to be a prominent theorist of the war in Iraq. Consequently, it seemed plausible for some analysts to say: “America’s misreading of the Arab world—and our current misadventure in Iraq—may have really begun in 1950. That was the year a young University of London historian named Bernard Lewis visited Turkey for the first time” (Hirsh, 2004). In his analysis of ideas and intellectuals in explanations of the Iraq war, Andrew Flibbert in a similar mood states that Lewis had unmatched intellectual influence on administration thinking about the Middle East (Flibbert, 2006).

Lewis’s influence over President Bush and the neoconservative lobby is evident through a lecture delivered in his honour by Vice President Dick Cheney. On the 1st May, 2006, at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia luncheon, honouring Professor Bernard Lewis, Cheney remarked:

[Bernard Lewis] was a man I wanted to keep in touch with, and whose work I should follow carefully in the years ahead... [W]e have met often, particularly during the last four-and-a-half years, and Bernard has always had some very good meetings with President Bush. He is always objective,

thoroughly candid, and completely independent. These, combined in the depth of his knowledge and the great discipline of his mind, make Bernard the very ideal of the wise man... And in this new century, his wisdom is sought daily by policymakers, diplomats, fellow academics, and the news media... we'll continue to rely on Bernard Lewis's rigorous thinking, his sound judgment, his realism, and his optimism as well (Cheney, 2006).

Methodology

At first glance any independent observer can easily confirm that Lewis is a great historian with considerable encyclopaedic information, deep historical analyses and some comprehensive philological observations. This attitude to Lewis's works is evident once he speaks on various aspects of classical and medieval history in Middle Eastern studies including the critical history of ancient religions and their interconnections; makes philological investigations into Middle Eastern languages; provides deep insights into everyday life of Middle Ages and origins of local feasts, tea and coffee; offers critical analysis of economic and fiscal traditions, rules and policies in different periods; publishes political researches into the roots of social and political upheaval, such as Assassins and Mamluks; evaluates the political roles of different ethnic and racial groups as diverse as Arabs, Persians, Turks and Mongols; and illustrates the domestic and international affairs of the Ottoman Empire based on original observations of the imperial archives and some other first-hand evidence.

Nevertheless, once it is realised that the whole edifice of historical knowledge is being employed for the ideology of dualism in present affairs, the observer would feel shocked. From this angle Lewis merely produces journalistic rhetoric and tries to employ his intellectual capacity to promote some political ambitions which are sadly intertwined with 'hate,' 'rage' and duality between the West and Islam. In this scene his work is superficial, using many fallacies, vast generalisations and strange oversimplifications. As we shall see in this chapter, his rhetoric time and again contradicts even his own scholarly analyses in his many and heterogeneous publications.

According to Lewis, in line with the first principle of dualism – namely the West and Islam are two monolithic entities – the main actors of human history are civilisations. Although at one time the general assumption was that ‘civilisation’ means us, and the rest are uncivilised, he argues, nowadays it is generally accepted that there are different civilisations. They meet and interact, and – even more interesting – a civilisation has a life-span: it is born, grows, matures, declines, and dies. One can perhaps trace this idea in the East to the medieval Arab historian-philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and in the West in the early twentieth century in works of the German historian, Oswald Spengler who discussed how different civilisations meet, interact, rise and decline, and fall (Lewis, 2003d).

Civilisations, however, are entities of great vagueness, to the extent that nobody can define them without the cost of oversimplification. Since they are socially constructed entities, the way they are defined depends on the cultural, economic, social and political intentions behind the definition. Through his works Lewis deals with two main civilisations, the West and Islam. He defines the two: “Certain generalizations can be made about what is variously called Christian, Judeo-Christian, post-Christian, and – more simply – Western civilization. While generalising about Islamic civilization may be difficult and at times in a sense dangerous, it is not impossible and may in some ways be useful. In space the realm of Islam extends from Morocco to Indonesia, from Kazakhstan to Senegal. In time it goes back more than fourteen centuries” (Lewis, 2004a: 3). Here his generalisation of the West seems to be extremely inaccurate. He dismisses the heritage of Greco-Roman traditions before Christianity as well as the historical influences of Islamic, Chinese and Indian currents. In addition, among each of these currents as well as Christianity itself there are different ways of life, various schools of thought and countless interpretations, all of which show that the West is heterogeneous, not a monolithic entity that can be defined in such an oversimplified way. The same is true with Islam. According to Lewis, however, once one is identified to be from the realm of Islam, all qualities of a Muslim subject can be generalised and applied to him, regardless of being Arab or Persian, Sunni or Shia, fundamentalist or modernist, nationalist or universalist, poor or rich, peasant or merchant, educated or illiterate, living in the West or in the Middle East. Such an extra-oversimplified definition, dismissing the infinite specifications of a huge number of people and merely

highlighting their so-called civilisational identity, enables Lewis to narrate – as we shall see – his unverifiable narratives without being questioned.

By portraying the world as a battlefield between the two civilisations, the West and Islam, his analysis tends to make the worldview of dualism seem natural and real. “The important question for the historian,” Lewis argues, “is not why the Europeans tried to dominate the Muslims – this had for centuries been the normal behaviour of both sides – but why they succeeded” (Lewis, 1993a: 202). In a sense, Lewis’s historical narrative could be summarised as continuing disputes between the two religiously defined rival civilisations, i.e., Christianity and Islam, both of which are ‘triumphalist’. From the very beginning of his scholarship in 1957 he asserted: “We shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations, but as a clash between civilizations” (Lewis, 2004b: 293). This line continues up to the events of September 11 and after when he proudly shows his readers he has been aware that the clash was and still is an important aspect of global relations (Lewis, 2003d).

It is usual in his historical narrative to portray the world scene as a scene of rivalry between the West and Islam. He does not pay attention to wars between European powers – between Britain and France or between them and Germany – as well as wars between Muslim powers, notably between Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey. He even ignores the fact that, for instance, in March 1854 Britain and France gave support to the Ottoman Empire and became her allies against Russia, another Christian state, or the fact that in the course of the World War I, the Ottomans were allies of Germany and Italy. In such a value-laden selection Lewis can obviously paint a distinct duality between the West and Islam, a duality for which, in this context, he uses “us” and “them” (Lewis, 2000: 277).

Perhaps no one can reveal dualism better than Lewis when he considers it as a natural outcome of history. “The question people are asking is why do they hate us? That’s the wrong question.” Accordingly, hatred is the fundamental part of the West and Islam relations and seemingly any question about this principle is naturally wrong. He then elaborates: “They’ve been hating us for a long time. In a sense, they’ve been hating us for centuries, and *it’s very natural that they should*. You have this millennial rivalry

between two world religions, and now, from their point of view, the wrong one seems to be winning. And more generally, I mean, you can't be rich, strong, successful and loved, particularly by those who are not rich, not strong and not successful. So *the hatred is something almost axiomatic*. The question which we should be asking is *why do they neither fear nor respect us?*" (Lewis, 2001b) (emphases added). Hence, for Lewis hatred is quite natural, they have the right to hate "us" as we have the right to hate "them". There is no question about this. The question is why they do not *fear or respect* the West, the superior civilisation. The natural answer in his perspective, as we will see, is because we have not been 'tough' enough as we should.

As a historian, Lewis knows well the flaw of the second principle of dualism, which should be generalised as historical model-building. He remarks that the historian of a period must know something of its cultural context and for this, literature is an indispensable guide (Lewis, 2004b: 7). By this he means that things change in different periods and they are not permanent. But in practice, he forgets this principle and once he wants to interpret Islamic civilisation, he merely looks at literary works produced in the classical period and the Middle Ages. Said observes this shortcoming and criticises his shocking dismissal of the lived actuality of Muslims, completely ignoring literary sources from the eighteenth century onward and just focusing on historical texts (Said, 1997: xxxi). Furthermore, it is surprising that Lewis is aware about other problems of historical model-building. He explains that if, for example, we compare the crusades with current events in the Middle East, we are, in fact, not making a comparison between two sequences of events at different times, but between two modern views. Such a comparison is of little value, since the similarities lie not in the actual events, but in the eye of the observer (Lewis, 2004b: 167).

Nevertheless, he thinks that Islam is an exception for which historical model-building is legitimate. In this way, he tries to highlight the special position of history in Muslims' mentality. Few if any civilisations in the past, he argues, have given as much importance to history as did Muslims, in their education, in their awareness of themselves, in the common language of everyday talk. He adds that until very recently, history – that is to say significant, usable history – for Muslim historians meant the history of Islam. And the most significant parts of Islamic history, thus the most usable, were those of the early centuries, the life of the Prophet and his immediate successors

(Lewis, 1991: 9). Hence, based on this bold assertion, of course with no evidence offered, Lewis's historical observations could be employed in his analysis of current Islamic affairs, as the second principle of dualism asserts. He further elaborates his argument that in contrast to Americans who, when they say 'that is history' they mean that it is unimportant, history is everything for Muslims. "Islamic history, for Muslims," he argues, "has an important religious and also legal significance, since it reflects the working out of God's purpose for His community – those that accept the teaching of Islam and obey its law" (Lewis, 2004a: xviii). This seems to be the main point behind Lewis' discussions about Muslims' attitude towards history. However, his assertion actually contradicts Islamic teachings. The Quran encourages all communities to change their way of life if they expect any development. It reads: "Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" (13:11). How, then, can history be considered as merely God's purpose for His community?

In line with the general Orientalist trend observed by Said, based on this assertion Lewis has the right to analyse, for instance, today's Islamic political movements based on his knowledge of classical Islamic polity in the times of caliphs and sultans. It is interesting that once he encounters some changes, he feels that there has been a distortion of the classical model. Observing the political language of Islam, he warns his readers, we must look beyond the contemporary political language in the Muslim world, because it has been profoundly affected, or "some might say distorted," by Western influences (Lewis, 1991: 5). Through a book he published under *The Political Language of Islam* he felt no need to discuss any contemporary terminology employed in thousands of articles, books, newspapers which are being daily published in Muslim world.

Beside his historical observations he also mentions some extra means for gathering information about contemporary Islamic civilisation. They are his travels to Middle Eastern countries, [of course none of them after the 1950s consisted of enough time to make meaningful analysis,] his occasional meetings with Middle Eastern monarchs and other rulers, more extensively with academic colleagues, and, perhaps most of all, his encounters with Middle Eastern students (Lewis, 2004b: 12). By no means, however, are such means sufficient for affirming the unverifiable narratives and vast generalisations that he usually makes about a civilisation with a population of one and

a third billion. He does not mention, and probably he is not aware of the fact that the Orientalist narratives and Western mass media are his main channels of information about contemporary Islam. Given the inadequacy of available tools for gathering information, following the second principle of dualism, his models for Islam have no way but to be merely based on his historical narrative.

It could be argued that his subject of expertise, i.e., history, has played an effective role in misleading him to disseminate dualism and to describe the world, to see the reality, to judge the truth, to portray the politics, all within the paradigm of the clash and hatred between the two millennial rival civilisations. That is because in history the sense of us and them is strong and bad events between the two sides, like conflicts and wars, have more frequency than good ones. In addition, events such as defeats and victories usually constitute historical turning points, and therefore are more important for a historian whose task is mainly the periodising of history. Lewis points to this fact: “[W]hen I was at primary school, history basically meant English history, and for a long time this, as taught at that level, consisted largely of wars with the French... A little later, chapters in my history textbooks on such topics as the Crusades and the Eastern Question raised similar questions” (Lewis, 2004b: 2). This shows that his starting point of Islamic history was naturally the “Crusades”. So once a historian comes to current affairs he is unsurprisingly at the risk of dualism, particularly if he sincerely believes that “historical processes... shape the present and affect the future” (Lewis, 2004b: 485). Neill Lochery also points to this aspect of Lewis when he compares him as a historian with political philosophers. A historian can easily transfer historical dualism to current affairs. “Such trends are more prevalent among historians and anthropologists rather than political scientists who appear much more interested in debating for them the key question of just how special was the ‘special relationship’” (Lochery, 2006).

Following the third principle of dualism, – namely, religion is the decisive factor – Lewis supports that the religion of Islam alone can thoroughly define Muslims, because “A basic distinguishing feature of Islam is the all-embracing character of religion in the perception of Muslims” (Lewis, 1999b: 25). This fact appropriately explains why in the Muslim view, the world is divided into religions, and these may be subdivided into nations and, by abuse, states (Lewis, 1999b: 28). Western secularised analysts cannot

grasp this point, Lewis argues, they have “great difficulty in understanding a culture in which not nationality, not citizenship, not descent, but religion, or more precisely membership of a religious community, is the ultimate determinant of identity” (Lewis, 1999b: 13). As a consequence, he adds, “Where Islam is perceived as the main basis of identity, it necessarily constitutes the main claim to allegiance” (Lewis, 1999b: 29). Finally and without much difficulty he can conclude that the use of such terms as left, right, conservative, progressive to describe Muslim political reality “is about as accurate and as enlightening as an account of a cricket match by a baseball correspondent” (Lewis, 1976a).

Nevertheless, this narrative about present-day life in Islamic countries which believes that Islam is everything cannot be accepted by any observer of the contemporary Middle East. Even Lewis cannot accept his basic theory once he comes to the facts on the ground. For instance, analysing the Iran-Iraq war, he admits to the existence of a patriotic and national loyalty among the two Muslim nations. In fact, the war between Iraq and Iran, both with majority of Shia population, demonstrated the insufficiency of both ethnic and sectarian appeals and perhaps also the power of patriotic loyalty. He adds that all over the Middle East, not only in old nations like Iran and Egypt, but even in some of the newest and most artificial, the state is once again becoming the primary focus of political loyalty and identity (Lewis, 1999b: 78-9). “At the present time, in the Middle East as in many other places, the state by which he is ruled, more than any other *factor*, determines a man’s identity.” He adds: “In principle, there was only one universal Islamic state... In fact, however, after the early centuries this was *never so*” (Lewis, 1999b: 93-4) (emphasis added).

Lewis also affirms the fourth principle of dualism – namely, Islam must be feared. Concerning terrorism in the name of Islam, he asserts: “Meanwhile, *significant numbers of Muslims* are ready to approve, and a few of them to apply, this [extremist] interpretation of their religion. Terrorism requires only a few. Obviously the West must defend itself by whatever means will be effective” (Lewis, 2004a: xxx) (emphasis added). He never mentions, however, how he measured the numbers of people who are ready to approve terrorism. Discussing Iranian nuclear ambitions, he also believes that they are worse than the Soviet Union, because being ready to embrace the hereafter, one cannot rely on any rationality on their side (Lewis, 2006). From his

perspective, this sort of unending fear of others can be well understood. Next to the millennial rivalry between the two civilisations and being aware of the fact that civilisations have a 'life-span' an unending fear seems unavoidable for a dualist.

In line with the last principle of dualism, – namely, ideologically biased positivistic methodology – he appears to be a perfect positivist. Generally in human knowledge, since the mid-twentieth century, it has been usually accepted that we are all influenced by our particular perspectives in one way or another. In this new milieu historical evidence has lost its nineteenth century privileged position, and it is widely accepted that the intension of the observer is an important factor generally in all sciences and particularly in social sciences and the humanities. As a result, the current intellectual climate is not a fertile place for ethnocentrism and judgmentalism, but perspectivism and interactionism (Fay, 1996: 5-8). However, it seems that Lewis ignores these new-born insights into knowledge and still believes in old-fashioned philosophical approaches, undermining and sometimes discrediting these vaguely as “fashionable” notions (Lewis, 2004b: 478).

Stating that he is still ‘old-fashioned enough’ (Lewis, 2001b) and advocating the nineteenth century critical method, applied by such trailblazers of Orientalism as de Goeje, Wellhausen, Caetani, and others who, Lewis argues, tried objectively to detect biases, distortions and variant versions, (Lewis, 2004b: 511) he does not attempt to answer critical questions raised by philosophers of the twentieth century against positivistic methodology. Although he agrees that without actual falsehood, historians may serve their intentions by defining the topic, choosing a starting point, or periodisation of the history, (Lewis, 2004b: 481) he still believes that these points could be avoided by an ‘objective historian’. At times he admits that complete objectivity is impossible, since scholars are human beings with their own loyalties and biases. But, he adds, this does not affect the issue. “To borrow an analogy, any surgeon will admit that complete asepsis is also impossible, but one does not for that reason, perform surgery in a sewer” (Lewis, 2004b: 487). He does not go farther to show which actions he has taken, and what procedure was followed by him to avoid such harmful bacteria as being an Orientalist with firm ideological ties with Zionism (Lewis, 2004b: 341-342) – a political ideology that is manifestly at war with Islam and tries its best to have the West on its side. He never critically explains why he tentatively divides up the

world in two rival civilisations and not several local powers. It remains unanswered, why he has chosen battles as turning points, not political revolutions, nor economic developments, nor Western expansion and colonialism. Said rightly points to this general shortcoming of Orientalism:

“What I am describing, then, is something that will characterize Islamic Orientalism until the present day: its retrogressive position when compared with the other human sciences (and even with the other branches of Orientalism), its general methodological and ideological backwardness, and its comparative insularity from development both in the other humanities and in the real world of historical, economic, social, and political circumstances” (Said, 2003: 261).

Lewis defines the objectivity of the historian mainly in an ethical way: “to be conscious of his own commitments and concerns and make due allowance and, where necessary, correction of them; and to try and present the different aspects of a problem and the different sides to a dispute in such a way as to allow the reader to form his own independent judgment. Above all the historian should not prejudge issues and predetermine results by *the arbitrary definition of topic and selection of evidence*, and *the use of emotionally charged or biased language*” (Lewis, 2004b: 11) (emphases added). Nevertheless, based on this definition, it seems that neither he nor his Orientalist ancestors could themselves remain ‘objective’ through their historical observations, because they tried their best to predetermine their analysis according to the ideology of dualism, towards which they arbitrarily defined topics, identified turning-points and selected evidence.

Such a general shortcoming of Orientalism is more obviously to be denied even with the nineteenth century approach. Three objections raised by Lewis against the Orientalist methodology may suffice to show that he himself is against his method. The first is in a book review written by him.¹⁴ Concerning the three Abrahamic religions he criticises the book: “There is inequality in the treatment accorded to the three religions. Of the four chapters of Judaism, all are by Jews, two of them rabbis. Of the nine chapters on Christianity, eight are by clerics, one - the most clerical of all - by a

¹⁴ Lewis reviewed: A. J. Arberry, ed. (1969). *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*. Cambridge University Press.

Christian layman. Of the nineteen chapters of Islam, only two or three are by Muslims, none of whom are professional men of religion. The remainder are by Western scholars, for whom Islam is an object of study, rather than a source of guidance” (Lewis, 2004b: 330). Second is in one of his old articles published in 1953 where in a pro-Turkish and to some extent a pro-Islamic paper, Lewis expresses sympathy with Turks, who are misunderstood by many Westerners. He says “Even the secularization of Europe in Renaissance times onwards did not seriously diminish this hostility to Islam ... Western travellers to Turkey ... do not understand that this was another civilization, with its own ethics and its own standards and values.” He adds: “Though it is generally accepted that one does not write French history without some reference to French sources, Western Europeans continue to write Turkish history - renamed the Eastern question - without any reference to what the Turks themselves had to say about it” (Lewis, 2004b: 143). Third, Lewis describes the role of some Western intellectuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when “Europe developed a pseudo-science and a pseudo-philosophy, the purpose of which was to justify the enslavement of the Blacks in intellectually acceptable terms, according to the standards of the time” (Lewis, 2004b: 251).

Lewis’s objections, however, are against his own methodology as well. His judgement of Islam is never made from a professional point of view, because he is neither an expert in Islamic studies nor familiar with contemporary Muslim world, but at best, a historian of some periods and some sectors of Islam. Just as he condemns writings on another civilisations without referring to some original resources, his judgement on contemporary Islam – not on the distant ancestors of present-day Muslims – is made without any reference to actual contemporary political, social and cultural Islamic facts and literature. Moreover, as we will see in his story of modernity, he tries his best to defend Western colonialism by generating his brand of pseudo-science and a pseudo-philosophy.

The current habit of many Western historians, now followed in many other regions as a standard periodisation, is to divide history into three main periods: ancient, medieval, and modern. In this approach, medieval Europe marks the transition between antiquity, i.e., Greece, Rome, and the ancient civilisations of the Middle East, and modernity. However, Lewis asserts, there were actually three routes from antiquity to modernity, of which medieval Western Christendom was only one. The other two were Greek Orthodox Christendom and “by far the most important of the three, the world of Islam.” He adds that the Islamic world, like the two Christendoms, accepted the heritage of antiquity, but it made far better use of that heritage than either of them. Greek philosophy and a wide range of sciences were preserved, translated, and studied in Muslim world long before they became even known in Europe (Lewis, 1997). In most of the arts and sciences medieval Europe was a pupil of the Muslim world, relying on Arabic sources (Lewis, 2002c: 7). Through his works, time and time again Lewis illustrates how various human products and skills have been transmitted via this inter-civilisational route in which, for centuries, Islamic civilisation was the predominant actor. Islam was marked by its rich and varied industry and commerce as well as the fact that its sciences were further enriched with elements from remoter lands and cultures, such as India and China (Lewis, 2000: 270).

Unlike some Western observers who uphold the view that Islamic civilisation was a mere transmitter, Lewis notes that the heritage which medieval Islamic scientists handed on to the modern West was immensely enriched by Muslims’ original and creative endeavours. Greek science, in general, tended to be theoretical. Medieval Middle Eastern science, however, was much more practical (Lewis, 2000: 266). He goes further and remarks that the Islamic civilisation of the Middle East, at its peak, presented a proud manifestation, “in many ways the apex of human achievement to that date”¹⁵ (Lewis, 2000: 269). Even in the realm of political philosophy, he argues, Muslims produced a new and original literature with fresh insights into some of the

¹⁵ Said states that such a glorification of Islamic civilisation is merely mentioned by Orientalists to cover their true intentions. He notes: “True, the relationship of strong to weak could be disguised or mitigated, as when Balfour acknowledged the “greatness” of Oriental civilizations” (Said, 2003: 40).

major problems of politics. Much of this dates back to the Middle Ages, translated into Western languages and exercised a significant influence on the development of the political thought in Europe (Lewis, 1991: 26).

There are different approaches to the story of modernity, its economic, cultural, social and political causes which led to the alteration of the world power balance. Lewis, in line with the first principle of dualism, mainly highlights the inter-civilisational aspect of the story. Dror Ze'evi suggests that Lewis believes the Napoleon invasion of Egypt was the first point that Modern period started in the Middle East (Ze'evi, 2006).¹⁶ However, what appears in *What Went Wrong* shows another kind of periodisation which suggests that the failure of Vienna siege was the starting point. In both accounts according to Lewis it happened in the course of a military confrontation between the two civilisations. For the first thousand years, Lewis narrates, of the long struggle between “the two world systems”, the Muslims on the whole had “the upper hand”. But after a while the situation dramatically changed – the West began to gain prominence. September 12th 1683 is considered by Lewis as a major turning-point, when the Turkish armies, or in his terms the army of Islam, failed to capture Vienna. This was followed by the humiliating peace accord of 1699 in the treaty of Carlowitz which inaugurated a long period of almost unrelieved “Muslim retreat before Christian power” (Lewis, 2000: 274-7). In *What Went Wrong* which is originally written to narrate this paradigm shift, his starting point is also the battlefield of 1683 when Muslims in their second siege of Vienna faced a calamitous defeat (Lewis, 2002c: 18).

It is interesting that at this historical turning point Lewis mostly highlights wealth and power as the West's trump cards on the table. Beside military victories, he argues, Europeans' strength on the sea, the impact of the new open ocean route between Europe and Asia, the establishment of colonial dependencies, the discovery and exploitation of the New World with ‘ample supplies of gold and silver’, and European invention of new weapons, changed the balance of power between the two sides (Lewis, 2002c: 14-23). Of course he mentions some cultural elements such as European interests in Eastern languages and knowledge unlike Muslims who were reluctant to learn from infidels – this made the knowledge flow in a one-way route. Highlighting

¹⁶ In his interpretation of Lewis, Zeievi relies on *Arabs in History, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, The Middle East and the West* and *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*.

the influence of religious teachings on Muslims, he adds that from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Muslims due to some Islamic restrictions on travelling to the lands of the unbelievers, as well as their experience of the hitherto backwardness of the West during the Middle Ages, were reluctant to travel to Europe, while the situation in Europe was the reverse. This type of communication between the two civilisations produced an unexpected result, i.e., the modernisation of the West in the course of the ignorance and then decline of the East (Lewis, 2002c: 39, 49).

From Lewis' perspective, modernity is defined by obtaining a standard level of economic development and job creation, literacy and educational and scientific achievement, political freedom and respect for human rights (Lewis, 2002c: 169; 2004a: 97-102). Western civilisation's distinctive brand of modernity, he argues, is distinguished by releasing the state and science from the subordination of religion (Lewis, 1997). He believes that the dominant civilisation defines the global norms and standards of modernity. Then he attempts to illustrate a natural duality between the modern superior civilisation and that of others. Once Muslims were the dominant power, he adds, they felt the aggressive mission of exporting their standards, "there was the mission, felt by other empire-builders before them and after them, to conquer, convert and civilize the barbarous peoples beyond the imperial frontiers" (Lewis, 2004b: 152). According to him, now, it is the West's turn and "those who had been disciples now became teachers" (Lewis, 2002c: 90). For the time being indeed the West is the perfect symbol of modernity and others should precisely follow it. "In every era of human history," Lewis proclaims, "modernity or some equivalent term has meant the ways, norms and standards of the dominant civilization. Every dominant civilization has imposed its own modernity in its prime" (Lewis, 2002c, 167).

According to Lewis, Muslims' failure to embrace modernity is due to their failure to adopt, with no reservation, the Western example. Today for the time being, he argues, as Atatürk recognised and as Indian scientists and Japanese high-tech companies appreciate, the dominant civilisation is Western, and Western standards therefore should define modernity (Lewis, 2002c, 167). He especially emphasizes Muslims' failure to accept the Western cultural baggage which, in his judgment, is the main difference between the backward Middle East and the rest of the world. He elaborates: "They were willing enough to accept the products of infidel science in

warfare and medicine, where they could make the difference between victory and defeat, between life and death. But the underlying philosophy and the sociopolitical context of these scientific achievements proved more difficult to accept or even to recognize. This rejection is one of the more striking differences between the Middle East and other parts of the non-Western world” (Lewis, 2002c: 90). Even worse, the Arab countries also lag behind more recent recruits to “Western-style modernity,” such as Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. (Lewis, 2004a: 97)

For Lewis, modernisation could be defined as absolute Westernisation. Nowhere his view could be deeply realised better than through his narrative of Atatürk’s Revolution of Turkey. A hero of modernising Islam, a “brilliant and inspired leader” (Lewis, 2002a: 291), Mustafa Kemal, later called Atatürk¹⁷, showed at different stages of his leadership his “true greatness” (Lewis, 2002a: 255, 291). Lewis describes Atatürk’s “great symbolic revolutions,” as “the forcible transference of a whole nation from one civilization to another” (Lewis, 2002a: 267). The hero’s main thesis was that “civilization means European civilization” (Lewis, 2002a: 267). Precisely to show this, through his speeches Atatürk was using the term civilisation in a singular form, counting old traditions, not excluding Islam, as barbarous (Lewis, 2002a: 268). Unlike many other reformers, Lewis argues, Atatürk was well aware that a mere facade of modernisation was worthless, and that if Turkey was to hold her own in today’s world, some fundamental changes were necessary in whole structure of society and culture (Lewis, 2002a: 292). Accordingly, in his Revolution, he took fundamental steps away from Islam towards the West, from backwardness to modernity. Such steps included: the restriction and prohibition of religious education; the adoption of European civil and penal codes; the nationalisation of pious foundations; the reduction and eventual elimination of the power of the *ulema*; the transformation of social and cultural symbols and practices, such as dress and headgear; and the alteration of the official calendar. And finally “The copingstone of the edifice of legal secularism was laid in April 1928, when Islam was removed from the constitution” (Lewis, 2002a: 404). This last step seems to be the most important one for Lewis, as he states that by this the disestablishment of Islam was completed, and Turkey was then, legally and constitutionally, a lay state, “*secular and modern* in her constitution, her laws, and her

¹⁷ In Turkish means “Father of the Turk Nation”

aspirations” (Lewis, 2002a: 276). (emphasis added) Nevertheless, this seemed still not to be enough, because there remained one symbol, potent and universal, that bound Turkey to the Orient and set her apart from the Western modernity – the Arabic script. No worry, Atatürk finally abolished this one as well. “It was this final badge of Muslim identity that was now to follow the Caliphate and the Holy Law into oblivion,” Lewis honourably narrates (Lewis, 2002a: 277). By learning a new script and forgetting the old, the past could be totally buried and forgotten (Lewis, 2002a: 433).

This genuine and original Orientalist approach to modernity could be narrated by nobody better than Lewis. It is precisely in line with the first principle of dualism, because it generalises modernity to a civilisational level. It is exactly based on the belief that Islam is static, the second principle, so there is no hope for that it could be changed from within, the only remedy is to transfer the nation, the identity, the culture, the whole way of life, and even the script to a “modern” one. Moreover, this approach on modernising Islam is in line with the third principle, because it regards the religion as the main essence of Islamic civilisation and believes that for every change, that very heart of the identity, the religion of Islam, must be destroyed. That is to say, in transformation from Islam to West, the replacement of the old Islamic conception of identity, authority and loyalty by new conception of European origin is of fundamental importance. In the theocratically convinced polity of Islam in Turkey, Lewis argues, “God was to be twice replaced: as the source of sovereignty, by the people; as the object of worship by the nation” (Lewis, 2002a: 486). In reality, however, God, as a sovereign force in society, was not replaced by nation, but like other ideologically motivated revolutions, by an ideology: the *laïcité*. Furthermore, this is in line with the fourth principle since behind all this Orientalist narrative, there lies a Western fear of a strong non-Western Turkey. This point becomes evident once Lewis implicitly explains the secret of his insistence on the Westernisation of Turkey and its impact on world politics. “The process of domestic Westernization found its natural counterpart in a foreign policy of Western alignment” (Lewis, 2002a: x). Finally this view is an ideological and positivist view on modernity, as in line with the fifth principle of dualism, since it regards itself as the sole bearer of truth. Exactly because of this epistemological approach, Atatürk who, Lewis admits, by his contemporaries was often

called “a dictator, and in a sense he certainly was” (Lewis, 2002a: 290), could be considered by Lewis as a “brilliant and inspired leader” (Lewis, 2002a: 291).

Although Lewis portrays the history of modernity mainly as a game of wealth and power, when he comes to the Muslims’ side to analyse the roots of their decline, he highlights not matters of lacking wealth and power but mainly interior socio-political failures. Although in *What Went Wrong* he quotes the most important propositions including internal and external answers to the question of ‘What went wrong in the Islamic civilisation?’ he deliberately attempts to underestimate factors caused by Western colonialism and imperialism (Lewis, 2002c: 170-8).¹⁸ These factors, nevertheless, were exactly the factors which played a major role in bringing prosperity and then modernity to the West, as he admits to this point in the course of analysing the historical changes within the West. Understating the role of colonialism, Lewis affirms that instead of “blaming others” which is an easier and more satisfying option in a “blame game,” Muslims should search for roots of their failure in their own societies (Lewis, 2002c: 169).

In line with his Orientalist mission, Lewis in his historical narration of colonialist and post-colonialist eras usually attempts to legitimise Western actions in the Middle East. Old inspirations from his Orientalist ancestors who considered the European aggression against other nations as a crucial part of the process of civilising ‘others’ are still vibrant in his rhetoric. The benefits of colonialism, he argues, might be obvious, comparing countries under colonialism such as Egypt and Algeria with independent countries like Saudi Arabia, of course, before the outward flow of oil, and Afghanistan (Lewis, 2004a: 49-50). Surely he has forgotten that if Arabia and Afghanistan had had more plentiful natural resources and better economic capacity, European colonialists would have invaded them as well. Hence, the backwardness of these countries is a cause for, not a consequence of, their independence. Lewis admits to this point on another occasion: “In Afghanistan and inner Arabia and a few other places difficult to access and offering no attraction, independent Muslim rulers maintained the old ways” (Lewis, 2002c: 67).

¹⁸ Here Richard Bulliet objects Lewis that although he asks the question of what went wrong on behalf of Muslims and wants to show their perspective on this issue, he mostly mentions everything from his own point of view (Bulliet, 2004: 54). Bulliet also suggests that only comparative observations can result in a consistent sense of what the Muslim world is lacking (Bulliet, 2004: 56).

The fact cannot be denied by any independent observer that some Western states are partly responsible for the conditions of life in other parts of the world because of what they did to them during the era of colonialism. This is not at all to deny that these countries themselves bear much of the responsibility for a disappointing performance and backwardness, but rather that the Western powers are not wholly innocent either, and have a duty to help remedy the consequences of their past as well as present actions. When the West backs dictatorships in some Middle Eastern countries, supplies them with dangerous weapons, corrupts, manipulates, and destabilises vulnerable regimes or imposes unfavourable trade agreements on them, it by no means can deny its responsibility for consequences of such actions. All these points are neglected, or one can say, negated in Lewis's rhetoric.

Enumerating the socio-cultural problems in Islamic civilisation, Lewis mentions that the social institutions and attitudes inherited from earlier times and maintained with increasing rigidity by the *ulema* made it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances or to create modern political and economic institutions. An attitude towards unbelievers that varied from aloofness in good times, to hostility and mistrust in crises, made it difficult to learn from them, or even to understand them, at a time when it was the West and not as previously the Islamic world, that had something to teach. The traditional family structure, based on polygamy, concubinage, and domestic slavery, was ill-suited to the process of social and cultural, and therefore also of political and economic modernisation (Lewis, 1993a: 205). On another occasion, however, he oddly contradicts himself and denies any role played by Islam or Islamic law in the process of decline. "The decline was not limited to the Islamic lands... Nor can the decline be attributed simply to Islamic religious attitudes or to the working of the Holy Law. Their presence did not prevent an earlier flourishing of commerce; their absence did not save Byzantium and Italy" (Lewis, 2000: 178).

According to Lewis, Muslims' rejection of the emancipation of women, in its Western sense, is the main barrier towards modernity. Likewise, the main difference between the Muslims' aspiration for modernity and the Western version is in the social role of women (Lewis, 2002c: 81). The status of women, however, though probably the most profound single difference between the two civilisations, attracted far less analysts' attention than such matters as weapons, factories and parliaments (Lewis, 2002c: 74).

This time, blaming the Islamic legal system with regard to the permission of polygamy and concubinage, he conveys that, according to Islamic law, there are three groups of people who do not benefit from the general Muslim principle of legal equality – unbelievers, slaves, and women. The woman is obviously in one significant respect the worst-placed of the three. The slave can be free by his owner; the unbeliever can at anytime convert to Islam by his own choice, and thus end his inferiority. Only the woman is doomed forever to remain what she is (Lewis, 2002c: 75).

It seems that Lewis this time has forgotten that the situation of inequality of the three groups is not exclusively Islamic, but shared by Christianity and Judaism. Elsewhere he remembers the fact and notes: “Like its sister religions, classical Islam assumed a basic inequality between man and woman, freeman and slave, believer and infidel, and enforced the inferior status of the latter by the rules of the Holy Law” (Lewis, 2000: 179). Furthermore, the tradition of slavery, in the Islamic lands, was much better than the West. As admitted by Lewis, Islamic slavery was more often domestic than economic and slaves enjoyed a position in home life. They also enjoyed some civil rights in matters of property, inheritance and treatment. Islamic law asked the owner of the slave to provide for the slave medical attention, food, and support in old age (Lewis, 2000: 207-8). Then Lewis admits that, considering historical evidence, it seems that the social realities of all the three minorities were better than their legal place – of course in Lewis’s interpretation of Islamic texts which usually corresponds to rigid interpretations.¹⁹ He explains that we can find *dhimmis* enjoying great wealth, economic power, and even rare political might. There were women exercising authority in the home, in the market, and in the palace. Finally, we can find ever-growing numbers of slave soldiers, slave commanders, slave governors, and even slave monarchs (Lewis, 2000: 211).²⁰

At present, polygamy has been abolished in the most of Muslim countries either by law or by practice and concubinage is of exception, no more than in other societies. Lewis

¹⁹ Richard Bulliet holds that judicial court records of the Ottoman Empire shows that justice was generally meted out impartially, irrespective of religion, official status, gender or ethnicity (Bulliet, 2004: 66).

²⁰ In another place, he adds: “In earlier times, notably in Abbasid Baghdad and Fatimid Cairo, adherence to the dominant faith was not a necessary condition of membership of the elites, and we hear of Christian and Jewish poets, scientists, and scholars moving in the same circles as their Muslim colleagues – not only as colleagues, but as friends, partners, pupils, and teachers” (Lewis, 2000: 181).

himself supports the change, remarking: "Polygamy is now very rare outside of Arabian peninsula, where men have both the means and opportunity" (Lewis, 2002c: 79). In practice, polygamy has been always rare except among the rich and powerful (Lewis, 2000: 210). Sometimes words can lead us astray, but with a deeper vision, promiscuity and prostitution, now frequent in many Western societies, are cultural synonyms with polygamy and concubinage. They are more visible than real and they should be interpreted in their context, otherwise, they will lead to a serious misunderstanding. Equally in the West and Islam, only men of wealth and power have been able to, and indeed usually have had access to, multiple sexual partners, although within different legal and social frameworks. Islam gave equal rights to all sexual partners of men as well as to their children. However, the West adopted an opposite solution by vesting all the rights in a man's primary sexual partner and her offspring, excluding others and their children from all legal rights. This fact has led some scholars to assert an opposite view, pointing out: "Arguably, Europe's mistresses might think that the Islamic practice favored women" (Alamdari, 2003).

Lewis's partiality and his exaggeration about the impact of the situation of women on the modernisation of Muslims results in an insecure conclusion, that is, the more there is emancipation of Muslim women, the more modern society would be. However, he does not believe in this causal statement, because among Arab countries, the legal emancipation of woman went farthest in Iraq and in the former South Yemen, both ruled by notoriously repressive regimes. It has lagged behind in Egypt, one of the more tolerant and open Arab societies (Lewis, 2002c: 81).²¹

Concerning issues of women's literacy and education, two pillars of modernisation, official figures have shown a dramatic increase in female university students in post-revolutionary Iran, to Lewis eyes, an Islamic fundamentalist country, where wearing the *hijab* is compulsory. The ratio of female students of Iranian universities to males has increased dramatically from 43% in 1997 to 55% in 2005.²² This shows that there may be ways to modernity very different from the Western experience.

²¹ See also (Lewis, 2000: 383).

²² The following table shows the number of students in years 1997, 2001, 2005.

One of Lewis's interesting points is that, exactly in line with the second principle of dualism, he does not pay any attention to voices of change from within Islam. No modernist intellectual has been cited by Lewis, no modernist movement was analysed or even was mentioned throughout his works. His ignorance of such waves of change within Islam prevented him from forecasting, not to mention from understanding, waves of change, especially in the interrelation between Islam and politics since the 1970s.

Islam and Politics

Islamic political theory

From Lewis's perception, there is no greater disparity between Islam and Christianity than in the relations between government, religion and society. The founder of Christianity advised his followers to render political issues to Caesar and religious issues to God (Matt. XXII: 21) (Lewis, 2004a: 5). This idea of separation between Church and State has been a basic feature of the political history of Christianity, and therefore in the history of Europe, as a racially and religiously "homogeneous society" – apart from a Jewish minority (Lewis, 2004b: 68). However, the Prophet of Islam unlike his precedents, Moses and Jesus, defeated his enemies in his lifetime and took both religious and political careers simultaneously. As a result, Islam from its origin emerged as a political religion (Lewis, 2004a: 5). These two phases in the Prophet's mission, the one of faith, the other of rule, are both reflected in the Quran which along with the prophetic tradition constitutes the main source of Islamic law. "In Muslim perception," Lewis asserts, "there is no human legislative power, and there is only one

Number of Students annually accepted in Iranian Universities

Year	Number of Students	Male (percent)	Female (percent)
2005	340526	45	55
2001	205026	48	52
1997	154101	57	43

Source of information: <http://www.irphe.ir/fa/Statistics/Stat-1384-85/AddmittedStudentTABLE/1-9.pdf> [accessed on 1/7/2007]

law for the believers - the holy law of God, promulgated by revelation.... It could not be changed and no Muslim ruler could, in theory, either add or subtract a single rule” (Lewis, 2002c: 113). Accordingly, in Islamic theory, Church and State are not separate or even separable institutions; the same Holy Law regulates both (Lewis, 1999b: 26). Since the law in Muslim conception is immutable and divine, the Muslim state legalised by the Holy Law is a necessary part of God’s providential dispensation for mankind. So the authority of the Muslim ruler, “however obtained and however exercised,” is divinely ordained and the Muslim political community is the unchanging medium of God’s guidance (Lewis, 1991: 26-8). The duty of obedience to legitimate authority is not merely a political, but also a religious obligation and disobedience is therefore a sin (Lewis, 1991: 91). Hence, if for St. Augustine, the first Christian political theorist, the body politic was evil and man-made, for his Muslim counterparts political authority was a divine good (Lewis, 1991: 25).

Accordingly, in Islamic political theory there is one ruling religious state, practicing ‘the static law of Islam’, and even no other reading of the religion could coexist. As a result, when Lewis attempts to describe the notion of civil society in the Islamic context, he considers civil as non-religious. He argues “In the Islamic context, the independence and initiative of the civil society may best be measured not in relation to the state [as in the Western context], but in relation to religion, of which, in the Muslim perception, the state itself is a manifestation and an instrument. In this sense, the primary meaning of civil is non-religious...” (Lewis, 2002c: 125).

Time and time again throughout his works, Lewis insists on the unification of the state and religion in Islam in contrast to Christianity, in addition to the static nature of the Islamic law. There were not two powers but one, he asserts, and the question of separation did not therefore arise. Islam in principle is theocratic. Theocracy literally means the rule of God. In this sense Islam, in theory, has been a theocracy. “The state is God's state, the law is God's law. The army is God's army - and of course the enemy is God's enemy” (Lewis, 2004b: 377-9). In such a worldview, he adds, God is seen as helping rather than testing the believers, as desiring their success in this world, and as manifesting His divine support by victory and domination, “for His army, His community, and His state” (Lewis, 1999b: 28).

After illustrating the domestic foundations of Islamic polity, he describes Islamic foreign policy, again as reflected in mediaeval sources. In the Muslim perception, Lewis proclaims, the world is divided into two poles: the House of Islam (*Dar Al-Islam*), in which Muslim governments rule and Muslim law prevails, and the House of War (*Dar Al-Harb*), the rest of the world, still inhabited and, more important, ruled by unbelievers. In this dualistic worldview, Muslims' presumption is that the duty of *jihad*, namely, holy war with infidels, or one may say with 'others', will continue – interrupted only by truces, not by peace – until all the world either adopts the Muslim faith or submits to Muslim rule (Lewis, 2004a: 27).

Although by such fabricated and extremely distorted narrations of Islamic polity, repeated virtually everywhere in his books, papers, interviews, and lectures, Lewis has encouraged political theorists like Huntington to promote a clash of civilisations;²³ has justified slogans that Islam and modernity, Islam and democracy are mutually exclusive; has persuaded US policymakers to make hostile policies against all Islamist sectors; and through media has pushed Western public opinion towards islamophobia, it seems that there is no truth in his story. In line with his dualistic mission this narrative is manipulated in a way to correspond fully with all five principles of dualism. It is between the two civilisations, considering Islam stationary, and the main part of Muslims' identity; Islam must be feared because it represents a dangerous version of dualism; all in a perfect positivistic discourse that dismisses any other understanding of Islam. Nevertheless, Lewis is aware that it is not fair to condemn a living civilisation simply based on sources and interpretations belonging to centuries ago, revived only in some circles of Islamic extremists and subsequently highlighted and exaggerated by Western media. In fact, thousands of graduates of politics from all Islamic countries may not even know the meaning of the historical terms of *Dar ul-Harb* and *Dar ul-Islam*. Of course historians like Lewis may know. As Heiko Henkel, studying Turkish Muslims in Germany observes, Lewis's use of the *dar ul-Islam/dar ul-harb* as a transhistorical principle defining the worldviews of Muslims is undoubtedly flawed (Henkel, 2004). Such frequent terms in Orientalism and Western headlines cannot be found in the contemporary political literature of the Middle East, even more, they are too old-fashioned to have any equivalent in modern Muslim languages. Of course,

²³ In fact, Lewis was the major Islamic reference of Huntington's controversial article under this title.

Lewis is knowledgeable enough to know the fact that what he does is merely a historical model-building for a radically different contemporary entity. He admits that the language of modern political discourse in the region is radically different from the past (Lewis, 1999b: 7). Now the political terminology is highly influenced by Western political discourse, even if local words are used. Some of these words, like democracy and dictatorship, are loanwords; others, like government or freedom, are old words, injected with new meanings.

To show that how flawed Lewis's narrative of Islamic political theory is, I need not to cite any other source but Lewis's encyclopaedic works, which offer correct information often in contrast with his politically motivated arguments. Here I just add a brief introduction to the formative period of Islamic political theory then come back to Lewis.

No doubt, Islam originally emerged as a religion with a strong political dimension. The Prophet of Islam received the first revelation when he was about forty years old. After a few years, he started to propagate the mission of God in public. At that time, his followers, later called Muslims, were an oppressed, weak, and poor minority under the sovereignty of the prosperous tribe of Quraish in the idolatrous society of Makkah. During thirteen years of the Prophetic mission in Makkah, Islam witnessed the subjugation, sanction, torture, and execution of its followers. The Prophet instructed Islamic principles to the faithful to strengthen their belief in the hereafter and to teach them how to resist the nonbelieving oppressors. Muslims were taught to follow the examples of the previous communities of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, as well as other prophets of God. This stage continued until the time when the Prophet, with two hundred of his companions, quietly emigrated to Medina where the first independent Islamic community was constituted.

In Medina the Prophet, now the head of an independent community, had to construct a political system. In addition to matters of faith, he had to teach his followers issues related to worldly life, such as taxation, judicial procedures, criminal punishments, foreign policies, and war with enemies. Being a messenger of God, all his instructions were recognised as divine teachings. This stage of the Prophet's career lasted for ten years and ended with his death. Islam in Medina changed from a religion of a poor

minority in an ignorant society to a world religion, which finally developed into the world's most superior civilisation and remained so for few centuries. Before his death, the Prophet conquered Makkah and attracted his previous enemies to his side. Eschewing vengeance, he instead accepted a settlement and granted the Quraish amnesty.

Islam considerably enhanced social and political standards of the time. Treatment of women was dramatically improved. Slavery, though was not abolished, was controlled by law. Social justice achieved the highest standards of the time. Public political participation through strict protection of individual rights, promotion of justice and mercy, and the application of a consultative government noticeably improved. Rights and duties of minorities, specified by law and mutual treaties, achieved the highest standards in comparison with other societies of the time.

The triumph of Islam in the political and spiritual realms, however, was closely tied to the divinity of its leadership. Though illiterate, according to his followers Muhammad was directly receiving God's revelation, and therefore, his sayings and acts, in Muslims' perception, corresponded to God's will. This crucial factor ceased to continue after his death. The majority of Muslims, later called Sunnis, believed that the Prophet passed away and the community, without enjoying a divinely-sanctioned leadership, must follow the Prophet's guidance, exemplified by the Quran and the prophetic tradition. A minority, later called Shia, supported a continuing divinely-sanctioned leadership with Ali bin Abitalib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and after Ali, with Ali's sons and grandsons. However, after two-and-half centuries when the Twelfth Imam of the Shias entered a phase known as occultation, most of the Shias, too, held that the community no longer had access to a divinely-sanctioned leadership.

In practice, Muslims were not successful in safeguarding the Islamic political heritage of Medina. Although the Islamic community flourished in economic, cultural, social, and military aspects, it began to lose its political achievements. After a few decades the egalitarian approach of the prophetic age was replaced by the privileged and tyrannical dynasties of the Umayyads and then the Abbasids. With regard to this historical fact Lewis points: "Islam triumphed only in certain limited spheres of social and family life. In most political and public matters it was overwhelmed by the more

ancient traditions of the region, which survived in an Islamic disguise, notably in the persistence of the autocratic, monarchical form of government” (Lewis, 2004b: 382).

Lewis is familiar with all of this.²⁴ He admits that while in the theory of Islamic law the head of the community is the Caliph, who succeeds the Prophet with supreme power in all military, civil, and religious matters, in practice the situation was much different throughout Islamic history. He admits to an unofficial and unarticulated separation of powers which evolved between the state and the Islamic jurists, the former usually conceded the exclusive competence of the latter in all that related to the Holy Law (Lewis, 2000: 188-9). At times, “the Caliph became the puppet of military commanders and political adventurers who, from the ninth century onwards, were the real rulers of Islam.” He then adds that in the administration of law we see the same contrast. Alongside the Qadi, who was usually an Islamic jurist, there were other courts, the ostensible purpose of which was to deal with matters not falling within the Qadi’s jurisdiction, and which therefore followed other legal systems (Lewis, 1993a: 145). So he accepts that Muslims from the very beginning employed, at least in certain domains, laws legislated by themselves, not by God.

In line with many other historians, Lewis, by entitling the Umayyad chapter of *The Arabs in History* as “The Arab Kingdom”, admits to the fact that from Mu`awiya onward the leadership ceased to continue as caliphate, but simply as kingdom. He also quotes some Arab historians who refused to give the very title of Caliphate to the reign of the Umayyad dynasty except for one just ruler, Umar II (Lewis, 1993a: 65).²⁵ After the early four caliphs, Lewis admits, the system and style of government became more and more like the ancient empires and less and less like the Prophet’s community in Medina (Lewis, 2000: 140). He adds: “The power wielded by the early caliphs was very

²⁴ A few open-minded Western observers pointed to this historical process as early as the eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who admittedly favoured undivided small republics, complains about the matter of separation of religion and politics in Islam preceded by the original prophetic unification. He argues: “[W]hen Jesus set up a spiritual kingdom, he separated the theological from the political; the State was no longer one, and thus began the divisions that trouble Christianity still. Several peoples have attempted to restore the old system: but the spirit of Christianity has everywhere prevailed and the sacred cult has remained independent of the State. Mahomet held very sane views; and, as long as his form of administration continued under the caliphs, that government was indeed one, and good. But the Arabs grew civilised and cowardly, they were conquered by barbarians and the division of the powers began again” (Rousseau, 1913, book 4: 109).

²⁵ See also: Lewis, 1991: 55

far from the despotism of their predecessors [(the Sassanid and Byzantine)] and of *their successors*. It was *limited* by the political ethics of Islam and by the anti-authoritarian habits and traditions of ancient Arabia” (Lewis, 2000: 140) (emphases added). He even denies the Ottoman’s assertion that they were caliphs, attributing that to a mere “legend” which was unprecedented after Abbasids (Lewis, 2002a: 324). Hence, Lewis indirectly admits that what he asserts of unification of Church and State in Islam cannot be more than *a theory* which was just applied in a limited period of the history of Islam. This by no means can be generalised to the whole civilisation.

Furthermore, Lewis admits to the fact that the institution of the caliphate was merely *a solution* “incidentally” (Lewis, 2003a: 20) proposed by some elites, not a divine permanent instruction. “At the time of Abu Bakr’s accession,” he notes, “it is unlikely that he or his electors had any such notions. But from their act of improvisation came the great institution of caliphate – the supreme office of the Islamic world” (Lewis, 2000: 54). He then elaborates: “His electors can have had no idea of the later function and development of the office. At the time they made no attempt to delimit his duties or powers. The sole condition of his appointment was the maintenance intact of the heritage of the Prophet” (Lewis, 1993a: 49). Even Lewis accepts that the legitimacy of caliphate has been under question by some Sunni scholars, not to mention Shia ones. Lewis quotes Ibn Batta, al-Ghazali, Ibn Jama’a and al-Baqillani to show that the obligation of obedience is not divine and immutable but has certain limitations and based on some rational calculations of the time. He summarises al-Ghazali’s argument for justifying Muslim rulers in an aphorism: “tyranny is better than anarchy” (Lewis, 1991: 102). He even quotes a historical event of the seventh Islamic century (fourteenth century CE) that a group of *ulema* in Baghdad issued a *fatwa* “preferring a just infidel to the unjust Muslim” (Lewis, 1991: 107). In addition, Lewis counts some profound historical changes of caliphate – sometimes it was “a sort of caliphal Vatican state” (Lewis, 1991: 46); at times “purely local” (Lewis, 1991: 47); occasionally the caliph was advised not to interfere political affairs (Lewis, 1991: 48). He also accepts that after collapse of the Abbasids the age of the “universal caliphate” came to an end (Lewis, 1991: 49). Considering all these facts, can one affirm that political sovereignty is something divine in Islamic civilisation, regulated by God? Or that caliphate was simply *a solution* offered in a particular historical context?

In addition to all of this, Lewis occasionally observes some sort of theoretical separation between Church and State in Islam. He admits that the Sunni caliph held a religious office in the sense that it was regulated by holy law, but the caliph was not a man of religion and had no legal power to modify or even interpret that law, which it was his duty to maintain and enforce (Lewis, 2004b, 368). He explains that Islam (or religion) and government can be regarded as twin brothers. One cannot thrive without the other. Islam is the foundation, and government the guardian (Lewis, 2000: 149). He also occasionally quotes some novel insights into political Islam: “The classical doctrine of *limited* authority and *limited* obedience, under law; the contractual and, according to the Sunnis, *electing character of the imamate*; the insistence of the classical tradition on justice as the main object of government and on consultation as a means of ensuring justice were all cited in support of constitutionalism” (Lewis, 1991: 113) (emphases added). It is interesting that he sometimes condemns those who are going to misuse political Islam by giving it a religious essence and divinity: “In most Muslim countries it was not the practice for professional men of religion to hold political office. There is no papacy in Islam, and there are no equivalents in Muslim history to cardinals Wolsey or Richelieu, Mazarin or Alberoni. In this respect too, the regime of the mollahs in present day Iran is a radical departure from all Islamic precedent” (Lewis, 1991: 30-1).

Moreover, Lewis at times supports a total separation in Islam, like that which he believes exists in Christianity. In Islamic tradition, he notes, at times government is considered evil. According to a saying attributed to the Prophet, government and paradise cannot be combined. Then, he adds, “The same duality is visible in the pastoral image of government which Islam shares with other religions” (Lewis, 2000: 155). Observing the facts of Islamic history, he admits that in the early centuries of Islam, the relationship between the state and the *ulema* was distant, even at times one of mutual suspicion. “For the truly pious, the state was a necessary evil, but one with which good men would not become involved. The service of the state was demeaning and in a sense even sinful...” (Lewis, 2000: 188).

At times Lewis even contradicts his attitude towards separation in the Christian tradition from its origin.²⁶ He explains that it took centuries of bitter religious war and persecution before Christianity did indeed find a solution to solve the dilemma of the relation between Church and State (Lewis, 1999b: 37). He adds: "In Byzantium, the emperor usually bore the ultimate responsibility for Church as well as State, and it was his duty to approve and impose the 'right opinion' – the Greek term, taken from Plato, is 'orthē doxa' – as defined by the ecclesiastical authorities" (Lewis, 2000: 134). He even approves of the idea that mixing religion with power came from Christianity to Islam. "In the Ottoman Empire – in part, no doubt, inspired by the Christian ecclesiastical organization which the Ottomans encountered in the lands they had conquered – the Islamic men of religion became part of the apparatus of government," he remarks (Lewis, 2000: 191).

Islam and democracy

Lewis believes that Muslims usually consider their ignorance of the original Islamic roots as their main fault which is the main cause of their current disasters (Lewis, 2002c: 26). However, in practice, Islamists always showed that once they won a political rivalry they would generate an aggressive pious dictatorship worse than the previous one (Lewis, 2004a: 89-96). In this way, they are going to hijack free elections as "a one-way ticket to power" (Lewis, 2000: 380). To Lewis the democratisation debate in the Muslim world is a non-starter, both because of the weight of the Islamic tradition and because Islamist ideologues and leaders repeatedly speak openly against the idea of democracy (Volpi, 2009). Accordingly his suggestion for the region is the model of Atatürk's Turkey. Most other states in the Islamic world, however, either have Islam in some form of words enshrined in their constitutions or they have no constitution, claiming that Islam itself is their constitution, and that they need no other (Lewis, 1994b).

²⁶ To compare Christianity and Islamic tradition in Lewis eyes with more accurate historical analysis of the separation or unification of religion and state, see Ferjani, 2005.

Although Lewis basically agrees that secularism is an essential prerequisite for modernity and democracy, he at times revisits his theory and doubts whether an absolute separation between Church and State is needed. He mentions that the actual obstacle in the way of modernity and democracy is the subordination of science and state to a religious authority in a way that it can dictate its terms to them. The experience of Israel, which he believes is a modern democratic state with an important religious component to its identity, is too new and brief to serve as a basis of argument. He adds that the same can be said of the religious-based parties in the democracies established after World War II in former Axis countries. Distancing himself from his positivist mentality, he then adds that the role of religion in relation to both democracy and modernity may vary considerably from religion to religion and country to country. The historical role of Christianity is different from those of Judaism and Islam. "What is clearly incompatible with both Western civilization and its distinctive brand of modernity is the subordination of the state and of science to religious control, whichever religion it may be," he concludes (Lewis, 1997).

It is surprising that Lewis when the direction of wind changes advocates some sort of 'Islamic democracy'. After Iraq was invaded and Saddam Hussein was toppled, instead of a Kemalist secular model that was previously being proposed by Lewis and his intellectual allies, there appeared an increasing religiosity to the extent that it forced Lewis to accept the legitimacy of an Islamic democracy. Contradicting his principles, he argues that the study of Islamic history and of the vast and rich Islamic political literature reinforces the idea that it may be possible to develop democratic institutions – not necessarily in the Western definition of that much misused term, but in one deriving from Muslims' own history and culture, and ensuring, in their way, limited government under law, consultation and openness, in a civilised and humane society. "There is enough in the traditional culture of Islam on the one hand and the modern experience of the Muslim peoples on the other to provide the basis for an advance towards freedom in the true sense of that word" (Lewis, 2003e). He also reconsiders the role of jurists in an Islamic political system, again doubting his theory of unification, pointing out that the traditions of command and obedience are indeed deep-rooted, but there are other elements in Islamic tradition that could contribute to a more open and freer form of government: the rejection by the traditional jurists of arbitrary rule

in favour of a contract in the formation and consensus in the conduct of government; and their insistence that the rulers, no less than the humblest of his servants, is bound by the law (ibid). Lewis was not alone in this way. Fouad Ajami, one of his long-time intellectual allies, went the same way, but unlike Lewis, instead of tactically changing his view on the interrelation between Islam and democracy, he confesses to his false prediction. He notes:

Let's face it: Iraq is not going to be America's showcase in the Arab-Muslim world ... If some of the war's planners had thought that Iraq would be an ideal base for American primacy in the Persian Gulf, a beacon from which to spread democracy and reason throughout the Arab world, that notion has clearly been set aside ... We expected a fairly secular society in Iraq (I myself wrote in that vein at the time). Yet it turned out that the radical faith—among the Sunnis as well as the Shiites—rose to fill the void left by the collapse of the old despotism (Ajami, 2004).

Islamic countries

Apart from theoretical arguments, Lewis believes that, practically speaking, excluding Turkey and Israel (Lewis, 2003b), all other Middle Eastern countries are under authoritarian rule, and have been far from modernity and democracy for centuries. He points out that the combination of low productivity and a high birth rate makes for an unstable mix, with a large and rapidly growing population. By all indicators from the United Nations, the World Bank, and other authorities, the Middle Eastern countries – in social and economic matters – lag ever further behind the West (Lewis, 2004a: 97). Modernising politics has fared no better. Western style parties and parliaments integrated by these countries almost invariably led to corrupt tyrannies, maintained by repression. The only European model that worked, in the sense of accomplishing its purposes, was the one-party dictatorship (Lewis, 2004a: 101).

According to his vision, an imported portion of modernity along with the revenues of oil, politically speaking, have had an ironic impact on Muslim societies – reinforcing authoritarianism. In past, the power of the sovereign was restricted by a number of

factors, some legal, some social. That is to say, in Islamic tradition there were many well entrenched interests and intermediate powers which imposed effective limits on the ability of the State to control its subjects. In modern times, the power of the ruler has been vastly augmented by oil revenues so that he doesn't depend on public support or public approval of his taxes. It has also been increased by all kinds of modern technologies for surveillance and repression "so that any tin pot dictator today wields far greater powers than were ever wielded by Suleyman the Magnificent or Harun al-Rashid or any of the legendary rulers of the Islamic past" (Lewis, 2001b).²⁷ Likewise, mentioning the Islamic tradition of *waqf* (endowment)²⁸ which represents a sort of civil society in the Islamic context, Lewis remarks that one of the major changes brought by modernising autocrats in the nineteenth century was to bring the *waqfs* under state control. In this way modernisation in the Middle East has ironically reduced the scope of independent and self-supporting associations.²⁹ (Lewis, 2002c: 124)

He supports the idea that tyrannies of the Middle East are mainly responsible for all the disasters of the region. They are two types: friends with the West and those hostile to the West. Although the latter apparently clash with Western states, they unconsciously lead their people towards friendship with the West. However, though the former appear to be in line with Western ideals, they produce anti-Western sentiment among their population, changing them into extremists and suicide bombers. Since the conflict with Israel is a perfect scapegoat for all regional disasters, tyrants, who are in fact responsible, try to maintain this scapegoat by rejecting peace in the Middle East. In principle, as it is generally agreed that 'democracies do not start wars', it is equally true, though not well recognised, that 'dictatorships do not make peace' (Lewis, 2004b: 470). None of these casual statements are approved by any evidence, however. The motive behind all of this, as we will further investigate, is to clear Israel and blame Muslim non-democratic countries for the Middle Eastern crisis.

In line with his approach to modernity his view of the modernisation of politics again appears to be positivistic. This can be realised once he defends the army's own

²⁷ See also: Lewis, 1999: 100-1.

²⁸ "A *waqf* is a pious endowment in mortmain, consisting of some income producing asset, the proceeds of which are dedicated to a pious purpose" (Lewis, 2002c: 123).

²⁹ Here he contradicts his support of Ataturk's nationalisation of endowment.

position in the Turkish political system. At first sight it might seem there is little prospect for democracy in a polity where the army plays so powerful a role and where it has even institutionalised the role through the National Security Council. Yet such a view, Lewis argues, would be mistaken. In accordance with their statements, the Turkish army repeatedly did exactly what they said they would do – restore order, restore *democratic* legality, and then return to the barracks (Lewis, 2002a: xviii). At different times and in different places, the army has acted for democracy (Lewis, 2000: 380). Therefore, in his vision, it is utterly legitimate for some army generals to decide on behalf of the entire nation and enforce their interpretation of democracy. This could not be fit into any perspective, but positivism. In fact, in Lewis' beloved Turkey, the army has not been a benign restorer of the order but an active intervener against the majority's will, and therefore against the democratic aspirations. Democratic thinking by no means can be compromised with a sole legitimate and powerful (particularly military) interpreter of the constitution.

After a few decades, Turkish Islamic parties refuted Lewis' prediction that the Turkish reform by Ataturk had already gone enough to make his favourite political system permanent (Lewis, 2002a: 128). In 1983, Necmettin Erbakan (1926-), a devout Muslim who combined careers in academia, business and politics, constituted the Welfare Party (WP) – in the Turkish *Refah Partisi* (RP). The economic situation of the early 1990s was a good opportunity for the WP to win an increasing number of votes. Although in 1987 the WP had only 7.2 percent of the vote, in the national election of 1991 it won 17.2 percent. The frustrated economy of Turkey, with 60 to 100 percent inflation rates, prepared many to listen to an alternative political theory, i.e., an Islamic solution for the country. This was reinforced by a good record for the WP during its services in the early 1990s. Winning 24.1 percent of the vote in 1994, finally in 1995 for the first time, in a coalition with the secular Tansu Ciller of the True Path Party, an Islamic government came to power. Erbakan's government, however, was ousted by military intervention as early as 1997. RP was banned and Erbakan was barred from being involved in the political system for five years. Lewis blames Erbakan for following "an Islamic fundamentalist ideology" which was ended by military pressure (Lewis, 1999b: 138). Elsewhere Lewis further explains his thesis: "The so-called Islamic fundamentalists – a minority, but an active and important one among Muslims – had

no use for democracy, except as a one-way ticket to power” (Lewis, 2000: 380). Nevertheless, the subsequent achievements of Turkish Islamists showed otherwise. They won in 2002 with 34%, in 2004 with 42%, and in 2007 with 47%. This illustrates the success of their pragmatic policies in the Turkish political scene. Their success shows that Islamic parties may enjoy both gaining democratic victory and keeping it. Their successes also answers questions raised by analysts who accused them of trying to hijack democracy, or of having nothing to attract people once they would have come to power.

Israel

The second democracy in the region, Lewis believes, is Israel. Perhaps, nowhere else can Lewis’ “objectivity” be assessed better than with his view on Israel. An Orientalist Jew, with ideological ties to Zionism and with close relations to the state of Israel, he should naturally enjoy a strong bias and feel loyalty towards Israel. Nevertheless, he is, as he asserts, an objective historian who does not ‘prejudge issues and predetermine results by the arbitrary definition of topic, and selection of evidence.’ (Lewis, 2004b: 11) So, it is interesting to assess his pure objectivity in the case.

Every analyst involved in the contemporary Middle East usually devotes a significant portion of his work to the problematic genesis and consequences of Israel. According to many, if not most, the current crisis and clash between the West and Islam is mainly nurtured by Israel’s challenging role in the region. The fact is that the foundation of Israel represents an exceptional historical precedent in modern world history. A permanent colony and finally an independent Western-style state on territory inhabited primarily by a non-European people, Israel has remained like an open wound in the Middle East. As Graham Fuller remarks, the continued existence of the Palestinian question helps maintain anti-Western views at a higher and fresher level than any other political issue in the world, consciously humiliating Arabs in their military impotence and their sense that the Palestinians have been deprived of basic rights (Fuller, 2003: 152).

On November 10, 1975, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution declaring that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” Lewis does not find much truth in the declaration, arguing: “Zionism is basically not a racial movement but a form of nationalism or, to use the current nomenclature, *a national liberation movement*... The definition of Jew according to rabbinical law is one who is born of a Jewish mother irrespective of the religious or racial origin of the father, or one who is duly converted to Judaism. This is not a racial definition, for the racists fathers are as relevant as mothers, and identity can not be changed at will.” (emphasis added) Feeling that his argument is not cogent enough, he adds: “In examining any accusation, the question may be asked whether the accuser comes with clean hands...” (Lewis, 2004b: 341-342). He means that the voters on this declaration perhaps are worse, so they have not the right to condemn others.

This time the objectivist seems to make a selection of evidence. Certainly he has read documents of the First Zionism Congress, the Balfour Declaration, and above all the Declaration of Israel’s Independence, issued at Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948 (5th of Iyar, 5708). The first sentence of the 1948 Declaration reads: “ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew) - The Land of Israel] was *the birthplace* of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.” It goes without saying that the focal point of the declaration is Jewish racial identity. The heart of racism is not the fact that the race can be transmitted by father or mother. Rather it is the strict duality between an interconnected group of people and others.³⁰ Zionism cannot be counted as nationalism at all, since, as Lewis affirms in another place, nation has acquired an unmistakable connection of territory and sovereignty. It is in this sense that the word ‘nation’ is used in the ‘League of Nations’ and the ‘United Nations’ (Lewis, 1999b: 81). Therefore, Zionism, which started

³⁰ To see how racist the European Israeli Jews (Ashkenazi) who have invented Zionism, are against non-European Israeli Jews (Sephardic), let alone the Arabs, see a series of brilliant articles in the Guardian by Rachel Shabi (herself a Sephardic Jew) at the following address:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/rachelshabi> [accessed 19/05/2009]

The titles of two of her articles are as follows: “Another side to the Jewish story” 25 June 2008 and “The suffering of Israel’s Mizrahis” 15 April 2009. Also see the following article: “Racism in the name of religion” By Elana M Sztokman, 23 Sep 2008, at:

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1222017369582&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull> [accessed 19/05/2009]

in Europe, can by no means be regarded as “a national liberation movement” for Palestine, a faraway Middle Eastern territory.

Lewis holds that the modern state of Israel, though not constitutionally secular, aspires to the standard of the liberal democracies. But he never mentions why the original inhabitants of this liberal democracy should be persecuted in such an unprecedented way. Somebody born in America, Britain or Russia can become an Israeli citizen if he/she has a Jewish mother and can qualify as a Jew, whereas Palestinians live as refugees in camps ten miles away, are not allowed to be a citizen and are condemned to be a second-class subject in their country of birth and their place of origin. A democratic system is supposed to grant full citizenship status without discrimination to all sane adults born within the community, or who have lived in it within a prescribed period of time. The fact that the European Jews came to Palestine, a country already settled and inhabited by another people, dispossessed them, destroyed their society and threw out two-thirds of them must not be totally ignored by a neutral observer. Of course, all of these issues could be regarded as completely legitimate through the lenses of dualism because ‘others’ are different from ‘us’. Said rightly objects to Lewis’s biased attitudes towards Israel:

He will speak of the absence of democracy in the Middle East, except for Israel, without ever mentioning the Emergency Defence Regulations used in Israel to rule the Arabs; nor has he anything to say about “preventive detention” of Arabs in Israel, nor about the dozens of illegal settlements on the military occupied West Bank of Gaza, nor about the absence of human rights for Arabs, principal among them the right of immigration, in former Palestine (Said, 2003: 318-9).

Unlike many, if not most, analysts who believe that America’s unconditional support for Israel is the most important cause of the current crisis between the West and Islam, it is interesting that throughout his works Lewis constantly attempts to downplay Israel’s role in causing inter-civilisational relations to deteriorate. Although he accepts that Israel is among the causes, he asserts that it is unrealistically exaggerated. His intention is apparently rooted in his loyalty for Israel, which leads him to dismiss the huge costs being paid by the West for its unconditional pro-Israeli foreign policies. To achieve this ‘objective’ assertion, Lewis uses different means. Analysing Osama Bin

Laden's declaration of 1998, in which he announced the main areas of grievance – the US military presence in Arabia, its offensive war against Iraq, and its support for Israel – Lewis argues that Israel was mentioned last, and therefore it is the least important issue (Lewis, 2004a: xxvi). Sometimes, he argues that Israel is a democratic system in which any report and misreport may be easily publicised. At times, he says Israel is highlighted because Jews are involved. Occasionally, he claims that problems related to Israel may be mentioned in the authoritarian Arabic media without any fear of the government, but other problems caused by the Arab states cannot be mentioned (Lewis, 2004a: 79-81). Elsewhere, he argues that although the Arab-Israeli conflict is the most visible and the most audible of the problems of the region, it indeed ranks rather low. To this end, he tries to highlight regional problems such as territorial disputes, national, ethnic and religious conflicts, and finally the unresolved clash of identities, of loyalties, of allegiances (Lewis, 2004b: 414-427). On occasion, he searches through the history of hatred and terror in the region to find that the Assassins, a Muslim terrorist group of the Middle Ages, did not murder Crusaders, but mainly Muslim political and high ranking military individuals. Hence, in his opinion, the hatred of Israel as well as murdering Israelis is not the first priority for Muslim fundamentalists. They see the emergence of Israel as a consequence, rather than the true cause, of a deeper more pervasive evil, i.e., the local tyrants (Lewis, 2004b: 129). At times, he highlights other disasters of the region, arguing, "even a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would not resolve or remove these other major problems" (Lewis, 2004b: 427). More interesting than all, quoting Khalid Istanbuli, the assassin of Anwar Sadat, that he has killed pharaoh and he does not fear death, Lewis comically proclaims, "he was clearly not condemning pharaoh for making peace with Israel, but as the prototype – in the Quran as in the Bible – of the impious tyrant" (Lewis, 2003a: ix).

Nevertheless, one might not find any expression of outrage against anything done by Muslims, with the same popularity and frequency within Muslims' media and public sphere, from the Western Africa to the South Eastern Asia, as that expressed against Israel. Confidently, the West's pro-Israel policy should assign it to the same position. An empirical study of all interstate wars between 1950 and 1992 also confirms that this issue has been at the centre of world issues: "The substance of the purported

clash between the West and Islam is simply the familiar Arab-Israeli conflict” (Russett, 2000). It seems that Lewis should rethink his judgments based on his own suggestions to historians:

[The historian’s] loyalties may well influence his choice of subject or research; they should not influence his treatment of it. If, in the course of his researches, he finds that the group with which he identifies himself is always right, and those other groups with which it is in conflict are always wrong, then he would be well advised to question his conclusion, and to re-examine the hypothesis on the basis on which he selected and interpreted his evidence; for it is not in the nature of human communities always to be right (Lewis, 2001a: 57).

The West and the Middle East

With regard to what the West must do in the Middle East, Lewis has had two contrasting attitudes. Once when he was a young scholar, he believed that the West should leave Muslims on their own and do ‘as little as possible’. In 1957 in “The Middle East in World Affairs” presented to a conference on *Tensions in the Middle East* he announced his attitude to the subject: “Let us watch and wait, do little and say less, and hope that in time the people of the Middle East may find their own way back to stability and health” (Lewis, 2004b: 295). However, it seems that the forty-one year old Lewis was too young to comprehend what, forty-four years later, he realised in 2001 in one of his masterpieces, “Did you say American Imperialism?” Written in the *National Review*, on December 17, 2001, a few months after the September 11, the article reads that US should not and could not and is even reluctant to take the role of an imperialist, however, upholding a kind of Machiavellist political philosophy Lewis, with astonishing frankness, promotes a worse role for America in which it is entitled to seek its benefits even by using ‘double standards’, by playing, when appropriate, the imperial role instead of being an ‘honest broker’ and even by avoiding evenhandedness. The paper reads:

[T]he accusation is often made, not only against the United States but against the West in general, that they have a 'double standard.' This is the most unfair accusation – why should we be limited to only two standards? Obviously the US government, like every other, has not a double but multiple standards to deal with differing and changing situations. A comparable charge is the lack of 'evenhandedness.' This is again rests on a total misunderstanding of the situation. Evenhandedness is a desirable quality in judges, juries, police forces, and other agencies of law enforcement. It is also appropriate to an imperial suzerain, trying to maintain some balance between contending protégés and native princes. But it is irrelevant to the policies of a power protecting its interests as best it can in a dangerous and troubled region... A similar misunderstanding affects the perception of and the desire for an American role as 'honest broker' in the Middle East disputes, notably the Arab-Israel conflicts (Lewis, 2004b: 435).

Considering Lewis's eloquent dualistic keynote cited above, i.e., 'policies of a power protecting its interests', one can easily realise why time and again he advocates the model of Turkey as the best solution for the Middle East. Turkey's model is a Westernised polity, reconstituted and imposed from above secured by military coups against any divergence of its '*laïcité*', that is to become a bulwark of security for America. Only based on this frank note, the West has the right to overthrow the Middle Eastern democracies such as Musadeq of Iran who did not act in line with Western interests. Accordingly the military coup in Algeria (year 1992) should be tolerated since the democracy "led to disaster" (Lewis, 2003c), and in 2006 Western aid to Palestine should be cut because of the unpleasant election of Hamas.

Lewis's argument, nevertheless, is deeply flawed in two ways. First, it is based on a *statist* or *exclusivist* view on world politics. This view dominated politics both in theory and practice in the emergence of the modern state in the seventeenth century.³¹ This approach is utterly untenable in the present interdependent world, however. Nowadays, the actions of any state deeply impact on people outside its boundaries and this fact reinforces every state's moral accountability to humanity as a whole.

³¹ For a critical discussion see Nardin, T (1983). *Law, Morality and the Relations of States*. Princeton University Press.

Human beings have duties not to harm others' fundamental interests and within their capacity to help them to enjoy those basic goods without which no worthwhile life is possible. As globalisation unfolds, we need a much more humanitarian approach to regulate relations between states, and therefore, *humanitarianist* approaches have begun to arise. Second, Lewis's view in the above article contradicts his other view, in the same article, which supports toppling Saddam Hussein. In other words, in one piece of writing Lewis at first acts as an *exclusivist* when he deals with Western interests in Arab-Israeli affairs, and then changes his philosophy and becomes a *humanitarianist* who eloquently supports the invasion of Iraq and bringing freedom to its people.

It seems that Lewis does not believe in the legitimacy of the UN as a represent of the international community – of course when it stands in the way of the West's own interests. During the Cold War, he frequently questioned the General Assembly's anti-Israel declarations, asserting "True or false, right or wrong, just or unjust – all such questions were irrelevant to the battle of the blocs" (Lewis, 2004b: 335). He suggests to America to follow its interests, regardless of what the United Nations decides. In the case of Iraq he argues: "Some contend that a process that gave the U.N. a central role would somehow confer legitimacy. We are at a loss to understand this argument. Nearly 40% of the U.N. members' governments do not practice succession by election. In the Middle East only Israel and Turkey do so. Why waste time with U.N. member governments, many of them nondemocratic ..." (Lewis, 2003b).

As a straightforward outcome of dualism, his suggestion on American foreign policy in the Middle East is "Get tough or get out" (Lewis, 2004b: 438). Since the West is dependent on the oil supplies of the region and there is no alternative source of energy, he adds, it cannot get out, therefore it should 'get tough'. It should continue its 'good work' in Afghanistan and deal with some other countries in the same way (Lewis, 2001b). In Lewis's judgment, the 'wishy-washy policies' of the Clinton era were responsible for the aggressive actions of Al-Qaeda on the September 11, however, the 'good work' of President Bush shall tackle terrorism (Lewis, 2001b).

The US failure in Iraq and its horrific consequences have not been a lesson for Lewis and his like-minded colleagues to change their views. They are still seeking their

'interests' and to continue the 'good work' and still want to 'get tougher'. In "August 22: does Iran have something in store?" he encouraged the West to start another bloody game. This time in 22 August 2006, by a magical prophecy of a nuclear attack on Israel, based on a random correspondence between two dates, one in Islamic and the other in Christian calendar, the 90-year-old doyen again in *The Wall Street Journal* took his turn. During the Cold War, he argues, both sides possessed weapons of mass destruction, but neither side used them, deterred by what was known as MAD, Mutual Assured Destruction. Repeating the slogans before the war in Iraq he adds: "It seems increasingly likely that the Iranians either have or very soon will have nuclear weapons at their disposal." Portraying a barbarian mindset for the "other" side, he adds: "In this context, mutual assured destruction, the deterrent that worked so well during the Cold War, would have no meaning. At the end of time, there will be general destruction anyway. What will matter will be the final destination of the dead--hell for the infidels, and heaven for the believers. For people with this mindset, MAD is not a constraint; it is an inducement" (Lewis, 2006). To date this is the final outcome of six decades of producing, promoting, promulgating some magnificent ultra-dualist literature.

Islamic belief and law

Concerning the term 'Islam' there is some ambiguity in Orientalist discourse. Unlike the dichotomy between 'Christianity' as a religion that is a system of belief and worship, and 'Christendom' as a civilisation that incorporates non-Christian or even anti-Christian elements, the term 'Islam' represents simultaneously both the religion and the civilisation. In consequence, one is able to explicitly affirm that Adolf Hitler is a product of Christendom not Christianity, but it is hardly possible to make a similarly efficient statement about the position of Saddam Hussein in Islam. Perhaps a similar approach is taken on the other side, i.e., in Islamic literature in which there is a dichotomy between 'Islam', exclusively used for the religion and 'Muslims', for the

civilisation,³² while it seems that sometimes there is some ambiguity in terms used to for others.

Sometimes the ambiguity leads to a fallacy. Lewis is aware of this problem. When we talk of Islam, he argues, we use the same word for both the religion and the civilisation, which can lead to misunderstanding (Lewis, 2003d). He elaborates that some cultural aspects of Islam (the civilisation) are originally pre-Islamic and non-Islamic (the religion) (Lewis, 1991: 6). By pre-Islamic he means practices of the Persian and Roman Empires, and by non-Islamic some traditions imported from originally non-Muslim dynasties, states and armies such as those of the Turks and Mongols. On many other occasions Lewis notifies his readers of the necessity for this distinction between Islam as a religion and a civilisation (Lewis, 1999b: 29; 2000: 220). Nevertheless, in practice, he at times does fall onto the trap of conflating the two. Five examples may suffice. First, speaking about Islamic political thought, Lewis attempts to show that the religion of Islam is the main part of Muslims' identity and Islam, unlike the West, is both the religion and the civilisation. He asserts that when Westerners use the word "Islam", they unconsciously make a natural error rooted in their Western perception of religion. For Muslims, he argues, Islam is not a section or compartment of life reserved for certain matters, and separate, or at least separable, from other compartments. There is no distinction between Church and State and any other aspects of life (Lewis, 1991: 2). Second, in a similar context, he explains, God is the formal expression of supreme sovereignty, and is often named in much the same way as the city, the crown, or the people in various Western polities (Lewis, 1991: 30). Third, speaking about the importance of religious identity in Muslims' foreign relations, he argues, the holistic attitude to the religion is not limited to Muslim revolutionaries and fundamentalist groups, but prevails over all Muslims. Accordingly, Islam (the religion) is the ultimate criterion of group identity and loyalty, and as a result, from the time of the Prophet to the present day, the ultimate definition of the Other, the alien outsider and the presumptive enemy, has been the *kafir*, the unbeliever. In addition, Islam is still the most acceptable, and in times of crisis the only acceptable, source for political authority (Lewis, 1991: 3-5). Fourth, he mixes religion and civilisation once again when he speaks about international Muslim groupings in the United Nations. He argues that

³² A well-known Farsi saying reads: "Islam has no shortcoming by itself, all is related to the way we act as Muslims."

the idea of such a groupings, based on a *religious identity*, seems to many modern Western observers to be an abuse of religion or even something comical. Some fifty-five Muslim governments, including monarchies and republics, conservatives and revolutionaries have built up an apparatus of consultation, and even, on some issues, cooperation (Lewis, 1999b: 24). He neglects the fact that such groupings are based on civilisational, not religious, ties and in this sense it is similar to many other international groupings. Fifth, this time he attributes the unity of religion and civilisation to Muslims' perception of religion: "Muslim civilization was, in its own perception, defined by religion" (Lewis, 2000: 273).

Such a frequently asserted fallacy within arguments presented by a scholar who is aware of the problem is surprising. Yet, the purpose behind all of this seems to be the absolute priority of dualism for an Orientalist mentality. As the third principle of dualism reads, religion must be everything. Although as a scholar Lewis is aware of this fallacy, as a dualist, he has no option but to portray a monolithic 'other'.

From Lewis' perspective, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are different branches of the same religion. Their resemblances are far greater than their differences (Lewis, 2004b: 250). Since Judaism is the oldest sister, in a sense, Christianity and Islam both are its daughters, offshoots, or pupils (Lewis, 2004b: 66). However, Judaism is a 'relativist' religion, believing 'everyone can be saved in his own faith,' but Islam and Christianity are both 'triumphalist', maintaining that they are exclusive possessors of God's final revelation to mankind. He adds that this approach makes a fertile land for a fundamentalist mentality which believes that it has a duty to bring the correct faith to those societies who have not yet embraced it (Lewis, 2004b: 247).

The relativist nature of Judaism, in contrast with the universalist attitude of the two other religions, however, could generate a negative racist mentality in some sectors of Judaism. They considered themselves as the "chosen people" and this is in a sharp contrast to some humanitarian and egalitarian approaches in many sectors of Christianity and Islam. Promoting the faith is not necessarily through military and political expansion, but it can be applied through its spiritual manifestations. Lewis admits to this fact with Islam. He argues that it is sometimes said that the Islamic religion was spread by conquest. The statement, however, is misleading. True, the

spread of Islam was to a large extent made possible by the parallel processes of conquest. Yet, the primary aim of the conquerors was not to impose the Islamic faith by force. The Quran was explicit in this point: 'There is no compulsion in religion' (2:256) (Lewis, 2000: 57).

During their history of long periods of persecution, conflict, *jihad* and crusade, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, nevertheless, maintained a high level of communication and coalition, because they are basically of the same family. Lewis, though in line with the five principles of dualism attempts to judge today's world on the historical hostilities between the two religious civilisations, cannot deny a significant amount of commonalities. He admits to this fact and speaks with equal validity – referring to the past – of a Judaeo-Islamic or even of an Islamo-Christian tradition (Lewis, 1999b: 116).

Nevertheless, the dualist sage knows his job. He can use even the significant commonalities between the two for his main aim. He points out that the large amount of resemblance between Islam and Christianity does not guarantee peaceful coexistence but ironically can lead to disaster. This is to say they could hold disputations and debates, and even their screams of rage were mutually intelligible. When Christians and Muslims say to each other, "You are an infidel and you will burn in hell," each understands what the other means, because they both virtually mean the same thing. (Their heavens are differently appointed, but their hells are much the same.) Such accusations would have conveyed little or no meaning to a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a Confucian (Lewis, 2003d).

Generally speaking, when Lewis explicitly speaks about Islam as a religion or as a civilisation, he usually uses respectful words in sympathy with Muslims. He remarks: "We can only commiserate with our browbeaten Muslim friends and colleagues, and lament the growing tendency in the non-Muslim world to perceive and portray the Muslim as a tyrant at home, a terrorist abroad and a bigot in both. This false and libellous picture of one of the great religions of the world and of the rich and original civilization that grew up under its aegis is a major tragedy of our time" (Lewis, 2004b: 440). He also denounces Islamophobia as well as any attempts to promote mutual hatred (Lewis, 2004b: 252).

Nevertheless, throughout his arguments, Lewis implicitly blames Islam, both the religion and the civilisation, in one way or another. In matters such as modernity, political theory, women, slavery, the treatment of others, *jihad* and violence, his arguments often target the heart of Islam. In his rhetoric, among diverse layers of Muslims, he usually highlights fundamentalists, and amongst various subjects, he focuses on sensitive topics. In the course of an interview when he is asked: 'Why do you always deal with sensitive objects?' he responds: "The sensitive place in the body, physical or social, is where something is wrong. Sensitivity is a signal the body sends us, that something needs attention, which is what I try to give" (Lewis, 2004b: 9). Although this kind of selection to some extent could be justified, if a narrator of 'others' consistently and merely highlights sensitive parts, he will naturally mislead his audience, because they merely hear about parts where something is wrong.

In line with the third principle of dualism, Lewis usually highlights a legal political aspect of Islam and attempts to show that it is a rigid system. Since that sort of system – unlike ones that are spiritual, mystical or ethical – works better with dualism, Orientalists usually try to portray Islam in that way. "Islam, unlike Christianity," Lewis argues, "is not adherence to correct belief and doctrine, though these are not unimportant; what matters most is communal loyalty and conformity" (Lewis, 1999b: 29). He adds: "Islam is not so much a matter of orthodoxy as of orthopraxy" (Lewis, 1999b: 126). To work in a dualist worldview, the system should be portrayed rigid, inflexible, incapable of change, of modernisation, of evolution, of any innovation. In Said's words, "[T]he Orientalist will find himself opposing any Islamic attempts to reform Islam, because, according to his views, reform is a betrayal of Islam" (Said, 2003: 106). Lewis exactly follows this line. He does not pay any attention to the evolutionary role of interpretation in understanding religious texts, and therefore, throughout his works, he usually deals with Islamic teachings through a positivistic literal understanding of traditionalism, usually citing sources of the medieval period, and rarely considering alternative interpretations of Islamic reformism or modernism. Even if there is a sign of change, Lewis considers it as a distortion. Oversimplifying the Islamic legal system which has been constantly interrelated with revelation, time, place, common sense and reason, he says, "the shari'a is simply the law, and there is no other" (Lewis, 1991: 72). As evidence for this claim, he compares Western

terminology with that of Islam. In the former, the adjective “holy” preceding the word “law”, is necessary, since there are other kinds, but in the latter “shari’a” alone suffices (ibid). According to the Muslim perception, he argues, there is no human legislative authority, and there is only one law for the believers - the holy law of God, promulgated by the Prophet. “This law could be amplified and interpreted by tradition and reasoning. It could not be changed and no Muslim ruler could, in theory, either add or subtract a single rule. In fact of course they frequently did both, but their action in so doing is always suitably designed” (Lewis, 2002c: 113). By this last phrase, he means that if interpretation leads to adding or changing legal rules, it will be a sort of deviation. It is interesting that Lewis’s stubborn commitment to Islamic orthodoxy is not less than that of a devoted fundamentalist layman.

Nevertheless, the major part the Quran, the main Islamic source which is believed by Muslims to be literally God’s words and instructions, deals with spiritual and ethical issues – conveyed through history, describing the Day of Judgment, previous prophets, and the like. Only a minority of Quranic verses relates to political and legal instructions. Even in that realm, it focuses on sincerity, honesty, virtue and justice. In Muslim practice even in the formative period of Islam, the legal and political instructions were never understood in the rigid sense portrayed by Orientalism, since this vision was not viable for an expanding civilisation.

As a historian, Lewis is not unfamiliar with all of this, but being a dualist is another matter. While the *shari’a* admitted no human legislative power in the Islamic state, he argues, in practice Muslim rulers and jurists during the fourteen centuries after the Prophet encountered many problems for which revelation provided no explicit answers, and they found the answers to them. Despite the restraining effect of the unchallengeable text of the Quran and of the accepted corpus of *hadith*, he adds, Muslims managed to a remarkable extent to modify and develop their laws in accordance with the principle laid down by the jurists that “the rules change as the times change” (Lewis, 2000: 224). Showing the flexible system of Islamic law he admits: “Pluralism is a part of the holy law of Islam, and these rules are on many points detailed and specific” (Lewis, 1999b: 120). In the case of unbelievers who were living in lands conquered by Muslims, at first glance, according to *shari’a*, non-Christian and Jewish minorities had no legal choice but to convert or to be killed. Lewis shows,

however, how the situation changed in Muslim practice. He explains: "Those who follow a religion which is not specified as lawful, that is to say who do not have a recognized sacred scripture, are not to be allowed the tolerance of the Muslim state... Eventually, legal formulas were found to accommodate all of these" (Lewis, 1999b: 122).

As I briefly pointed earlier, slavery is one of the sensitive issues that Lewis discusses. He affirms that Islamic rules and regulations for slavery were considerably more egalitarian not only than the ancient societies surrounding Muslim lands, namely, Iran, India, and both Byzantine and Latin Europe, but also than modern colonial systems. He remarks that Islam accords slaves a certain legal status and assigns obligations as well as rights to slave owners. Perhaps for this reason, he adds, the position of the slave in Muslim societies was incomparably better than either classical antiquity or nineteenth-century North and South America. Western observers at the time often comment of the relative mildness of Middle Eastern slavery (Lewis, 2002c: 91-95). Nevertheless, since this institution is adopted by Islamic scripture and law, from a traditional point of view, it would be difficult for it to be changed based on realities of the modern world. "To forbid what God permits is almost," Lewis narrates from traditionalists, "as great an offense as to permit what God forbids" (Lewis, 2002c: 95).

Although the gradual process of the abolition of slavery in Islamic countries is a perfect example of how the realities of modern life can develop new interpretations of Islamic law, here again Lewis mainly highlights the viewpoints of fundamentalists' by narrating the Wahabis' arguments and pays less attention to the successful practice of the reform. In fact, the process of change is attractive to some Western Islamologists as well as many Islamic reformists. The 'ABD' article of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (ed. 2004) reads:

The reformer Sayyid Ahmed Khan in India, goes so far as to maintain, in a special work, *Ibtal-i Ghulami*, which appeared in 1893, translated into Arabic in 1895, that the Quran (xlii, 4) forbade the making of new slaves (Baljon, *The Reforms ... of Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan*, Leiden 1949, 28-29). Without going so far, his illustrious compatriot Ameer Ali (*The Spirit of Islam*, London, 1st ed. 1893; ed. 1935, 262) includes slavery among the pre-Islamic practices which Islam only tolerated through temporary

necessity, while virtually abolishing them: man-made laws were later to complete the abrogation of it, which could not have been done formerly by a sudden and total emancipation (cf. the Egyptian Ahmed Chafik, on much the same lines: *L'esclavage au point de vue musulman*, Cairo 1891, 2nd ed. 1938). This thesis gradually found its way, to a varying extent, into the circle of the ulama... (Brunschvig, 2004).

In Orientalist literature, Muslims' treatment of religious minorities, mainly Christians and Jews, is usually considered as another sensitive issue. Lewis as a historian states that, given the standards of the time, Islam throughout its history offered a high degree of tolerance to minorities. "There is nothing in Islamic history to compare with the massacres and expulsions," he argues, "the inquisitions and persecutions that Christians habitually inflicted on non-Christians and still more on each other. In the land of Islam, persecution was the exception; in Christendom, sadly, it was often the norm" (Lewis, 1999b: 129). He adds, there is nothing in Islamic history similar to the Inquisition, the *Auto da fe's*, the wars of religion, not to speak of more recent crimes of commission and acquiescence. Within certain limits and subject to certain restrictions, Islamic governments were willing to tolerate the practice, though not the full dissemination, of other revealed monotheists religions. Even polytheists, though condemned by the strict letter of the law to a choice between conversion and enslavement, were in practice tolerated, as Islamic rule spread to Indian subcontinent (Lewis, 2002c: 127-128). With regard to the Ottomans, he remarks, they did not offer equal rights to their subjects - a meaningless anachronism in the context of that time and place. They did, however, offer a degree of tolerance without precedent or parallel in Christianity (Lewis, 2002c: 37). Historically speaking, he summarises his view, "the use of force against deviants as against *dhimmis*, was rare, atypical, and due to special circumstances" (Lewis, 1999b: 126).

However, concerning Islam's treatment of outsiders, Lewis believes, the situation was unfavourable from the very beginning. Due to the lack of curiosity, not to say the total ignorance of Muslims, he argues, we should not be surprised to find a lack of any kind of empathy with the outsider. In a lecture given at Tel Aviv University, he argues that empathy is not a strictly modern phenomenon. The prophet Jonah was reminded that the people of Nineveh were also human beings, so one should not delight in their

defeat. The Greek dramatist Aeschylus shows compassion for the defeated Persians in a war in which he himself had been a combatant. In contrast, he adds, "I have not come across anything of that kind in Muslim sources" (Lewis, 2004b: 508).

By such an odd assertion, Lewis apparently shows a bizarre selection of evidence. Of course, such an affirmation might be welcomed by Islamic extremists who, like their counterpart Orientalists, enjoy a dualistic worldview; however, there is no truth in it. A similar story for the prophet Jonah (Yunus) is stated on a few occasions in the Quran (10:98, 37:139-148, 21: 87-88). In addition, the Quran describes the Prophet Mohammad as the prophet of mercy: "And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the peoples of the world" (21:107). The verse reads that the prophet is a mercy not only for the Muslim believers but for all peoples all over the world, including other believers and non-believers. The Prophet's conquest of Makkah and the granting of an amnesty to his bitter enemies represented a brilliant lesson of mercy, but all of these apparently do not look attractive to dualistic eyes.

In Orientalist literature, the merciful teachings of Islam are usually overshadowed by exaggerated slogans about *jihad*. This is another sensitive issue that Lewis focuses on. Here again Lewis highlights aspects of medieval sources regardless of their context. His interpretation of *jihad* is of an extremist type, similar to an approach he elsewhere expresses to be of "the radicals' interpretation of Islam" (Lewis, 1991: 90). He states that *jihad* is an obligation without time and space (Lewis, 1991: 73). It must continue until the whole world either accepts the Islamic faith or submits to the power of the Islamic state. As usual and in line with the second principle of dualism, he equates Islam with a series of texts, historical evidence and some interpretations of medieval jurists, all in its most extremist sense. Accordingly, the natural and permanent relationship between Islam and unbelievers is one of manifest or latent war, and there could, therefore, be no peace and no treaty. It is surprising that in this way he translates *sulh* – a Quranic term which undoubtedly means *peace*³³ – into truce or armistice and adds that such temporary agreements between Islam and unbelievers does not affect the above principle (Lewis, 1991: 78). The basic division of the world in the traditional Muslim perception, which according to the second principle of dualism is true for today's Muslims, is between the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the House

³³ Lewis admits to this fact as I quote from him in few lines.

of War (*Dar al-Harb*). It is the moral and religious duty of Muslims, he adds, to share their good fortune with the rest of the world, to bring Islam to all humankind if possible in peace, if necessary by war (Lewis, 2004b: 150).

Historically speaking, military *jihad* should be considered in parallel with a crusade. However, although Lewis believes that in practice both *jihad* and crusade have used the same language, he supports the originality of *jihad* in Islam (the religion), in contrast to the innovation of the crusades in Christendom (the civilisation). “The jihad was a sacred mission ... The crusade was a human enterprise, not enjoined - some might rather say forbidden by Christian scripture...” (Lewis, 2004b: 156). He then adds: “Jihad was a holy war; the Crusade was a limited and belated Christian response to the jihad” (Lewis, 2004b: 508).

Mention has already been made that Islamic instructions cover both spiritual and temporal realms. Therefore, like other systems it is naturally expected that Islamic teachings and scripture contain something about military action, an essential piece of the mosaic of every political system. Wars made under the supervision of the Prophet, like his other actions, are considered by Muslims as holy wars. However, after his death and especially after the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs, wars in the name of *jihad* were not necessarily genuine religious wars, but the war of Muslims, or one may say, products of the civilisation. It is noteworthy that many of such wars were sectarian conflicts in which both sides proclaimed *jihad* against each other. In Lewis’s terms such wars merely used “religious coloration” (Lewis, 1999b: 126).

By this explanation both *jihad* and the crusades were products of civilisation, the former was an interpretation of the text and the latter was an interpretation of the faith by which crusaders could mobilise thousands of soldiers to ‘war for the Cross’. Admitting to the religious essence of the crusades, Lewis narrates: “[T]he pope, Leo IV, offered a heavenly reward to all those who died fighting the Muslims” (Lewis, 2000: 235). Furthermore, since war and its subsequent actions were documented in the scripture of the Muslims, their post-war actions were more civilised than that of their rival civilisation. Comparing the two, Lewis appreciates the distinction between *jihad* and crusade in this regard. He says: “Even in Christian Europe, Saladin [the hero of the counter-crusade] was justly celebrated and admired for his chivalrous and generous

treatment of his defeated enemies” (Lewis, 1998). Broadly speaking, the idea of holy war – a war for God and the faith – was adopted in the Middle East before Islam. Lewis admits: “It suffuses the books of Deuteronomy and Judges, and inspired the Christian Byzantines in their wars against Persia and in their struggles to repel the Arab and later Turkish invaders” (Lewis, 2000: 233-4). Hence, Christian holy wars were neither belated nor limited only for the purpose of reconquest.

Orientalism intends to reinforce by its exaggeration of *jihad* the fourth principle of dualism, i.e., fear. Nevertheless, there is no historical truth in such an assertion that Islam has been the main threat to the West. Lewis admits to the fact that in practice, “the periods of peace and war [between *House of Islam* and *House of War*] were not vastly different from those which existed between the Christian states of Europe for most of European history” (Lewis, 1999b: 124). He also contradicts his assertion that there is no peace in Islam by correctly translating a verse of the Quran: “If the enemy incline towards peace, do you also incline towards peace and trust in God” (8: 60), Lewis translates (Lewis, 1999b: 132).

Lewis believes that the new phase of suicide bombing and terror in the name of *jihad* is unprecedented in either Islamic religion or civilisation. Regarding religious authenticity, he remarks, the standard juristic literature on *shari’a* normally contains a chapter on *jihad*, understood in the military sense as regular warfare against infidels. It prescribes correct behaviour and respect for the rules of war in such matters as the opening and termination of hostilities and the treatment of non-combatants and captives, not to speak of diplomatic envoys. “At no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders” (Lewis, 1998). With regard to the precedent of this new kind of terror in the history of Islamic civilisation, Lewis believes that although there were extremist sects in Islamic history such as the Assassins, they were markedly different from the present-day terrorists.³⁴ The Assassins’ victim was always a highly placed individual, a politician, a minister, or a militant. In no circumstance did they commit suicide. They died in the hand of their enemies. Finally he adds: “The medieval Assassins were an extremist sect, very far from mainstream Islam. That is not true of their present-day imitators” (Lewis, 2004a: 124).

³⁴ Lewis has written a book and several articles observing the Assassins’ beliefs and actions.

It is not unexpected that this ultra-dualist narrator proclaims that present-day extremists are near to the Muslim mainstream. He affirms in another occasion: "If the people of the Middle East continue on their present path, the suicide bombers may become a metaphor for the whole region" (Lewis, 2002c: 159). It is not clear through which standard Lewis could discover that current extremists are not 'very far from mainstream Islam'. He does not refer to any survey or evidence which has shown that one and a third billion Muslims are close to hijackers and suicide bombers.

All in all, by now it must become crystal clear that what matters for Lewis first and foremost is his dualist mission, regardless of whatever contradiction or misinterpretation or even distortion of historical facts that elsewhere he has appreciated as a historian. In addition, it should be evident that due to his biases and emotions, Lewis is far from 'objectivity'. After all, the picture the late Edward Said has portrayed for Lewis seems to the point. Said notes:

Lewis is an interesting case to examine further because his standing in the political world of the Anglo-American Middle Eastern Establishment is that of the learned Orientalist, and everything he writes is steeped in the "authority" of the field. Yet for at least a decade and a half his work in the main has been aggressively ideological, despite his various attempts at subtlety and irony. I mention his recent writing as a perfect exemplification of the academic whose works purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda *against* his subject material. But this should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the history of Orientalism; it is only the latest – and in the West, the most uncriticized – of the scandals of the scholarship (Said, 2003: 316).

Taking into account how Orientalists like Lewis portray Islam for the Western public sphere, the current waves of Islamophobia are understandable.³⁵ His interpretation of the world of Islam in his bestseller books is partly responsible for the current increase in Western antipathy towards fellow Muslims. Such interpretations could be also responsible for post-September 11 extremist literature. A columnist writes: "We don't need long investigations of the forensic evidence to determine with scientific accuracy

³⁵ To assess the relation of Lewis theories and new forms of racism in Europe, see: Hervic, 2004.

the person or persons who ordered this specific attack. We don't need an 'international coalition.' We don't need a study on 'terrorism' ... We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war" (Coulter, 2001). A Lewis-type portrait of Islam can lead people such as Fred Ikle, a neoconservative strategist and former undersecretary of defense to mix up a terrorist group with 1.3 billion Muslim populations to such an extent as to say: "A nuclear war stirred up against the 'infidels' might end up displacing Mecca and Medina with two large radioactive craters" (Ikle, 2002).

In the early twentyfirst century the world is still dominated by empires, superpowers, and global powers who merely seek 'their interests'. They still need propagandists disguised as scholars to justify what they do by making fashionable discourse and "pseudo-sciences" to legitimise slogans such as 'Mideast democracy promotion', previously known as 'the white man's burden' or 'mission to civilise.' However not all Western Islamologists are of that sort. There are others.

Chapter Two: John Esposito

During the early 1970s, quite exceptionally a Western PhD student began to study Islam, not under a senior Orientalist like Professor Sir Hamilton Gibb, but under a Muslim mentor, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-86). Al-Faruqi, like Edward Said, immigrated to America as a Palestinian refugee, but unlike Said he was a pan-Islamist revivalist. He opened before his disciple, John L. Esposito, a window to a beautiful landscape of Islam. Probably the most important distinguishing feature of Esposito's perspective crystallised in this stage – he started to deal with Islam as a religion, not as a political rival force or as a destination for colonial ambitions. As a result, from the very beginning, Esposito looked at Islam in a different way; he looked at it from an intellectual viewpoint influenced by a modernist approach. Like Judaism and Christianity, he found Islam to be an Abrahamic religion with a rich spiritual dimension and, in addition, a reasonable and dynamic legal system which can and shall be modernised to meet conditions of modern life. "If Muslims recognized many of the major prophets of Judaism and Christianity – including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus – why had I not been aware of this after all my years of liberal arts and theological training?" he wondered when in one of his PhD modules for the first time he heard something about Islam (Sanoff, 2005).

Born in 1940, Esposito was brought up in Brooklyn in a working-class neighbourhood that was almost all Italian. As an Italian-American, he grew up in a world in which he was a second-class citizen (Esposito, 2002c). A son of a machinist, in a Catholic family, he says: "I remember many days that I was in church from 6 a.m. through much of the day, as an altar boy and student" (Jaschik, 2005). At the age of fourteen, he entered a Capuchin Franciscan monastery where he spent ten years preparing for the priesthood only to have a change of heart. He explains that although the order emphasised community, he never felt like he had a family or a community there. He adds: "Deep down I felt a certain loneliness" (Sanoff, 2005).

Post-seminary, Esposito a year later married with Jean who is his partner, best friend, and as he describes, a pivotal force in his intellectual life. He tried the corporate world and high-school teaching before returning for graduate study in theology. Religion

continued to intrigue him. He enrolled in a doctoral program in religious studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, where he mainly focused on Hinduism and Buddhism. Then, it was suggested to him that he take a course on Islam to round out his understanding of the world's religions. At first, Esposito resisted this suggestion which appeared to him like entering an alien world where up until then he had learned “absolutely nothing” about it. As with public opinion in the United States, he had a negative perception of Muslims who were usually equated with Arabs and portrayed as villainous despots. But finally he agreed to take one course (Jaschik, 2005).

The unusual point was that instead of studying under a senior Orientalist in a Middle Eastern Studies Department, he started studying Islam under the late Professor al-Faruqi and in a secular institution of religious studies. Al-Faruqi in 1945 at the age of twenty-four became governor of Galilee, Palestine. Like many other Palestinians, however, the creation of Israel in 1948 abruptly and tragically changed everything in his life. He immigrated as a refugee first to Lebanon and then to America, where he chose academic life and earned his master degrees from Indiana and Harvard and his PhD in Western philosophy from Indiana University (1952). Then he went to Cairo to study Islam at al-Azhar University for four years (1954-58). As the years progressed, al-Faruqi through founding many Islamic academic and research institutions increasingly became an active scholar in US intellectual networks. During thirty years of his productive intellectual life, he authored, edited, or translated twenty-five books, published more than one hundred articles, and was a visiting professor at more than twenty-three universities all over the world (Esposito, 1995; Esposito and Voll, 2001: 23-4).

Al-Faruqi suggested to Esposito that he apply for a summer fellowship to study Arabic at the University of Pennsylvania. At first, Esposito wasn't excited about the prospect “but I was doing nothing, and the fellowship paid good money.” After struggling for many weeks, Arabic clicked “and I became fascinated with Islam” (Jaschik, 2005). At Temple, he also met intellectuals and students from Islamic world, including those from Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, and Malaysia. Mentioning al-Faruqi as his main mentor, he adds, “we also had, during that time, an Egyptian, Hasan Hanafi, who is back

teaching at Cairo University.¹ Those were the people in my formative years, I would say” (Esposito, 2003a). Finally another fellowship – for study in Lebanon – sealed the shift and by the time Esposito earned his PhD from Temple, in 1974, his focus was Islam (Jaschik, 2005).

Traces of al-Faruqi’s approach are obvious particularly in three aspects of Esposito’s perspective. First, al-Faruqi was a pan-Islamist and theorist of the “Islamisation of knowledge”, a theory by which he was going to revive the Islamic orientation of Muslim societies. Esposito in a “Foreword” to a collection of al-Faruqi’s articles, published in 1998, describes his mentor:

For al-Faruqi, Islam was an all-encompassing ideology, the primary identity of a world-wide community of believers and the guiding principle for society and culture. This approach, this wholistic Islamic world-view was embodied in a life and career in which he wrote extensively, lectured, and consulted with Islamic movements and national governments, and organized Muslims in both America and internationally (al-Faruqi, 1998: vii-viii).

Later in this chapter it will be illustrated how Esposito sometimes overestimates the role being played by religion in Islamic societies. Seemingly he is influenced by his mentor who presented Islam as *the primary identity* and source of unity of an otherwise diverse worldview community of believers (Esposito and Voll, 2001: 27). Second, al-Faruqi was an Islamic reformist who was described by some colleagues as a Luther of Islam. Equipped with both Islamic and Western knowledge he never ceased his struggle to provide the “ideational depth” for inculturation of Islam in Muslim societies through a modernist interpretation (Esposito and Voll, 2001: 28-9). Later we will see how Esposito, perhaps influenced by al-Faruqi’s tendency, tends to

¹ Hasan Hanafi (1935-) is an Egyptian Islamic modernist who has summarised his intellectual stance as “Islamic left”. He studied philosophy in France (1956-66), came back to Cairo and taught at the University of Cairo for four years and then moved to the United States where he was with Esposito at Temple University for a few years. One of interesting themes in Hanafi’s work is Occidentalism which he has developed against prevalent waves of colonialism and Orientalism. By this he was going to de-Westernise modernity and especially social sciences in order to produce some better ways for Muslim societies develop their own versions of modernisation (Esposito and Voll, 2001: 68-90).

overestimate a modernist trend in Islam.² Third, al-Faruqi in a significant part of his intellectual life, focused on inter-faith understanding.

Christian Ethics [by al-Faruqi] was a ground-breaking exercise – a modern-trained Muslim analysis of Christianity. Faruqi combined an impressive breadth of scholarship, a voracious intellect, and linguistic skills... [Complaining of the lack of any similar research on Islam by an objective Christian, al-Faruqi says:] ‘We do not know of any analytical book on Islam, for instance, written by a Christian, which does not reveal such judgement of Islam by Christian or Western standards’ (Esposito and Voll, 2001: 33-4).

Apparently Esposito’s prescription for the current global crisis between Islam and the West, i.e., Muslim-Christian mutual understanding, is inspired by his mentor’s approach. We will see how Esposito wants to fill the gap mentioned by his mentor and help Muslims to understand Islam better, as al-Faruqi attempted to do that for Christians.

After earning his doctorate, when Esposito went job hunting, he realised that although Islam fascinated him, it did not attract the academy. He found no position for an Islamicist scholar and finally took a post at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, primarily teaching courses on world religion. Above all, he had to teach about Hinduism and Buddhism. “When I was hired, Islam was on no one's screen,” he describes. He settled into what looked to be a quiet academic career; his main expertise was rarely needed. Outside of the college, no one cared either. “I would send out book proposals and 95 percent of them weren't answered, or they would say, ‘good idea, but there's no market’” (Jaschik, 2005).

In 1979, when the Islamic Revolution of Iran broke out, everything changed dramatically and Islam became on the front page. Then newspapers and television sought him among other Islamicist scholars for recurrent interviews. Publishers who had once rejected his book proposals wanted to know how quickly he could produce a manuscript. He went into overdrive and since then has never stopped. “I'm at this meeting out of town and my wife calls and tells me that I have three publishers trying to reach me with book contracts” for proposals he had submitted before but which

² This trend will be elaborated later in this chapter under *Islamic Movements*.

were suddenly relevant (Jaschik, 2005). "I owe my career and my Lexus to the Ayatollah Khomeini," Esposito jokes (Duara, 2005).

In 1984, he published *Islam and Politics*, followed in 1988 by *Islam: The Straight Path*.³ These were the first of a series of plain, clear, and favourable books on Islam that would become relative best-sellers and go through many editions. In 1988, Esposito was elected president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA). Oxford University Press seemed willing to publish everything he produced and commissioned him to edit a four-volume *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*.⁴ A substantially expanded version of the encyclopedia in six volumes was published in the early 2009 under *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*.⁵

In 1993, he arrived at Georgetown University, where a foundation of Arab businessmen endowed a Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding to support Esposito's works. The foundation was led by Hasib Sabbagh, a Christian Palestinian refugee, who made a fortune with his engineering company. As a founding director, Esposito assembled a group of like-minded colleagues – two of them, like himself, past presidents of MESA. Grant money began to flow in for conferences and projects. In December 2005, the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding received a \$20 million dollar gift from Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, an internationally renowned businessman and global investor, to support and expand the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. The Center was renamed the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. At the Center the main discipline is of Muslim-Christian history, and international affairs. So although it does some of it, it is not primarily interested in theological dialogue.⁶

By the mid-1990s, Esposito could claim to speak from the summit of the American Islamic studies. In the post-Cold War era when many in the West tried to put Islam in the position of the first ranked enemy of the West, he tried to moderate US public

³ Esposito, John L. (1984, 1998). *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse University Press. 4th edition; Esposito, John L. (1988, 2005). *Islam: the Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, revised third edition.

⁴ Esposito, John L. (editor) (1995) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the modern Islamic World*. Oxford University Press.

⁵ Esposito, John L. (editor in chief) (2009) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Oxford University Press.

⁶ More details are available at: <http://www3.georgetown.edu/sfs/acmcu/> [accessed 04/02/2009]

sphere by publishing a series of works such as his masterpiece *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*.⁷ His main objective in this new era was to counter the ideology of dualism of the West and Islam. He attempted to show that Islam is a great world religion and Muslims are ordinary people like other believers, separated between mainstream Muslims and Islamic extremists who occupied Western headlines as the more visible symbol.

His attempts were apparently shattered by the horrific events of 9/11. Different kinds of accusations were made against him and his moderate approach to Islam. Time and again, he was criticised as an “apologist for militant Islam.” Moreover, he was blamed for being impotent for failing to predict 9/11. Stanley Kurtz of Hudson Institute blames Esposito and his optimistic approach, asserting:

The refusal of the American academy to squarely face the terrorist threat to the United States — either before or since September 11 — will redound to its everlasting shame. Yet there is reason to believe that the academy's multiculturalist blinders represent more than a sad and silly waste of intellectual energy — more, even, than the spiritual corruption of a generation of America's youth. There is reason to believe that the reigning multiculturalist foolishness of the American academy may be directly connected to the intelligence failure that led to September 11 (Kurtz, 2001).

Kurtz directly blames Esposito for giving misleading advice to President Clinton who refused vital intelligence on Osama bin Laden's activities offered by the government of Sudan. Kurtz claims: “Esposito's bad advice may have had a great deal to do with the state department's foolish refusal even to look at critical intelligence on Osama bin Laden's activities” (Kurtz, 2001). However, Esposito dismisses the idea that he played an insider role, saying, “critics assume I was wired in at the top, but I met Clinton for the first time after he left office,” and then only to help put together a conference in New York (Sanoff, 2005).

⁷ Esposito, John L. (1999). *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

More sophisticated accusations were made by Martin Kramer of Tel Aviv University.⁸

He says:

Esposito came forward to claim that Islamist movements were nothing other than movements of democratic reform. Only orientalist prejudice, of the kind dissected by Said, prevented American observers from seeing past external form to this inner quality. Americans would “have to transcend their narrow, ethnocentric conceptualization of democracy” to comprehend “Islamic democracy that might create effective systems of popular participation, though unlike the Westminster model or the American system.” This idea — that Americans suffered from an ethnocentric understanding of democracy — soon reverberated throughout Middle Eastern studies.... And so American congressmen were instructed by the president-elect of MESA [John Voll, who has been Esposito's closest collaborator,] that [Sudan] a country with no political parties, presided over by a coup-plotting general, ridden by civil war, with a per capita gross domestic product of \$200, still might qualify somehow as a democracy. This was not deliberate self-parody; it was merely Esposito's logic advanced ad absurdum (Kramer, 2001).

Mathieu Courville from University of Ottawa objects to Kramer's “self-serving scale.” Courville holds that unlike Kramer, Esposito does not view his own respective vocation as a servile martial art, but rather as liberal arts. His work is not a mere means to some other end; but aimed equally, in a staunchly deontological manner, to be an end in itself as well. Esposito as well as Said do not work for mere national (that is, blatantly sectarian) interests, but also worked to serve the ‘cosmopolis,’ that is, the peoples of the world at large. He then adds that merely Schmitt-inspired ‘friend versus enemies’ realpolitik view of scholarship has motivated Kramer to choose such vision of scholarship (Courville, 2006).

In 2002 by publishing *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Esposito attempted to explain 9/11 through his philosophy.⁹ In this way, he who introduces himself as “the

⁸ Esposito describes Kramer: “The problem is that people do not address the question of who are the people behind this? What about Kramer who has Israeli citizenship and spent his career at Tel Aviv University running the Moshe Dayan Centre? That is fine with me. But if you look at the track record of the likes of Kramer and Pipes, do they ever criticise the Sharon government? I would say that they are not arguing for what is in the best interests of America” (Esposito, 2003c).

bridge builder between the Muslim world and the West” (Sanoff, 2005) tries to repair or reconstruct the bridge. In this new title Bin Laden, his sect: Wahhabi Islam, his ideological mentor: Zawahiri, and their ideologues: Hasan Al-Banna, Mawdudi, and Sayyid Qutb are observed in some detail. However, beside them, Esposito makes his readers aware about some alternative voices who promote reform and modernist approaches, and again tries to portray a more comprehensive picture of Islam in order to remove existing misunderstandings and encourage the Orient and the Occident to engage in coalition building for the promotion of the coexistence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the era of globalisation.

Islam is a main player in the world and there is always room for sympathisers and their approach is always needed even by hardliners. During the post-9/11 period, Esposito frequently met and consulted with government officials from the State Department, FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and Justice Department. In the academic year of 2003-04 he gave more than fifty lectures to audiences as diverse as the Jesuit School of Theology in Croatia, the Booz Allen consulting firm, and Northern Kentucky University. Although he often talks pro bono, his speaking fees can sometimes exceed \$30,000 (Sanoff, 2005).

In August 2003, ISNA gave Esposito a special award to honour his contributions to the understanding of Muslims. Sayyid Syeed, secretary general of the association, compared Esposito to Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet Mohammad (Rashed, 2003). Abu Talib, who, according to Sunni Muslims, never converted to Islam, is appreciated for his sincere defence of the Prophet and his new faith. For a non-Muslim intellectual to be compared to a relative of the Prophet of Islam is the highest of honours. Esposito received such admiration because he has been trying his best in his methodology to observe his subject of study, not dualistically but humanely.

⁹ Esposito, John L. (2003). *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Methodology

As the first principle of dualism reads, dualism between two entities can be hypothesised only based on a monolithic perception of each side. Without such homogeneous 'others' no polar dichotomy can be rationalised and no dualistic philosophy would be raised. The second principle of dualism needs to remove any possibility of change in the other side. Thus, the dismissal of the 'diversity' and 'dynamism' of 'others' can be counted as the first necessary step towards dualism. It has been the case of the West and Islam. Dualism can be portrayed as that where the civilised West which promotes values of democracy, free market, limited government, and human rights contrasts with a monolithic and unchangeable Islam that fosters despotism, a closed economy, totalitarianism, and disapproval of human dignity. The diversity or dynamism of Islam, hence, can annul dualism at its root.

Being aware of that, Esposito to show solidarity¹⁰ with Muslims builds his philosophy on the 'diversity' of Islam and its 'dynamism'. The inherent unity of faith, implicit in statements like 'one God, one Book, one Prophet,' he argues, should not deter us from appreciating the rich diversity that has characterised all aspects (legal, theological, and devotional) of religious life in the Islamic community (Esposito, 2005b: 114). As a matter of fact, this diversity is intertwined with an inherent dynamism, since from its earliest days Islam possessed a tradition of revival and reform (Esposito, 2005b: 116). Because of revealing both diversity and dynamism, Islamic movements, more than anything else, are at the centre of Esposito's perspective. Pointing to historical Islamic movements, he notes that throughout Islamic history understanding the background and context of revival and reform is essential for an appreciation of Islam's dynamism and diversity. Islamic movements not only contributed to the revitalisation of Islam in their own times, but also left a legacy that informs much of the mood of contemporary Islam (Esposito, 2005b: 115).

More than three decades of Esposito's intellectual life witnessed his using 'diversity' and 'dynamism' as two golden keys to virtually any locks between the West and Islam. Five examples may suffice here. First, in the post-Cold War era when indiscriminate

¹⁰ I use 'solidarity' as an antonym of 'dualism'.

use of the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' blinded the West to many facts on the ground, Esposito notes that in actuality political Islam is far more diverse. Saudi Arabia, Libya, Pakistan, and Iran have been rhetorically called fundamentalist states, but this hostile term tells us nothing about their real nature (Esposito, 1994). Second, during the Rushdie affair, when Muslims were indiscriminately blamed for being brutally against freedom of speech, Esposito, pointing to the diversity, maintained that a group of Arab and Muslim intellectuals and writers did defend Rushdie in the name of free speech. "The Ayatollah Khomeini was not the sole spokesman of Islam" (Esposito, 1999a: 251). Third, in the case of the first Gulf War many tried to regard the war as a battle between the West and Islam. He, however, notes that the war indeed undermined such stereotypical images of monolithic Arab and Muslim worlds gripped by Pan-Arabism or Pan-Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 252). The Gulf war revealed a diversity of stances within the Muslim world. The multiplicity of voices represented differing perspectives and priorities among Muslim governments, between some governments and their people, among religious leaders and Islamic movements (Esposito, 1999a: 256). Fourth, to counter the attitude that Islamic law is a fixed unchangeable system, he distinguishes between *Shari'ah* (divine law) and *fiqh* (human interpretation and application). This underscores the extent to which much of Islamic law – from forms of government, notions of governance, to individual and collective rights, and gender relations – may be seen as reflecting time-bound, human interpretations that are dynamic and open to adaptation and change (Esposito, in Abu el Fadl, 2003: 98). Finally in the case of September 11, when the attacks were regarded by many analysts as a real symbol of the 'clash of civilisations', he attempted to counter this attitude again by highlighting the actual diversity and dynamism on the ground. While the events and the period following have reinforced the threat of the dark side of political Islam with its theology of hate, he argues, forces of democratisation and the diversity of Islamic movements remain important in many elections recently held in Muslim countries (Esposito, 2005a). In sum, for Esposito, "[d]iversity rather than monolithic unity is more the norm than the exception in Islamic politics" (Esposito, 1999a: 287).

Describing the roots of the contemporary dismissal of the diversity and, in turn, the projection of the dualism of the West and Islam, Esposito supports that after the Cold War, in a "threat vacuum" and in line with the benefits of some parties involved, the

'Islamic threat' was indiscriminately propagated. However, he suggests, before building a new paradigm for world politics, there are lessons to be learnt from the flawed dualist ideology of the Cold War, during which false impressions from the "evil empire" misled the West into taking the wrong policies. He elaborates that the exaggerated fears and vision that drove the West to take Herculean steps against a monolithic enemy blinded Western analysts to the actual diversity within the Soviet Union and underlying changes that were in place (Esposito, 1999a: 214).¹¹ In addition, as the dualism of the Cold War was abused by many for their political interests, this new suggested version of dualism between the West and Islam leads to some similar misuses. Just as in the past many Third World countries used anti-communism to excuse authoritarian rule and to win the support of Western powers, now banning Islamic organisations, imprisoning political opponents, and violating human rights are being justified with a similar excuse, i.e., anti-Islamism (Esposito, 1999a: 218).

What is the source of this rich diversity and unending dynamism of Islamic world? Esposito believes that both are rooted in the religion of Islam. For Esposito, religion enjoys an "inner dynamic nature" that could digest any forthcoming events. "Religious traditions although characterized as conservative and traditional," he argues, "are the product of a dynamic, changing process in which the Word of revelation is mediated through human interpretation or discourse in response to specific sociohistorical contexts" (Esposito, 1999a: 260). The human understanding and interpretation of sacred texts, influenced by local traditions, socio-political, economic and cultural conditions as well as by reliance on reason, could produce multiple and at times contending religious paradigms (Esposito, 2005b: 113). This is a critical point of Esposito's perspective. He even looks at diversity and dynamism as products of Muslims' religious identity.

As a matter of fact, for Esposito religion is the decisive factor in Muslims' identity, society, politics, in culture, in civilisation, in everything. Being an expert in religious studies, Esposito agrees with Orientalism in the third principle of dualism. Yet, unlike Orientalism and in contrast with the first and the second principles, for him, religion, and in particular Islam, is a source of diversity and dynamism. His works testify that he looks at everything primarily from a religious angle. Seemingly he, like Lewis, has fallen

¹¹ See also: Esposito, 2005 and Esposito, 2006a.

into the fallacy, caused by confusing the religion of Islam with Islamic civilisation. Why should democracy in Islamic world be mainly defined and discussed religiously in *Islam and Democracy*?¹² Why must political affairs in Islamic countries, more than anything else, be analysed from a religious viewpoint in *Islam and Politics*? Why should only religious characters be highlighted as heroes of Islamic world in *Makers of Contemporary Islam*?¹³ Why are his starting points, his categorisations, his proposed turning-points and his periodisations, all often coloured as religious?¹⁴ Why should Islamic movements, as we will see in detail, be categorised merely based on their attitude towards religion? Most important of all, why in the title of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* was the term “Islamic world” used instead of “Muslim world”? Esposito answers this last question in his “Foreword” to the Encyclopedia. He notes that “Muslim world” is not used because it is a *more generic* term whereas this encyclopedia would be focusing on the “*Islamic dimension*” of its topics (Esposito, 2005b: xi). Indeed that is often the case in virtually all his works. He looks at and talks about Islamic world as if it is the Islamic religion.

Nonetheless, religion, whatever its diversity and dynamism, does not seem to be a good vehicle for an anti-dualistic mission. Triumphalist Christianity and Islam portray themselves as exclusive representatives of truth, and as history shows, this usually led to significant ideological differences and continuing challenges among them. In contrast, an anti-dualistic vehicle is supposed to act flexibly, to be able to synthesise the two sides in a pragmatic way and to suggest political compromise. So by his vehicle, it seems that the messenger voids the message. We will see in this chapter precisely because of his religious perspective, that sometimes Esposito has been unconsciously led to a dualistic conclusion.

Esposito admits that religion has always had a dark side and has always been subject to theologies of exclusivism and hate. If one is to generalise quickly, he argues, when Judaism, Christianity, and Islam began, they were all exclusivist religions. “However inclusive they are, ultimately they have a world view in which ‘I have the Covenant, I am right’, and then they must deal with how other people can also be right.” It becomes the world of the believer and the unbeliever. Thus, it is not simply “us and

¹² Esposito, John and Voll John (1996). *Islam and Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

¹³ Esposito, John and Voll John (2001). *Makers of Contemporary Islam*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ We shall see some examples in this chapter.

them”, but a stricter version prevails, “the believer and the unbeliever.” It easily slips into “it is the people of God versus those who are not the people of God” (Esposito, 2002c). Esposito also admits that religion is most likely a suitable vehicle for confrontation rather than promoting mutual respect and coexistence. Both Islam and Christianity possessed a sense of universal message and mission, he argues, “which in retrospect were destined to lead to confrontation rather than mutual cooperation” (Esposito, 1999a: 23). In their history, the monotheistic vision of both Islam and Christianity, each believing that it is the possessor of the final revelation of God and is charged to call all to salvation, usually resulted in uncompromising claims and missions and produced theological and political conflict (Esposito, 1999a: 246).

In addition, Esposito is aware that political players of both the West and Islam frequently use religion as an effective means for legitimacy, while it is not their real end. Although the religious claim is apparent, it is not that real. He elaborates the point that although conflicts between the West and Islam are coloured as religious, the main issues are socio-political. Then he compares this with the case of Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant communities, where local disputes and civil wars have more to do with political and socioeconomic issues and grievances than with religion. Disputes were, however, coloured as religious (Esposito, 1999a: 228).

It is interesting that Esposito criticises Western policy makers for giving a religious flavour to their rhetoric, while the actual sources of conflict, he notes, are not religious. As an example he highlights President Bush’s rhetoric. Bush said repeatedly that the War on Terror is a war of “good” against “evil”, he even used the words “crusades” (even though it was subsequently retracted) and the “axis of evil”, and the Pentagon then used the phrase “Infinite Justice”. When the government organised the recent raids in northern Virginia against Muslim organisations, they called the operation the “Green Front”. This shows that from the beginning they had some intentions in mind by employing religious terms even though they later apologised. Using “evil” all the time, he adds, (axis of evil, they are men of “evil”, with us or against us, etc.) in religious terms translates into, “You’re a believer or you’re a non-believer.” It is us and them, forces of good against forces of evil, and what this does is it leaves no middle-ground for anyone, whether it is countries or people (Esposito, 2002a).

I would have no objection, if Esposito as a theologian or a jurist (*faqih*) just wanted to focus on the religious aspects of Islamic world. The theological and juristic aspects, as a matter of fact, are obviously of great importance, particularly in Islamic world and in the late twentieth century. Indeed, one of main problems with secularist Muslim regimes, like that of the Shah of Iran and Ataturk of Turkey, was that they dismissed the importance of the religious identity of the people. True, every step towards modernity should consider the role of religion as well as all other aspects of culture. This is true in the Islamic context as well as in non-Islamic contexts. However, considering the fact that virtually all of Esposito's projects, including the *Encyclopedia* and the centre he founded for Muslim-Christian understanding, aim to study "international affairs" between the West and Islam; in order to satisfy this broad objective, mere religious consideration by no means suffices. This reminds me of what once Edward Said remarked to counter theological arguments for today's affairs: "Even the ones whose speciality is the modern Islamic world anachronistically use texts like the Koran to read into every facet of contemporary Egyptian or Algerian society" (Said, 2003: 301).

In addition, as I quoted earlier, Esposito admits to the fact that religious understandings and interpretations are highly influenced by other factors, and therefore to some extent, the religious factor ranks second in importance. In this way he criticises Orientalists and traditional Muslim theologians alike, for their failure to understand "the extent to which religious beliefs and laws are the product of human interpretation... Ironically, non-Muslim scholars sometimes themselves sound like mullahs" (Esposito, 1999a: 265). But he too rarely goes farther than the religious discourse to consider other aspects of Muslims' contemporary life. To highlight some critical aspects ignored by Esposito, I briefly look at an alternative approach presented by Olivier Roy.

Roy in a first step attempts to differentiate between 'religiosity' and 'religion'. He defines the former as the self-formulation and self-expression of a personal faith and the latter as a coherent corpus of beliefs and dogmas collectively managed by a body of legitimate holders of knowledge (Roy, 2004: 6). In contemporary Islam, religiosity is the most important factor which is more influenced by modernisation, westernisation, globalisation and secularisation than by religion itself (Roy, 2004: 15). According to

Roy, fundamentalism is both a product and an agent of globalisation, since it accepts without nostalgia the loss of pristine culture, and advocates the opportunity to build a universal religious identity, delinked from any specific culture. In addition, “[f]undamentalism is synonymous with westernisation, and above all is also (but not exclusively) a tool of westernisation” (Roy, 2004: 26). Islamic revival is often recast in terms of multiculturalism, authenticity, identity and pluralism, discourses that are obviously products of the West. Using such a terminology is not a matter of tactic. These Western categories are deeply entrenched among fundamentalists.

Modern religiosity, Roy explains, is intertwined with the delegitimation of the religious hierarchy. There is a great deal of anti-intellectualism in all contemporary forms of religiosity in both Islam and Christianity (Roy, 2004: 169). Religion is everybody’s business. Thanks to modern communications, information is easily accessible to everyone. The divide between *ulema* and ordinary Muslims is blurred, because many educated young Muslims think themselves experts in religion. The circulation of knowledge is horizontal between equals and not vertical, from learned intellectuals to the students. This horizontal circulation is a characteristic of the Internet (Roy, 2004: 168). As a result, nowadays many Islamic thinkers and activists, whether fundamentalist or liberal, from Hassan al-Banna to Sayyid Qutb, from Mawdudi to Zawahiri, and from Arkoun to Soroush, are not graduates from religious educational system but from secular systems and mainly in subjects other than religious studies.

In contemporary forms of religiosity, Roy submits, knowledge of the truth is achieved through personal faith, not through years of theological learning, nor through obedience to religious scholars and clerics. Feeling is more important than knowledge. The self and thus the individual is at the centre of religiosity. Faith is personal, it is the truth. Faith is not religion (Roy, 2004: 31). That is the logic behind the fact that Islamic modernists cannot meet the demands of the religious market. People seek a ready-made and easily accessible set of norms and values that might order their daily lives and define a practical and visible identity. Young born-again Muslims do not want to undertake years of study; they want the truth immediately. In current forms of religiosity activism replaces knowledge and charisma, not religious expertise, bringing leaders to the fore (Roy, 2004: 167). Quotations – usually out of context – from Islamic sources play an important role for contemporary religious literature. Debates, many of

which are held on the web, might simply be an exchange of some quotations from the Quran and hadith with little reasoning and analysis. This approach to religion nullifies centuries of interpretation and intellectual discussion. Accordingly, instead of referring to Islamic intellectuals seeking novel reinterpretations as Esposito prefers, Roy attempt to sociologically analyse waves of globalisation and Westernisation in the Muslim world.

The real genesis of Al Qaeda's violence, Roy elaborates, has more to do with the Western tradition of individual and pessimistic revolt in pursuit of an elusive ideal world than with the Islamic conception of martyrdom. It is common to find among Islamic radicals a mix of Quranic injunctions and pseudo-Marxist explanations (Roy, 2004: 46). Of course, Islamic radicalism has something from Islam, he explains, but the fact that it is at a crossroads between negative westernisation and Islamic radicalisation cannot be ignored either. However old-fashioned their theology they may seem to Westerners and whatever they may think of themselves, radical Euro-Islamists who make up a majority of al-Qaeda militants are clearly more a postmodern phenomenon than a premodern one (Roy, 2004: 303). Their globalisation is not a consequence of reading the Quran but simply a revival of a radical phenomenon of the 1970s. In fact, al-Qaeda is heir to the ultra-leftist and Third Worldist movements (Roy, 2004: 324).

Roy maintains that by fighting to purify religion, fundamentalists tend to objectify religion, to define it as an explicit set of norms and values, separated from surrounded culture which is presumably man-made and therefore corrupted. Unlike conventional discourse used by many other analysts including Esposito, Roy concludes that this separation of religion from culture can ironically be interpreted as a first step towards secularisation (Roy, 2004: 334).¹⁵ Contemporary forms of religiosity among Muslims (as well as Christians) have a number of patterns in common: individualisation, the quest for self-realisation, the rethinking of Islam outside of a given culture and the recasting of the Muslim *ummah* in non-territorial terms (Roy, 2004: 232). Accordingly, westernisation and globalisation are the most decisive factors in changing the contemporary pattern of religiosity by three means: (i) the delusion of the pristine

¹⁵ Under "Islamic Movements", we shall discuss in detail Esposito's views on Islamic fundamentalism which is termed neo-revivalism.

culture, where religion was embedded in a given culture and society; (ii) the absence of legitimate religious authorities; (iii) the impossibility of any form of legal, social and cultural coercion in the new global context (Roy, 2004: 151).

Roy's insights seem more useful in understanding some new trends among Muslim youth than merely trying to reread the Quran and other Islamic resources and listening to Muslim intellectuals – the ways often preferred by Esposito. The impact of such theoretical and legal discussions on current practices is overemphasised only by some Muslim fundamentalists and Western Orientalists. In truth, there is a discrepancy between the avowed values of a 'Muslim culture' and the sociological realities of everyday life for people of Muslim origin. We have to take into account that cultural values are more preached than implemented. All such facts are overlooked by Esposito because he overemphasises religion and this can lead him to some dualistic outcomes he shares with Orientalism. Yet Esposito has a competitive edge over Orientalism because the way he looks at religion is "modernist", i.e., he believes that religion can compromise with the modern world.

Thanks to his mentor, al-Faruqi, Esposito looks at Islam as an all-encompassing ideology which is compatible with reason and can be adjusted to the realities of modern life. Accordingly, he criticises scholars like Lewis, who hold that when Islamic modernists attempt to adapt traditional Islamic concepts to contemporary needs and justify democratic forms of government, they are suspected of having a hidden agenda or are criticised for not being faithful to Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 265). Esposito also criticises some Western observers, whom he describes as "fundamentalist secularists", for their narrow vision of religion. "The modern notion of religion," he argues, "as a system of personal belief makes an Islam (or any world religion or religious worldview) that is comprehensive in scope, in which religion is integral to politics and society, ..." (Esposito, 1999a: 257-8).

Although this modernist view on religion as *a theory* is remarkable and it can be suggested to develop the Muslim world, the question is how popular this worldview is among Muslim populations. That is to ask: could this approach represent the religious sentiments of mainstream Muslims? Does this appropriately express what is over there on the ground? Later in this chapter, studying Esposito's perspective on Islamic

movements, we will see that his answer is “no”.¹⁶ The disproportionate importance Esposito gives to Islamic modernism and the underlying dualism this approach has, reminds me what Said says about Louis Massignon:

He reconstructed and defended Islam against Europe on the one hand and against its own orthodoxy on the other. This intervention – for it was that – into the Orient as animator and champion symbolized his own acceptance of the Orient’s difference, as well as his efforts to change it into what he wanted (Said, 2003: 272).

To rightly study Islamic world, the key question is not what the Quran actually says, but what Muslims believe that the Quran says. A sacred book by definition has various meanings and is subject to argument and interpretation. In reality, there is huge disagreement between Muslims on how to read the Quran. Such differences of opinion can be found in history, in geography, among sects, between social classes and in different cultures. In other words an analyst of Islamic world must first and foremost focus on the discourses and practices of the actual actors and should weight the importance of different attitudes among Muslims without directly interfering in theological elements, as Esposito sometimes does.

Esposito is basically right that Islam has a powerful built-in dynamism, however. True, there is no evidence that shows mainstream Muslims understand Islam as contemporary modernists do, yet history shows that in a wider context through enormous ups and downs Islam could adjust itself to many different circumstances. Taking into account these facts, Esposito rightly criticises Islamic studies in Western academia, where Islam has been treated as something utterly fixed in its historical baggage. In this sense he is in Edward Said’s camp.¹⁷ Many experts were trained in area studies programs, Esposito argues, by professors of social scientists with little real expertise in Islam as a living religion. That is to say, in history and politics courses, Islam was treated primarily as part of a cultural legacy studied more for its relevance

¹⁶ Relying on this fashionable, but unpopular approach to religion for analysing Muslim world affairs, it seems that Esposito would be similar to those whom he criticises elsewhere: “Experts analysed and judged societies as their elites ran them - from the top down. As a result, academic and government analysts and the media often slipped into the same pitfalls: focusing on a narrow, albeit powerful, secular elite segment of society...” (Esposito, 1999a: 261). Since modernism is only a minority trend, Esposito apparently has slipped into the same pitfall.

¹⁷ Although generally Esposito admires Said’s vision, he believes that Said was at times “excessive” (Esposito, 1999a: 261).

to the past than to the present. "Islamic studies was textually and historically rather than contextually oriented, with little reliance on the social sciences and with minimal attention to the modern period," he remarks (Esposito, 1999a: 260). In addition, he highlights the role of "the marketplace" in partially selecting some narratives of Islam. Publishing houses, journals, and the media for their financial concerns prefer to publicise a more violent picture, which is ironically the more attractive face of Islam for Western audiences (Esposito, 1999a: 261).

He considers Western political analysts who have focused on 'sensitive' matters and headline events as "new forms of Orientalism" (Esposito, 1999a: 261). Their failure has been reinforced by their inability to predict recent Islamic resurgences in Iran, Egypt, Algeria, and many other Muslim countries (Esposito, 1999a: 257). Because of their underestimation of Islam, Esposito argues, they acknowledged many political events "at the eleventh hour" (Esposito, 1999a: 262). Here, however, one may question Esposito on how his modernist perspective has been able to predict September 11 and its subsequent events. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, his masterpiece, and indeed, one of best works written about political Islam, although published in three editions between 1992 and 1999, failed to continue after that, allegedly because of its failure to predict a new phase of Islamism in and after September 11.¹⁸

Esposito warns of the establishment of a new school of thought about Islam within America. This school argues for what is in the best interests of Israel. They are ideologues who have an agenda and can no longer claim to be the academic experts. "They are in fact stocking horses for the neo-cons' agenda" (Esposito, 2003c). Esposito believes that they are against what America is truly about – free speech, open dialogue, and a multiplicity of views. They are quoting the Quran out of context to promote a violent face of Islam. This is done deliberately and if someone did this to them by quoting the Old Testament or the New Testament out of context, he would be accused of being anti-Christian, or anti-Jewish, "or the routine charge of anti-Semitic" (Esposito, 2003c).

¹⁸ In fact, Esposito had somehow predicted 9/11. In 1998, he warned: "The American cruise missile attack against suspected terrorist training bases and targets supported by Osama bin Laden raised the specter of a future struggle between international terrorists and the West in the twenty-first century" (Esposito, 1999a: 270). Nevertheless, his overall suggestions to the policymakers have been presented in a more optimistic context than what was needed to address a real threat adequately (Czwarno, 2006).

In addition, Western Islamic studies, Esposito argues, suffers from a lack of empirical research, direct contact, and extended experience (Esposito, 1999a: 257). Considering the fact that Esposito in comparison with other Islamologists has not usually employed some extra empirical methods throughout his works, it seems odd that he raises such a comment about his colleagues' methodology. There seems to be only one exception. Recently he, as a senior scientist, has been involved in a project with Gallup Organisation to produce a large, in-depth study of Muslim opinion (Esposito, 2006a). The results are recently published under *Who Speaks for Islam? what a billion Muslims really think*.¹⁹ It holds out the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop an understanding of the Muslim world and the complexities of what is based on six years of research and more than 50,000 interviews representing 1.3 billion Muslims who reside in more than thirty-five nations that are predominantly Muslim or have sizable Muslim populations.

Although such broad surveys can be *an* empirical tool to round out our understanding of Islamic world, they must be used with immense caution. That is because asking a huge number of people living in different cultures a similar question that consists of some highly abstract notions like religion, *shari`a* and democracy, does not mean that their collective responses reflect a consensus. That is because every respondent can interpret the notion, he/she was asked about, differently. In the above survey, Gallup asked about "having an enriched religious/spiritual life" and 90% the Muslim respondents said that it is "essential, that one cannot live without." This, however, by no means can be translated to say that 1.3 billion Muslims regard 'religion' – in the way Esposito interprets the term – as a primary maker of identity, as he inaccurately concludes (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: 6). That is because perhaps most of the respondents, unlike Esposito, do not see religion as an all-encompassing ideology. If they were asked about their family, their shelter, their livelihood, their job, their nation, etc., they would respond in a similar way. A similar question was asked from the United States population and 68% of respondents answered that religion is "an important part of their daily life" (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007: 47). But this, by no means, shows any sort of centrality of religion in their identity.

¹⁹ Esposito, John and Mogahed, Dalia (2007). *Who Speaks for Islam? what a billion Muslims really think*. Gallup Press.

As discussed earlier, a major motivation behind the dualism of 'us' and 'them' is to achieve the legitimacy of 'our' interests, which are sometimes against 'our' values. This way is called 'using double-standards'. A dualistic approach, based on the superiority of 'us' and inferiority of 'them,' can easily justify such actions. Hence, a major clue to dualism is how a thinker deals with values and interests. It is perfectly clear in the case of Lewis who justifies using not only double-standards, but also multiple-standards to safeguard US interests. Esposito's position, however, is blurry. He mentions: "The United States must be willing to demonstrate by word and action its belief that the right of self-determination and representative government include acceptance of an Islamically oriented state and society as long as it reflects the popular will and does not directly threaten U.S. interests" (Esposito, 1999a: 274; Esposito, 1994). This means that the promotion of self-determination and representative government should be limited to the extent that it does not directly threaten US interests. If it does so, as in the case of Mosaddeq in Iran or Hamas in Gaza, it will be legitimate for the US to give priority to its interests and forget its values, using double-standards. This, in turn, may show the limit of Esposito's sympathy with Muslims. Although such statements are rare in Esposito's rhetoric, in this way, too, he sometimes diverts to dualism.

Overall, though his perspective suffers from some deficiencies, Esposito deserves to be mentioned as a good example for solidarity with Muslims. Although his religious perspective, his holistic and modernist view on religion, and his loyalty to American interests, at times divert him from his original path, in the majority of cases he tries his best to avoid dualism. In this way, he tries to attribute seemingly profound contradictions between the two civilisations to simple matters of misunderstanding. The remedy is, he argues, "building bridges for understanding" (Esposito, 2003d: xii). Through his works he usually attempts to put himself in Muslims' shoes, narrating their viewpoints. It is not an easy task, especially in today's America. He complains: "In the old days, being controversial was fine because we had a more open society. Now we don't, so we get nailed" (Esposito, 2003c). Especially in times of crises, being a mediator is not an easy job, "because people will accuse you of trying to legitimate terrorism" (Esposito, 2002c).

Far from the fourth and fifth principles of dualism his last solution accepts seemingly critical contradictions as natural differences in religiocultural issues. For instance, in

the case of Rushdie, he argues that insensitivity to cultural differences and a failure to appreciate different political contexts limited the West's ability to understand the depth of Muslim anguish and rage. Acknowledging the offensiveness of *The Satanic Verses* to many Muslims does not require agreeing with it but can include recognition that "the limits of free speech may vary in different religiocultural contexts" (Esposito, 1999a: 252). His final suggestion is tolerance: "American policy should accept the ideological differences between the West and Islam to the greatest extent possible, or at least tolerate them" (Esposito, 1994). This provides Muslims with time and space to find their own path to modernity.

Islam and Modernity

In Esposito's perspective, historical interrelations between the West and Islam mainly crystallised in a religious theatre. His starting point is the Crusades, which he describes as battles that left an enduring legacy of misunderstanding and distrust (Esposito, 2005b: 58). Nevertheless, unlike some Western writers who consider the Crusades as a matter of pride and honour for Christendom, Esposito supports the view that the final triumphant side was Islam. In his opinion Muslims were more civilised in their actions and more compassionate towards minorities. Despite a popular belief, he supports, Christian rulers, knights, and merchants were primarily driven by political, military, and financial motivations which were simply coloured as religious inspirations (Esposito, 2005b: 57-59). More important than the motivations of Crusaders, he believes that the real intention of the religious sector was not even Christianity. "Pope Urban called for the Crusades for political rather than his ostensible religious reasons," he remarks (Esposito, 2003d: 74).

To analyse the root causes of the historical challenges and distrust between Christendom and Islam, he attempts to look beyond the popular slogans of Orientalism. He criticises Western historical stereotypes as some popularised invective and propaganda. For instance, in the case of relations between the Ottomans and the West he emphasises a negative role played by the convenient, hostile stereotype and caricature of the Turks. In practice, such negative images prevailed over the minority

voices of those diplomats and scholars who had actually seen or dispassionately studied the Turks (Esposito, 1999a: 41). Just as might be expected from Esposito, he tries to highlight the psychological roots of frequent Orientalist fabrications. For him Orientalist ignorance reflected not only lack of knowledge but also the all-too-common human tendency among educated and uneducated alike to dehumanise the enemy, to assume a superior posture and dismiss that which challenges and threatens one's deepest beliefs or interests by labelling it Other, inferior, fanatical, or irrational. To this unholy aim, distorted portraits or caricatures of Muhammad and Islam were created – more accurately, fabricated – with little concern for accuracy (Esposito, 1999a: 43).

Unlike Orientalist polemics, Esposito often highlights the dark side of the Western colonialism which produced a negative impact on relations between Islam and the West. To justify their actions, Esposito argues, Britain spoke of “the white man’s burden” and France of its “mission to civilise”, but the real intention was to advance European imperialism (Esposito, 2003d: 76). Accordingly, unlike Lewis who attempts to commend the West and to highlight Muslim deficiencies in meeting modernity, Esposito impartially considers the role of the Western exploitation of oppressed Muslims. In Esposito’s view, only the ready-made rationale for the “crown and cross” can easily lead to a conclusion that modernity is the result not simply of concrete conditions that produced the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution, but also of Christianity’s inherent superiority as a religion and culture (Esposito, 1999a: 46).

Esposito disagrees with Lewis over the compatibility of Christianity and incompatibility of Islam to modernity. For Lewis, the compatibility is based on the separation between Church and State in Christianity, and the incompatibility is due to the unification of religion and politics in Islam. Esposito rightly explains that the separation in Christianity is not an unquestionable historical fact. Although in Christianity church and state were distinct, they were not always separate (Esposito, 1999a: 258). He also questions why Western policy makers overestimate the unification of the temporal and the spiritual only in Islam, ignoring a same fact in a number of other contexts. The US government, he comments, has not similarly condemned or regarded the mixing of religion and politics in South Africa, Israel, Poland, Eastern Europe, or Latin America as a necessary threat, while this is a ready-made accusation against Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 272).

In addition, following a wider definition of modernity he is against the theory that the separation of religion and politics, or in other words secularisation of society, is among the preconditions of modernity. Counting this secular perception to be among the major causes of misunderstanding between the West and Islam, he notifies his readers that Western antipathy is not only fed by media headlines but is also rooted in a secular outlook on life that is often antithetical to the perspective of Islamic activists (Esposito, 1999a: 257). In other words, the secular presuppositions of Western academia have been a major obstacle in understanding and analysing political Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 259). The post-Enlightenment tendency to define religion as a system of beliefs restricted to the personal or private life, rather than as a way of life, has seriously hampered the ability of the West to understand the nature of Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 260). He calls such popular secularist interpretations which have come to represent for many a self-evident and timeless truth “secular fundamentalism” (Esposito, 1999a: 258).

To show that secularism is not the sole path towards modernity, particularly in an Islamic context, Esposito argues in four ways; none of which, however, seems to me convincing. His first argument is based on his modernist interpretation of religion (Esposito, 1999a: 260). As noted earlier, religion for Esposito is a dynamic system which can be easily reinterpreted in different social and political contexts. In his approach, religion is a fully flexible institution that may be redressed by modern understandings without much difficulty. It goes without saying that such an approach does not need to rationalise any sort of separation between religion and politics, since religion can easily be adapted to the necessities of the modern life. However, the main problem with this argument is to show how popular this flexible understanding of religion is among Muslims or other believers of world religions. As we will see in the next few pages, Esposito admits that this approach to religion by no means represents that of mainstream Muslims.

His second argument is that the secularised mentality fails to appreciate that for many people in the world, religious faith is also a primary identity. “It is a given, not a choice, and as such Muslim citizens in the West cannot be expected to forgo certain rights in society” (Esposito, 1999a: 239). This argument, however, is in line with the third principle of dualism and preserves a severe dualist approach, particularly once

Esposito portrays it as a given characteristic and not a choice. This reminds me of what Said remarks in criticising the way H. A. R. Gibb portrays Islam, a way which is in this sense similar to Esposito's: "Admittedly, the picture is a little difficult to see, since unlike any other religion *Islam is or means everything*" (Said, 2003: 279). It's hard to think of a more self-defeating argument by the messenger of solidarity.

As his third argument, he refers to available historical facts. Islamic revivalism,²⁰ like some forms of Christian revivalism, has countered and discredited such a uniform view of modernity and development. Islamic revivalism has been most visible in countries where modernisation has been stronger (Esposito, 2005b: 225). He adds that the secularisation of processes and institutions cannot easily be translated into the secularisation of minds and culture. The most forceful manifestation of Islamic resurgence has occurred in the more advanced and 'modernised' secular countries of the Muslim world such as Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Thus, he concludes, modernisation has not simply led to progressive secularisation but instead has been a major factor in the resurgence of Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 7-9). The problem with this argument is the confusion between modernity and simply adopting modern technologies (this is sometimes termed modernisation). Secularists do not assert that secularisation is a prerequisite for the process of importing modern equipment, as it was the case in the above countries. Secularists' assumption of modernity, however, is – as mentioned by Lewis – the underlying philosophy of cultural development which is observable in the appreciation and application of ideas like democracy, free market, limited government, human rights, and the rule of law. Esposito admits to the fact that secularisation could not penetrate into the cultural layers of the above modernised Muslim countries. Hence, he cannot argue that the experience of those countries refutes the secularisation theory.

His fourth argument is based on the global resurgence of religion in the late twentieth century. An increasing religiosity in the political scene would be evident, he argues, considering the fact that presidents from Jimmy Carter to George Walker Bush publicly profess that they are "born again" and presidential and congressional candidates make no secret of their religious beliefs. "In the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush comfortably cited Jesus as his hero..." (Esposito, 2003d: 126). Esposito goes further,

²⁰ This term will be elaborated later in this chapter under *Islamic Movements*.

citing from Peter L. Berger, a key figure in articulating secularisation theory, that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled 'secularisation theory' is essentially mistaken. What is now needed, Esposito suggests, is the "desecularization of society" (Esposito, 2003d: 126).

The resurgence of religiosity in the late twentieth century tended to be a popular understanding of many political philosophers, among them Huntington's view was mentioned in the introductory chapter. The religious character of US presidents, however, is not something new. Probably no US president faced controversies over his religious belief more than John F. Kennedy during the 1960 campaign. Yet, loyalty to religion in Western politics often remained a personal matter. Addressing the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Kennedy announced:

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the President – should he be Catholic – how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference, and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him, or the people who might elect him.²¹

This way of referring to religion is far from Esposito's perception that it is an all-encompassing system of thought, representing a holistic way of life. Although contemporary Western policy makers such as President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have at times referred to religious issues in their rhetoric, they never imagine the sense of association of religion and politics conveyed by Esposito.

All in all, although none of Esposito's arguments against secularism seems convincing, there is a significant element of truth in his view. That is to say, the final proposition of secularism would be that the secular pattern of Western modernity appeared to be more successful than pre-modern patterns in the West. Nevertheless, this is very a context-based proposition. No evidence has shown that it will be exclusively the successful pattern in other contexts, with different religions, within different cultures. Esposito, addressing such self-fulfilling prophecies, which is in line with the fifth principle of dualism, remarks that "[i]t was taken for granted that modernizing meant

²¹ <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkhoustonministers.html> [accessed 06/12/2007]

the progressive westernization and secularization of society: politically, economically, legally, and educationally.” In this way secular ideology tends to assert, without any evidence, that the choice faced by developing countries such as those in the Muslim world seemed to be between the polar opposites of tradition and modernity, “Mecca and mechanization” (Esposito, 2003d: 125). In practice, however, in Muslim societies secularisation not only did not work as a “bullet-train” towards modernity, but also imposed authoritarianism as well as social and economic frustrations. As Olivier Roy remarks, the irony is that in Islamic world, unlike the West, secularisation has been equal to political restriction while religion has been considered as a window to freedom (Roy, 2004: 3).

Islamic movements

In Esposito’s view, waves of modernity brought Muslims into a new paradigm in which Islamic movements have been distinguished driving forces. Facing Western modernity, a group of Muslims, later called Westernised secularists, attempted to embrace modernity and tended to follow the Western example precisely. Secularists believed that mixing religion with politics was inappropriate and regarded those who did so as manipulating Islam for political rather than religious ends (Esposito, 2005b: 228). On the other side of the spectrum, a group of conservative pious Muslims rejected and withdrew from modernity, attributing Western achievements to non-Islamic inspirations such as Christianity and the godlessness of modern Western societies. Since Islamic law is the divinely suggested path, they believed, it is not the law that must change or modernise, but society that must conform to God's will without reservation (Esposito, 2005b: 229). This group isolated and preferred to take no action but to refuse modern life, especially in the political scene. Between these two extremes, Islamic movements emerged. Unlike Lewis, Esposito pays especial attention to these movements which by their existence utterly disprove the second principle and by their variety refute the first principle of dualism. He categorises Islamic movements in three following groups.

First is Islamic revivalism. Revivalists are activists who believe that all disasters in Muslim societies have been caused by the prevalent ignorance of the original Islam. If Muslims really followed Islamic examples, no problems would have emerged. In this regard, they do not highlight the role of the West; however, internally motivated, they concentrate on divergence of their societies from the straight path of Islam. This category includes early revivalists such as Arabian Muhammad bin Abd Al-Wahhab (1703-1792), Algerian Muhammad Ali bin al-Sanusi (1787-1859), Mahdi Sudani (1848-1885), Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1702-1762), and Indian Sayyid Ahmad Barelewi (1786-1831). They found their Islamic societies going into decline. Their diagnosis proved that the main illness in both individual and social levels was leaving the genuine Islamic path which was symbolised in the prophetic community of Medina. All insisted that the dynamism of the reinterpretation of Islamic sources (*ijtihad*) should be established again and non-Islamic behaviour and institutions must be removed from Islamic societies. They believed that religion should be integrated into state and society, a majority pursued their goal by holy struggle (*jihad*) and a minority sought to go through peaceful reform (Esposito, 2005b: 115-125).

The second category is Islamic modernism. Modernists attempt to respond to the cultural and political waves of Western colonialism and imperialism. They assert that there is no contradiction between Islam and the modern sciences. In their view, since Islam originally appealed to reason and rationality, Muslims should integrate the fruits of Western sciences, not via blind imitation as secularists suggest, but through a sophisticated selection. This category includes modernists such as Iranian Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), his disciple, Egyptian Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Syrian Rashid Rida (1865-1935) – in the first period of his intellectual life – , Indian Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817- 1898), and Muhammad Iqbal (1875-1938). They shared with revivalists in their belief in the necessity of reinterpretation and reform but their main ambition was to find Islamic answers for contemporary questions raised after facing Western modernity. Most of them personally witnessed the development of the Western societies and their increasing global influence. Modernists believe that Islam, a comprehensive way of life that was able to manage a glorious civilisation for several centuries, has the capacity to adopt modernity without much difficulty. In this process,

they argue, the major obstacle is the historical understanding of jurists rather than genuine Islamic teachings (Esposito, 2005b: 125-148).

The third group, called Islamic neo-revivalists, believe that there is no need to import anything from the West or any other civilisation; Islam has everything on its own.²² This group is to varying degrees anti-Western to the extent that some of them accused the West of being the main source of all disasters. Unlike modernism that is mainly an intellectual movement, neo-revivalism includes structured activist organisations with educational and welfare programs, like the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) founded by Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) in 1928 and Pakistani Islamic Society (*Jamaat-islami*) established by Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979) in 1941. Although their holistic vision of Islam is the same as Islamic modernism, they totally reject the Western pattern of modernity, believing that Islamic thought is self-sufficient in creating an appropriate modern pattern for Muslim societies. As we saw with Sayyid Qutb, they undermine Western models by promoting one-sided attacks on the illnesses of the Western culture (prostitution, alcoholism, high crime rates, sexual promiscuity). Unlike modernism, neo-revivalism ignores the fact that the inherited Islamic legal system was mainly affected by historical context and human reasoning. Nevertheless, their insistence on an Islamic identity, consistent with traditional understanding of Islam, has been welcomed by a majority of their societies (Esposito, 2005b: 149-156).

A minority of Islamic neo-revivalist movements, Esposito submits, tended towards radicalism. Radical movements go beyond revivalists principles and often operate according to two basic assumptions. First, like other dualists, they believe that Islam and the West are locked in an ongoing battle. Second, Islam is not simply an ideological alternative for Muslim societies but a theological and political imperative. Therefore, Muslims who hesitate, remain apolitical, or resist are no longer to be regarded as

²² Unlike a popular usage, Esposito rejects 'fundamentalism' as an expressive term for describing this branch of Islamic movements. He argues in three ways: (i) all Muslims, like other believers, rely on the fundamentals of their religion; (ii) the American understanding of the term 'fundamentalism' is tied to a literalist understanding of Bible, an understanding which does not fit political Islam that more often than not does not avoid harnessing modern education and technologies; (iii) the term shows a sort of radicalism, yet it is not true for the majority of Islamic activists. Accordingly, he suggests 'neo-revivalism' for describing Islamic groups which are frequently called by other analysts fundamentalists (Esposito, 1999a, 5-6).

Muslims. They are like Western infidels, atheists or unbelievers, enemies of God against whom all true Muslims must wage *jihad* (Esposito, 1999a: 17). By calling radicals a deviant minority as well as by mentioning their extreme view against their fellow Muslims, here again Esposito attempts to oppose the fourth principle of dualism.

Esposito's analysis of Islamic movements can be summarised in the following points. These contain invaluable insights into contemporary political Islam and show how many critical facts were dismissed by Lewis.

- Diversity and dynamism are the main principles. The variety of Islamic activist groups and experiences, Esposito argues, are a testimony to the flexibility of Islam, and particularly political Islam. This diversity underscores the problem of terminology in Western discourse, the extent to which simplistic labels can become an obstacle to understanding. Islamic politics must be viewed within specific contexts: far from being a monolithic entity, it manifests a rich diversity of leaders and forms (Esposito, 1999a: 207-8).
- In contrast to the fourth principle of dualism, Islam, by no means, is equal to radicalism. As a common theme through his works, Esposito supports this thesis in a variety of forms. Four examples may suffice: despite the contemporary media image of political Islam, radicalism has been a minor tendency (Esposito, 2005a); "mainstream activists versus violent radical revolutionaries" (Esposito, 1999a: 207); we should distinguish between "a radical fringe and the mainstream" (Esposito, 1999a: 239); the militant groups "remain a distinct minority voice in society" (Esposito, 1999a: 148). Furthermore, he believes that Islamic revivalism is far broader than its mere political dimension. As the violent actions of a minority of radicals should not obscure the moderate activities of the majority, he argues, so too the breadth of the personal aspect of Islamic revivalism should not be overshadowed by its political dimensions (Esposito, 2005b: 251).
- Radicalism is a real danger which is primarily caused by domestic oppression. Although he supports that radicalism is a minor tendency, he observes that Islamic organisations, as history has shown, can move easily from the social to

the political and when circumstances warrant even to revolutionaries (Esposito, 2005b: 250). Studying cases of Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Algeria, he shows that the radicalisation of Islamic movements, instead of being inspired by Islam, is in response to government manipulation of the political system, suppression, or violence (Esposito, 1999a: 142, 152, 171, 187). Origins of Islamic radicalism, its ideologies, development, tactics, and agendas, though religiously justified, are often the product of political and economic concrete factors as much as a theological-ideological worldview (Esposito, 1999a: 276).

- Islamic movements usually enjoy the opportunity of being an alternative in countries void of political alternative solutions to degenerate secular ruling elites. Their voices for political liberalisation and social change, Esposito argues, often represent the only viable alternative to the present political system (Esposito, 1999a: 209). Islamic organisations and parties constitute the only credible voice and vehicle for opposition in relatively closed governments of their counties (Esposito, 1999a: 288).
- Being highly motivated, with a clear sense of purpose and commitment Islamic movements have shown themselves to be usually successful at the micro level (Esposito, 1999a: 208-9). This characteristic can be seen by studying the cases of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Hamas of Palestine, Hezbollah of Lebanon, and AK of Turkey (Esposito, 1999a: 104, 281, 156, 201).
- A sense of political independence and ideological separation from the West is prevalent among all Islamic movements. Although they vary in their attitudes towards the West, “[a]ll advocate independence from the West and the East politically, economically, and culturally” (Esposito, 1999a: 210).
- Islamic movements have tended to be more specific about what they are against than what they are for. Their lack of a well developed agenda, their broad and vague solutions, in addition to the fact that they would lack personnel, models (political, economic, legal), and experience reinforce the possibility of considering them as a destructive force, and thus, as a threat. Although they have often been able to identify and mobilise opposition against a common enemy, Esposito argues, once successful, internal power struggle

and problems quickly emerge in defining and implementing an Islamic system of government. Islamic movements continue to be challenged to move beyond slogans and vague promises and to produce viable answers to concrete political and socioeconomic problems. They need to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic beliefs and institutions and the socio-political realities of the contemporary world to be successful problem solvers, not just social critics (Esposito, 1999a: 268). After all, “serious questions” on Islamic movements, Esposito believes, remain unsolved (Esposito, 1999a: 269).

- As Esposito's favourite movement appears to be Islamic modernism, his favourite activists, it seems, are reformists who prefer to work within the political system rather than pursuing a revolutionary path towards an Islamic state (Esposito, 1999a: 153). His view will be more evident considering his appreciation of Ghannoushi who talks about institutional reform rather than violent revolution, about change from below rather than the imposition of an Islamic system from above, about Islamic reform rather than the implementation of traditional Islamic law (Esposito, 1999a: 167). Esposito thinks that the success or failure of political Islam is not so much measured by whether or not an Islamic state is established, but rather the influence of Islamic values on Muslim societies. In Muslim societies now, he argues, Islamic values and principles have become more and more institutionalised. This is what he calls “the quiet revolution” that took place. While everybody was looking for a “violent revolution”, mainstream Islam in societies such as Egypt could quietly produce an alternative elite and alternative institutions and change society from below (Esposito, 2003c).
- Islamic movements are urging a turn toward “ballots not bullets” (Esposito, 2005a). His optimism seems in the opposite direction of the pessimism propagated by Lewis who predicts confrontation and clash. To varying degrees in recent years, Esposito argues, most Islamic movements have emphasised change not through violence but through peaceful democratic ways by political and social transformation of society (Esposito, 1999a: 210). If much of the 1980s was dominated by fears of Iran’s export of revolutionary Islam, a decade later, Islamically oriented candidates were elected as mayors and

parliamentarians in countries as diverse as Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. They served in cabinet-level posts and as speakers of national assemblies, Prime Ministers in Turkey and Pakistan, Deputy Prime Ministers in Malaysia, and as the first democratically elected president in Indonesia (Esposito, 2005a).

- In practice, Islamic modernism, Esposito's favourite tendency, usually loses to Islamic traditionalism which wins the minds and hearts of mainstream Muslims. "This is understandable," Esposito argues, "since most Muslims were raised on these traditional reinterpretations" (Esposito, 2005, 241). In Muslim societies, traditionalism is predominant to the extent that when modernists come to power, they prefer to act in a traditionalistic way, forgetting their previous modern views. As an example, Esposito refers to Hasan Turabi who "exemplifies these tensions and contradictions" (Esposito, 2005, 245). Although Islamic modernism has successfully given a sense of confidence to Muslim societies that Islam is compatible with modern reform, and although Islamic modernism could productively enter modern ideas and values in Islamic discourse, it failed to "produce organizations to pass on, develop and implement their ideas in a sustained manner" (Esposito, 2003d: 78). Nowhere is this problem more evident than in the tendency of many of their disciples to turn toward a more secular path. Taha Husayn is a prime example of this tendency, as is Saad Zaghlul, the great Egyptian Nationalist leader (Esposito, 1999a: 59). Regarding Islamic law, while Islamic modernism occasionally and partly succeeded in making some reforms, Esposito believes that it has failed to make a productive system of modern Islamic law acceptable to mainstream Muslims who were mainly influenced by traditional Islamic jurists (*ulema*). In fact, the proposed reform in Islamic law is often "superficial and piecemeal" and because of the considerable resistance to reform, compromises often seemed necessary (Esposito, 2005b: 148). After all, Islamic modernism, being "primarily an intellectual movement" (Esposito, 1999a: 59), which was then inherited by political activists who "have not had the leisure to produce a systematic interpretation or reformulation of Islam" (Esposito, 2005b: 241), has remained *a minor tendency* of the Muslim world. In conclusion, Esposito

believes, “the resurgence of Islam has often tended to be a process of revivalism or restoration instead of reform through reinterpretation and reformulation of tradition” (Esposito, 2005b: 235).

If Lewis’s perspective represents a nineteenth century positivistic and reductionistic judgement, Esposito’s represents a multicoloured illustration of a complex reality in a way similar to other branches of social studies in the late twentieth century. His attempts to understand Islamic movements sympathetically which, in one way or another, counter the West, seem to be unusual among Western analysts. His philosophy in comparison with Lewis’s, no doubt, to a great extent purifies Western Islamic studies of dualism.

However, although Esposito has been able successfully to refute four out of five principles of dualism, the prism of religion finally leads his perspective to a sort of dualism. Perhaps influenced by his mentor’s idea of the Islamisation of knowledge,²³ or probably misinformed by the rhetoric of many Islamic movements who overestimate their religious identity next to their disillusionment with the West, or perhaps misled by those who merely seek legitimacy under religious slogans, Esposito overestimates, and therefore, expects too much from religion and from religious movements. Taking into account the actual role of religion which is only one among other social, cultural, economic, and political factors, it alone cannot offer alternative elites, paradigms and models for all branches of knowledge. At best, religious movements can be supposed, among other influential players, properly to give their comments on existing paradigms and models, based on which Muslim societies, using all their capacities, may produce better solutions, or in Popperian terms, better conjectures. No evidence is mentioned to show that the religious factor, however visible and vocal, is capable and authentic enough to be equated with the whole civilisation or can alone change and develop the civilisation.

²³ Historically speaking, Muslims never put themselves at the risk of reinventing the wheel. As witnesses of history, they have been adopting all sorts of knowledge and try to enhance them in their cultural framework. The case is similar in politics. Fuller observes: “political Islam cannot properly be viewed as an alternative to other ideologies such as democracy, fascism, socialism, liberalism and communism. It cannot put anywhere clearly on an ideological spectrum. It is far more useful to see it as a cultural variant, an alternative vocabulary in which to dress any one of these ideological trends” (Fuller, 2003: 193). So we have to be careful that Islamic knowledge is not a distinct brand, but just a cultural variant.

The case of women's rights in Islam is another example where the role of religion is exaggerated and too much is expected from religious movements. Unlike Lewis, who attempts to accuse Islam, even in its formative period, of having an unjust approach to women's rights, Esposito argues that the Quran introduced substantial reforms affecting the position of women by creating new regulations and abrogating many customary practices (Esposito, 2005b: 94). In this regard, he answers some popular Western questions about the position of women in Islam in two ways. First, he attempts to interpret the Quranic verses in their contexts. For instance, the verse which authorises polygamy should be understood in a society where polygamy had no limit and then was restricted by the Quran to only four wives provided that the man be able to deal between his wives justly. Similarly, verses that consider the portion of inheritance of women as half of men's must be appreciated in a society where women previously had no right of inheritance. Likewise, regulating family law in a way that gives men the exclusive right of divorce must be judged considering the situation in which divorce was by men's will without any regulation. Only by considering the context of pre-Islamic Arabia, Esposito argues, can the significance of the Quranic reforms be understood (Esposito, 2005b: 94). Second, he argues that many customs, now prevalent among Muslim societies, were not originally Islamic but were imported from other societies. "Nothing illustrates more the interaction of the Quranic prescription and customary practice", he observes, "than the development of the veiling (hijab, burqa, or chador) and seclusion (purdah, harem) of woman in early Islam. Both are customs assimilated from the conquered Persian and Byzantine societies and viewed as appropriate expressions of Quranic norms and values. The Quran does not stipulate veiling or seclusion" (Esposito, 2005b: 98).

Coming to modern times, however, Esposito admits, despite the relative success of family law reform in the formative period of Islam, many issues were avoided and remained unresolved (Esposito, 2005b: 146). This time, his perspective seems to be in line with Lewis who supports that the Islamic approach to women's rights has been one of the most substantial differences with the West and has been one of the greatest barriers to modernity. Esposito's religious approach seems to be unable to rectify critical issues on women's rights. He admits that bitter debates continue to occur over legislation that would adopt traditional laws regarding women rights. Two

examples are counting women's testimony in court as half that of men and providing less compensation for a crime committed against a woman than a man (Esposito, 2005b: 140-1). To his eyes this time there is a dramatic difference between West and East and therefore dualism appears to be inevitable.

However, why do all advances towards modernity have to be inspired primarily and exclusively by religion and religious movements? Surely, it was not the case in Western experience of modernity. Therefore, what is the rationale behind insisting that every problem should be resolved primarily via a religious solution? In fact, reforms can be innovated by many other factors, and once institutionalised, religion have no way but to adopt it, either as it is or by some modifications. Even people's religious understanding depends on their level of literacy, civility and experience. An example for reform through non-religious ways is ironically related to the many rights of women. Influenced by the West, many legal reforms, voting rights, and educational and employment opportunities have changed Muslim women's status. Subsequently and with some delay, these changes were adopted by religious institutions. Iran, an Islamic country where wearing *hijab* has been obligatory since the Revolution, shows an interesting development in women's higher educations. As mentioned in the first chapter, the ratio of female students of Iranian universities to males has increased dramatically from 43% in 1997 to 55% in 2005. This development, which was not primarily motivated by any religious authority, was produced due to changes in social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances. In future Iran, 55% female in comparison with 45% male professionals, will be able to eliminate many gender disparities, by any available means, including religious justifications. Recently (5/04/2009) the speaker of the Iranian Cabinet announced that the legal compensation for killing a woman in the course of a car accident has been made equal to that of a man.²⁴ In order to make this legal reform, the government did not go through any religious route which seemed blocked. Rather, insurance companies were obliged to maintain the equality of compensation in their contracts.²⁵

²⁴ See <http://tabnak.ir/fa/pages/?cid=42159> [accessed 23/05/2009]

²⁵ As another example the Iranian Parliament recently (26/01/2009) changed the law and gave more equal rights of inheritance to women. This was just by selecting a less prevalent religious attitude (*fatwa*) to the issue. Although both attitudes were available since the first Civil Code legislated about 80 years ago, the change of the law by applying the interpretation which gives women more equal rights is

Another example, also noted in the previous chapter, is slavery which was abolished in Islamic world without any primary religious motivation, and even without any religious authentication. Subsequently, however, religious justifications were produced, highlighting the negative aspects of slavery in Islamic law even from its formative period. Thus, although the religious factor must adopt and justify changes brought by modernity, it must not be overestimated and other factors in play must be considered as well. The case is similar in politics.

Islam and Politics

Islamic political theory

To avoid dualistic outcomes of the Lewis brand, Esposito attempts to illustrate the complexity of Islamic political theory and practice, distinguishing between ideals of the faith and what has happened on the ground. The political and social infrastructure of the Umayyad and Abbasid “empires”,²⁶ Esposito remarks, did not grow out of the interpretations and applications of Islamic sources but rather from the *ad hoc* policies of successive regimes, which drew heavily from Byzantine and then Sasanid practice (Esposito, 1998: 29). In this way, Esposito highlights the conflict between the ideal and the real in Muslim political history. Unlike Lewis who considers the Islamic caliphate, which has been in practice a sort of despotism, as the ultimate hope of Islamism, Esposito argues that Islamic theories on the caliphate developed not as deductions or speculations on the nature of Islamic government but rather as justifications for a political reality often at odds with normative prophetic Islam (Esposito, 1998: 29). Accordingly, unlike Lewis, he believes that the caliphate was a human solution not a divine instruction. With the establishment of the Umayyad Dynasty, he argues, the 'golden age' of Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs came to an end and the caliphate became “an absolute monarchy”. Muslims regarded the period of Muhammad and the first generation of companions or elders as normative, but after that the political system was never sanctified (Esposito, 2005b: 38).

rooted in non-religious factors. Obviously, because this change was not motivated by any religious debate. See <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=825782> [accessed 07/02/2009]

²⁶ By calling them empires Esposito shows that they were not Islamically oriented divine systems of governance, while Lewis by usually calling them caliphs implies otherwise.

This approach helps Esposito to rationalise the capacity of Islamic political theory for development and enhancement in a modernist way. To this aim the first step is to accept that while the period of the state of Medina remained the ideal paradigm, theologically and historically there was no single, detailed model of an Islamic state to be applicable for all different contexts (Esposito, 1997). Accordingly, all historical systems of political Islam were just human-made models. Islamic ideals, being usually at odds with those historical models, could generate a paradigm of seeking for more developed systems of Islamic governance. Such an approach, far better than that of Lewis, is able to explain the tradition of political reform in Islam. Furthermore, it opens an easy way to hypothesising Islamic democracy.

Islam and Democracy

Esposito is aware that the interrelation between Islam and democracy is the main source of contemporary dualism between the West and Islam. The core of the vision of an Islamic threat, he remarks, is the belief that Islam is inherently antidemocratic or at best, does not welcome democracy (Esposito, 1999a: 240). Discussing the problem of minorities under Islamic states, he adds that if many Muslims ignore these issues or simplistically talk of tolerance and human rights in Islam, discussion of these questions in the West is often reduced to two contrasting blocs – the West, which preaches and practices the freedom and tolerance, and Islam which does not (Esposito, 1999a: 245).

Esposito holds that Islam has the capacity to integrate a democratic system of governance. In contrast to both Muslim secularists and rejectionists Islamic modern reformers have suggested ways to reinterpret key traditional Islamic concepts and institutions – consultation (*shura*) of rulers with subjects, consensus (*ijma*) of the community, reinterpretation (*ijtihad*), and the public welfare (*maslaha*). Reformers operate within Islamic discourse, and aim to show how Islamic ideas can be reinterpreted to support forms of parliamentary governance, representative elections, and religious reform (Esposito, in Abu el Fadl, 2003: 96).

For Esposito the interplay between Islam and democracy is an internal and domestic issue, which finally should be resolved from within Islam. The essential point, often

missing from popular discussion, he notes, is that the debate about the virtues of democracy is not simply a debate between Islam and the West, but a debate within Islam itself (Esposito, 2002b). This attitude is twofold, both of which parts are common themes for Esposito. First, Muslims have no uniform view towards democracy. On the contrary, with respect to democracy a diversity of voices within the Islamic world are now debating issues of political participation (Esposito, in Abu el Fadl, 2003: 96). The political records of Islamo-democratic experiments have been diverse and incongruent. What is important is not that they are all consistent but that they are part of a process of real attempts of reconciling Islam and democracy (Esposito, 1999a: 243). Second, democracy can be only theorised and rationalised from within Islam. That is to say, democracy cannot be imported as a ready-made package from the outside either peacefully or by military force. All are challenged to understand that political liberalisation or democratisation is a process that needs patience – it requires building institutions and cultivations a political culture and values for strong civil society. This process entails experimentation and is unavoidably accompanied by trial and error (Esposito, 1999a: 288).

In addition, Esposito holds that despite Western politicians' rhetoric, Western powers have no real desire to foster democracy in the Middle East. As the track records of the Clinton and Bush administrations have thus far demonstrated, he argues, the strategic interests of America preclude any real desire to promote democracy in the Middle East (Esposito, 2002d). Sometimes Esposito goes further and considers many Western governments as real opponents of democratisation of Islamic countries. In his view, both autocratic rulers in the Muslim world and their Western allies fear any real democracy in the region. For leaders in the West, democracy raises the possibility of old and reliable friends or client states being transformed into more independent and less predictable nations which might threaten Western interests. As a result stability in the Middle East has often been defined in terms of preservation of dictator allies (Esposito, 1999a: 241).

In Esposito's view, the real advocate of democracy in Islamic countries is Islamic modernism. Modernist intellectuals and activists have produced a growing body of literature that re-examines Islamic traditions considered to be compatible with democracy (Esposito, 1999a: 247). However, it seems that Esposito cannot finally

resolve the dilemma successfully. In the final analysis, his perspective on religion proves to be unable to provide a convincing answer to the problem of Islamic democracy. He considers the rights of minorities in Islamic societies as the main barrier to democracy. He notes: "A major issue facing Islamic movements is their ability, if in power, to tolerate diversity and political dissent. The status of minorities in Muslim majority areas and freedom of speech remain serious issues" (Esposito, 1999a: 245). He adds: "Without a reinterpretation of the classical Islamic legal doctrine regarding non-Muslim minorities as 'protected people' (*dhimmi*), an ideologically oriented Islamic state would be at best *a limited democracy*" (Esposito, 1999a: 245). (emphasis added) However, such a prospective reinterpretation has not been raised yet and if it will do in future, there is no reason that it has a greater chance for popularity among Muslim masses than other modernist reinterpretations.

Again I should raise my criticism that historically religion was not the sole solver of all political dilemmas of Islamic world, nor was it the explanation of all Muslims' actions. For instance, based on Islamic law, Hindus are not counted as a protected minority. Therefore, in Islamic law they cannot enjoy even minimal rights of citizenship. Yet, as Lewis observed, they have been living under Muslim rulers of the Indian Subcontinent for centuries. Aziz Ahmad explains this historical fact:

In the context of the less liberal Turco-Persian conquest of north-west India it has to be remembered that Mahmūd's iconoclasm was aimed against images and not men. He regarded administration of the state as a practical proposition not necessarily related to religion. While he sacked Hindu temples he also mobilized three Hindu divisions in his forces and at least three Hindu generals, Sundar, Nāth, and Tilak rose to positions of high responsibility in the Ghaznawid army (Ahmad, 1964: 101).

Although such a phenomenon could not be explained by a purely Islamic legal argument, for centuries it has been among the historical facts of Islamic world. Thus, there is no reason to limit ourselves to the religious discourse, particularly that of Islamic law (the focal point of Esposito's concern in minorities' rights), to pave the way to political development. Being traditional and conservative, Islamic law appears unable to be a successful precursor to development and advancement. Of course, it could be a good follower, as mentioned in the abolishment of slavery. Later in this

chapter, I will give further explanations for the dualistic impact of highlighting the legal essence of Islam. Such a holistic approach on religion is odd especially with Esposito who offers an extensive analysis on the contemporary politics of Islamic countries. He should be aware that if the religion were the sole director of the play, such huge diversity and dynamism that he propagates could not emerge.

Islamic countries

In his narrative on Muslim countries, Esposito again attempts to illustrate how multifaceted, diverse, and complex the reality of Islam is. He often tries to go beyond popular narratives broadcasted in headlines which more often than not label Muslims as fundamentalist and terrorist. Through studying Islamic countries, he critically evaluates many different types of political Islam. While he usually admires reformist readings of Islam, he seriously disapproves of the self-serving idiosyncratic Islam of Qaddafi; (Esposito, 1999a: 85) the opportunistic Islam of Nimeiri who defined Islam “on a weekly basis to suit his needs and whims” (Esposito, 1999a: 85); the military Islam of al-Bashir (Esposito, 1999a: 89); the instrumental Islam of Sadat and Nasser for whom Islam “did not determine but was determined by other political and economic priorities” (Esposito, 1999a: 96); and Ayatollah Khomeini’s dualistic Islam in which “the world was divided into two groups: oppressors (the United States and the West in general, as well as the Soviet Union) and oppressed (Muslims and the Third World)” (Esposito, 1999a: 113).

In Esposito’s view, the resurgence of Islam in Muslim countries must be traced back to diverse regional and global factors. The root causes of Islamic resurgence, he observes, were many, dependant on each Muslim country's context, yet there were four factors in common: (i) an identity crisis; (ii) disillusionment with the West; (iii) the new found sense of pride and power emerged from Arab-Israel war, oil embargo, and Islamic Revolution of Iran; (iv) a quest for a more authentic identity rooted in an Islamic past (Esposito, 2005b: 160-3).²⁷ Especially, Islamic identity was reinforced because of the failure of secularist elites whose Western originated patterns demonstrated that they

²⁷ For another but similar categorisation see Esposito, 1999a: 12.

were incapable of satisfying Muslim nations. Both Western capitalism and Marxist socialism were rejected as being part of the problem rather than the solution, he argues (Esposito, 1999a: 13).

Esposito examines the Islamic resurgence in major Islamic countries, analysing the political power exchange between secular and Islamic groups, the role of authoritarian governments as well as Islamised tyrants, the position of laity and clergy, the function of democratic elections as well as the critical role of the West and Israel. He adequately highlights the difference between those who consider Islam as a part of national culture and those who own a holistic approach to Islam. Moreover, he properly demonstrates that though at first Islam seems to unite a Muslim nation, at further stages different reinterpretations of Islam, as in the case of Pakistan, lead to seemingly endless divisions among society. A review of Islam's role in Pakistan shows the diverse, shifting and often contending interpretations and usages of religion as well as its very potential to divide rather than unite (Esposito, 2005b: 196). There has never been a consensus on what that "Islamic republic", a part of the official title of Pakistan, means at the level of national ideology and policy (Esposito, 2005b: 202).

Unlike Lewis, Esposito pays special attention to the first democratic victory of Islamism in Algeria. In this context, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) emerged as a political actor. Under Islamist leaders, such as Abbas Madani (b. 1931) and Ali Belhadj (b. 1965), FIS promoted an Islamic alternative. Like other Islamists before taking power, through preaching and stating general principles, they guaranteed that an Islamic solution could resolve all social, economic, and political problems of Algeria. FIS in its short time of activity presented a successful image of social and welfare services. A network of mosques was employed and traditional layers of clerics and laymen were activated to participate in the election for FIS. Although it seemed unbelievable, FIS won the municipal and regional elections of 1990 with 65% of the vote (Esposito, 1999a: 171-82). The government responded strictly, Esposito adds. In 1991 it changed the election law. Madani and Belhadj as well as about five thousands of their supporters were arrested. This, however, did not benefit the military government. In 1991, when Algeria held its first parliamentary elections, FIS, despite all restrictions, won the vote in the first round. Just a day before the second round, in which it was anticipated that FIS would win two-thirds to 80 percent of the vote, the country came under a military

regime. If not in form, there was in fact a military coup (Esposito, 1999a: 183). The first victory of the Islamists in a democratic election, he argues, could be tolerated neither by a domestic ruling layer nor by their Western allies. The government's aggressive suppression penetrated Algeria for a few years leading to a spiral of violence. Attacks from the army and counterattacks from radicalised Islamists cost, as claimed, thirty thousand lives. Algeria was the first country in which political Islam won by ballot. Yet it was subsequently countered by the bullet (Esposito, 1999a: 185). "In the face of the repression much of the world stood silent. The conventional wisdom had been blind-sided" (Esposito, 1994).

Nowhere is the contrast between Lewis's and Esposito's perspective more visible than in the case of Turkey. Unlike Lewis who admires the secular model of Turkey as a leading exemplar for other Muslim nations, Esposito believes in the failure of radical secularism of Kemalism which represents a shadow of "the positivism of the West" (Esposito, 1999a: 192, 205). Given their militant secularism rooted in a nineteenth-century rationalism, he argues, they viewed the recourse to religion as retrogressive and anti-modern, a retreat to the Dark Ages and a threat to their power and lifestyle (Esposito, 1999a: 207). In Turkey, the notion of secularism is not simply the separation of Church and State, he adds. Rather, they have a negative attitude towards religion itself. The Turkish notion of 'laiklik' is imported from the French model and is anti-religious, whereas in America the separation of church and state means that no religion is privileged and all religious people and nonbelievers have equal space (Esposito, 2006c). Wrong analyses on modern Turkey, however, have been prevalent among US policy makers. For more than a decade, it was almost part of American policy to promote the Turkish secular model. What they meant was that they wanted to promote secularism throughout the Muslim world, without even understanding that Turkey's secularism is not the American notion of secularism, it is anti-religious (Esposito, 2006c). Esposito's liberal approach in contrast with the French '*laïcité*' is evident when he remarks: "What's ironic here is that you will find that secularists will say their fear is that if people who are in power are Islamically oriented, they're going to be forced to wear a head scarf, and somehow that violates liberalism, etc. But they have had no problem for years with the fact that they force women not to be able to wear a head scarf" (Esposito, 2006c).

Instead of Turkish secularism, Esposito supports Turkish Islamism as a good example for other Muslim nations. Their political experience, as a result of their maturation, their effectively responding to the needs of society, and their willingness to work with Europe, with the United States, and the international community while retaining Turkey's independence, provide lessons to be learnt by other Islamic nations (Esposito, 1999a: 199; Esposito, 2005; Esposito, 2006c).

Israel

Another major difference between Lewis and Esposito is in their approach to Israel. As I noted on his chapter, Lewis apparently sets aside his self-claimed objectivity when he talks about Israel and in particular its negative impact on interrelations between the West and Islam. Esposito, however, frequently and appropriately highlights the role of Israel in exaggerating the Islamic threat in the West on the one hand, and in crystallising a regional hatred towards America in particular and towards the West in general on the other. As a result Israel enjoys a unique role in reconstructing and institutionalising a sense of distrust between the two civilisations (Esposito, 2003b: 88).

Esposito explains that fear of Islamic fundamentalism, like fear of communism, has made consequences. Muslim tyrants have joined Israel in warning of a regional and international Islamic threat in their bid to win Western aid and justify their repression of Islamists (Esposito, 1994). The role of Israel, which enjoys an influential lobby in the United States and is supported by the Western media, is critical. The Israeli government, no longer able to present itself as a bulwark against the spread of communism in the Middle East (a role that during the Cold War powerfully justified substantial American aid), found in Political Islam not only a domestic threat but also a new, more dangerous global threat (Esposito, 1999a: 218, 223). Such a threat is overstated by a new class of American experts on Islam who "are not arguing for what is in the best interests of America. They are, rather, arguing for what is in the best interests of Israel" (Esposito, 2003c). In this respect, Esposito underscores the role of Western media. While average Americans might see the latest explosive headline

event such as a spectacular terrorist attack in Israel, they rarely have the opportunity to look at images of Israeli violence and brutality, the disproportionate fire power, the number of Palestinian deaths and casualties and the use of American weapons against Palestinian civilians (Esposito, 2003d: 154).

Unlike Lewis, Esposito does not ignore the role of unconditional American support for Israel in spreading a popular hatred of the US among Muslim populations. Analysing Islamic neo-revivalism and reformism as well as political conflicts between the West and Islam from oil embargoes (Esposito, 2005b: 160) to the Gulf War (Esposito, 1999a: 254-255) and September 11 (Esposito, 2003d: 23), he often considers the significant costs that have been paid by the West because of its unconditional support for Israel. Seemingly he aims at Lewis' rhetoric when he remarks: "While some in the West downplay or deny the significance of the Palestinian issue, surveys continue to verify its significance to Muslims globally" (Esposito, 2003d: 154).

Esposito does his job well, judging the case of the democratically elected Palestinian government of Gaza in 2006. In that year, despite Hamas' victory in democratic and free elections, the United States and Europe failed to give the party full recognition and support. Esposito condemns such "Democratic Exceptionalism" which subordinates democracy, as a Western value, to some Western interests. He wisely advises the United States and Europe to be prepared to condemn Israel's disproportionate use of force, collective punishment, and other violations of international law. Finally in a brilliant anti-dualist rhetoric, he adds, "most fundamental and important is the recognition that widespread anti-Americanism among mainstream Muslims and Islamists results from what the United States in particular does – its policies and actions – not its way of life, culture or religion" (Esposito, 2006a). By this he utterly contrasts Huntington's rhetoric that regards the otherness of the West and Islam as something essential.

Clash of Civilisations

Esposito is utterly against the theory of the clash of civilisations. Instead of such political prophecies which are based on simplistic and ready-made answers to

complicated problems, Esposito maintains, our challenge is to better understand the history and realities of the Muslim world and to recognise the diversity and the many faces of Islam (Esposito, 1999a: 289). Huntington's theory is created as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" which put the West at risk of obscuring deficiencies of its foreign policies (Esposito, 1999a: 289). In fact, anti-Western movements are more often motivated by objection to specific Western policies and actions than by mere civilisational hostilities (Esposito, 1999a: 271). Esposito rather sees beyond such dualist philosophies imperial ambitions of the West. He supports the view that just because Western leaders think their interests may be threatened by less predictable Muslim democracies, they want to justify their actions in support of regional tyrants by philosophies which, in line with Western interests, rationalise essential characteristics of Islam (Esposito, 1994).

Unlike Huntington, who wants to show that world politics in the post-Cold War era has been usually shaping based on cultural and religious tendencies of parties involved, Esposito shows that the real, concrete, grounded, and workable issues on both sides, including psychological legacies, have been playing the main role. Through some case studies in the Muslim world, Esposito attempts to provide some evidence to show the theoretical fragility of "the clash of civilisations". Three examples may suffice here. First, comparing the relations of the West with Sudan under Nimeiri and then under al-Bashir, both of which were Islamised governments, he concludes an interesting point. That is the different relationship of the two Sudanese Islamist governments with the West reveals the extent to which politics, not religion, determines the nature of states as well as their perceived threat to the West (Esposito, 1999a: 92). Second, analysing the foreign policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he highlights the fact that Iran's foreign policy is more pragmatic than ideological, driven more by national interest than religious ideology (Esposito, 1999a: 121). Third, studying Egypt under Sadat and Libya under Qaddafi, he comes to the conclusion that while Islam can influence a Muslim nation's attitude toward greater cooperation or foreign aid, in most cases the overriding influence will be national interest (Esposito, 1999a: 126). This also accounts for the diversity of relationships between Muslim countries and the West.

In an article published on the American presidential race of 2004, Esposito sharply criticises Bush administration's foreign policy which seems to be based merely on a dualistic worldview. In the opposite direction of Lewis, Esposito critically questions the result of *tough actions* of post-9/11. The American-led war on global terrorism, he argues, has not destroyed al-Qaeda, limited the growth of extremist groups or lessened the threat of global terrorism (Esposito, 2004). In this case he accuses an "unholy alliance" of neoconservatives and the militant Christian right, in an attempt to implement a "New American century". American democratic principles and values have been sacrificed to a militant neoconservative ideology to expand America's global imperial power (Esposito, 2004). The sad thing is that there are people who want to patrol "our discourse, our vision of America," who want to shut this down and at times America feels under siege, he cries (Esposito, 2003c).

Esposito compares US contemporary foreign policies with those of European colonialism. Before the war in Iraq started, unlike Lewis, he tried his best to discourage policy-makers from involving America in this messy game. The removal and replacement of Saddam with a handpicked American ruler, he predicted, and the measures necessary to both hold Iraq together and guarantee US influence in Iraq, would mirror and recall the policies of European colonialism and signal a new American imperialism. As a result, the United States would be forced, at the end of the day, to support strong, authoritarian governments that would rely on their security forces, political repression, and American aid (Esposito, 2002b).

Esposito comes closer and attempts to analyse the religious and racist roots of such American policies. Observing influential lobbies in the White House, he remarks that there are different kinds of people who are part of the Christian Right but the more evangelical fundamentalists often tend to have a theology that is Zionist, deals mainly with the Restoration before the Final Coming and the Rapture. That kind of fundamentalist theology has been strong and influential in Washington, far more than most people realise (Esposito, 2002a).

Instead of such aggressive policies, Esposito suggests synthesising policies, such as 'public diplomacy' in which mutual understanding plays a major role (Esposito, 2006a). The West should win minds and hearts, and that happens through people-to-people encounters. It needs exchanges and programs on both sides to get to know and understand each other better (Esposito, 2006a). He highlights the role of Muslim Western-educated scholars and the Muslim diaspora, especially in the era of communications and ease of dialogue. Public diplomacy can occur by two-way communication and exchanges occur through scholars' and activists' travel, speaking engagements, publications, video and audio tapes, and increasingly in cyberspace (Esposito, 2005b: 269).

On many occasions, however, the American administration has shown that it is not keen on applying such policies. For Western policy makers, democracy has not been a real measure, but merely a tactic to condemn enemies. A major test for US policy on democracy, Esposito suggests, will be Iran, where a majority of the population, especially students and women, has twice voted overwhelmingly in 1998 and then in 2002 for reform by backing President Mohammad Khatami. Opposition voices have sent a clear message to hard-line clerics. However, US President Bush's axis of evil policy, Esposito predicts, set back democratic reformers in Iran. Moreover, continued pressure from neo-conservatives to "get tough" with Iran – as suggested by Lewis – plays into the hands of Ayatollah Khamenei and the hardliners (Esposito, 2005a). Esposito's prediction was perfect. The failure of reformists in Iran resulted in the victory of President Ahmadinezhad, an ultra-hardliner whose dualistic policies have provided both the West and Islam with huge extra costs.

Perhaps nowhere Lewis's and Esposito's perspectives could be compared better than in their recommendations to American policy makers on the Iranian nuclear program. As observed in the last chapter, Lewis's suggestion was based on the presumption of a barbarian mindset on the other side. His approach illustrates a genuine dualism, which could not be located anywhere but in an original Orientalist perspective. Esposito looks at this case in a far different way. Possessing nuclear weapons, he remarks, is a strong playing card for the Iranians, and that is the card their president is going to play. And of course, the line in Iran on the question of nuclear capability vis-a-vis the nuclear threat will be that Israel has nuclear capability and Israel threatens to use it, and Israel does

not comply with international inspections, so why should not Iran have it? It would be a terrible mistake for the West to threaten to hit Iran militarily to take out its nuclear capability. Making that kind of threat will mobilise all Iranians because it becomes a matter of national pride (Esposito, 2006b). When Esposito was questioned about whether MAD works in the case of Iran, taking into account that they are people who believe if they die killing an infidel, they will go to paradise, he replied, “even people that you may not like can be intelligent and rational. It doesn't mean that they're nice guys. And no Iranian leader, unless he's out of his mind, will commit an action that he knows will bring about the destruction of his country” (Esposito, 2006b). Lewis's and Esposito's perspective can be considered to realise how the war of ideas regarding dualism is at the centre of neo-Orientalism political debates.

In November 2007, National Intelligence Estimate in a report entitled *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities* showed that Esposito's analysis was more realistic.²⁸ The report judged with confidence that in the autumn of 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program which, with moderate confidence, has not been restarted as of the time of the report. So Lewis's judgement that Iran has something in store as well as his magic prophecy of a nuclear attack to Israel, based on a random correspondence of two dates, one in Islamic calendar and the other in Christian was proved to be totally wrong. Yet, Esposito's suggestion, though at first not seeming to be influential, was finally applied by American policy makers.

Islamic belief and Law

As observed in the case of Lewis, Orientalists have been facing a major criticism that they have not been adequately making a distinction between the religion of Islam and Islamic civilisation, though it had been clearly made between Christianity and Christendom. In theory, Lewis has been aware of the problem, but in practice, as discussed, he has often slipped into the same pitfall, since the third principle of dualism cannot be rejected by a dualist. The case of Esposito is more complicated. In his perspective, religion represents theories and ideals and civilisation practices and

²⁸ www.dni.gov/press_release/20071203_release.pdf [accessed 04/12/2007]

realities (Esposito, 1998: 29; 2005: 38). Mention has already been made that he adequately makes a distinction between Islamic political ideals and practices of the caliphate. Meanwhile, he is aware of the firm interrelations between religion and civilisation. He admits that the way people interpret the religion greatly depends on the social and cultural conditions which have resulted in different religious attitudes throughout history (Esposito, 2005b: 74-78).

Esposito states that careful distinction must be made between a religion and people who attribute themselves to it, particularly when they are just minorities among those who adhere to the religion. This has been applied, Esposito argues, in Christianity and Judaism as in the cases of "Puerto Rican terrorist groups in New York, the Jewish Defense League, the IRA, the Mafia, or Christian extremists calling themselves the army of God who bomb abortion clinics" (Esposito, 1999a: 239). However, such distinctions, he adds, are not as sharply drawn when dealing with Muslim extremists. Nor are the distinctions between liberation or renaissance movements and radical organisations. The situation is compounded by those who sharply contrast the Judeo-Christian tradition with Islam on such issues as peace, violence, holy war, and revenge (Esposito, 1999a: 239-40). Violence, warfare, terrorism, and injustice exist in the Muslim world, as in other places, he remarks. They have been justified on occasion in the name of Islam, as they have in the name of Christianity, Judaism, and secular ideologies such as liberalism and communism (Esposito, 1999a: 257).

Overall, while Lewis time and again equates the religion of Islam with the civilisation in the realms of ideals and practices, it seems that Esposito attempts to separate the religion at least from historical practices. However, when he comes to ideals and matters like norms and values, Esposito apparently equates the realm of religion with that of civilisation. To Esposito's holistic vision of religion, the humanitarian ideals, national ideals, liberal ideals of Islamic civilisation have to be coloured as religious ideals. For him, unlike Christianity, Islam provides "the worldview, the framework of meaning for both individual and corporate life" (Esposito, 1998: 31). Hence, Esposito's perspective could be summarised by saying that the ideals of Islamic world are completely religious, but those of the Christian West are basically secular. As mentioned earlier, this view, following the third principle of dualism, can be a fertile

land for dualism, because it considers two contradictory approaches as seemingly essential components of the West and Islam.

Esposito's overall rhetoric, however, is far more positive. For him, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all have the same root and share a good deal in common. Avoiding popular allegations which are usually attributed to Islam through Orientalist literature, Esposito illustrates that Muslims' beliefs and practices are close to those of other Abrahamic religions. Indeed, Muslims, like Christians and Jews, he remarks, are the children of Abraham, since all trace their communities back to him (Esposito, 2005b: 1). Accordingly, Islam is not a new religion with a new scripture, yet it represents the original as well as the final revelation from God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Esposito, 2005b: 18-20).

Unlike Lewis who attempts to put Christianity and Judaism, as pillars of Western culture, under a single category, while putting Islam under a different one, Esposito talks about a Judeo-Christian-Islamic culture. References merely to a 'Judeo-Christian tradition', he argues, obscure the fact that this term represents a twentieth-century understanding or interpretation of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Previously, both faiths were seen and saw each other as significantly different and separate in their outlook and values (Esposito, 1999a: 237-8). Muslims, like Jews in the past, he adds, find themselves in Western cultural contexts in which they are often regarded as completely 'other' and thus as a threat. This happened not only through ignorance of Islam or by equating it with extremism and terrorism, but also by the failing to appreciate the extent to which "Islam is part of a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition" (Esposito, 1999a: 238).

Esposito supports that in contrast to Christianity in which belief is the central factor, practice and obedience to God's will is the most visible and real essence of Islam. Accordingly, whereas theology is the most prestigious knowledge of Christianity, the most important discipline in Islamic studies is jurisprudence, the Islamic law (Esposito, 2005b: 68; 1999: 32). In addition, he notes, Islamic law has been central to Muslim identity, for it constitutes the ideal social blueprint. He observes: "Despite vast cultural differences, Islamic law has provided an underlying sense of identity, a common code of behavior for Muslim societies" (Esposito, 2005b: 75).

Studying the history of Islamic law, Esposito attempts to show that although the constitution of Islamic law was made through human interpretations, in later stages it crystallised as virtually unchangeable divine codes. The constitution period was during the first two centuries of the Abbasid rule (750 - 950). By the tenth century, Islamic law in the opinion of the *ulema*, was finalised and institutionalised. In practice, individual, independent reasoning or personal judgment was no longer deemed necessary or permissible – the door of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation) was henceforth closed (Esposito, 1998: 21-22). Islamic law, the product of an essentially dynamic and creative process, then tended to become unchangeable and fixed (Esposito, 2005b: 84).

He thinks the mentality of traditionalist *ulema* has been responsible for keeping Islam frozen and preventing it from making required changes to utilise the achievements of modern life. According to Esposito, they believe that since Islamic law is the divinely revealed path, it is not the law that must change or modernise, but society that must be adapted to the God's instructions (Esposito, 2005b: 229). Studying the *ulema's* mindset, Esposito points to an irony in their logic. Although at times they have been flexible enough to compromise and cooperate with secular rulers, when the climate changes and they come to power, as in Iran and Pakistan, they are ready to impose their rigorous interpretations on Muslim societies without any sort of flexibility and possibility of compromise (Esposito, 2005b: 229).

From Esposito's perspective, Islamic law is also the main source of an Islamic political system. Though the historical and political realities of caliphal life were often at odds with Islamic ideals, he maintains, the primary principle of political identity and social cohesion nevertheless continued to be public and popular commitment to Islamic law (Esposito, 1998: 32).²⁹ In addition, the systematic expression of the Islamic ideal, which is the central point of Islamic political thought, is originally rooted in Islamic law (Esposito, 1998: 29). Islamic scholars and jurists enjoyed an influential role in legitimising the ad hoc political order. "Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun," Esposito argues,

²⁹ Since the idealism of Islamic law was often deemed impractical, Esposito notes, governments, both because of confronting challenges of ruling a great empire and because of their desire to personal regulations, tended to legislate a set of parallel regulations with Islamic law as well as a new judicial system, i.e., the *Mazalim* (complaint) court system parallel to *Sharia* Courts. Accordingly, though in theory the *Sharia* was the only officially recognised system of law, in practice a parallel system of caliphal laws and courts existed from earliest times (Esposito, 2005b: 86). "Thus, in the name of Islam and the upholding of the *Shariah*," he argues, "the right of the sovereign to issue ordinances, not laws, was justified" (Esposito, 1998: 22-23).

“provided justifications for the acceptance of harsh political realities, mentioning that order was better than political chaos” (Esposito, 1998: 31).

In sum, Esposito makes two major assertions concerning Islamic law: first, it is central to the faith, second it is the main source of Islamic political thought. However, both these assertions seem extremely debateable. The first seems problematic in four ways. First, if we consider the Quran as the blueprint of Islamic faith, at most only seven percent of Quranic verses speak about legal issues (Saiouri, 1964: 5). Hence, law is just a minor Quranic theme. Second, even legal verses of the Quran as well as many legal *ahadith* convey law not merely as codes but as being based on values and ethics. That is to say, the legal teachings of the Quran are not like Napoleon’s Civil Code but often conveyed as spiritual instructions.³⁰ Third, taking into account that what is called Islamic law at any rate is based on unchanging divine elements, it is less likely to compromise with Others. Thus putting it at the centre can seriously preserve dualistic outcomes, badly affecting interrelations between the West and Islam. In practice, the legal approach to Islam has not provided good results, as Fuller states, “[t]he basic reality is that no Muslim state has made any significant progress toward creation of a more ideal society as it has come ever closer to full application of *Sharia* law” (Fuller, 2003: 198). Unlike Islamic law, Fuller suggests, Islamic moral, ethical and spiritual principles can be made permanently relevant through regular reinterpretations in accordance with existing reality and community consensus (Fuller, 2003: 201).

Fourth, theories that exaggerate the role of Islamic law in the religion cannot explain the seemingly endless sectarian clashes in Islam from its advent. Many such clashes were primarily caused not by legal but by theological or political motivations. Of course, different sects at times have had dissimilar approaches to law, but the root causes of conflicts were not in such minor legal differences. From the early centuries of Islam, disputes between Sunnis (Esposito, 2005b: 2), Shi’ites (Esposito, 2005b: 43-45, 109-113), Kharijites (Esposito, 2005b: 41-43, 69), Murjiites (Esposito, 2005b: 70), Mutazilites (Esposito, 2005b: 70-72), Asharites (Esposito, 2005b: 72-74), philosophers (Esposito, 2005b: 73-74), Sufis (Esposito, 2005b: 100-109) and the like, have had strong theological, and sometimes political roots, instead of being motivated by legal origins.

³⁰ Only some minority of legal themes, like some penal codes, are declared in a way that we call nowadays legal language.

Esposito is aware of these tendencies in Islam and gives adequate explanation on the theological roots of this diversity (Esposito, 2005b: 69-75). This point brings his assertion of the centrality of law to Islam into question.

As for the origination of Islamic politics in Islamic law, there are approaches opposite to that of Esposito. Ayatollah Khomeini, though originally a jurist, especially in last stages of his life theorised the absolute priority of politics over the law. He stated: "To constitute an Islamic polity, is the most basic of Islamic duties... It is prior to all other Islamic laws such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage."³¹ In such an approach, Islamic law comes second, after politics, and thus, politics should not adapt itself to the law, but when it is necessary to protect the very existence of an Islamic state, the Islamic legal system must be changed to satisfy the political interests of Islam. Another example is Muqtedar Khan. In a different context from that of Ayatollah Khomeini, he attempts to show that democracy should not be considered as an outcome of the Islamic law. The political essence of Islam is prior to its legal essence. Therefore, an Islamic democracy should not be justified through legal arguments, but by considering general interests of the faith. He observes:

Many Islamic jurists simply equate Islam with Islamic law (Shari`ah) and privilege the study of the latter. As a result we have only episodic explorations of the idea of a polity in Islam. Hundreds of Islamic schools and universities now produce hundreds of thousands of legal scholars but hardly any political theorists or philosophers. With some rare exceptions, this intellectual poverty has reduced Islamic thought to a medieval legal tradition. The extraordinary influence of the idea of Islam as Shari`ah has made law the precursor of the state and political life. Instead of thinking law as serving the changing needs of the political community, the polity is said to be legitimate only if it properly implements Shari`ah (Muqtedar Khan, in Abu el Fadl, 2004: 63-4).

Overall, as Fuller suggests, being more flexible and dynamic, the spiritual aspects of the faith seem to be a better vehicle for mutual understanding and coexistence than Islamic law and politics. Spiritual matters are more or less shared by all world religions in one way or another and they can make better sense of the unity between human

³¹ See http://aftab.ir/articles/religion/religion/c7c1145101437_imamkhomeini_p5.php [accessed 06/01/2008]

beings. In fact, as it is expected from a revealed scripture, most of the Quranic verses deal with spiritual and ethical matters rather than with legal or political aspects. Both the legal and political aspects of Islam seem to be at severe risk of dualism, instead of being good vehicles for a scholar who seeks solidarity with Muslims.

Esposito may counter this argument by saying that he means by Islamic law the reformist understanding of law; thereby he is immune from that criticism. Nevertheless, even reformist reinterpretations are theoretically limited to some basic principles of the faith. This point makes some readings of the sacred text unworkable, or at least, unacceptable to the Muslim mainstream. The following example would be sufficient. Esposito suggests:

The thinking of educated members of the American Muslim community as well as advice from Islamic legal scholars around the world are brought to bear in formulating fresh legal opinions (*fatwas*) on such matters as the legality of business projects under Shariah law, the propriety of Muslim voting in non-Muslim society or for non-Muslim candidates, and the acceptability of observing *juma* (community) [sic] prayer on Sunday instead of Friday. In this way the dynamism of Islamic law, its historic ability to provide answers appropriate to changing and diverse socio-historical context, is preserved (Esposito, 2005b: 219).

My main concern is about “observing *juma* prayer on Sunday instead of Friday.” It should be noted that *juma* prayer by no means can be translated into “community prayer”. Such a translation does not exist in any Arabic-English dictionary. It seems that Esposito has mixed up *jamaah* (congregational) prayer with *juma* prayer which should be translated into “Friday prayer”. The Holy Quran reads: “O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know” (62: 9). Thus, faced with this verse, how can a reformist reformulate a new reinterpretation to allow Muslims in the West to say “Friday prayer” on Sunday? Is that acceptable to mainstream Muslims, simply because they are living in a non-Muslim country? It seems to me it would be easier to convince them to convert to Christianity than asking them to say Friday prayer on Sunday. Perhaps, this mistake is just caused by a mistranslation. Such errors with regard to Islamic terminology and thought, however, can occasionally be found in

Esposito's works, even after a few editions. Here I mention only some examples of such mistakes:

- He narrates the "death of Jesus" from the Quran (Esposito, 2005b: 18), while Muslims widely believe that Jesus was not crucified and therefore he did not die on the cross, and after all, he did not die a natural death, but "Allah took him up unto Himself" (4: 158). Muslims also believe that Jesus will come back at the end of time. The holy Quran reads: "And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain" (4:157). There are two other verses of the Quran (3: 55; 5: 117) that appear to point to the death of Jesus, yet as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* reads under "Isa", the specific term used in those verses does not necessarily mean death.³²
- He says: "The Quran is regarded as the only miracle brought by the Prophet" (Esposito, 2005b: 19). However, as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* reads, under "Muhammad", Muslims believe that the Quran is one – of course the greatest – among other miracles of the Prophet.
- He proclaims: "[T]he times of prayer and the ritual actions were not specified in the Quran" (Esposito, 2005b: 89). However, the holy Quran clearly states: "Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed. And some part of the night awake for it, a largess for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a praised estate" (17:78-79).
- He asserts that the shrine of Imam Ali is in Kufa (Esposito, 2005b: 98, the second photo following the page). Nevertheless, it is in Najaf, a city near Kufa. He adds Kufa and Qom to, and omits Samarra from, the shrines of the Imams of the Shi'ites, (Esposito, 2005b: 110) whereas no Imam was buried in Kufa or in Qum.

³² Here as well as in the next point, I have used the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* on CD-ROM, 2006.

- He asserts: “Neither Muslims nor Jews and Christians could be enslaved in early Islam” (Esposito, 1998: 11). Nevertheless, the holy Quran justifies enslaving Jews and Christians who aided the unbelievers in war against Muslims. It reads: “And those of the People of the Book who aided them - Allah did take them down from their strongholds and cast terror into their hearts. (So that) some ye slew, and some ye made prisoners” (33: 26).
- Describing the Islamic Revolution of Iran, he says: “The clergy and their students represented a vast reservoir of grass-roots leadership; at the weekly Friday communal prayer mosque and sermon were transforms into a religio-political event and platform...” (Esposito, 1999a: 114). The problem with this assertion is that Friday Prayer had not been popular in Iran before the Islamic Revolution of Iran triumphed. It was rarely held in some cities, but there is no record that any participants in such prayers took political action. The only religio-political type of prayer was daily congregational prayer at mosques and one special case of the Eid al-Fitr prayer on the 5th of September 1978.
- He describes Ayatollah Montazeri as “a senior cleric once designated (the designation was later withdrawn) by Khomeini to succeed him as faqih” (Esposito, 1999a: 123). Yet the designation of Montazeri was not by Khomeini but by the Assembly of Experts. In his verdict of Montazeri’s withdrawal, Khomeini publicly announced that from the very beginning he was against the designation of Montazeri.
- In the course of the first Gulf War, 1991, he counts Ayatollah Khomeini among who called for a *jihad* against foreign intervention (Esposito, 1999a: 253). But the Ayatollah died in 3rd of June, 1989, two years before the Gulf War.

Perhaps this is a dark side of the late twentieth century’s prevalence of cross-disciplinary educations. Through Lewis’s works, nonetheless, these sorts of errors can not easily be found.

Despite all his shortcomings, Esposito tries his best to disprove the dualism of the West and Islam. As the fourth principle of dualism reads, a dualist theorist is supposed to portray the other side as hostile and aggressive in a way that there is no way to

compromise. While this approach is obvious in Lewis's rhetoric, Esposito chooses the opposite view and attempts to highlight the peaceful dimensions of Islam. For instance, narrating on the formative period of Islam, he remarks that the final phase in the struggle between Medina and Mecca highlights the method and political genius of Muhammad, "[e]schewing vengeance and the plunder of conquest, the Prophet instead accept the settlement, granting amnesty rather than wielding the sword toward his former enemies" (Esposito, 2005b: 10). Another example is his narration of the spread of Islam. Whereas Orientalism tries to show that the expansion of Islam was merely by war, he explains that, in fact, Islamisation of invaded societies was not due to sword, but "In many ways, local population found Muslim rule more flexible and tolerant than that the Byzantium and Persia" (Esposito, 2005b: 34).

As for *jihad*, unlike the popular Western method of covering Islam, Esposito notes that the term has a comprehensive meaning rather than merely showing violence. He notes that *jihad*'s primary meaning is "the 'struggle' or effort to follow God's path, lead a good life, and build a just society" (Esposito, 2005b: 256). To distinguish genuine from fake *jihad*, he highlights ways in which the term was abused and misinterpreted by extremists to develop a "theology of hate" (Esposito, 2005b: 255). Throughout his works, he attempts to illustrate that Islam is in the way of reform and this way as in Protestantism and Catholicism is a "long process of not only theological debate but political and economic turmoil" (Esposito, 2005b: 271).

Esposito, like a messenger of solidarity, gives his final suggestion to the world: "It is not a time for provoking a clash of civilizations or for the self-fulfilling prophesy that such a clash is inevitable. It is rather a time for global engagement and coalition building, for the active promotion of coexistence and cooperation" (Esposito, 2003d: xii). In his way of studying Islam he was able successfully to reject four out of five principles of dualism. His main shortcoming, however, remains his overestimation of the religious factor in Islamic world. Due to this approach he dismisses many socio-political factors working in Islamic world and even shaping religious understanding. I am now going to study another scholar who contrasts sharply with Esposito by mostly focusing on factors ignored by him.

Chapter Three: Gilles Kepel

So far I have studied two scholars, both of whom first and foremost answered questions put by American policy makers, media and public sphere. In spite of the fact that Lewis has spent most of his life in Britain, taken all of his degrees and had most of his work experience in a European milieu, the most flourishing period of his intellectual career has been in America. It was the case, yet with much stronger American elements, with Esposito. To be more inclusive, I have to add a third scholar from Europe, the motherland of the West. I choose Gilles Kepel, a French scholar whose audience are Europeans and whose perspective is the fruit of francophone culture.¹

What makes Kepel distinguished in this field is his unwavering enthusiasm for his passion about Muslim societies, endlessly seeking first-hand documents, papers, interviews, and even original anthropological observations of the Muslim world to provide as comprehensive a scope of the Islamist movements as possible. What sets Kepel apart from other scholars is his frequent visits to the Middle East, as many Arab visas in his French passport give witness (Kepel, 2003a: 27). He speaks fluent Arabic, acquired during years of study and research in Syria and Egypt. Considering his fresh and original observations, he is likely to be a well-known commentator on Islamic affairs on French television.² In short, Kepel is not only a leading academic on the Middle East but also a 'man of the world'.

A positive aspect about Kepel is his awareness of Arabic contemporary literature. This is contrary to American ignorance, as Said describes, of this critical factor of Oriental studies. The net effect of this remarkable omission in modern American awareness of the Arab or Islamic Orient, Said adds, is to keep the region and its people conceptually emasculated, reduced to "attitudes", "trends" and statistics: in short, dehumanised

¹ Born in 1955, Gilles Kepel has been Professor of the Institut d' Etudes Politiques in Paris since 1985; Director of the Doctoral Program on the Muslim World at the same Institute since 1994; Senior Researcher at National Board for Scientific Research in Paris since 1984. He was Visiting Professor at Colombia University, New York (1996-97); Researcher at Egyptian-French Centre for Scientific Cooperation in Cairo (1980-83) (Kepel, 2003c). Arguably among the world's most influential and opinionated experts on the contemporary Middle East, Kepel holds degrees in Arabic, English, and philosophy and a doctorate in sociology and political science (Kepel, 2006d).

² In France, Kepel is a media presence: "prolific, provocative, and photogenic" (Kramer, 2002).

(Said, 2003: 291).³ Kepel, however, being in direct contact with his subject of study, tries to avoid this problem. As an example, I just bring one of his original observations after 9/11, a type that we rarely saw in previous chapters:

Many young women in particular were really enthusiastic about bin Laden. He became a sort of symbol, even with a certain aura of sexual potency. I heard a famous *nuqta* or joke in Egypt: “A woman in a restaurant needs to go to the toilet. She goes to the men’s toilets, but the waiter says ‘Oh no, Madame, you cannot go there, you have to use the other one’, and she asks ‘Why? Are you telling me that bin Laden is hiding in those toilets?’ ‘Why no, he isn’t there’, and so she replies, ‘Well I can go then – because he’s the only man left in the Muslim world.’” There are different versions, more in tune with traditional mores, or more refined versions where she goes to the *hamam* [public bathroom] on the men’s day. This is something for anthropologists of the *nuqta* in the future! (Kepel, 2003d)

With a minor change Kepel narrates the same story in his chronicle. He adds that the joke shows ‘Osama Bin Laden is the phallus!’ (Kepel, 2003a: 27) Although such an original observation is an important step towards understanding the Orient, to know how to interpret this observation is a more important step, in which, as we will see in this chapter, Kepel often fails. His interpretation of the joke, for instance, seems to be influenced by his French culture, which he describes as “bed culture” (Kepel, 2004f). In similar contexts of Muslim literature, being a “man” is mostly used as a metaphor for being strong in social affairs, not for being sexually potent.⁴

Kepel started his intellectual work on Islam with his PhD dissertation, written on Islamist movements in Egypt under Sadat. The research took three years to complete and later in 1984 was published as his first book under the title *Le Prophète et Pharaon*.⁵ In 1985 a translation of the book published in English, entitled *Muslim*

³ It could be argued that this is not only a matter of non-familiarity with Arabic, more than that it is a methodological/philosophical issue. Many American scholars in the social sciences are trained with the mentality which gives credence and importance to ‘data’ and ‘information’ processing as against ‘critical analysis’ and ‘in-depth interpretation’.

⁴ This can be observed in many Arabic and Farsi poems regarding social and martial affairs. True, in the course of entertainment and humour being man can be translated into being phallus.

⁵ Kepel, Gilles (1984). *Le Prophète et Pharaon*. Editions Le Decouverte.

Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh.⁶ Twenty years later, when the taste of readers changed, the same book was reprinted under the title *The Roots of Radical Islam*.⁷ The interesting point of this first book, as the author later discloses, is his empathy with his topic due to his age first and foremost; he was then between twenty-five and twenty-nine years old (Kepel, 2005b: 10). In 1991 he published his research on the resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in last decades of the twentieth century, entitled *La Revanche de Dieu*, translated into English in 1994 as *The Revenge of God*.⁸ His focus on religiosity, in its extremist sense, made Kepel among Huntington's sources, from which he was inspired to theorise the clash of civilisations. Huntington quotes Kepel in his article: "The revival of religion, 'la revanche de Dieu,' as Gilles Kepel labeled it, provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations" (Huntington, 1993).

During the last years of the twentieth century when the question of Islamism was being raised globally, Kepel continued to produce many attractive titles. In a comprehensive research, which was published under *A l'ouest d'Allah* – translated into English as *Allah in the West* – he critically analyses Islamic movements in America, Britain and France.⁹ Yet his masterpiece is undoubtedly *Jihad: Expansion et déclin de l'islamisme* in which he researches and measures political Islam in depth and then tries to show sophisticatedly the interconnectedness of different nodes of the Islamist network all over the world.¹⁰ In this book he concludes that political Islam reached its apogee during the 1980s and from the 1990s the world began to witness symptoms of the decline of the Islamist ideology. For Kepel, escalating terrorist attacks show that Islamism could not mobilise Muslim masses, and therefore are among the major signs of the decline. In 2002 the book with some additional addresses to 9/11 published in English under *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam*.¹¹ *Fitna: Guerre au Coeur de l'Islam* is the next title in which he equally condemns Islamic extremism and US neoconservatism as

⁶ Kepel, Gilles (1985). *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*. Translated by John Rothchild. Saqi.

⁷ Kepel, Gilles (2005). *The Roots of Radical Islam*. Translated by John Rothchild. Saqi.

⁸ Kepel, Gilles (1994). *The Revenge of God: the Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*. Polity Press.

⁹ Kepel, Gilles (1997). *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*. Translated by Suzan Milner. Polity press.

¹⁰ Kepel, Gilles (2000). *Jihad : expansion et déclin de l'islamisme*. Paris: Gallimard.

¹¹ Kepel, Gilles (2002, 2006). *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by F. Roberts. I. B. Tauris.

two sides of the same coin.¹² The book was published in 2004 and in the same year was translated into English under *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*.¹³ His last title is *Terreur et Martyre*, 2008, in the same year published in English under, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom*, in which Kepel suggests how the world can bypass those bankrupt narratives.¹⁴ Kepel also has published many papers in academic journals and in French newspapers, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, as well as English periodicals like *The Independent*.

From being a young Trotskyist of the 1970s (Kepel, 2004g) to a member of the committee for the law banning veils in France (Kepel, 2004f), Kepel shows some deep-seated elements of French culture. He is proud of the strength of francophone culture in the field of Islamic studies, yet is unhappy with the minor role this culture plays in contemporary world affairs. He notes: "It is crushing that it [Francophone] has been unable to find the means of making itself heard just as the triumphant globalization and all-Americanization of the late twentieth century are being challenged by the yardstick of cultural pluralism, in the world we will be focused to build together" (Kepel, 2003a: 30). He explains that France deserves to take a central role between Islam and the West, thanks to its old and close relations with the complicated East and to its expertise, which can be recognised by counting French specialists in Middle Eastern studies (Kepel, 2004g). By French expertise, he means French Orientalism, the influence of which on Kepel's works can be time and again observed without much difficulty.

He is aware of some fundamental differences between French understandings of the world and that of the Anglo-Saxons. This difference in understanding is reflected in the way each culture deals with Others, in the role each gives to religion and in the way each defines modernity. We will assess later in this chapter how such differences in the two approaches deal with dualism of the West and Islam. Perhaps to this difference of approaches he points, joking: "I do not believe in the 'clash of

¹² Kepel, Gilles (2004). *Fitna: Guerre au Coeur de l'Islam*. Paris: Gallimard.

¹³ Kepel, Gilles (2004). *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. Translated by Pascale Ghazaleh. Harvard University Press.

¹⁴ Kepel, Gilles (2008). *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: the Future of the Middle East*. Translated by Pascale Ghazaleh. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

civilisations' theory, except of course between the British and the French – which is clearly irreconcilable!" (Kepel, 2003d)

Kepel also shows a strong Euro-centric approach. Being unhappy with the post-Cold War US policies in the Middle East, Kepel asserts that the question of Islam is first and foremost related to Europe and should be resolved by its close collaboration. He argues: "To us, the Middle East is not the Middle East. It is the Near East. And we are part and parcel of the Mediterranean, and they are part and parcel of Europe... this creates a very different perspective... [For America it] is something which pertains to foreign policy. To us, it is domestic policy" (Kepel, 2004b). He adds that there are many Muslims in France, at the workplace, at the dinner table and even at times in bed with a French men or women. "France is a bed culture". In France, the vast majority of young Algerian women live with Frenchmen and vice versa. A blending process is taking place, which is creating a sort of hybridisation (Kepel, 2004f). Because of the geopolitical difference, Kepel argues, America and Europe have different responsibilities, challenges and stakes. Thus they are entitled to have closer cooperation in their foreign policies, unlike what happened in the course of the US attack on Iraq in 2003. Europe must stop being a hostage and victim of al-Qaeda's or the Pentagon's interests and to take in hand its own policy and its own strategy in a Middle East that is no 'greater' than before and that contributes, by virtue of its immediate proximity (Kepel, 2004d). He adds that Europe would be well-advised to take measure of the situation and maintain its own role therein if it wishes to count in the future of peace in the great Euro-Mediterranean-Gulf region that will be its natural place in the globalised planet of the twenty-first century, between the American pressure and the Muslims' resistance (Kepel, 2008b).

In this domain, Kepel speaks in a way that is not dissimilar to French traditional Orientalists who were in a constant dispute with their British counterparts, yet this time the two poles are Europe and America. He asserts that the European initiative is the only one capable of peacefully dealing with Islam and without Europe there will be no escape from another military confrontation that will take the entire world hostage by endangering its supply of hydrocarbons (Kepel, 2006a). He adds that as America was delegitimised by its failure in Iraq, it cannot take on this challenge, and it is up to Europe to show the way in partnership with other regional powers. The challenge

between Islam and the West, which is a challenge of civilisations, will be one of the major tasks for the French presidency of the European Union: “we must evaluate the stakes involved and demonstrate political will” (Kepel, 2008b).

The shortcoming of the American foreign policies, Kepel believes, is rooted in the inadequacy of American academia in the field of Middle Eastern studies. “In the past ten years or so, American universities have hardly accumulated any knowledge at all about the Middle East, where, after Oslo, peace was believed to be close at hand but where investment perspectives were judged mediocre. It was no longer a strategic priority: private funding for research evaporated and talented young people chose to study other regions” (Kepel, 2003a: 129-130). Worst of all, he argues, is that US academia finds itself devoid of relevant knowledge of the Middle East because partisanship has replaced scholarship. Some American academics published books to promote the “moderate Islamists”... But at the same time, other academics and pressure groups in the United States, many of whom were close to the pro-Israeli lobby and press, made it their business to claim that the so-called moderate contingent was only the smiling mask of terrorism and fanaticism (Kepel, 2006b). Since 9/11 the predominant influence has veered from the Esposito people to the Pipes people, Kepel complains (Kepel, 2004g).

Kepel further attempts to explain the roots of American intellectual shortcomings. The key problem, he remarks, is that research funding and tuition payments in the US invariably have political strings attached. Either one is the Custodian of the Two Holy Places professor or the Jewish Foundation professor of Middle Eastern studies; one is obliged to start all one’s courses either with ‘In the name of King Fahd’ or ‘In the name of Sharon’. So to a large extent, research in the US has become hostage to the interests of these two camps. He adds that he attempts all the time to keep himself away from such unhealthy approaches towards knowledge, even by paying a high price: “I must say, I take great pride in being insulted from both sides... I learnt then that one way of surviving as an Arabist is to be a sort of tightrope walker. If suddenly one side stops attacking you, you need to wonder what you are doing wrong, regain your balance, and start saying the things they do not like” (Kepel, 2003d). Comparing the US with France, he adds: “This is something we in France have not had to go through. We are ‘poor but dignified’... In this field at least, nothing much has been done to enable

private money to enter the education system. So we have felt much less need to be aligned” (ibid). Later in this chapter I will show that it is not always ‘private money’ that corrupts research, but sometimes grants from public bodies like the French Government can affect the approach of the researcher. That is to say, national interests can also play an important role in leading the researcher to dualism.

Although Kepel is eloquent in criticising the American intellectual environment, especially the pro-Israel lobby, he has been much safer from intellectual counterattacks than Esposito; perhaps because he has been a stranger not a rival. Martin Kramer, who, as we saw, was very harsh against Esposito, deals with Kepel differently. Discussing Kepel’s theory of decline of Islamism in the late twentieth century, he says: “Some American interpreters of Islamism, by the way, have said the same about their pre-September 11 writings. The difference is that Kepel’s defense is justified, and theirs is not. The French ‘post-Islamists’ were never starry-eyed about Islamist goals, and never dismissive of the Islamist potential for terror. The American Islamophiles, on the other hand, gave the benefit of the doubt to any and every Islamist, and scoffed at scenarios of mass killing” (Kramer, 2002).

Daniel Pipes is very harsh against Kepel, however. He strictly refutes Kepel’s above theory: “One way to become a Famous Intellectual in France is to take a nonsensical thesis and be the first to write a whole book advancing it. By this standard, Kepel excels, for he adopts the preposterous idea that militant Islam is in decline and manages to fill 376 pages of text with examples and arguments that credibly support this idea” (Pipes, 2002).¹⁵

In America Kepel, as a political sociologist, is also praised for his scientific methodology, through which he does not trace every challenge between Islam and the West back to mere cultural roots. That is because, like Olivier Roy, another French Islamologist, he looks at Islamic world neither as a historian nor as a theologian, but as a social scientist. Annoyed by the usual narratives of Islam and the West, an American scholar describes these two French scholars: “Like culturalists, Roy and Kepel examine very carefully the Islamist discourse about both the Koran and the rest of the world. But they understand it as the product of many forces, rather than as the necessary

¹⁵ Apparently Pipes wants to show that Islamism is still in its peak in order to keep anti-Islamic policies in place.

development of its religious origin. In doing so, they provide a more nuanced understanding of doctrinal and political Islam than do the culturalists" (Mamdani, 2005). In fact, Kepel's methodology is considerably different from both Lewis's and Esposito's.

Methodology

In the very beginning of his intellectual work, Kepel distances himself from two prevalent categories of Western Islamic studies. The most common category, which by the way corresponds to Lewis's approach, "is inspired by a polemic stance that considers the Islamic militants no more than atavistically backward fanatical terrorists. Those who share this approach will remember only the anti-Semitism of al-D`awa and Karam Zuhdi's thirst of Christian blood... They will have ignored anything that might conflict their iron-clad certainties..." (Kepel, 2005b: 232). The second category, which is incidentally similar to Esposito's approach, stands on the opposite side of the spectrum. "It studies only the theoretical texts," Kepel argues, "and seeks to ignore the risks of their implementation, especially when they are violent. It jettisons any contradictions and deliberately obfuscates anything that might disturb its idealized view, in an effort to present a 'generally positive balance-sheet'." Then he concludes that rejecting all these "value judgements" and this "intellectual laziness", we must accept the challenge the contemporary Islamist movements represent to the traditional categories of social science and to Orientalism (ibid). Kepel also keeps himself away from French specialists in Islam who exalt this cause, which they ingratiatingly perceive as the authenticity of the people of the South. He takes a more distant view on the matter and does not necessarily incline towards sympathy for the movements (Kepel, 2003a: 18).

Nevertheless, his close contacts with his subjects of study could moderate their "Otherness". Having many Muslim friends, colleagues and students Kepel virtually feels at home when he resides in an Islamic city. This mood takes him far from first principle of dualism. "This is not a war of civilizations," he remarks, "but a complex conflict within intertwined civilizations, which are condemned to engage in a

permanent cultural dialogue, whatever the Islamists on one hand and the far right on the other might say. The Islamists are neither the end of History for Muslim societies, nor their final aim” (Kepel, 2003a: 75).

Unlike Lewis, Kepel considers political players from both Islam and the West as rational players who test and choose the best means at their disposal. To clarify the difference, let us compare Arafat’s character in Lewis’ narrative, with that of Kepel. Lewis states that “asking Arafat to give up terrorism would be like asking Tiger to give up golf” (Alam, 2003). Kepel, however, deals with the two sides of the Middle Eastern conflict as normal political players. He notes that Arafat’s strategy was the more naive one. In year 2000 he renewed the intifada in hope of wearing down the Israelis’ resolve and extracting concessions when the Israeli prime minister eventually returned to the negotiating table (Kepel, 2004e: 11). By taking as his reference point Al-Aqsa as well as the 1987 intifada, Arafat was positioning himself as the most ardent champion of a religious as well as a nationalist cause. His aim was to checkmate not just Israel but his domestic political rivals, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well (Kepel, 2004e: 14). Comparing terrors on both sides of the Middle Eastern conflict, Kepel points out, martyrdom operations create a balance of terror of sorts against invincible smart weapons (Kepel, 2004e: 22). In this new regional game, Kepel states, the most important cards in play were terrorism, the transnational Arab media, expertise in global finance operations, and Internet communications between Tora Bora, Bali, and Tampa (Kepel, 2004e: 35). Comparing and contrasting the way Kepel deals with the Middle Eastern players and terrorists with that of Lewis, Kepel’s approach seems to be much farther from the first principle of dualism.

That is not the case on all occasions, however. Once Kepel speaks of Islamism,¹⁶ political Islam or Islamic political movements, it seems that he is dealing with a monolithic ideology. Perhaps, because of such a stance, Kepel time and again compares Islamism with communism (Kepel, 2003a: 45; 2006b: 34, 370; 1997: 154, 163; 2004e: 264). This comparison evokes a strong sense of the Cold War version of

¹⁶ Using Kepel’s works as well as many other scholars, Mehdi Mozaffari defines Islamism as follows: “‘Islamism’ is a religious ideology with a holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means” (Mozaffari, 2007). Although in some cases Kepel uses the word in that sense, it is hard to say that he means by Islamism that vast meaning everywhere. More generally, it seems, Kepel uses the term for a religious ideology that seek political and legal domination.

dualism, but this time between the West and Islam. In a sense no political scientist, educated in the Cold War era, can convey his dualist approach more expressively than by comparing the otherness of Islam with that of the West and the evil ideology of Communism. And this is the way Kepel follows. Just to give examples, I bring two quotations. First, observing Muslims in France, he says: "As was the case with Western communism, it is difficult to know whether changes in Islamist vocabulary accurately track structural transformations in ideology or whether they are merely rhetorical artifice to mask a hidden agenda" (Kepel, 2004e: 266). There is no sign of the diversity portrayed by Esposito; Islamism seems to be a monolithic entity. Second, he compares Islamism and Communism to show the validity of his theory of the decline of Islamism. Two decades ago as the communist system was fading fast and the working classes it claimed to represent were turning away from it in disgust, a number of armed groups (the most extreme being the Red Brigades in Italy, the German Red Army Faction, and the Carlos network) seized terrorism as the ideal way to inflict spectacular damage on the enemy. Now Islamism goes the same way (Kepel, 2006b: 18). Accordingly, both Communism and Islamism are considered as evil monolithic ideologies who challenged the West, and from this respect, it could be interpreted as a strong sign of the dualism.

Kepel also shows with the second principle of dualism both positive and negative sides. The positive side is that, avoiding the simplistic judgements of Lewis, he uses instead first hand observations. The negative side is that in selecting and interpreting his observations, Kepel shows himself to be strongly under the influence of Orientalist dogmas. Let us start with the positive aspect. To analyse contemporary affairs in Muslim world, Kepel rarely relies on historical resources, such as the Quran, *hadith* and Medieval texts. His main means, however, is social observations, including interviews with Islamic activists and textual and discourse analysis of their contemporary literature. He justifies his methodology by saying that although reading the Quran helps us to understand Bin Laden's rhetoric, it is just a partial means. To understand how this use of cultural tools might be able to mobilise people, the analyst has to know what the texts are about, and what kind of images they ignite in people's minds. Nevertheless, he argues, the key to understanding people's attitudes lies mainly in studying the social fabric (Kepel, 2003d). Accordingly, his priority is social observation. For instance, in his research on the Islamic movements of Egypt, which was originally

his doctorate thesis, his main sources are Qutb's *Signposts*, some articles of *Al-Dawa* journal published by some Muslim Brothers, a pamphlet by Mohammad Faraj, a sermon of Sheikh Kishk, some quotations of Shukri Mustafa, and a few governmental reports. In this context, his investigation on how Egyptian Islamic movements recruit young people is interesting. He considers the relation between the sexes and the way such kind of relation strengthened Islamism. In a traditional society in which relations between the sexes occur late and are strictly circumscribed by marriage, he argues, on the way to university, the jostling bus in which bodies are pressed one against the other becomes a site of furtive eroticism of which the female students feel themselves the victims (Kepel, 2005b: 140). The Islamists' solution to this problem came exactly to the point. They organised a minibus service for female students in order to preserve their dignity, but the service was made available only for females who dressed in an Islamic style. This indirectly persuaded the girls to wear the veil, at the first step, then after a while led them to involve themselves in political Islam (Kepel, 2005b: 146).

The negative side is, as Popper remarks, knowledge does not start with observation but with our previous knowledge, with traditional prejudices, beset with error. The problem is that though Kepel tries his best to analyse appropriately each of these social observations, they alone by no means represent Islamic movements of Egypt. They are just a few among hundreds of thousands of similar factors that influenced, or were produced by, Islamic movements in twentieth century Egypt. So he must *select* some and then *interpret* them to be able to portray a new version of the whole picture. A researcher's task is therefore like one who works on a huge puzzle with infinite pieces and a vague, big picture. He has no alternative but to keep an eye on the big picture and select some pieces. Then by concentrating as deeply as possible on each piece, he has to try to interpret it and then suggest a place for it to be able to make a clearer portrait of the big picture. This dialectic relation between the big picture and the small pieces represents the growth of knowledge and continues for ever. Kepel, as a sociologist, knows and applies the rules of analysing small pieces. This is his job at the micro level. But at the macro level, where he should consider the big picture, he mainly relies upon theories generated by Orientalism which dictate to him how to work in the process of *selection* and *interpretation*.

Kepel is aware of such a problem in his methodology. Once he mentions the challenges of contemporary Islam, such as the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the assassination of Sadat, to the Western categories of thought, he concludes that the effect of these events have been real enough, where their causes, presumably complex and entangled, resist analysis. To unwind the skein of all these phenomena in an exhaustive study of the manifestations of Islamism all over the world, would require a work of encyclopaedic scope. It is far better to examine one particular case more restricted in space and time (Kepel, 2005b: 20). "The Egyptian example – which I was able to analyse on the scene and at considerable length – therefore stands as a kind of paradigm against which other manifestations of Islamism can be measured" (Kepel, 2005b: 21). However, in Egypt he just examined some limited pieces of Islamism and Egypt itself in the Arab world is just a piece among many. And the Arab world, which in many cases is wrongly equated by Kepel with the world of Islam (Book Briefs, 2005), is only a part of Muslim world. In either case he needs to generalise his observation. But in such a generalisation "the task of the Orientalist and the political scientist are inevitably intertwined" (Kepel, 2005b: 22). This appropriately shows the deficiency of his methodology in which he as a social scientist has only focused on particular pieces at the micro level. Of course, to be a sociologist is no fault. The problem arises when he blindly follows the rules provided by Orientalism at the macro level. Indeed, his main difference with Esposito is that Esposito tries his best to make necessary corrections to Orientalist rules by producing new humane patterns, by emphasising diversity and dynamism, by trying to produce fresh insights into Islamic resources, but Kepel does not. This has affected Kepel's perspective on many occasions. Later in this chapter, observing his attitude towards 'Islam and violence', 'Islam and modernity' as well as 'Islam and democracy', we will see how, following Orientalist dogmas, his methodology is vulnerable to dualism.

As Popper notes, in the process of interpretation and observation some pre-scientific factors play a decisive role. Western observers who come in person to Islamic societies are usually considered as strangers and sometimes witness severe violence. This provides them with some preconceptions that later can impact on their final analysis. Kepel is no exception. For instance, I bring one of his memories of when, as a French student, he was learning Arabic in Syria:

One day in December 1977, having finally collected our small wages, we took off to Beirut without the director's knowledge, accompanied by Pierre-Jean Luizard, today our expert on Iraq. We dined in a real restaurant near the American University, where there were only a few customers. Those at the next table finished their meal, then emptied the till and held us up, relieving us of our meagre fare. I remember the pistol, which my terror had made enormous, brandished before my eyes, and our attempts to explain that we agreed with the 'Islamoprogressive' camp (which controlled the territory we were on), before a slap closed our mouths (Kepel, 2003a: 38).

And a memory with one of his colleagues:

And then that day in autumn of 1985, when I drove Michel Seurat to Orly airport to catch his flight to Beirut. Kidnapped when he landed, he was taken hostage by a faceless terrorist group – even then – that had styled itself 'Islamic Jihad'. He died in captivity, an atrocious death: isolated from his comrades, suffocated by coughing fits and – as Jean-Paul Kaufmann recounted – shouting: 'I'm not going to die here!' Jihad told the news agencies: 'We announce that the expert spy researcher has been executed ...' I will never forget (ibid).

Later in this chapter, I will show how, perhaps due to such a perception, Kepel exaggerates the role of Islamic extremism.

Another example for pre-scientific factors is that Western observers in some cases take themselves to be mediators between the two civilisations. Consequently, they consider that whatever story they are told by official or ordinary Muslims has in one way or another an underlying message for the West. For instance when a moderate Islamist tried to portray for Kepel a reasonable picture of contemporary Islamists of Egypt, Kepel thought to himself: "But for him, this is no doubt an opportunity to convey messages [to circles of the French scholars] where the Islamists' fellow-travellers have little credibility" (Kepel, 2003a: 18). In other words, Kepel presumes that there is no originality in the message, but some codes are being given to him only because his voice is being heard in the West. Although his approach is to some extent

understandable, such a sceptical view can affect his work. To avoid all of such pre-scientific judgements, Gadamer's rule gives a valuable advice:

A person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' with respect to the content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its otherness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings (Gadamer, 2004: 271).

To assess Kepel's relation with the third principle of dualism, we have to understand the notion of "religion" in his perspective. He pays much attention to the resurgence of religiosity in the late twentieth century. For him what contemporary religious movements say and do is meaningful, and do not spring from a dethronement of reason or from manipulation by hidden forces. Rather, the message revealed by such movements is the undeniable evidence of a deep malaise in a society that can no longer be interpreted in terms of our traditional categories of thought. He adds: "They are true children of our time: unwanted children, perhaps, bastards of computerization and unemployment or of the population explosion and increasing literacy, and their cries and complaints in these closing years of the century spur us on to seek out their parentage and to retrace their unacknowledged genealogy" (Kepel, 1994: 11).

Coming to the world of Islam, which is his main field of expertise, Kepel notices a fundamental difference with the popular Western perception of religion. He observes that despite the prevalent understanding that religion is always a mask for social and economic motivations, 'Islam' plays an essential role in Islamic movements. He disagrees with Engels's argument that Islamic movements, like other religiously motivated uprisings, are born of economic causes although they bear a religious disguise. Confronting this theory, Kepel notes, a century later, the 'Mohammedan world' is challenging the treatment of religious phenomena as purely ideological. The doubt acknowledged by Engels has become a central difficulty for all those who are interested in the intersection of the religious and the political. "The problem must be posed anew, the hypothesis inverted, for in this domain 'ideology' is but another name

for ignorance: the religious expression of a social phenomenon is not its disguise, but its unveiling” (Kepel, 2005b: 234). He further elaborates his theory that in studying Islam nothing would be more specious than to assume a priori that the manifestations of contemporary Islam are no more than the usual sort of phenomena analysed by the social sciences, but veiled, in this case, by the mask of religious ideology (Kepel, 2005b: 21).

What is then this unveiled notion in Kepel’s perspective? If for Lewis religion means a static traditional system of belief, and for Esposito a dynamic holistic attitude towards life, in Kepel’s perspective, it is a set of ideas represented by contemporary religious political movements. He neither looks at religion from a classical angle nor pays much attention to religious texts and resources. Instead, he observes religion from the viewpoint of a political sociologist who is not interested in theological arguments but social phenomena. Kepel, contrary to Esposito, analyses Islamic tendencies in a sort of worldly vision. That is the case, for instance, when Kepel discusses Islamic banking. According to him, Islamic banking has been only a shelter protecting the devout middle class against confiscation, nationalisations and other machinations they have believed were practiced by the official banks of their countries (Kepel, 2006b: 78). That is the case also when he analyses the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The ordinary Iranian people played an important part in the Revolution. In return, they expected the Shah’s overthrow to be followed by the satisfaction of their immediate demands. He counts such demands as improved living standards, higher salaries, the occupation of the property of the ‘corrupt ones’, the proper development of temporary housing in which many of them lived, the recognition of so-called illegal settlements, free public services, and much more (Kepel, 2006b: 113). Of course, this is not an expressive image of the role played by Islam and undermines its historical, spiritual and legal aspects. Kepel, however, does not pay much attention to those aspects. What is important for him is that religion can work as a strong political engine.

Although this approach to religion keeps Kepel immune from the Lewis-version of dualism and from the Esposito-version which exaggerates the religious factor (mainly legal) in Muslims’ identity, Kepel’s version facilitates dualism from another angle. That is to say, to Kepel’s eye all religious signs and symbols can be considered as weapons for some sort of political confrontation. For instance, a mosque for Kepel is first and

foremost a political symbol. When he describes the American University of Cairo, he notes that, in the middle of the campus a large warehouse-shaped building, not in harmony with the carefully groomed architecture of the whole, bears the sign "Prayer Ground". It is a mosque from where the call to prayer suddenly rings out, at the very heart of the principal vector of American cultural influence on Egyptian bourgeois youth (Kepel, 2003a: 20). Thus, for Kepel a simple prayer room can be a strong political sign of Others. To compare between Kepel and the two other scholars, his description of the mosque can be contrasted with that of Lewis who describes the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, counting its similarities and differences with the example of Santa Sophia and some details of Muslim tradition of worship from the time of the Prophet and Caliphs till now (Lewis, 2004b: 17-20) and with that of Esposito, who defines a mosque by describing details of the way Muslims worship (Esposito, 2005b: 89-90).

Perhaps the most serious dualistic aspect of Kepel's methodology is with regard to the fourth principle. He applies the principle through overestimating Islamic extremism in the realms of politics; thereby he exaggerates the fear of political Islam. His overestimation of extremism has sometimes changed his research to a blueprint for dualism. This explains why his *The Revenge of God* was a key citation in Huntington's "the clash of civilisations". Orientalism serves Kepel here by guiding how to *select* his observations and then how to *interpret* them based on the fact that others are dangerous.

It is interesting that in an introduction he wrote, after two decades, to his first book, Kepel condemns intellectuals who exaggerate the role of extremism in Islam. Explaining Islamology in the 1980s, he says that in those times few academics were bothering with the political-religious phenomena of the Muslim world. Many experts saw these movements as a sort of after-image of reactionary archaism; their suspicious attitude extended to those who study such phenomena, and who soon received the stigma of "Orientalism". Now, twenty years on, progressive circles have often succumbed to fascination with Islamic "militants", elevating them to the status for the Muslim world's suffering masses and worshipping today what they avoided yesterday (Kepel, 2005b: 10). This shows that Kepel appreciates diversity and plurality of Islam, however, the situation is different when he talks about political Islam, or as he calls it,

Islamism. In this realm, he completely takes political Islam to be the same as radical Islam. We can observe this distinction when he talks about different trends in Islam. Some of the greater mystics of Islam were scholars, he argues, while many scholarly Muslim clerics circulated among the mystical brotherhood. Nevertheless, the distinction allows us to see the various ways one can practice Islam, and to comprehend the religion's pluralism. Thus, as far as Islam is apolitical, Kepel has no problem with it. "The emergence of Islamism in the 1970s, by contrast, tended to reduce Muslim practice to a single political dimension," he argues (Kepel, 2006b: 48).

According to Kepel, political Islam makes Islam an evil ideology. Islamism is an extreme political ideology with a strong essence of militancy. His approach to political Islam is evident, looking at the title of his masterpiece, *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam*. By this he means that *jihad*, or one can say violence, essentially follows political Islam. Moreover, the term he uses for Islamic political activists clearly reflects this vision. He prefers "militant" to be used even for a moderate Muslim political activist (See for example Kepel, 2006b: 306, 351, 354; Kepel, 1997: 133). He even prefers to use "Refah's militants" (Kepel, 2006b: 357) for Turkish Islamic activists, who preferred not, Kepel admits elsewhere, "to drift toward violence that took a toll elsewhere in the final decades of the century" (Kepel, 2006b: 346). He even implicitly uses the term for Dr. Abdelwahab al-Effendi, a London-based intellectual and a lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Democracy. He considers al-Effendi's suggestions to Islamic movements as something issued for "in-house consumption by militants" (Kepel, 2006b: 362). And because he believes in the equality of the sexes, he uses the term "female militant" for female Muslim activists (Kepel, 2006b: 372). A similar interesting point in Kepel's terminology is that he prefers to use 'weapon' for those militant's votes (Kepel, 1997: 217). Seemingly the democratic collaboration of Others is merely an evil weapon!

Because of inappropriate selection, Kepel's knowledge of Islam is limited to some extremist circles of Qutb and Mawdudi. In fact, he does not know about Islam except through these vanguards of militant Islam – as he calls them. As a result, whatever school of Islamic political thought he wants to describe, in one way or another, at the end of the day will be attributed to those extremist circles. In other words, he has an answer to any question on Islam, but it is only based on what he sees through the

glasses of Islamic radicalism.¹⁷ An example is the Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr of Iraq. Those who are familiar with al-Sadr's approach confirm that it is strange that Kepel claims that he follows Qutb. Kepel claims: "According to as-Sadr the Islamic economy was part and parcel of the kind of Islamic state he advocated, in the political footsteps of Sayyid Qutb and Khomeini: in other words, he saw it as a clean break with the economics of the non-Muslim world" (Kepel, 2006b: 77). Indeed, what al-Sadr believes is far more moderate. After describing the political aspects of Western capitalism and communism, al-Sadr remarks:

Through comparative study of different schools of economics, we should carefully examine viability of systems suggested by those schools to be applied in an Islamic context. That is to say, economic development could not be met simply by adopting an economic system. But the system works only after institutionalisation and integration by both government and society. Otherwise, and without full compatibility and integration, no economic system would be successful. European man's experience, crystallised in Europe's historical context, has clarified this point. In fact, all systems could succeed only by matching themselves with actual needs and capacities of the society during long periods of trial and error. Therefore, if we want to import a system for our economic development in an Islamic state, we have to consider all different historical and cultural dimensions which play a critical role in convincing the society to adopt this new system (al-Sadr, 1984: 31).

Then al-Sadr explains that blind imitation of the West in matters like nationalism without considering the realities of an Islamic context has been responsible for many failures in Islamic countries. Taking into account al-Sadr's cogent argument, it seems odd that Kepel considers al-Sadr's view "as a clean break with the economics of the non-Muslim world" and in line with Qutb's approach to modernity. On another occasion, Kepel describes al-Sadr, who was the founder of the Dawa Party, in a strange way: "The founders' goal was to create a totalitarian Islamic state, in which the party would be the guardian of Sovereign Good as expressed in Islam" (Kepel, 2004e: 228). Kepel never provides any citation or justification for such accusations. This shows an

¹⁷ Describing al-Qaradawi's live show on al-Jazeera satellite channel, Kepel was surprised that as an Islamist al-Qaradawi had a ready answer to every sort of question (Kepel, 2003a: 63). Yet, Kepel here seems to be in a similar mood.

underlying belief in his perspective that the Others are all from a same fabric and should be feared just because they are Others. Such an attitude can come only from a deep-seated dualistic approach.

Kepel overemphasises the role Qutb's ideas have played in contemporary Islam. He counts Qutb's *Signposts* as the best-selling Islamic equivalent of Lenin's *What is to be Done?* (Kepel, 1997: 163) To identify dualism in his perspective, one has to consider this simile and pay special attention to the similarities between the two titles he considers as "the best-selling equivalent." He reaffirms: "*Signposts...* is the royal road to the ideology of the Islamist movement of the seventies" (Kepel, 2005b: 36). Looking closely at Kepel's perspective, one easily understands that such assertions are a natural outcome of his focus on some pieces of the puzzle – ignoring the fact that they constitute only a small part of the reality – and then generalising them according to Orientalist dogmas.

For Kepel, virtually all Islamic movements and institutions, in one way or another, are traced back to the Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan or the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, to the extent that for those who have become familiar with Islam only through Kepel's window, it remains no question if any other view of political Islam exists. The UK-based Leicester Islamic Foundation is just one example.¹⁸ Kepel describes it as an institute "controlled by the spiritual followers of Mawdudi" (Kepel, 2006b: 187). He argues that a pamphlet published by the foundation puts forward as 'recommended reading' the writing of Mawdudi and various authors closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and omits any reference to publications which present an alternative view of Islam, even those written by Muslims (Kepel, 1997: 122). Discussing the Rushdie affair he argues: "The first moves were made by the Islamists movement inspired by Mawdudi's Jama'at-i Islami, whose secular arm[!] was the Leicester-based Islamic Foundation" (Kepel, 1997: 130). A director of the Leicester Islamic Foundation in the early 1980s, Kepel adds, before returning to Pakistan to become one of the main leaders of the Jama'at-i Islami, wrote a handbook on how to convert non-Muslims to Islam. "The Mission's extremely radical and exclusive view on Islam could hardly be understood and accepted within the mass of workers of Muslim origin, except by a

¹⁸ For further examples see (Kepel, 1997: 177) and (Kepel, 1997: 230).

relatively small circle of radicalized and dedicated Islamists” (ibid). It is interesting how Kepel considers conversion, which is a normal practice in many religions including Islam and Christianity, as a political weapon.¹⁹ He adds that the Foundation is today one of the most important centres for the propagation of militant Sunni Islamist thinking in the world (Kepel, 1997: 132-3). Here I do not want to defend the Foundation against accusations made by Kepel, but we have to consider that Kepel describes them in an intolerant way. Although the Foundation published some of Mawdudi’s works, it has also published modernist titles such as some works of al-Faruqi, Esposito’s mentor. Moreover, in 2007 the Foundation published an official report, entitled *Islam at Universities in England: Meeting the Needs and Investing in the Future*, following which the government agreed to spend £1 million of UK public resources to promote a moderate understanding of Islam.²⁰ The report is much far from Mawdudi’s thought and Islamic militancy.

A similar judgment by Kepel about the genealogy of Erbakan’s party in Turkey is interesting. Kepel asserts that Erbakan’s Islam was an Islam close in spirit to that of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers or the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami; but within the restrictive framework of the secular Turkish state, it could not express itself as such for fear of an immediate clampdown (Kepel, 2006b: 345).²¹ Again here no proof is offered, no names cited. Turkish Islamism has already been assessed in the chapters on Lewis and Esposito; both produced some arguments for their view. Seemingly Kepel need not to explain too much, being an Islamist is evidently equal to being in relation with some extremist ideologies.

The Union of Islamic Organisations in France (UOIF) is another example which, Kepel believes, is a Muslim Brotherhood-inspired institution (Kepel, 1997: 195). Yet, at least this time, Kepel quotes from some of the UOIF’s intellectuals a reappraisal of the Islamic doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood. In their view, he notes, modern Islamist ideology needs to take into account the huge changes which have taken place in the world in the twenty years since Sayyid Qutb. At the time when communism has

¹⁹ Similarly, Kepel considers wearing the veil, which is a normal practice of faith, as just a politically inspired practice. He argues: “Now that France counted as *dar el-Islam*, militants felt that Muslim schoolchildren should be authorised to respect the prescriptions of the sharia, as interpreted by the disciples of Qutb and Mawdudi, and that women and girls should wear the veil” (Kepel, 2006b: 199).

²⁰ *The Guardian*. Tuesday June 5, 2007.

²¹ For further reference see: Kepel, 1997: 190.

collapsed in Eastern Europe, Kepel narrates from UOIF, Muslims too put forward a democratic demand: authoritarian colonial states should not give way to authoritarian states based on religion. Rather, the future Islamic state should seek to reconcile pluralism and application of the sharia (Kepel, 1997: 197). Of course, as mentioned above, Kepel is sceptical about such changes in the vocabulary of Islamism, taking it like that of communism under the Cold War.

Kepel has already received from some of his Arab friends criticism about his exaggeration of Islamic extremism. Isam al-Erian, an Egyptian doctor, read the Arabic translation of his books, *The Revenge of God*, and rebuked him for focusing on 'extremists' instead of 'moderates' like himself. Kepel says that he has taken note of his remark: 'and it is partly because of it that I subsequently pay closer attention to the specific claims of "pious middle classes" – which provided me with a key to reading contemporary Islamists movements – in their complementarity with, or opposition to, the "young urban poor"' (Kepel, 2003a: 17). However, his claim that he has paid closer attention to moderate voices should not be misinterpreted to mean that he has changed his relation with the fourth principle of dualism. In fact, in his succeeding works his methodology remained the same. He just means that since then he has paid closer attention to how the 'pious middle class' complements the radical actions of the 'young urban poor,' or alternatively they oppose the Islamism. We can clearly see this trend in his later works, when he describes some violent actions against some Egyptian secular elites in the 1990s. He believes the events show that the moderates and extremists complement one another's actions, with the latter executing victims singled out by the former, and the former pleading attenuating circumstances on behalf of the latter, should the need arise (Kepel, 2006b: 288). In other words, he asserts that all who remain under Islamism are militants; while some younger generations have less insight, the middle class has a wider vision and therefore acts in a different way. Based on this attitude, he says that in Egypt in the 1990s, as in other countries, the chief function of Islamist ideology was to mobilise social groups with different agendas into a single force, by demanding the moral regeneration of an impious state. But the long term ideal was the installation of a true Islamic state (Kepel, 2006b: 336). Accordingly, being an Islamist means being an extremist in one way or another. And as we will see,

an Islamic state, in Kepel's attitude, can never tolerate modernity and democracy, but is fatally intertwined with totalitarianism and violence.

Kepel's relation with the fifth principle of dualism is blurry. He sometimes shows a wide approach to reality and truth. For instance, discussing the destruction of al-Jazeera's building in Kabul and the opportunity of CNN to be the sole voice of the news, he notes, the substitution seems to him to be more important than the Afghan capital's surrender. "Once again, America's voice will be able to tell history, produce it, give events the meaning it wishes and transmit that to the world as a whole. For the first time in the contemporary period, the major account of History-in-the-making was narrated by a voice and in a language that did not belong to the West" (Kepel, 2003a: 85). Such an approach seems healthier and farther from dualism than Lewis's positivist view on history and media. Nevertheless, once Kepel talks about modernity and regards it as intertwined with Westernisation, or when he reaffirms the French Republican model, as we shall see later, Kepel appears to be a positivist.

Islam and Modernity

Unlike Lewis, Kepel rarely goes back into history to analyse how Muslims received and reacted to the first waves of Western modernity. And unlike Esposito, he hardly ever pays attention to the intellectual interplay between Islamic thought and Western modernity. He asserts that most of the nationalist movements of the first half of the twentieth century had a religious component, which had been instrumental in tipping the whole country over into anti-colonial rebellion, and was prominent in the multifarious combats which proceeded real independence (Kepel, 1994: 18). However, after achieving independence, Kepel adds, secular nation states came to power and the link between religion and civic order seemed to grow increasingly tenuous. As a result, some religious institutions then strove to adapt their message to the modern values of society, to look for points of contact and to emphasise them (Kepel, 1994: 1).

The main starting point for Kepel is when the first attempts of Muslims towards Western modernity, i.e., Muslim nation states, failed. Around the mid-1970s, he argues, this whole process between seculars and religious movements went into reverse. A new religious approach took shape, aimed no longer at adapting to secular values but at recovering a sacred foundation for the organisation of society. In this new turn, "the aim was no longer to modernize Islam but to 'Islamize modernity'" (Kepel, 1994: 2). In other words, the religious movements then started fighting the uselessness of the secular ruling class. To their eyes secularism revealed the emptiness of Western liberal and Marxist utopias, which in the West had led to selfish consumerism, and, in the socialist bloc and the Third World, to the repression, poverty and a dehumanised society (Kepel, 1994: 5). The root causes of this uprising should be sought in deficiencies of the post-industrial world (Kepel, 1994: 11).

However, for Kepel this combat between religion and modernity is neither between the caliphate and modern European thought, as it was for Lewis, nor between Islamic thought and the process of Westernisation, as it was for Esposito. Instead, these religious movements came from disinherited social classes who opposed or dissented from the dominant attitude of "official religion" which they readily criticised (Kepel, 1994: 5). In other words, this radical challenge to the foundations of secular modernism is uttered not by sons of traditional religious education, but by the children of modernity, who have had access to modern education (Kepel, 1994: 192). Accordingly, religion is neither a historical matter nor an intellectual thought, but a banner for some social cause.

According to Kepel, the resurgence of religion in the late twentieth century is not something limited to the Muslim world; rather it is a global phenomenon that covers both Islam and Christianity and even Judaism. However, the outcome of these religiously inspired movements has been different in the West and Islam. That is to say, it could be managed democratically in the West, but in the Islamic context it produced some unprecedented crises. The secret of this difference, Kepel asserts, should be investigated in the difference between the two religious cultures. He mentions two fundamental differences. First, Kepel supposes that unlike the Western archetype, Athens, which has been always a source of legitimation for the system, the

Muslim archetype, Mecca, has been a sort of delegitimation. After mentioning some stereotypes of separation between state and religion in the Western archetype and unification in the Muslims', Kepel asserts that such *ontological difference* between archetypes corresponds to a difference between those who employ them. The political class that governs the Western societies encourages the originating myth of Athens because it provides legitimation for the system. In contemporary Muslim societies, however, it is those layers that contest the established order referred to as the Golden Age of Islam in order to delegitimise the existing order. "As far as the most radical tendencies of the Islamist movement are concerned, time stops in year 660 when Mu`awiya seized the caliphate and introduced the dynastic principle" (Kepel, 2005b: 236). Concerning the separation of religion and state in the West, he adds, this separation was possible because from its origin, Western thought has borrowed from two sources: Christianity and Roman law. Islam on the contrary is marked by *tawhid*, or fundamental unity. The distinction between religion (*din*) and government (*dawla*), the spiritual and the temporal, is meaningless in Muslims' doctrine (Kepel, 2005b: 237).²² Historically speaking, Kepel adds, after the Rightly Guided Caliphs there were always a *de facto* separation between the ruler and the religious authority, *ulema*. They assume what Bourdieu called the two 'polar positions' of the religious task, namely 'justifying the existence of the ruling classes as rulers' and 'imposing recognition of the legitimacy of domination on the ruled' (Kepel, 2005b: 238).

Nowhere can his blind acceptance of the big picture produced by Orientalism be more evident. He is neither a historian nor an expert in Islamic thought. The narrative about separation and unification, which has been taken for granted in his perspective, shows the fact that his background knowledge is completely filled by Orientalist dogmas. Therefore, there is no surprise if Kepel from the beginning speaks about some fundamental differences between Islam and the West, to select and interpret his

²² Similar narratives can be found in his other books. On another occasion after describing Islam as a monistic religion, in which church and state are unified, he says about Christianity: "By contrast, the movements of re-Christianisation from above... have never questioned the dualism symbolised in Christ's saying 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' Christianity has no equivalent to the shar'ia or the halakah, and Christendom nurtured the process which was lead to modern democracy via the reformation and the Enlightenment" (Kepel, 1994: 196-7).

observations wrongly, and to overestimate Islamic extremism, all these are natural consequences of the dualistic spirit that he has uncritically adopted as *a priori*.

The second difference between the two civilisations, Kepel argues, is the democratic aspirations of Europeans who attempted re-Christianisation. This capacity distinguished them from their Islamist counterparts. They held that in this world the expression of ultimate Truth, of which the Church is the guardian, is subordinate to man's rules. However, such 'constraint by democracy' does not exist in the field of re-Islamisation (Kepel, 1994: 98-99). Both re-Christianisation and re-Islamisation aim "to break the link between modern technology and the dominant culture which produced it." Nevertheless, because these latter movements had "no cultural connections with democracy" they clashed with the surrounding society in a way that had no parallel in Christian countries (Kepel, 1994: 138-139). Kepel once denies any cultural connection between Islamic movements and democracy refers to something deep in his mind, rooted in what he mentioned in his first point about *tawhid*, the essential Islamic attitude. *Tawhid* is a theological term which means "there is no god but God." This term was employed by some extremist circles, like the early *Kharejites* and Qutb, in the political arena and Kepel generalises their approach to the whole Islamic thought. Later analysing Islam and democracy from his perspective I shall explain further about his approach. What is important here is another part of the above quotation, i.e., where he asserts that the dominant culture, i.e., secularism, was the source of modernity. For him – like Lewis and Huntington – the source of modernity, therefore, was the separation between the spiritual and the temporal.

The underlying attitude that prevents Kepel from talking about any possible compromise between religion and modernity is rooted in his French cultural bias that advocates a strict separation between religion and state. Such an attitude can be realised when he talks about some attempts to gather together Islam and modernity in Egypt. The Islam of the Muslim Brothers, he narrates, raised the standard of "Islamic modernity" as an alternative to the modernity of Europe. "If we describe European modernity as the dividing of society, politics, religion, and culture into separate fields or discourses, then the Brothers were opposed to it during the 1930s, just as their heirs are today." Then he repeats the above assertion that their Islamic version of

modernity entails a 'complete and total' blend of society, state, culture, and religion, a blend with which everything began and ended (Kepel, 2006b: 28). This is exactly what the third principle of dualism reads. Later in this chapter I shall study his French cultural bias and its dualistic outcomes. This kind of separationism is not exclusive to French scholarship, however. As we observed, Lewis and Huntington were also for this idea. Esposito, however, was utterly against this, naming it as 'secular fundamentalism' (Esposito, 1999a: 258).

Kepel suggests that the solution to the problem of modernising Islam must be sought in Europe.²³ Young people of a Muslim background in a democratic milieu of twenty-first century Europe, through institutions – especially those of education and culture – could encourage upward social mobility to produce a new face of Islam, which is reconciled with modernity. He proposes that such grassroots political activity “requires a separation of mosque and state,” as Islam settles into the European milieu. “This separation of the secular and religious domains is the *prerequisite* for liberating the forces of reform in the Muslim world” (Kepel, 2004e: 294-295) (emphasis added). For the utopia of this hybrid generation of Islam and the West Kepel uses the term “new Andalusia”. The advent of a new Andalusia, he adds, is the only way out of the passions that terror and the War on terror have produced. But in contrast with medieval Spain, where intellectual influence came from Islam and the political power was in the hands of Muslims this is an Andalusia in reverse: intellectual creativity and innovation emanate from the West, and the elites from Pacific Asia are integrated into its cultural sphere (Kepel, 2004e: 294).²⁴ He elaborates that ‘we have to give our Muslims the opportunity to embrace the modern world – without any constraints. Young people of

²³ Before Kepel suggested this solution in 2004, a similar solution had been suggested by Habib Mokni, a spokesman of some Islamic movements of France. Kepel quotes him: “Western countries as hosts to sizeable Muslim populations are themselves an excellent laboratory for the Islamist democratic experiment to develop” (Kepel, 1997: 197).

²⁴ It is no accident that Kepel urges waging a war for Muslim minds and is keen to make a connection to the Muslim masses through Muslim elites in the West. This was basically a French Orientalist tendency for centuries. Said quotes Maurice Barres, a French Orientalist, who was seeking some Oriental intellectual elite to form a link between West and East. Said then remarks: “Discriminations between elites and the masses are less likely to be made by the British than by the French, whose perceptions and policy were always based on minorities and on the insidious pressures of spiritual community between France and its colonial children... British Oriental expertise fashioned itself around consensus and orthodoxy and sovereign authority; French Oriental expertise between the wars concerned itself with heterodoxy, spiritual ties, eccentrics” (Said, 2003: 245-6).

Muslim heritage who enjoy success in our society today will have no need to apply Islamic criteria when defining their identities' (Kepel, 2006c).

Nowhere can one understand the depth of dualism in Kepel's French perspective more than in this final suggestion to the world of Islam to embrace modernity. Here he is similar to Lewis and far from Esposito. Kepel makes no distinction between the kind of religion suggested by Bin Laden and that suggested by Islamic modernists, for whom religion acts as a source of inspiration and enlightenment, especially when it indicates an ethical approach to politics. For Kepel, things are straightforward. At first he asserts that Islam is inherently for the unification of religion and state, and then, the remedy is that Muslims should embrace their separation. In other words, he suggests that in order to embrace modernity, Muslims should change their culture, their religion, their political philosophy, and in brief their identity, to a European version. 'Others' should become *normal* like 'us'. As a result, he proposes *an absolute integration* in the Western culture, at first for the Muslim diaspora and then through them for other Muslims.²⁵ And this is the opposite direction to which, according to Kepel, Islamic movements suggest.

Islamic movements

Analysing the Islamic resurgence, Kepel proposes some root causes which could be categorised under three types: political, social and economic. Studying these three types he, as a sociologist, mainly talks at the micro level. At first I start with political causes. Through studying different cases, three political causes of the Islamic resurgence have been mentioned by him. The first cause was the evaporation of alternative rivals for Islamism, namely, militant socialism and nationalism. This created a vacuum that Islamism seemed ideally qualified to fill (Kepel, 2006b: 9). In the Egyptian context he explains that the 1967 defeat seriously undermined the ideological edifice of pan-Arabist nationalism and created a vacuum to be filled by Qutb's Islamist philosophy (Kepel, 2006b: 63). Second, lack of freedom of speech in most Islamic

²⁵ Later in this chapter when I narrate his attitude to Muslims in the West, I shall talk more about the "integration."

countries reinforced the role of mosques, which had produced a well-established network that could not be controlled by the government. In a society with no press freedom worthy of the name, and no free exchange of ideas except in the mosques, naturally Islamists were able to use the religious framework to their advantage (Kepel, 2006b: 65). The third political cause was rooted in the anti-communist policies of the Cold War. Western allies, following the Saudi model, encouraged Islamism as a counterweight to the Marxists on university campuses, whom they feared (Kepel, 2006b: 64). He further elaborates the role played by petro-dollars, poured into anything that claimed to be Islamic, employing it as a weapon against leftist movements, especially in Egypt and Algeria (Kepel 1994: 25). He asserts that the various communist groups lacked the resources to overthrow the ruling regimes, either because they had few militant members or because of the severity of the countermeasures taken against them (Kepel, 1994: 15). But for decades anti-communist policies were the first priority for both the West and its allies in the region. Eventually they were surprised by an unwanted result of such policies. He remarks: "History played a trick to the Western foreign offices by substituting one revolution for another: where they had expected to see a leftist in his keffieh, there was a turbaned mullah brandishing his Kalashnikov" (Kepel, 1994: 17).

Some social causes of the resurgence of Islamism, mentioned by Kepel in different Muslim countries, can be discussed here. In Lebanon, he summarises some of the social roots incorporated by the Lebanese Shia community in the 1970s, namely, demographic explosion, rural exodus, projection to the margins of cities, and growing literacy (Kepel, 2006b: 124-5). In the case of Algeria, he elaborates on some of these social causes. The Islamic rebellion of 1988, he argues, involved the first generation reaching maturity without having known any regime other than the one against which they were protesting. Again, a demographic explosion had thrust the children of the farmers into the cities and their outskirts, where conditions were precarious; and again this mass of young people had had access to education for the first time in the country's history (Kepel, 2006b: 159).

Among social causes reinforced by Muslim governments, Kepel takes into consideration some modern educational policies in some Islamic countries. For instance in his study of Egypt under Nasser and Sadat, Kepel considers the first

generation of youth who have been educated for the first time under policies applied by the state which recently received its independence. Once the students were profoundly reshaped by Islamist ideology, they would no longer be satisfied, as their elders were, with the dialectic of the *ma`alish* and the *bakhshish* (two colloquial Egyptian expressions, both meaning 'take it easy') (Kepel, 2005b: 244). Kepel brightly describes Egyptian universities which to his eyes are, in one way or another, a revealing example of Third World universities. Since the Nasser era, Egyptian universities have become caricatures more than copies of Western, or even Soviet, models. He adds, the Egyptian university is a mass institution, where it is not unusual for two or even three students to share a seat in the packed lecture halls and laboratories (Kepel, 2005b: 139). By this, Kepel wants to say that the graduates of such universities will not be culturally capable of bringing modernity to their country. In other words he has no doubt that that educational system changed the society, but towards Islamism, not towards Western modernity – as he calls them.

Among all university disciplines the role played by the applied sciences and engineering departments in promoting Islamism is distinguished. Virtually in all of his case studies Kepel notifies his readers of the function of this social group, who mastered applied sciences and technology but were poor in their social analysis. For instance, studying Islamism in Afghanistan in the 1970s, he observes: "As in other countries, the applied science departments (engineering and so on) provided a significant platform for recruitment" (Kepel, 2006b: 140). The secret of the deficiency of their education is, explained by Kepel elsewhere, that education taught them the mannerism of modern life but not its spirit, and they regarded the state's talk of modernization as hypocrisy (Kepel, 2005b: 244). In the Egyptian context, he further analyses why authoritarian states prefer to produce technicians and engineers, but not experts in the humanities and social sciences: "Here, as elsewhere, we can detect the indelible stamp of Nasserism, which (mimicking its Soviet big brother) preferred to train technicians capable of repairing human bodies and machines instead of intellectuals who think about the problems of society. Officers who had risen through the ranks were there to do the thinking" (Kepel, 2005b: 141).

The economic roots of Islamic resurgence, mentioned by Kepel in different case analyses, are two. One is the rise of the price of oil in 1973. The monetary inflation, a

result of the boom, sharpened the contrasts between the countryside and the towns in which the wealth that flowed from royalties was concentrated (Kepel, 1994: 24). The other is the role played by Islamic charity networks available virtually all over the Muslim world. From south Tehran to the *gecekondus* of Istanbul, from the City of the Dead in Cairo to shanty towns around Algiers, Islamic charity networks were coming to play an essential part in assimilating and recruiting those elements of the population who could not taste the fruits of modernity and prosperity (Kepel, 1994: 24).

Unlike Esposito, who categorises Islamic movements as revivalists, modernists or neo-revivalists (fundamentalists), Kepel in his sociologist perspective prefers to put them into two categories: “movements from above” and “movements from below”. The former, which mainly emerged in 1970s, sought to achieve political power through revolution, in Iran, acts of terror in Egypt, and military coups in Sudan (Kepel, 1994: 32). The latter, which emerged in the late 1980s, however, began “with the stress of re-Islamizing individuals rather than states” (Kepel, 1994: 36). He gives some more examples for the first category: Turabi and his friends were adept at Islamising society from the top down; Mawdudi and the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan; Anwar Ibrahim’s ABIM in Malaysia. The second category contains: the Egyptian Muslim Brothers or the Algerian, Palestinian, and Iranian Islamists who began by preaching to the masses (Kepel, 2006b: 179-180).²⁶

Despite the difference between the two approaches of the Islamic movements, Kepel argues, both had the same aim, namely to re-Islamise society in Muslim countries and to propagate Islam everywhere until humanity is converted into “*ummanity*” (Kepel, 1994: 45-46). He adds, “it would be a mistake to think that re-Islamization ‘from below’ is less radical in its rejection of the secular and *democratic* organization of society, than the Hizbollah and other soldiers of the Jihad who made the running in 1985” (Kepel, 1994: 46) (emphasis added). When the time is ripe (Kepel, 1994: 13) or conditions change (Kepel, 1994: 36) ‘movements from below’ easily changes to ‘movements from above’. He even implicitly warns the West about Islamic movements from below (Kepel, 1994: 201).

²⁶ There seems to be a contradiction; here he puts the Iranian Islamists under ‘movements from below’, while he put them in the previous quotation under ‘movements from above’. Perhaps he suggests that in its first stage, i.e., before revolution the Iranian example was of ‘from below’, but in the course of revolution it changed and must be categorised under ‘from above’.

Obviously in Kepel's perspective there is no room left for Islamic modernism, which is ironically overestimated by Esposito. That is because according to Kepel, Islamism moves away from modernity, obviously because there is only one path towards modernity and it is secularism. Thus no compromise between the two would be logical. As in the above quotation, he believes even peaceful movements from below are non-democratic in nature, simply because they are Islamic. To compare his approach with that of Esposito, the Indian Subcontinent is a good case. To analyse political Islam in this area Kepel merely mentions the Deobandi, Barelevis, the Tabligh and the Jama'at-i Islami as great players in the theatre of Islamism. Overestimating Mawdudi and his, so-called, disciples, he never mentions Esposito's favourite figure, Mohammad Iqbal, nor does he pay any attention to the ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Kepel, 1997: 89-92). A similar contrast can be seen in Egypt. While Esposito highlights the role of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, Kepel focuses on Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb (Kepel, 2005b: 34-67).

In all his selections and interpretations Kepel is in one way or another at risk of being influenced by his Orientalist background knowledge which he rarely doubts. Once Kepel departs from his 'intellectual laziness'²⁷ and doubts the Orientalist narrative, and then hermeneutically observes the situation on the ground, he does his job well. For instance, in the case of 'inter-confessional incidents' in the spring of 1980 between Copts and Muslims of Egypt, he suggests two ways of analysis. The first is simply to claim that fanatic Muslims would be satisfied only by shedding of Christian blood. The second is to compare what was done to the Copts during the inter-confessional incidents with the fate of other minorities during economic or social crisis. Neither schema, however, allows him to understand the specificity of the phenomenon. At the end of his description of the incidents in Mania, he remarks that the inter-confessional tension involved not two protagonists, Muslims and Christians, but three, for the state involved too (Kepel, 2005b: 247). By such a deep political insight into the situation in this case he shows able to doubt Orientalist dogmas, as he does at times in his other political analyses.

²⁷ This is exactly the expression Kepel uses to judge some popular tendencies to study Islam (Kepel, 2005b: 232).

Islamic political theory

In Kepel's narrative contemporary political Islam can be divided up into four periods. The starting stage is the 1960s, an embryonic period in which theoretical aspects crystallised in its modern context. The second is the 1970s during which the implanted ideas consolidated their position within Muslim societies. The third, the 1980s, is the heyday of Islamism – the fruits of political Islam yielded in different parts of world. Finally last, the period of decline, is the 1990s when political Islam showed itself powerless to mobilise Muslim masses towards its goals and instead of conquering real power, tended towards terrorism.

During the first period Sayyid Qutb is the most important figure in Kepel's narrative. Being a prolific writer in diverse fields, Qutb has been read in many different ways, from moderate to super radical. Kepel's reading of Qutb, however, is mainly through Qutb's most radical work, *Signposts*, and therefore, is a radical interpretation. The main problem with his analysis of Qutb, however, is his lack of competence in understanding Islam as a religion with rich spiritual, theological and legal aspects. Seemingly, *Signposts*, was the first work about Islam Kepel read. For instance, there are two key terms in *Signposts*: '*ubudiyya*', being worshipper, and '*hakimiyya*', being sovereign. Kepel considers these terms as non-Quranic terms (Kepel, 2005b: 46). Then he concludes that Qutb has borrowed these terms from Mawdudi who earlier used them in his works. Of course, as Kepel notes in a few pages, (Kepel, 2005b: 63) this comment is not originally from him but from one of Qutb's critics, al-Hudaybi. At any rate, it seems that Kepel is neither right in his first assertion, i.e., those terms are not Quranic, nor in his second claim that they should be traced back to Mawdudi. The terms do not seem to be alien to the Quranic terminology. That is to say, both *hākim* and '*abd*' are Quranic terms, used respectively for sovereign and servant in many verses of the Quran.²⁸ The suffix of "*yyat*" could be added to any Arabic noun to produce the infinitive form. The suffix is somehow equivalent to "being" added before a noun in English. To add the suffix so as to add 'being' before a Quranic term by no means can be counted as making the term alien to the Quranic terminology. Kepel's

²⁸ For '*hākim*' see (7:87); (11:45); (12:80); (95:8). For "*abd*" see (19:30); (43:59); (50:9); (72:19).

second claim that these terms should be traced back to Mawdudi cannot be justified either. The idea of the sole sovereignty of God is rooted in Islamic history as early as the first century of Islam when the *Kharejites'* idea emerged. In this sense, Qutb's argument is close to *Kharejites'* attitude towards polity in Islam. To refute any authorised human rule in Islam, they cited to the holy verse: "the command is for none but Allah" (12:40).

Kepel is aware that *Signposts* was written in Nasser's concentration camp (Kepel, 2005b: 26). Hence, when analysing Qutb he usually tries to keep this context in mind. However, he does not pay much attention to the point I mentioned in the Introduction that *Signposts* was written to defend Islamic thought against ideologies such as colonialism, Orientalism, positivism and Marxism. So if Qutb, for instance, condemns the West as a political entity, it is mainly through a perspective which has crystallised under colonialism. If he counters the West as *jahiliyya* (a barbarian entity), in fact, he counters a dualist perspective of Orientalists who considered the West as the ultimate civilisation and the rest as barbarian. Once he overemphasises the rule of God in the society, he bears in mind positivism, a philosophy that overestimates the role of human knowledge in showing the truth. Finally many of Qutb's ideas ought to be analysed based on his presence under Nasser, who was socialist. We can rarely see any sign of consideration of such contexts when Kepel analyses Qutb.

The second period of political Islam is marked by the emergence of political, social and economic causes of the Islamic resurgence. Previously some causes in Kepel's perspective were mentioned. Apart from that, Kepel has some original observations in this period. One example is his observation of Shukri Mustafa who blindly followed his reading of Qutb. In brief, Shukri believed that Muslim community in that time was in a phase of weakness and should avoid any political activity, but had to concentrate in a self-building process. His reading of Islam was literal. For instance he believed, Kepel quotes him, the teaching and writing for its own sake is illicit (haram). That is because the Prophet did not open *kuttab* (Quranic schools) and institutions to teach Muslims writing and arithmetic. He only permitted Muslims to be taught according to needs and necessities (Kepel, 2005b: 85). Then Kepel attempts to justify such an apparently irrational assertion made by Shukri. Here Shukri was putting his finger in his own way on a crucial problem of Egyptian society. For many Egyptians it was indeed useless to

learn to write and they have forgotten the rudiments they learned at school. Shukri placed himself on the margins of society, flouting established customs. He challenged the social conventions of daily life, revealing them as actually political (Kepel, 2005b: 86-7). Such a way of analysing is interesting, especially from a Western observer. If the analyst, for example, were Lewis, he would promptly interpret this attitude towards literacy as an example for the absolute backwardness and fanaticism of the Muslim mentality, but Kepel tries his best to justify the political approach of his subject of study as a rational player put in a specific situation. Here his way is similar to Popper's situational analysis.

It is worth noting that although Kepel tries his best to make, in Lewis's terms, a fashionable interpretation of Shukri's attitude, Shukri's political understanding was not at such a level as to be able to formulate such intelligent strategies. Kepel is aware of this point. When he analyses Shukri's communiqué claiming responsibility for the kidnapping of Muhammad al-Dahabi, a former minister of *waqf* (endowment), Kepel admits the point: "It reveals Shukri's difficulties in correctly and effectively understanding the state apparatus" (Kepel, 2005b: 98). Perhaps a better understanding of Shukri's character is that his attitude was rooted in a *Salafist* understanding of religion, more or less compatible with some readings of *Signposts*.

Through his analysis, Kepel attempts to follow Shukri's logic precisely, and sometimes objects to him forgetting his own principles. By resorting to attempted homicide against Egyptian citizens, Kepel reminds Shukri, he allowed the judiciary to take up his case and therefore opened himself up to *jahiliyya* attacks while still in the phase of weakness (Kepel, 2005b: 96). Apart from whether the outcome of this observation is accurate, this method of dealing with Muslim subjects seems to be healthier than the conventional biased methods of Orientalism.

Kepel then explains how, at the end of this period, Islamic movements sometimes tended towards violent actions. In the Egyptian context, Kepel finds this attitude in Qutb's terminology: the dialectic of the phase of weakness and the phase of power (*marhalat al-istid'af, marhalat al-tamakkun*) was no longer working. What was needed was the most possible rapid attack on the infidel state; the seizure of power seemed indispensable (Kepel, 2005b: 209).

The third period of political Islam, its heyday, started with the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which, Kepel asserts, was the most important political event at the dawning of this period. He asserts that the Islamic Revolution of Iran was rooted in Shia teachings. In the world of Sunni Islam, no revolution with a religious dimension has been successful in conquering power. When Sunni Islamists were brought to power, by contrast, it was through military coups (Sudan in 1989), foreign intervention (Afghanistan in 1996), and co-option by the army, the monarchy or the ruling classes, but never through a victorious revolution (Kepel, 2005b: 9-10). He analytically and critically examines the secret of success of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, and the failure of other attempts in the Muslim world. Convinced from his political case studies, he states that the key players in Islamic resurgence are the devout middle class, the young urban poor and the Islamic intelligentsia (Kepel, 2006b: 9, 67, 108, 325, 354, 362). Accordingly, only in the Shia context of Iran could these three players co-operate with each other to win the game. Yet in the Sunni Arab world, he illustrates in all cases that these factors could never combine altogether. (Kepel, 2006b: 37) The fragile alliance between the young urban poor and the devout middle class, which was held together by intellectuals preaching the doctrines of Islam, was always ill-prepared in the Sunni world (Kepel, 2006b: 9).

Kepel states that the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran – while not being able to change the Muslim world in a way it desired – provided the world of Islam with two important waves. First it gave inspirations to Islamic movements worldwide to follow its example. However, because they lacked the ability to match all the three key players, they could not succeed and in turn, in some cases, were radicalised. The assassination of Sadat by al-Jihad, a radical Egyptian group, was of this type. Kepel comprehensively studies al-Jihad and illustrates how they planned to attain power after the assassination. In the early 1980s, analysing a pamphlet published by al-Faraj, the group's leader, Kepel predicted a huge influence of his ideas on Islamic extremism. He remarks: "But the text of this young electrician does, I think, at least begin to go beyond Sayyid Qutb, if not to inaugurate a new era in Islamic thought" (Kepel, 2005b: 249). As he had brightly predicted, exactly this line continued to give birth to al-Qaeda and the subsequent theology of violence and terror in Muslim world.

The second impact of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Kepel argues, was the emergence of re-Islamisation programmes from above, by which Muslim states attempted to counter the Iranian brand of Islam. He states that Arab governments, scared from a mass revolution of the Iranian type, attempted to co-opt Islamic slogans. In other words, regimes in Muslim countries saw the fate of the Shah of Iran as an object lesson, increasingly annexed the vocabulary of Islamism (Kepel, 2006b: 118).²⁹ By making concession after concession in the moral and cultural domains, he adds, governments gradually created a reactionary climate of 'reIslamisation'. To this aim, they sacrificed secularist intellectuals, authors, and other 'Westernised elites' to the tender mercies of Islamists, in the hope that the latter, in return, would avoid a revolutionary act of the Iranian type (Kepel, 2006b: 7). Ironically one of the closest US allies in the region had the lion's share of this process. Saudi Arabia's impact on Muslims throughout the world, Kepel remarks, was less visible than that of Iran under Khomeini, but the effect was deeper and more enduring (Kepel, 2006b: 61-62). He elaborates why they chose this way: "By becoming the managers of a huge empire of charity and good works, the Saudi government sought to legitimize a prosperity it claimed was manna from heaven..." (Kepel, 2006b: 70).

Kepel further illustrates how some Muslim countries opportunistically attempted to employ the Islamic cause merely for their political aims. In the case of Pakistan he observes that for General Zia, the promotion of Mawdudi and his disciples was a way of blocking the restoration of democracy and to justify martial law by presenting it as a viable means for setting up a true Islamic state (Kepel, 2006b: 101). Kepel further observes how Zia took advantage of the suspicion between traditional clerics and modern Islamists to play them off against one another and then by dividing the religious establishment, he could rule them better. Thus the state policy of Islamisation was an overall success for the Pakistani dictatorship, which used it to win the support of the different social groups in one way or another (Kepel, 2006b: 104-105). However, Zia's policy produced an overall success as well for the Islamic cause 'from below' the fruits of which was later seen in Afghan jihad as well as in the rise of Taliban.

²⁹ Kepel observe a similar story in different cases. For instance, see his analysis of Algeria in Kepel, 2006b: 165.

Among all events of this period, Kepel highlights the emergence of the Afghan *jihad*, which eventually produced a global phenomenon of Islamic terrorism. He explains how *mujahedin* were born in the course of *jihad* in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation. The scene of *jihad* was a great gathering of international Islamists. Arabs mixed with Afghans and other Muslims from the four corners of the world and exchanged ideas based on their different traditions. In the paradigm of the Cold War the *mujahedin* were supported by the United States and its conservative Muslim allies. At the same time, however, the network developed its own logic, which before long began to work against its original patrons (Kepel, 2006b: 137-8). A mixture from different nationalities and backgrounds, *jihad* in Afghanistan emerged as a hybrid movement. In addition to Afghani fighters, many Pakistani militia embraced *jihad*. The Deobandis, who before the 1980s were counted as a fully moderate sect, are an example. Kepel is surprised that the Deobandis suddenly adopted violent methods. This was, according to Kepel, one of the more unexpected effects of the Islamists ferment in southwest Asia during that decade (Kepel, 2006b: 143). The Afghan *jihad* also received many fighters who were among Arab dissidents. Describing how Egyptian Islamic militants changed to global terrorists, Kepel notes: "In Cairo, the powers-that-be wished them well, pleased to kill three birds with one stone: getting them out of Egypt, subcontracting them to the American godfather for the purpose anti-Soviet warfare, and hoping they would get lost for good" (Kepel, 2005b: 14). Although political Islam through jihad in Afghanistan received one of its main achievements, Kepel considers this movement as one of main causes of the decline of Islamism worldwide.

During the last period of political Islam, the decline period, *mujahedin* were changed to the "international brigade of jihad veterans". Since they were no longer bound by local political contingencies, Kepel explains, they had no responsibilities to any social group either. In a sense they became "the free electrons of jihad" or "a pool of manpower" for *jihad*. This milieu was cut off from social reality; its inhabitants, settled in a primitive environment, perceived the world in the light of religious doctrine and armed violence (Kepel, 2006b: 219). They constituted a kind of demobilised army of several thousand experienced warriors, all without passport, in search of a place to fight or at least to hide (Kepel, 2006b: 300).

But why does Kepel consider the 1990s as the period of the overall decline of Islamism? The cumulative effect of the 1980s, Kepel replies, had been to force the Islamists to bring together their various tendencies behind a shared ideology; this process began to reverse in the early 1990s, when mere doctrine could no longer hide the social disagreements within the movement. The radically different trajectories of the main players: the middle classes and the disinherited young became more and more obvious. As a result the former became vulnerable to attempts by established governments to win them over, while the latter drifted in the direction of violence and terrorism (Kepel, 2006b: 206-7). The drift into terrorism cut off the most radical groups from the young urban poor whom they aspired to represent, and this also affected the alliance between poor youth and devout middle-class intellectuals. Thus terrorists could no longer represent Islamic demands of their nation (Kepel, 2006b: 313).

Then Kepel discusses the terrorist attacks in the West, especially that of 9/11 which has been interpreted by many as a huge success for Islamism against the West. Kepel believes otherwise. Despite the appearance of growing influence worldwide, he argues, the deeper reality is that the two opposing camps within the Islamist movement – the devout middle class and the young urban poor – were no longer able to provoke social upheaval on a scale that could lead to a lasting success like that of the Iranian revolution (Kepel, 2006b: 207). In spite of what many hasty commentators contended in its immediate aftermath, he elaborates, the attack on the United States was a desperate symbol of the isolation, disintegration, and decline of the Islamist movement, not a sign of its strength and irrepressible might (Kepel, 2006b: 375). In Kepel's view, the greatest strengths of terrorism – its suddenness, its anonymity and its use of surprise – is also its greatest weaknesses, if we look at it as a political action; because it never can claim its dividend (Kepel, 2006b: 16).

So far in this section by narrating these four periods of political Islam, i.e., its birth, growth, apogee and decline, I have tried my best to capture Kepel's attitude to political Islam. No doubt, he, as a socio-political analyst, does his job well at the micro level. He tries his best to understand Qutb, to analyse Shukri, to find main players of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and elsewhere, to evaluate *jihad* critically in Afghanistan, to trace back sophisticatedly the causes of global terrorism and finally to hypothesise its

decline.³⁰ But at the macro level, here again, like his approach to Islam and modernity, he naively takes for granted some presumptions originally established by Orientalism. Based on such presumptions, he selects Qutb as the most prominent figure of political Islam; overestimates Shukri Mustafa; equates political Islam with extremism; gives no position to democratic achievements of political Islam; concludes that if the extremist brand of Islamism decline, political Islam as a whole is going to fail; as well as many other attitudes which are the result of the big picture that he unconsciously employs. All in all, although he is a brilliant analyst at the micro level, traces of Orientalism at the macro level have imprisoned his perspective. This will be more evident once he talks about the theoretical aspects of the interrelation between Islam and democracy.

Islam and democracy

The theory of the decline of Islamism was originally raised by Kepel before September 11 in the French version of *Jihad: the Trial of Political Islam*. Since then, in various contexts, including extremist and democratic, Islamism has achieved much success. As mentioned above, Kepel regards acts of terror in the name of Islam as approval for his theory. Then, how does he justify Islamists' democratic achievements? His answer is simple and straightforward, that is: moving toward democracy means leaving Islamism. His analysis of successful attempts of Iranian reformists, namely, ex-President Khatami and his wing, can be a good example for showing how Kepel understands political Islam. Kepel does not put Khatami within the circle of political Islam, though Khatami himself insists that he is within it. Instead, Kepel considers his victory, like that of other Iranian reformists', as a sign of decline of political Islam. The

³⁰ Martin Kramer, a pupil and follower of Lewis, doubts Kepel's theory of decline even at the stage of micro-analysis. He argues that although Kepel covers Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan and Malaysia, and naturally dwells at greatest length on the cases that confirm his thesis, many other cases of Islamic movements do not support his theory of decline. Kramer adds: "There are Islamist movements, positioned at the very jugular of the Middle East, that are not at all spent. In Lebanon, the Iranian-backed Hizballah has dug itself into Lebanese politics and society, and its militiamen still parade with guns, having compelled Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon after an 18-year occupation. And from the Palestinian-controlled cities of the West Bank and Gaza, Hamas and Islamic Jihad dispatch waves of suicide bombers, and openly take credit for their deeds. These movements still believe that a determined minority can change the course of history — the few thousand Shi'a guerrillas who hunted the Israeli army, and the one hundred Palestinians who have chosen 'self-martyrdom'" (Kramer, 2002).

legislative elections of February 18, 2000, which were won handsomely by reformist candidates, are according to Kepel an unmistakable sign that Iranian society is turning its back on the social and moral order inherited from Ayatollah Khomeini. In Kepel's eyes, the forecasts about the way the transition from an Islamist to a post-Islamist era will be managed recall the arguments over post-communism in the former Soviet Republics. In both cases the unrest demonstrates the failure of a political approach that now seems unworkable. Iranians no longer view Islamism as the source of utopia, and this more pragmatic vision augurs well for the future (Kepel, 2006b: 365-6). For those who are familiar with Iranian reformist literature, nevertheless, it is clear that the reformists who took power, including Khatami himself, never claimed that they are distancing themselves from Islam or the Revolution. On the contrary, they believed that they can better understand Islam and even the ethos of the Ayatollah Khomeini in this new context. Khatami, even more than his rival political wing, feels close to the thought and heritage of Khomeini. It seems all such apologetic justifications by Kepel are rooted in his uncritical attitude towards political Islam. For him, seemingly it is Others' attitude towards politics and is not more than the evil ideology of communism, which once resisted Western approach and then faded.

This kind of judgment is not limited to Iran, but virtually covers all Kepel's case studies. In the case of Bosnia too he asserts that a democratic attitude toward religion is a sort of post-Islamist logic (Kepel, 2006b: 251). In Malaysia he mentions "disillusioned Islamists", such as one of Anwar Ibrahim's men, who wished to forge an alliance with civil society that would allow them to *recycle* themselves into the great market of globalisation (Kepel, 2006b: 363). Accordingly, his final suggestion for Islamism is to be democratic, or in his terms, to be recycled. He applies this idea to all Islamic political movements: "As for intellectuals linked to middle class, they were obliged to take a stance in favour of democracy, the rights of man (and woman, too), and freedom of expression, themes on which the founding fathers of Islamism had been ambiguous, not to say downright hostile. This stance allowed them to forge alliances with their secular counterparts against authoritarian regimes, but it also forced them into revision of doctrine that tarnished their Islamist credentials and made them vulnerable to dogmatic zealots" (Kepel, 2006b: 208).

Of course, Kepel rarely talks about some kinds of Muslim democracy.³¹ Muslim rulers, he suggests, must assist at the birth of “a Muslim form of democracy” that would embrace culture, religion, political and economic modernity as never before. The choice the rulers made would determine whether we would see again the flag of jihad or whether the Muslim people could take their own peaceful path to democracy (Kepel, 2006b: 374-5). Sometimes he also talks about some brands of democracy which are under consideration by Muslim intellectuals. There is a renewal in the Muslim world among intellectuals, he says, as to how to rethink the Islamic legacy in its plurality and how to make it democracy-compatible (Kepel, 2002). However, it remains pretty vague what sort of political philosophy is meant by Kepel to represent ‘Islamic democracy’. Given what we see in his overall approach, for him the ‘Islamic’ adjective in this phrase cannot be more than just an additional word without meaning, apparently employed just to satisfy fellow Muslims and to convince them to recycle to and to embrace without reservation the French *‘laïcité’*.

The secret of Kepel’s stance on political Islam seems to be in line with the second principle of dualism which gives him an underlying belief that Islam is fixed and cannot be changed and developed, and therefore, the fixed Islamism by no means can compromise with the modern democracy. Occasionally he clarifies this secret: “In Islamist thinking there could be no room for autonomous political activity outside the control of the *shar`ia*, the Law codified by Islamic scholars from the revealed scriptures. To introduce democracy is to destroy the case put forward by the re-Islamization movements” (Kepel, 1994: 193-4). We have already talked about this simplistic approach to Islamic democracy.³² Here the question is that, since he is not an expert in Islamic religious thought, who has given him such an idea about Islam? One potential answer is that he has been inspired by the extremist wings of Islamism. This

³¹ In this sense, he is like Lewis who basically is against any possible form of Islamic democracy, but rarely contradicts himself and talks about something that opposes his principles (Lewis, 2003d).

³² Parekh argues for the possibility of an Islamic reading of democracy and shows that the apparent contradiction between being Islamic and being democratic can be found in other contexts as well. He remarks: “Islam insists that sovereignty is ultimately derived from God. This can be reconciled with democracy by arguing that people are its inheritors on earth... At the heart of an Islamic or any other religion-based (or even hyphenated) democracy, there is a constant tension between the requirements of religion and democracy. However, this is not unique. Liberal democracy also contains a tension between the principles of liberalism and democracy: the former stressing individual autonomy and personal liberty and with a bias towards capitalism; and the latter stressing community and equality and with a thrust towards socialism or social democracy, so much so over a century liberals and democrats wondered if they could ever become partners” (Parekh, 2008: 264-5).

answer is to some extent correct, as his observation of Algerian Islamism illustrates: “‘Democracy’ itself is rejected out of hand, as is incessantly repeated by Imam Ali Belhaj, the spokesman of the contemporary Islamist movement in Algeria; there is no basis in the Koran for the idea of the demos, the people as sovereign” (ibid). But the question remains as to why throughout his narrative Kepel merely gazes at the rhetoric of Islamic extremists. Among Algerian Islamist movements, there were other moderate voices, such as Abbas al-Madani who is considered by Esposito as the most prominent figure of the movement. So we have to ask again: who has convinced Kepel that political Islam has to be tied in one way or another with extremism (the fourth principle of dualism) and should be represented by those extremist figures? The only possible answer seems to be that there is an underlying dualism in his perspective inherited from Orientalism,³³ reinforced by his French Republican cultural bias as we shall see in his discussion on Islamic countries.

Islamic countries

Kepel further develops his ideas on Islamic countries through different case studies. The first case he starts his career with is Egypt under Sadat. In his analysis of Egypt he mostly concentrates on eight currents: governments of Nasser and Sadat; Qutb as the godfather of Islamism; Shukri Mustafa and the ‘seclusion in the phase of weakness’ theory; Neo-Muslim Brethren, a more conservative Islamic tendency that wish to work within the system; Jamaat Islamiyya, an Islamic movement among Egyptian students; Al-Azhar, a government-controlled religious authority; Sheikh Kishk, an independent traditional preacher; Muhammad Faraj’s jihadist and terrorist group which emerged when all other types of resistance – and in a sense all other readings of Qutb – failed. Among all these currents, his discussion about al-Azhar is the briefest one, while he covers all others in a considerable length. His method of study is to focus on a few important books, documents, interviews and the ilk. For instance, with regard to Qutb, as I mentioned earlier he concentrates on *Signposts*, for Shukri, he mainly focuses on

³³ Perhaps can nowhere the decisive role of al-Faruqi in crystallisation of Esposito’s sane perspective be realised more than here, if Esposito is to be compared with Kepel.

his published statements in the court, for Neo-Brethren he considers a few articles and one column of their magazine, *al-Dawa*. As for independent preachers, he overemphasises the role of Kishk and focuses on one of his sermons. Finally in the case of al-Faraj's group, he concentrates on a pamphlet entitled "Hidden Imperative". Some of the documents he focuses on are published by the government itself or some journalists related to it, and therefore, in a non-democratic environment could be unreliable. He admits: "Statements solicited and rewritten by government journalists must be read with caution, of course" (Kepel, 2005b: 151).

However, as a matter of fact, these currents do not include all pieces of Sadat's Egyptian puzzle. Kepel never considers the secular players of the theatre. He does not pay much attention to pan-Arabism which was the touchstone of Nasserism. In this case he ignores the important waves and inspirations, caused throughout the region, where Egypt was not an exception, by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was, in his view, the only successful experience of Islamism from below. Furthermore, he does not abundantly involve himself in the intellectual arguments produced by al-Azhar, simply because this institution was to some extent related to the government. By linking too directly to the state, al-Azhar institution was deprived of social credibility, he argues. A vacuum had been created, to be filled by anyone ready to question the state and criticise governments in the name of Islam, whether that person had received clerical training, like Kishk, or not, like Qutb (Kepel, 2006b: 53).

Perhaps Algeria is the most interesting case in Kepel's view, because firstly it is of the francophone bloc and secondly Algerian immigrants in France enjoy the most decisive role in defining a French brand of Islam. Hence, Kepel's objectivity can be critically assessed here in parallel with Lewis's objectivity with regard to Israel. Kepel starts by discussing Algeria under French rule and the subsequent role played by Islamism. Unlike Esposito (Esposito, 1999a: 172), Kepel does not consider Islamism as the major hero of the independence, but only late contributors, (Kepel, 2006b: 49, 55, 162) though they themselves believe that they are the legitimate heirs of the 1954 War of Independence (Kepel, 2006b: 172). He narrates colonial Algeria: "[T]he Algerians had constructed a mixed political and cultural popular identity, rooted in 130 years of shared history with France. It was this *cultural cross-fertilization* which the FIS [Front Islamique du Salut] ideology sought to eliminate. This necessitated an Islamic re-

writing of the whole history of the war of independence (out of which the FLN [Front de Liberation Nationale] had emerged victorious), now depicted as a 'jihad against the Cross'" (Kepel, 1997: 157) (emphasis added). Kepel's phrasing of the French colonialism as a 'cultural cross-fertilization' seems to be an interesting point. He never uses a similar term for other colonial powers. For the British colonial domination of India, for instance, he prefers to highlight an 'absolute otherness' of Indian subjects promoted by the 'British colonial empire' (Kepel, 1997: 86).³⁴

This portrayal of Algerian Islamism makes his stance on the movement clear from the very beginning, because the Islamists are those who sought to eliminate this rich cultural heritage of France. Moreover, he highlights the negative effect of the FIS on French Muslims. Given the Algerian origin of many French Muslims, Islam in France in the 1990s has developed within a wider context marked particularly by events in Algeria. The appearance and staggering success of the FIS have shaken up the whole system of values associated with Islam, not only in Algeria but also more generally in France (Kepel, 1997: 154-5). The FIS imposed a mass 'Islamist alternative' which strongly promoted an Islamic identity based on rejection of the West (Kepel, 1997: 155). This version carried with it a redefinition of Algerian identity including the rejection of any French influence. By blaming all of Algeria's ills on French cultural influence, the FIS heightened a sense of 'pure' Islamic identity, from which the party wanted to exclude all the elite and discourse made or influenced by France (Kepel, 1997: 157). Discussing the FIS's ideology, he adds: "[T]he combatants must reconquer hearts and minds, by depicting France as an evil entity and an enemy of the Islam of which the FIS claims to be the supreme representative" (Kepel, 1997: 160).

As for the political function of the FIS, which won several elections in the late 1980s and the early 1990s and finally gave up in a course of military suppression in 1992, Kepel's position clearly expresses his attitude towards Islamism. The movement has had two leaders, first, Abbas Madani, a 58-year-old (in 1989) war veteran and a university professor who went about a luxurious Mercedes and second, Ali Benhadj (Belhaj), thirty-three years old (in 1989) and a lightweight motorcycle rider (Kepel, 2006b: 168). While Esposito highlights the role of the former and consider him as an

³⁴ This sense of national pride (or selfishness) is not limited to Kepel. As Parekh narrates, "the French National Assembly passed a law on 23 February 2005 requiring all 'high school history courses and textbooks' to emphasize the 'positive dimension of the French colonial era'" (Parekh, 2008: 105).

Islamic reformist (Esposito, 1999a: 177-8), Kepel highlights the role of the latter, arguing that he was “the most charismatic leader of the FIS” (Kepel, 1997: 166). At the same time Kepel does not believe that the second ranking leader, i.e., Abbas Madani was an Islamic reformist, but describes him as someone who attempted “to develop a version of society which closely resembled that of militant Islamism, as promoted by Banna, Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood” (Kepel, 1997: 162). In addition, evaluating the FIS, Kepel states that an extreme example of community restructuring of identity, the fixed path to follow marked by *salafist* preachers, “was at the heart of the creation of FIS” (Kepel, 1997: 168).

While both Lewis (Lewis, 2004a: 95) and Esposito (Esposito, 1999a: 185) –each in his own rhetoric – appreciated the democratic nature of the Algerian Islamic movement, Kepel tries to show that the movement attempted to hijack democracy. For him its achievement was a social upheaval much more like the Iranian Revolution than a genuine democratic victory (Kepel, 2006b: 171). The jihadist-salafists, contingent at the fringes of the Islamist party in Algeria, had never believed that power could be won through the electoral process and thus had waited for the right moment to precipitate an armed struggle, he asserts (Kepel, 2006b: 257). Leaving aside the question of democracy, the FIS’s great achievement was to limit the betrayal to that of the ‘original *Islamic* ideals’ (Kepel, 1997: 159). Attempting to equate Benhadj’s view on democracy with that of FIS as a mass movement, Kepel asserts: “The FIS’s most explicit view on the question of democracy is a long text by Ali Benhadj, published in three parts in *Al Munqidh* under the title ‘Smashing open the head of the doctrine of democracy’” (Kepel, 1997: 170). However, one might question Kepel about how a democratically won party may question the legitimacy of the notion of democracy, which indeed is its point of strength. Perhaps this point led Kepel to doubt in his analysis, causing him to remark: “But although the doctrinal standpoint of Ali Benhadj is unequivocal in its condemnation of democracy, its practical application and particularly the way in which it has been received at grassroots level are much less easy to pin down” (Kepel, 1997: 171).

Kepel, unlike Lewis (Lewis, 2004a: 95) and Esposito, (Esposito, 1999a: 172) tends to attribute the failure of Islamism in Algeria, not to the military suppression of 1992, but first and foremost to the internal weakness of the Algerian Islamists. The Islamism

entirely controlled the direction of Islam between 1988 and 1992, he argues, and set the tone for all FIS propaganda. Nevertheless, their extremism, their youth, their ardour and their political immaturity prevented them from winning secular middle-class support, and therefore lost an essential factor of their initial success (Kepel, 2006b: 176).³⁵

Again, unlike Lewis (Lewis, 2004a: 95) and Esposito, (Esposito, 1994) Kepel does not pay any attention to the supportive silence of the West about the Algerian military suppression. This is in a sharp contrast to the case of Bosnia with regard to which he admits Serbian butchery, “while the West with its vaunted human rights, looked on silently” (Kepel, 2006b: 238). Perhaps, again being a French scholar he has unconsciously ignored his country’s important role, as the most involved Western country in this case, in dismissing democracy in Algeria.³⁶ Without saying anything on the questionable silence of the West, Kepel vaguely admits that the outlawing of the Islamist party, which had won the highest number of the votes and the imprisonment of its leaders and activists “was approved by many parties, movements and associations which claimed to be ‘democratic’” (Kepel, 1997: 171).

Kepel’s approach to Islamism in Turkey seems to be a perfect occasion for comparing his perspective with that of Esposito from three angles. First, unlike Esposito who portrays Erbakan, the movement’s leader, as a moderate and pragmatist Islamist (Esposito, 1999a: 203), Kepel portrays him as an Islamic fundamentalist in line with the Egyptian Muslim Brothers or the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami (Kepel, 2006b: 345). In this way, Kepel bases his argument on actions Erbakan’s group made during the 1970s when ministers of Erbakan’s Party of National Salvation fought openly against ‘Westernisation,’ censoring films that they judged obscene, placing restrictions on the sale of beer, and opening prayer rooms in their office buildings (Kepel, 2006b: 346). All of these acts, for Kepel, are categorised under fundamentalism. Second, unlike Esposito, Kepel does not pay much attention to the democratic nature of the victory of Turkish Islamists. In other words, while Esposito tends to encourage other Muslim nations to follow the Turkish example, Kepel attempts to highlight the fragility of

³⁵ See also Kepel, 2006b: 254-5.

³⁶ In this regard Kepel points to President Mitterrand’s statement deploring the suspension of elections (Kepel, 1997: 214), but the statement is considered as a very mild reaction by some analysts (Cavatorta, 2002).

Islamism as a political philosophy. Analysing the failure of Islamism, he notes that its *ultimate* failure was largely due to the pressures exerted on it by the military hierarchy and the political establishment. But simultaneously he highlights that it was also a consequence of insurmountable contradictions between the Islamist political project and the practical reality of running a democratic state linked to the West and hampered by growing disenchantment at the ruling parties electoral base. In fact, the Turkish army, which had mounted three coups before, in 1960, 1971, and 1980, did not need in this case to use force. "The Islamist government trapped itself" (Kepel, 2006b: 355). In this way Kepel attempts to illustrate that the collapse of the Islamic government was not due to the military intervention, but due to its internal problems, to its logical inconsistency. Last but not least, unlike Esposito, Kepel believes that Islamism in Turkey, like other cases, is in the mode of decline and as in the case of Bosnia (Kepel, 2006b: 252-3), it has started to distance itself from its original message (Kepel, 2006b: 258-9). Otherwise, it had no chance to continue. In losing the attraction it had formerly enjoyed, the party became a humdrum part of the Turkish political landscape and resigned itself to expressing the religious interests of a single segment of society (Kepel, 2006b: 344). He further elaborates this point that at the end of the twentieth century, democratisation was under way all over the Muslim world. In the case of Turkey, it resulted in a severe setback for the Islamist ideology at the April 1999 general election (Kepel, 2006b: 359). So in general, for Kepel, unlike Esposito, Turkey is not a perfect model for Islamic political movements to follow, but merely another piece of evidence of the decline of political Islam worldwide.

Nonetheless, Turkish Islamists continued to win several elections since 2002. This point has had to be considered by Kepel. Hence, later he rebuilds his argument by removing the new Turkish Islamist government from Islamists' camp, as he did for the Iranian reformists. The Turkish government, he argues, that is both waiting and pressing for this decision is dominated by a reformist Islamic party, the *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* (AKP, Justice & Development party) whose prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, achieved notoriety, and was even imprisoned, in 1998 for quoting in a political speech a poem which likened the minarets of his country's mosques to bayonets and their domes to helmets. But, according to Kepel, now Erdogan's thinking has changed. The AKP of Recep Tayyip Erdogan may be Islamic in name, but it represents a significant

departure from its predecessors in the febrile world of Turkish Islamist politics (Kepel, 2004c). Kepel's apologetic justification for his theory of decline is not convincing, however. Islamists with their insistence on their Islamic ethos won in 2004 with 42% and in 2007 with 47%. One of the first moves of the AK Islamist party after its electoral victory in 2002 was to push for the freedom of women to wear the *hijab* at university. Moreover, in the annual meeting at Davos in 2009, two months before the Turkish municipal elections, Erdogan harshly criticised the Israeli President for the brutal massacre in Gaza in the same year. Once he came back home, he was warmly welcomed by thousands of demonstrators who shared anti-Israeli feeling with their Prime Minister. Erdogan was even accused of doing all of this to receive more votes.³⁷ This accusation, true or false, appropriately shows the fact that an Islamic ethos is still at the centre of the Turkish electoral campaign.

Israel

The Israeli-Palestinian dispute appears to be a perfect occasion for comparing Kepel's perspective with Lewis's. There are three advantages to Kepel's approach. First, as we saw in his chapter, Lewis does not seem to be neutral. Kepel, however, asserts that to resolve the current dilemma of the Middle East, an equal dignity of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples must be acknowledged, not pretending that the latter do not exist or imagining its identity could be levelled (Kepel, 2004d). Lewis throughout his works tries to underestimate the role played by the Israeli-Palestinian question in the crisis between Islam and the West, asserting that it is more visible than real. Kepel, nevertheless, is aware of the significant effect this question has caused. He suggests that the West should take a more balanced footing on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In the Muslim world, people who reject violence and terrorism are nevertheless adamant against the U.S., because they do not see it as an "honest broker" anymore (Kepel, 2004b). Moreover, Kepel is aware about the negative effect this political question has in Muslim minds. The problem is that with what we have

³⁷ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,604650,00.html> [accessed 11/02/09]

now in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is not much room in the Muslim world for relaxed thinking about their domestic political deficiencies. Most energies are focused on hostility to Israel and, to a large extent, the West (Kepel, 2002).

Second, Lewis, as we saw, states that the US has to consider its interests first and foremost, regardless of being blamed for using double-standards or not being an 'honest broker'. Kepel, however, is severely against such a thesis. He asserts that the policy of beating on the heads of Palestinians until they yield was shown not to be effective. Instead they need to be convinced not only that terror is a dead end, but also that they can reap political, social and economic benefits of peace. The past decade, however, is more of a liability than an asset. He adds: "They also need to be persuaded that the peace brokers are honest, and that brutal Israeli re-occupation of Palestinian territory in the course of the second intifada, together with its targeted 'elimination' of Palestinian activists and 'collateral damage' calling for an endless vicious circle of bloody revenge, is condemned on an equal footing in Washington" (Kepel, 2003b).

Third, mention has already been made that Lewis has been influential upon US neoconservatives and in formulating George Bush's Middle Eastern policies. Quite on the opposite side, Kepel is flatly against the neocons' philosophy, as we shall observe in this chapter. In his view, one of the touchstones of the neocon political strategy is the security of Israel regardless of the price the West should pay. Investigating the root causes of September 11, Kepel points to the breakdown of the Oslo Accords. He elaborates: "The neocons, self-declared champions of Israel as a predominantly 'Jewish state', saw the Oslo peace process as a trap" (Kepel, 2004e: 3). As early as 1996, in a memorandum intended for Netanyahu, a group of neocon academics were convinced that the logic of Oslo was out of date. According to them, a lasting settlement in the Middle East was contingent upon dealing with the Iraqi question by eliminating Saddam Hussein and replacing him with a pro-Western democracy. This, they believed, was the only way to break Arab resistance to the state of Israel (Kepel, 2004e: 17).³⁸ As a result the priority of Israel led the White House to weaken the peace process.

In the course of the second round of Georg Bush's presidency, Kepel further explained the crucial role of the Israeli lobby in US politics. President Bush, he remarked, would

³⁸ See also: Kepel, 2004a.

soon begin the re-election race, and he would be torn between domestic, short-term tactics and international, long-term strategies. Common wisdom in Republican circles was of the view that Bush Snr., in spite of the 1991 military triumph, was not re-elected because he had alienated the pro-Israel American lobby by forcing too many concessions upon Israel. Additionally, alienating the pro-Israel lobby, strongly 'embedded' in the neo-conservative Pentagon elite, seemed totally unrealistic (Kepel, 2003b). Such a mentality in the White House led to the situation that, according to Kepel, "while his father was eager to put equal pressure on Palestinians and Israelis, 'Dubya' seems reluctant, to say the least, to hurt any of Ariel Sharon's vested interests and, instead, all the pressure has been exerted on Palestinians" (ibid). Such a deal with the Muslim world could effectively reinforce distrust between the West and Islam. Kepel, however, this time resisted the dualistic judgement in this case. For him, though a Western intellectual, Palestinians are not Others who are doomed to be in an inevitable clash with the West.

Clash of Civilisations

Perhaps the main field where we can directly examine dualism in Kepel's perspective is his approach to the post-Cold War interrelations between the West and Islam. As discussed in this chapter, because of his focus on Islamic extremism, Kepel, like Lewis, was among Huntington's key references. In fact, the book which was cited by Huntington, i.e., *la Revanche de Dieu* – later translated under *The Revenge of God* – is Kepel's most hostile book to Islamic political movements. Looking at Kepel in that book, we have to say that to some extent Huntington has read him correctly. For instance, describing religious extremists, including Muslims, Christians and Jewish ones, Kepel states: "This is an extreme incidence of something which was bound to emerge from the reaffirmation of religious identities: a clash between holders of opposed, but equally radical beliefs" (Kepel, 1994: 195). He adds: "The time for the conversion of Constantine or for starting a crusade is not yet. But, in the medium term, it is the logic of conflict which underlies the parallel development of different religious movements setting out to reconquer the world. Such conflict is ultimately a war

between 'believers' who make the reaffirmation of their religious identity into the criterion of truths that are both exclusive of others and peculiar to themselves" (Kepel, 1994: 203).

Apart from this exceptional title which originally was published before Huntington's article, in the rest of his works Kepel, like Esposito, is utterly against the theory of 'the clash of civilisations.' Perhaps the main reason for his stance on the theory is that being in frequent contact with different Muslim countries, he is aware that the reality of the construction of personal identity in today's world is far different from what was suggested by Huntington. Hence, to counter Huntington's argument, Kepel mainly tries to refute the first principle of dualism from its origins. Huntington takes no account, Kepel remarks, of the fact that Muslim identity in the world today is largely a social construct, made up of tradition, inherited characteristics, how people see, feel, eat. All this is brushed away by a Huntingtonian view that is fascinated only by the 'essence' of civilisations. By this logic, all Muslims are alike; they see Islam as their driving force; and they face 'the West'. This argument, however, can only convince Western observers who are away from facts on the ground. "In my own, more down to earth, travelogue, I tried to grasp the fragile reality of the construction of personal identity among some Muslims, some Middle Easterners today. I wanted to point out that this involved more than just putting someone into a box because of his religious origins" (Kepel, 2003d). He further elaborates his thesis that despite Huntington's opinion, Islamism is not a necessary outcome of Muslim societies. They may choose other solutions. In the final analysis, any ideology's attractions, Kepel argues, depend on how it adapts to the perceived actual needs of a society. The success and failure of the Islamist movement in the twentieth century, since the time of the Muslim Brothers, has shown this trend clearly. This conclusion is far different from a teleological view of history which holds that Islamism, for better or for worse, is a necessary outcome for the Muslim world (Kepel, 2006b: 30).

Furthermore, Kepel believes that waves of globalisation have removed cultural borders between the two civilisations. In his chronicle, once he discusses the American University of Cairo, he notes, what is being played out here is not a war of civilisations, but rather an attempt to participate in a globally dominant one (Kepel, 2003a: 21). In the same mood, describing the 'scandalous al-Jazeera' satellite channel

in Qatar as Bin Laden's agent, Kepel notes, global commerce is paying homage to the merchandising of Bin Laden products. While the man himself is apparently hidden in the Pashtun mountains – a missile strike away from the Qatari peninsula – his message is being broadcasted everywhere. "We must be on the front line of the famous 'clash of civilizations' - but I am no longer sure which side we are on" (Kepel, 2003a: 60); he points to the fact that in our interdependent world absolute demarcation is rather a myth.

In addition, Kepel warns that such dualist theories are counterproductive. That is to say, instead of offering constructive solutions, they provoke reactions amongst extremists from the two sides and in turn they produce the hostility and conflict. Kepel explains: "Professor Huntington ... seems surprised when I tell him that his book, of which the Arabic translation is a bestseller, is the top reference for all Islamist militants, thrilled by the cultural rift that gives credence to their confrontational ideology. All they have to do is to invert the signs of Good and Evil" (Kepel, 2003a: 133).

Instead of such destructive approaches, Kepel submits that the West and Islam ought to consider both the negative and positive sides of their interrelations. Although civilisational identity and cultural specifications are important, shared interests of humanity and constructive relations are not less. A curious relationship with the West has developed in our global universe in a way that declarations of distrust are combined with a powerful attraction; rejection of the West is mixed with admiration for a democratic system of which most of the Muslim world's societies are still deprived. Nowadays, claims of cultural specificity are intertwined with the irrepressible wish to participate equally in universal culture (Kepel, 2003a: 16).

The West and the Middle East

For Kepel, as for many other analysts, September 11 was a turning point in the interplay of the West and Islam. Kepel, like Esposito, attempts to consider both the attacks and counterattacks and to condemn equally extreme attitudes on both sides, namely, Islamic extremism and US neoconservative ideology. The former is

condemned for September 11 itself and the latter for unconsciously preparing the conditions for September 11 as well as for waging the 'War on Terror'. He regards the fundamentalists of the two sides as two sides of the same coin. "They're mutually interdependent; they feed off and reflect one another" (Kepel, 2006c). Perhaps, this is the apex of his anti-dualistic mentality. Resisting against all Orientalist narratives, here he sophisticatedly analyses the causes and consequences of what happened in New York and Washington. He argues:

Though the ultimate goals of jihadists and neoconservatives diverged, their proximate goals were remarkably aligned: ousting the region's regimes, whose authoritarianism and corruption they both abhorred... Thus the September 2001 attacks represented a crossroads for two diametrically opposed ways of thinking. Each group responded by formulating a project for radical transformation of the Middle East. The jihadists endeavored to capitalize on the triumph of September 11 to attract sympathisers to their cause... The neocons on the other hand, saw September 11 as a tragic opportunity to sell their radical new deal for the Middle East to the shell-shocked Bush administration (Kepel, 2004e: 4-5).

Kepel explains how the American neoconservative ideology represents a mirror-image of Islamic extremism. The neoconservative 'project' is based on Leo Strauss's (1899-1973) dualistic political philosophy, which in the Cold War era was translated into a warning against any attempt at 'convergence' in the name of realpolitik, between the United States and the Soviet Union. For Strauss, as for other dualists, there could be no moral equivalence between democracy and totalitarianism, Good and Evil (Kepel, 2004e: 50). The Neocons extended Strauss's view to the post-Cold War era by endorsing supremacy for the United States through military confrontation with regimes that potentially challenge its absolute hegemony (Kepel, 2004e: 58). A line was drawn separating 'civilised nations' from the 'rogue states' of the Middle East. This was reinforced by Huntington's theory which presented Islam (and secondarily, Confucianism) as the West's adversarial Other and inherently a hostile entity. But the comparison was misleading, Kepel argues, since it suggested that the world of Islam is like the Soviet bloc once was and that Mecca constitutes the Moscow of Islam. "But the Muslim world is neither monolithic nor homogenous" (Kepel, 2004e: 62).

Describing post-September 11 America and the dualistic mentality of the White House, he remarks, it is almost unthinkable to question the Manichaeian dichotomy of the 'war on terror', with its black-and-white worldview, Good against Evil (Kepel, 2003a: 127). World politics is portrayed for the public sphere as the same hard line that caused the Soviet's defeat will bring about the downfall of America's enemies in the Middle East. "In that sense, George W. Bush is a much Reagan's direct heir as he is his father's son – and today's 'Axes of Evil' is the offspring of yesterday's 'Evil Empire'" (Kepel, 2003a: 128).³⁹ However, Kepel argues against such a mentality, saying that unlike the story of the Cold War, al-Qaeda is not a terrorist group backed by a state. It's something that belongs to the Internet age. He elaborates on the real character of this new generation of threat, stating that "Bin Laden is the supreme hacker," not a pawn manipulated by a rogue state (Kepel, 2004b). Nevertheless, the Islamic terrorists were presumed by the Bush administration to have some connections to Iraq and Iran, rogue states on an 'axis of evil' that no longer included Moscow. Seemingly the United States required a worthy adversary for its war and naming the adversary created the illusion of having identified it. Washington's strategic planners seem to be culturally incapable of grasping an actor that was not, in final analysis, a state (Kepel, 2004e: 111-2). Or perhaps by reducing Al Qaeda to a military-style base that could be destroyed by laser-guided airstrikes, Washington indeed hoped to avoid the difficult analysis of their own role in creating a monster (Kepel, 2004e: 115).

Kepel tries in his analysis to keep the balance. On the one hand, he tries to highlight different aspects of what was happened in the course of the attacks on the twin towers and the Pentagon. For him, the attacks were part of a precise, carefully considered program that combined the logic of *jihad*, the operational tactics of guerrilla warfare, the opportunistic advantages offered by the Arab-Israeli conflict during the second intifada, and the political influence of neoconservative ideology on US foreign policy. All of these factors worked to the advantage of radical Islamism (Kepel, 2004e: 107). On the other hand, he appropriately considers the opportunistic advantages from other players in the scene. Since September 11 has become the only lens through which America sees the world, Kepel argues, Israel can recycle the logic of the war of terror for its own benefit. The Arabs, however, because of the suicide

³⁹ See also: Kepel, 2004a.

bombing inside Israel, run the risk of losing the image war in America (Kepel, 2003a: 125).

Kepel maintains that although neocons have a particular agenda in relation to Israel's unquestionable security, they are indeed firm proponents of democracy and they attempt to promote it in the Middle East. Although neocons had much in common with Huntington, they were convinced that there could be no "cultural exception," whether Arab, Muslim, tribal, or other. They were willing to gamble that Huntington's dire 'clash of civilizations' would dissolve into democratisation and the market economy (Kepel, 2004e: 68). They did not understand, however, the contradiction between preaching democracy in the area and refusing to put the slightest pressure on Israel. As long as such a unilateral stance continues, the US has no chance of winning the support of Middle East civil societies against radicals and terrorists (Kepel, 2004g). But the bearers of the discourse of democratisation are associated, in Muslims' perception, with US imperial support of Israel. In fact, today the word 'democratisation', preceded by the adjective 'Western', has negative connotations for large swathes of the educated Muslim middle class, who are the potential beneficiary of democratisation (Kepel, 2004e: 293). As a result, Bush's democratic engineering has ironically increased anti-Western sentiments; in most of the countries where free or semi-free elections have taken place, anti-Western Islamist parties from Iran to Palestine have won (Kepel, 2006a).

As a better working solution for the crisis, Kepel suggests a "war for Muslim minds". People whom Ayman al-Zawahiri calls "the Muslim masses" are ultimately the only group able to eradicate terrorism. America must engage with civil society (Kepel, 2004g). He further elaborates that mere military action is not enough: "It set about cutting out the visible parts of the terrorist tumor, but it did not have a systematic cure for the cancerous cells that were metastasizing throughout the world" (Kepel, 2004e: 149). Lacking a realistic policy, he sadly concludes that the Bush administration's incompetence in the region could not have led to a more complete dead end (Kepel, 2004e: 293).

Kepel further investigates the real motivations behind the war in Iraq. Richard Clarke, former head of anti-terrorist coordination at the National Security Council, testifying

before the 9/11 commission, admitted that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime had been a priority for the Bush administration as early as when the president took office. He went so far as to claim that advisors to Bush had used the September 11 strike as a tragic opportunity to wage a war on terror in which the hunt for Al Qaeda was a secondary goal (Kepel, 2004e: 207). Moreover, through analysing Paul Wolfowitz's discourse on why a faked story of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was circulated, Kepel traces the roots of his arguments. He notices some revealing signs that refer to deep elements of dualism which he describes: "The Machiavellian thinking was worthy of Leo Strauss – even of Plato, who counselled the philosopher-king to lie to his people for their own good" (Kepel, 2004e: 204).

But from the very beginning and even before the war starts, in April 2002 this French scholar brilliantly predicts disasters that the US will encounter in Iraq. He surprisingly asks whether the region's states, particularly Saudi Arabia, will remain passive against an offensive that threatens their interests (Kepel, 2003a: 129). Being familiar with the Middle East, he curiously adds: "I am surprised during my conversations with the [American] 'hardliners', by their certainty that Arab societies are as culturally estranged from the regimes that lead them as the Poles or Hungarians were from Communist ideology" (ibid); he brightly argues against the theory that Iraq is like the former West or East Germany. The methods that were used to de-Nazify or de-Communistify cannot be duplicated with the de-Baathification (Kepel, 2004b). Iraq, however, is a country where you have opposing ethnic groups fighting against each other, and not only for the nature of the state, but also for the cultural commodity (ibid). This will be more difficult in the context of opposition from within the Arab world. "This is a Pandora's box" (Kepel, 2003d). Finally he tries to show the theoretical problems of imposing US values on Iraq and then he attempts to illustrate that in this story US interests have played a primary role, not its values: "These distressing images are a far cry from the virtuous circle the Americans wanted to implement in the Middle East as a result of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' (or OIF – preferred to 'Operation Iraqi Liberation', which bore the somewhat embarrassing acronym OIL)" (Kepel, 2003b).

The more recent challenge, and perhaps the most dramatic one, between Islam and the West can be the nuclear ambitions of Iran. Previously we studied stances taken by Lewis and Esposito on this issue; a tough one from the former and a mild one from the

latter. Kepel's position is close to Esposito's but with a more European flavour. Beyond the paradoxes, he argues, the reality is more complex and fits into the process of opening a system of overall negotiations in some tightly interdependent problems of the Middle East, including the nuclear issue, the Lebanese-Syrian crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Europe would be well-advised to take measure of the situation and maintain its own role therein if it wishes to count in the future of peace in "the great Euro-Mediterranean-Gulf region," which will be its natural place in the globalised planet of the twenty-first century, "between the American hammer and the Asian anvil" (Kepel, 2008b).

By mentioning "the great Euro-Mediterranean-Gulf region" Kepel seems to redraw Huntington's political map. The Middle East is a "natural" European domain in the globalised world. Thus, the West and Islam equation can be more complex than what has been suggested by Huntington. America, as it has no natural proximity to the Middle East, has no historical and cultural ties and therefore has no legitimacy to interfere directly in the region. The Middle East is no 'greater' than before (Kepel, 2004d). So as it was successfully managed before American superpower arrived on the scene, the French scholar believes, it can be naturally integrated in European culture in today's interdependent world, enjoying the very "cross-fertilisation" (Kepel, 1997: 157) of the type Algeria received under colonialism. All in all, this reading of Kepel shows the fact that, although he is harshly against Huntington and the neocons, he advocates another brand of dualism in which the superior European culture in a "democratic milieu" can civilise and then integrate the inferior Muslims. Of course, this will happen in a "new Andalusia". This reading of Kepel will be reinforced once his perspective on some aspects of Islamic belief and law are examined.

Islamic Belief and Law

So far I have illustrated the fact that Kepel usually takes Islam as a contemporary political entity. He rarely speaks about Islam as a religion with spiritual and legal elements, and if he does, he merely focuses on teachings that in one way or another relate to the political dimensions. In his view, when religion in general and Islam in

particular enters political life and constitutes a source of identity, it will result in division, separation and conflict. For instance, through his study of Islam in America he attempts to show that a sort of deep-seated dualism is rooted in the religious identity. He argues: "This identity, unchanging throughout history, homogeneous and unadulterated, stands as the yardstick of what is pure. The rest of the world is therefore tainted, impure, barbarous, composed of enemies and persecutors" (Kepel, 1997: 69). He elaborates that for Black Americans Islam served as a means of breaking with the dominant order, which employed Christianity as a means of legitimising oppression and injustice, as the blue-eyed Christ was appropriated for the use of white people only (Kepel, 1997: 22). Islam is the name given by 'the so-called Negroes' to the "absolute otherness" they wish to give to their identity to redraw the long history of antagonism between the Christian universe and their own (Kepel, 1997: 28). In other words, Black Muslims of America put forward Islam as the only solution, since they see it as an opportunity to encourage the transformation of anomic Black populations into a dignified, disciplined Muslim community (Kepel, 1997: 74). For Kepel, this role of the religious identity is not limited to American society, but it is virtually true for all religious political movement. "This separatism," he argues, "is as much a means of defence against a dehumanised or hostile social environment as a way of mobilizing 'brothers' and negotiating collectively in their name with the authorities... thanks to specific teachings, modes of behaviour and attitudes which heighten difference and 'otherness', among which the strict observance of all religious rules and prohibitions plays a fundamental role" (Kepel, 1997: 2).

In general, Kepel is against all sorts of communal separation within society. As the most democratic solution, he prefers the French Republican model, which provides the society with a sharp separation between religion and state (*laïcité*) and, bypassing all ethnic, racial and religious specificities, produces a homogeneous national identity. Kepel criticises communalism, especially in its religious brand.⁴⁰ It is giving fresh life to an idea of 'community' by which one of the main foundations of democratic societies, namely, the equality of all citizens before the state and the law is undermined. In communalism this egalitarian, universalist principle is rejected as being a product of

⁴⁰ By communalism he means the thought that gives the people the right to be identified first as a group and only second as individual citizens. In this way ethno-cultural identity stands between the state and the individual.

the hated spirit of the Enlightenment, which extolled the emancipation of reason from faith (Kepel, 1994: 190). He further highlights the negative role of religion, because it is based around non-negotiable values. Therefore, the political cost of tension in the religious community is potentially very high indeed (Kepel, 1997: 146). He adds that communalism, which is based on strong personal attachment to a reconstructed identity, inevitably resists the reflexive process of comparison between diverse human experiences and therefore tends to be a main source of dualism. That is to say outside the community of the self-proclaimed 'pure', there can be only barbarism (Kepel, 1997: 67).

In this way, Kepel readily criticises the British model of communalism and even multiculturalism.⁴¹ He asserts that these models are originally rooted in the British history that granted such status to communities of the Welsh and Scottish nations and later to commonwealth members. Such a juridical situation made Britain unique in the world, which meant that citizenship has no meaning as a criterion of national identity, since membership of the commonwealth conferred automatic rights through nationality (Kepel, 1997: 97). British multiculturalism was encouraged by this historical communalism indeed in racial, ethnic and religious minorities (Kepel, 1997: 98).

Accordingly, later during the decades following the Second World War when Muslims, mostly from the Subcontinent, came to Britain, there was an existing model not to assimilate the immigrants into the dominant society but rather to grant them a communal identity (Kepel, 1997: 98). It did not take long for the immigrant populations to assert their Islamic identity. Indeed mosques started to appear in Britain in the 1950s, whereas in other European countries with significant numbers of Muslim populations mosques did not spread until after 1973 (ibid). Furthermore, communalism encouraged the rise of community leaders who acted as intermediaries between their religious or racial kin and the state. This in turn strengthened the sense of 'otherness' felt by those communities in their dealing with the outside world (Kepel, 1997: 110). The logic of community action, Kepel concludes, was pushed to its limit by the establishment of a separate self-styled 'parliament of British Muslims', sitting in parallel to the British Parliament (Kepel, 1997: 130). It is no accident that such an

⁴¹ As it will be discussed in a few lines, by multiculturalism he means the belief that individuals are determined by unchanging cultural factors that is particular to each community.

institution took place in Britain. The 'Muslim Parliament' initiative represents two fundamental patterns of organisation: Islamic identity and the political communalism inherited from British multiculturalism (Kepel, 1997: 144). This situation will be costly for the British identity because, as a historical fact, the exacerbation of communalist identities had often resulted in the breakup of societies (Kepel, 2006b: 201).

Kepel further explains his argument against multiculturalism. He notes that multiculturalism by no means could be identified by the emphasis on differentiation – for every society is more or less differentiated by never-ending conflicts among the social groups driving it. The unique aspect of multiculturalism, however, is the belief that individuals are determined by an unchanging cultural 'essence' that is particular to each 'community'. Historically, in Britain multiculturalism was the product of an implicit social consensus between leftwing working-class movements and the political elites. This alliance allowed the former to monitor immigrant Muslim workers and the latter to secure their votes at election time through religious leaders. Nevertheless, Kepel believes: "The July [, 2005] bombings have smashed this consensus to smithereens" (Kepel, 2005a). He adds that following the murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands and the attacks in London, questions about the multicultural model of society are undoubtedly valid. In truth, it is tantamount to *apartheid*. The multiculturalism in 'Londonistan'⁴² has reinforced the feeling among British Muslims that they are not fully-fledged UK citizens (Kepel, 2006c).

Kepel, instead, promotes the French political tradition that has actively combated any form of regional, ethnic or religious identity which potentially weakens the link between the individual and the nation state (Kepel, 1997: 236). According to the French constitution, the Republic is held to be 'one and indivisible', there is no legitimate space for communalism within the political system (Kepel, 1997: 198). Unlike the United States and Britain, the state in France exerts strong pressure on society to prevent the formation of religion-based or other sorts of communities which would weaken the link between the Republic and its citizens (Kepel, 1997: 216). It is

⁴² Kepel more often than not prefers to use this nickname for 'London' to implicitly show the dominance of Islamism over the city as a negative outcome of British multiculturalism. The term was first used by French anti-terrorist police officers, who resented the lack of cooperation from Britain in the extradition of Rashid Ramadan, a key figure in 1995 terrorist bombings in Paris (Roy, 2004: 106).

interesting that he insists on his favourite model “even if in practice republican equality through citizenship fails to deliver the goods” (Kepel, 1997: 154).

In fact, despite Kepel’s approach, the French Republican model is a strong source of dualism. In this homogenising model, the individuality of the citizens is being denied and their distinct identities are obliterated for the sake of a superficial identity, i.e., the identity of the state. Since this model combats differences, at first glance it may seem to be anti-dualist. However, looking at its deeper layers we can see that it takes a totalist attitude towards Truth, and therefore, it has much more potential for dualism. While Kepel rejects ‘the absolute otherness’ of communalism, his favourite model reinforces the otherness of those who are in one way or another out of the Republican circle; avoiding a pitfall, he has fallen in a more dangerous one. In fact, his monistic attitude to ‘us’ as a single society inevitably defines some ‘others’ who are different from us and should be integrated, assimilated or otherwise be eliminated.⁴³ As some philosophers of the Enlightenment rejected religion and then put themselves in position of God, Kepel by disapproving all “self-proclaimed pure” religious tendencies precisely puts himself in the position of fundamentalists. This is exactly what Esposito has called ‘secular fundamentalism’ (Esposito, 1999a: 258).

Apart from traces of Orientalism in his approach, Kepel based on such a *laïc* attitude takes the aforesaid harsh approaches against political Islam which once compared with his French Republican model represents inherent Otherness. The following quotation appropriately illustrates how he assumes the West as the ultimate truth and ‘the rest’ as deceivers who merely promote falsehood. Describing the second generation immigrant youth of France who prefer to use French as their everyday language, he notes:

The aim was not to reject the French language, but to dissociate it from its ideological connotations and ‘ungodliness’, from its association with the values of the Enlightenment, Voltaire and Rousseau, and to make it the

⁴³ Parekh argues against such a French mentality. He supports that immigrants are not supposed to be assimilated or integrated within the society, but they can become equal citizens just by the ties of common belonging. That is because both ideas of assimilation and integration suffer from theoretical problems. They are insatiable, totalist and intolerant. Furthermore they are vulnerable to subtle forms of racism. As long as immigrants participate “in the collective life of the society and discharge their obligations as citizens, their personal and social lives are their own business” (Parekh, 2008: 82-89).

vehicle for propagating the faith, just as the Islamists of the Leicester Islamic Foundation in Britain used English in their publications to gain as wide an audience as possible and transform it into the language of Islam (Kepel, 1997: 163).

At times, Kepel admits that in practice the French model has not been successful either. Mentioning the Rushdie affair, the veil affair and the Gulf War, he accepts that these events helped French Muslims who up until then had not paid any great attention to the Islamic part of their identity to discover that they were Muslim. This happened particularly next to realising their solidarity with fellow Muslims whom they saw demonised by the Western media (Kepel, 1997: 152). The crisis of French identity and the crisis of social integration and employment were combined to create a favourable environment for the re-Islamisation among many young *beurs* (Kepel, 1997: 153). The isolation of many young people of Maghrebi and African origin, the spread of *jihadi* websites, the departure of some young men to fight on the frontline in Iraq or Pakistan, all are outcomes of the French model (Kepel, 2005a). Even reality has led the French Government to, officially or not, accept some sort of religious community. That is because the French state realised that problems linked to Islam could easily escalate out of control, in the absence of an interlocutor recognised both by the authorities and by the Muslim population (Kepel, 1997: 177). This in practice persuaded the government to cultivate links with a body, similar to British community leaders, which would serve as intermediary between the public authorities and Islam in France and take responsibility for solving any problems relating to Islamic issues (Kepel, 1997: 178). It seems to Kepel that in a final run the West could not tackle the crisis of Muslim immigrants; neither by the Republican model, nor by multiculturalism. In any case, it has become clear that whether the state is centralist and 'assimilative' as in France, or liberal and 'pluralist' as in Britain and the United States, the demand for communalist identity continues to grow gathering force with the spread of systematic social exclusion in post-industrial society (Kepel, 1997: 233). At the end of the day the outcome would be the same: "Starting from very different situations, France and Britain faced the same problem at the end of the 1980s" (Kepel, 1997: 237).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Roy supports that Europe is moving to reach a hidden consensus on how to deal with Muslim minorities. Whereas there is no coordination within the European Union concerning citizenship,

All such problems that Kepel sees in the dilemma of Muslims in the West are rooted in one way or another in the lack of tolerance. He should accept that attitudes such as the Republican model may not be suitable for the age of globalisation. If he is going to apply such a model for “the great Euro-Mediterranean-Gulf region” the outcome for the Muslim part cannot be better than once Atatürk experienced. I even wonder how he justifies the huge differences within today’s Europe. As I shall explain in the concluding chapter only some “brand-new democratic” thinking can cope with the problems of today’s interdependent world. The remedy is to understand others and instead of integrating them, try to accept an inevitable global plurality. A first step for this is to avoid forcing others to accept our models and even before that to avoid measuring others with our scales. Many Western Islamologists, perhaps unconsciously, attempt to analyse Islamic belief using European religious scales.

Kepel is no exception. He sometimes attempts to measure Islam using the scale of medieval Christianity. For instance, falling in this trap, he cannot distinguish between the way religion militates against science in Islam and that of the West. In Islamic history hardly a record could be found that stated that religious institutions countered physics, astronomy, and natural sciences. For instance, some Muslim scientists suggested some scientific theories similar to Galileo's; however, they were never denounced as heretical. Quite the opposite, Islam has been keen to welcome natural sciences and new technologies. Yet since Islam has had a powerful legal system and has offered a highly detailed way of life, there has often been a high possibility that its teachings contradict modern ideas produced by the humanities and social sciences. The legacy of Islamic modernism of the twentieth century adequately illustrates this fact. Nevertheless, Kepel, unfamiliar with this difference, is surprised at the way Kishk in one of his Friday sermons deals with the natural sciences. He notes: “The medical metaphors are striking... The most explicit is the perfect concordance between faith and science: God forbids anger which is especially ill-advised since medicine comes to exactly the same conclusion.” He surprisingly adds: “But this Islamization of science, far from making science seem more remote from his listeners, bring it closer to them

integration, status of religion and ethnicity, there is a *de facto* convergence to a ‘middle way’ (Roy, 2004: 103).

by demystifying it” (Kepel, 2005b: 193). Here for Kepel, as Said notes in one of his case studies, “Islam was just a misguided version of Christianity” (Said, 2003: 61).

Kepel, like Esposito, tends to take law as the main component of Islam. Although he usually considers Islam as a political, he believes that the main motivation behind political Islam is the revival of the Islamic law. Kepel generally defines ‘Islamist movements’ as those that are political-religious movements that aim to establish an Islamic state. What is an Islamic state? It is a state that is ruled according to the law derived from the sacred text of Islam, which is called *shari’a* (Kepel, 2002). In Islamist thinking, he adds, there could be no room for autonomous political activity outside the control of the *shar’ia*, the Law codified by Islamic scholars from the Quran (Kepel, 1994: 193-4). Just as I discussed in Esposito’s case, this tendency has a great potential for dualism.

However, unlike Esposito, Islamic law for Kepel is a rigid non-flexible system. He never talks about the possibility of modern reinterpretations of the sacred texts. Only sometimes does he admit that necessity could change the law. In the case of the conquest of the Indian Subcontinent by Muslims in the eighth century he notes that according to Islamic law Hindus are not counted among the People of the Book, and thus they should convert to Islam or be killed. But the balance of forces between the sparse of armies of the conqueror and the massive Hindu population made it impossible to enforce dogma. In fact, Kepel argues, necessity made the law, and the polytheistic Hindus were regarded as the People of the Book, whilst Islam spread amongst some sections of the population (Kepel, 1997: 88). Apart from such exceptions, Kepel usually considers Muslims as blind followers of their codes. Describing those who burnt the *Satanic Verses* in Bradford Kepel says: “For most of them, whether illiterate or readers of English, Urdu or Arabic, any printed text would belong to a register which had at its peak the Sacred Book and would be evaluated according to the criteria of the revealed Truth, especially if dealing directly with themes related to Islam... The novel as such was rarely read by its opponents, who were not afraid to proclaim: ‘Yes, I have not read it, nor do I intend to’” (Kepel, 1997: 82-3).

If Islam for Lewis was medieval Islam and for Esposito intellectual Islam, Islam for Kepel would often be Islam as it is with ordinary people. Such an approach to Islam can determine the type of texts and subjects selected by Kepel; usually neither the authors/lecturers he selects enjoy high intellectual positions, nor are their books/lectures addressed to intellectuals. They are rather politically active. For instance, he quotes a layman who says that there are four important signs for Islam. The first is the wearing of the veil; the second is the male equivalent of the wearing of the veil, that is the untrimmed beard and white *gallabieh*, which Muhammad wore; the third sign is early marriage; and the fourth is attendance at public prayers on the greater and lesser holidays (Kepel, 2005b: 157). Further examples can be found among his narrations of Kishk. Kepel quotes from him an argument against the Trinity: “[T]he mention of Mary’s vaginal measurements suffices to annihilate Jesus’s pretensions to divinity...” (Kepel, 2005b: 193). Such selections cannot be found either in Lewis’s or in Esposito’s works. Even this portrait of Islam seems to be alien to the average Muslim middle class. They are, however, the only window through which Kepel looks at Islamic belief and law.

Kepel’s view on *jihad* is mainly inspired by the fact that he overemphasises extremism. To identify this Islamic obligation, Kepel usually puts forward interpretations produced by the radical tendency. *Al-Jihad* magazine published by Abdallah Azaam, a leader of Afghan *mujahedin*, is an example (Kepel, 2006b: 146-147; Kepel, 2004g). Perhaps the most knowledgeable jurist he takes into consideration is al-Qaradawi. However, even in this case he considers al-Qaradawi’s *fatwa* that justifies suicide bombings in Israel (Kepel, 2003a: 66-7). Kepel never goes down the path of Lewis or Esposito to analyse first hand historical or intellectual documents and to analyse independently something about Islamic belief and law.

Like Lewis, he does not consider Islamic modernism. There are some rare exceptions. In an interview with al-Gannouchi, Kepel quotes some fresh insights into Islam and the West relations. According to al-Gannouchi, the presence of Muslims in the West made a radically new situation for Islam, forcing it to rethink the binary division between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb. It seems necessary ‘to overcome prejudices whilst maintaining the principles of Islam and trying to establish a sincere dialogue in order to achieve a sincere integration’ (Kepel, 1997: 199). As Gannouchi remarks, for better or

for worse, old patterns of interrelations of Islam and the West no longer seem adequate. Both Islam and the West need to produce some brand-new insights, more tolerant, more plural and more democratic, to draw a beautiful future for our global world.

Conclusion

Although the works of Lewis, Esposito and Kepel by no means represent all Western literature on Islam, they can be regarded as some leading prominent examples of the most important trends. What I have observed in these particular cases cannot be generalised about all the literature which has been considerably expanding during the last decade. The three perspectives, however, can show some important and influential tendencies in this new context and can illustrate some important routes to the crystallisation of a neo-Orientalist discourse. This method, i.e., focusing on some leading examples, is precisely the one employed by Said in *Orientalism*. To analyse each period he selected some prominent authors and through textual analysis observed their perspectives in order to find some important tendencies in the larger whole. As mentioned in the Introduction, he chose this way due to his observation that individual scholars enjoy a significant influence in Orientalism.

After consideration of these three leading perspectives, I should approve Said's thesis that latent Orientalism, or in my terminology underlying dualism is more or less observable in all the three cases. Moreover, manifest dualism is still in place. Many of the commonly accepted dogmas – observed by Said – are still working in the background, and time and again in the foreground. Of course, due to new conditions of world politics and some dramatic changes in the West and Islam, both have been influenced by waves of globalisation, some important changes have occurred. These changes can be observed in the Western literature on Islam, sometimes moving it towards a stricter version of, and at times moving it away from, dualism. Overall, some new methodological and epistemological trends in Western scholarship can suggest the crystallisation of a new paradigm of the West and Islam dualism which I call neo-Orientalism.

It can be shown, perhaps without much difficulty, that Lewis, fully believing in the five principles of dualism, is still a persistent follower of the old-fashioned school of dualism. His dismissal of the diversity and dynamism of Islam, his reliance on historical evidence and his reluctance to look directly at modern Muslim societies, his

exaggeration of the religious part of Muslim identity, his overestimation of radicalism and his discourse of rage, clash and fear, his positivist methodology with his self-assured objectivity: all of these elements are the heritage of his Orientalist predecessors. It should become obvious that many of his apparently intellectual stances are, in fact, politically motivated. For instance, although he believes that Islam and democracy are mutually exclusive, once the political situation changes and his allies need to justify toppling Saddam Hussein, Lewis's mind changes and talks about "the vast and rich Islamic political literature encourages the belief that it may well be possible to develop democratic institutions" (Lewis, 2003d). When he speaks about US interests in the Arab-Israeli conflicts his political philosophy follows a rigid statist political approach, but once his neoconservative allies see that the promotion of democracy in the Middle East is in line with their political agenda, Lewis's philosophy radically changes and advocates a universalist mission for the US in the War on Terror.

In Lewis's perspective, the world is considered as a medieval classroom in which the master civilisation, currently the West, is a qualified teacher with a long stick in his hand and other civilisations are pupils. Unlike good Japanese and keen Indians, the Islamic civilisation is a "reluctant and resentful pupil" (Lewis, 2002c: 90) who refuses to learn the lesson, and therefore, he is reprehensible and subject to a serious punishment. In Lewis's opinion, as the historical evidence has repeatedly illustrated, Muslims should follow Ataturk's example and totally change their personality, aligning themselves with the modern world. Hence, the teacher should be "tough", forcing them "to fear" his might, "to respect" his dominance, not through a logical discourse which they cannot "understand", but through directly instructing them on the Truth using tough actions.

Esposito seems to be much more successful in distancing himself from dualism. As mentioned earlier, his overestimation of the religious factor in Islamic world, in line with the third principle of dualism, more than anything else reinforces some unwanted dualistic outcomes. This shortcoming will be more evident, if Esposito is compared with Kepel whose analyses cover a broad set of socio-political angles. The overestimation of the religious factor is originally, as I quoted from Said and we saw in Lewis, of Orientalist heritage to reduce Islamic civilisation to Islam as a religion. Orientalist Islam, however, is much more different from that portrayed by Esposito.

Whereas Orientalism regarded Islam as utterly inflexible, Esposito on the other extreme exaggerates Islamic modernism. However, it seems that both portraits poorly describe Islam as it is understood and believed by Muslims. Emphasising a legal aspect of Islam is another pitfall of the dualism into which Esposito has slipped. Nevertheless, his observation of diversity and dynamism in both the religion and the civilisation of Islam, his insights into Islamic movements as the engine of change, his disapproval of fundamentalist secularism, his helpful suggestions to Muslims about the compatibility of Islam and democracy and his criticism of Western media and policy-makers that their judgements and policies are unilateral and counterproductive: all of this can paint a much more beautiful picture of coexistence and coalition-building in our interdependent world than Lewis's proposition.

For Esposito the world is like a conference hall in which intellectuals debate the interrelation of Islam (religion) and the modern world. The debate is essentially of an academic nature and different viewpoints are welcomed. The conference is chaired by the West which, though it has its academic and non-academic interests, more than anything else thinks about the stabilisation of this rational debate. Islamic modernists have influenced all participants by their cogent arguments, but they fail to convince their traditionalist colleagues who comprise the majority of Muslim participants. Some extremists want to disrupt the debate. Although they must be countered, since the nature of the conference is academic, at the same time they should be convinced that they are wrong.

Kepel seems to be partially successful in dissociating himself from dualism. His cosmopolitan approach nullifies the first principle of dualism and his fresh observations invalidate the second principle. His outstanding reservations about the mentality behind the War on Terror are another important positive point against the fourth principle. His reliance on Orientalism at the macro level, his overestimation of Islamic extremism and his rigid view on modernity, however, are his three main shortcomings. Sometimes, his underlying attitude that Oriental objects are profoundly organic – thus every discrete study of *one bit* would confirm in a summary way the situation of the rest – is responsible for his failure to avoid the first principle of dualism. Moreover, his French Republican mentality and his insistence that Muslims should be assimilated into Western culture are in line with a strict version of dualism,

produced in his perspective by following the fifth principle. Perhaps the most important endeavour is his original micro-analysis by which he was able to produce some novel insights. Yet, his reliance on an Orientalist big picture often misleads him in the process of selecting and interpreting his observations. Said perfectly describes such a quality in a similar case as “amalgam of imperial vagueness and precise detail” (Said, 2003: 50).

Kepel acts like a football reporter, who reports a match between the West and Islam. He claims to be neutral but since he is a Westerner and reports the match for a Western audience, like many other reporters, he has an underlying sympathy with his own team. The violent acts of Muslim players are somehow exaggerated as well as the civilised style of the West. It is not clear why the reporter believes that Muslims are more violent, since he does not rely on the actual ratio of offences and misconducts. Furthermore, he sometimes accuses gentle players of violent acts. Since he believes that the West is the only stylish team, he suggests that Islam, in order to be successful, has no way but to send its players to New Andalusia to learn how to play football. One of Western players with a bearded face is of Muslim origin. The reporter suggests that this player can play well, but in order to maintain the coherence of the team he might remove his beard.

The close comparison between the three scholars demonstrates certain influence of disciplinary backgrounds on the approaches of the individual authors under scrutiny. No doubt, Lewis was influenced by historicism as it was shown in various occasions of this research, Esposito by religious studies and by phenomenology as its major approach, and Kepel by the French sociology. This shows that Western Islamology is a multi-disciplinary area of study and to a great extent depends on the background of the Islamologist.

Between the three, Lewis, a sage of Middle Eastern studies, is undoubtedly the most knowledgeable in classical Islamic history, theology, jurisprudence as well as classical Arabic literature. Esposito is the highest ranked specialist in contemporary debates on Islam and modern theoretical topics such as Islam and democracy, Islam and modernity and Islam and modern politics. Kepel enjoys a leading authority in socio-

political studies of contemporary Islam with some deep insights into Islamic radicalism. The three show both similarities to and differences from classical Orientalism.

Commonalities and Changes

My dissertation has shown that some essential factors of dualism are still more or less in place in this new era. It, nonetheless, shows some fundamental changes as well. Here I gather together three sets of factors. First are those shared by both Orientalism and neo-Orientalism, but they are not mentioned by Said in *Orientalism*. Second are some promising changes that this research shows in this new era. The third is of negative elements that in one way or another reinforce dualism and crystallise a neo-dualistic ideology, or one can say, neo-Orientalism.

First, the main three cases that I studied in detail as well as the two cases of Huntington and Qutb, all illustrate some inevitable outcomes of dualism:

- A dualistic perspective cannot be a sincere proponent of democracy. As in cases of Huntington, Qutb and Lewis, a dualist builds his/her political philosophy on a friend-enemy basis. In an ultra-reductionist way he sees the world in black-and-white and therefore his political philosophy ultimately leads to conflict, hate and war. Such a quality is far from a democratic way of life which entails the appreciation of complexity, tolerance, coalition-building, pluralism and civil society. This research has shown that this is true in all cases observed. Even Kepel, who to some extent could distance himself from dualism, once he tends towards a dualist judgement like in the case of Algeria, is unconsciously transferred into an opponent of democracy.
- Dualism is not merely an inter-civilisational matter, but once a political philosophy employs it, it covers the domestic realm as well. This is exactly what I quoted from Schmitt. This tendency is clear also in Qutb, once he accuses all fellow Muslims of being in the phase of *jahiliyya*. In Huntington's approach, this would be clear if we consider his overestimation of the Western essence of America, that "a non-Western America is not an America", as well as his emphasising the religious essence of America. These two qualities, he argues,

are inseparable from and rooted in US civic identity (Huntington, 2004a). By all of these he wants to say that, American civil society, while remaining American, cannot select any other direction for itself. Accordingly, American people who insist on any other direction will be considered as a danger. His main concern is about Latin American immigrants who brought with themselves non-North American norms and values that can corrupt the American way of life (Huntington, 2004b). In the case of Lewis, his justification for the Turkish army's interventions and his dismissal of Israeli discrimination inside its borders shows exactly his views on domestic issues. Kepel's intolerance of French minorities also shows this fact.

- A dualistic philosophy views modernity as a pure Western product, which will remain forever exclusively under its original brand; different forms of modernity are unthinkable. This is more than obvious in the cases of Lewis, Kepel and ironically Qutb. Huntington is a bit different. But as I discussed in the introduction his affirmation of different versions of modernity by no means can be translated into tolerance for and acceptance of other models. But he means that Others are basically incapable of reaching the level of Western modernity.
- Since it harbours enmity at its core, dualism intertwines with fear. Given the fact that dualism is built on an ideological dichotomy between Good and Evil, and considering that conflict is inevitable between Good and Evil, and taking into account that Evil will remain in the world till the End of the Time, unending fears and wars are the unavoidable consequences of any dualistic outlook. Schmitt, Huntington, Qutb and Lewis often show some symptoms of fear. Compared with Esposito, this characteristic of their worldview is more than clear. Once Kepel talks about Muslims as individuals, his world is favourable. But once, according to an Orientalistic big picture he overstates Islamic extremism, his perspective is filled with terror and horror.
- Since dualism is originally built as a political idea and then employs descriptive and ethical realms to justify that political idea, it is unstable. That is because once political interests change, everything can be changed radically. This point is more than evident once Lewis dramatically changed his attitude towards Islam and democracy. Islamic democracy, once logically impossible and

politically unfeasible, could be easily regarded by Lewis and his political allies in War on Terror as something probable and compatible with Islamic traditions.

Second, despite having many aspects in common with Orientalism, in this new era some promising changes can be observed:

- The growing presence of Muslims in Western universities has effectively changed the way Islam has been understood, portrayed and analysed. Many Muslim writers, analysts, critics and activists effectively moderate the otherness previously propagated by Orientalism. Edward Said, though personally not a Muslim, as a Palestinian refugee was a product of this generation. Al-Faruqi, Esposito's mentor, was influential in this way. Perhaps al-Faruqi was not aware that his main intellectual legacy would not be his theory of the "Islamisation of knowledge", but one of his students who exceptionally learns Islam, not through conventional Orientalist routes, but under a modernist Muslim mentor. Later, this student would dramatically moderate US literature on Islam. Moreover, the attendance of Muslim scholars and their works on Islam in the West enabled them to convey themselves within a Western discourse, and therefore, shattered another Orientalist dogma that the Orient is "incapable of defining itself" (Said, 2003: 301).
- Muslims' presence in the West has not only been influential in producing individual scholars, but also in financing sympathetic approaches to Islam. Successful businesses and the increasing income of oil have enabled some Muslim businessmen as well as some Islamic states to make an impact on Western academic institutions through their financial support. Esposito's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, was originally funded by a Palestinian refugee. Later, following another grant from a Saudi Prince, the centre was renamed the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal centre. Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) which headed by Esposito in 1988 and Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) which gave Esposito a special award to honor his contributions to the understanding of Muslims in 2003 are other examples. In this way, many of the conditions, enumerated by Said, for producing a hostile Orientalist literature have been dramatically changed.

- The globalisation and communication revolutions of the twenty-first century have provided humanity with more opportunities of mutual understanding. As in the case of Kepel, direct contacts can provide Western scholars with opportunities to make close observations and can remove one of the main obstacles mentioned by Said, i.e., the lack of empirical observation. Kepel's approach to the Middle East, which he sometimes calls the Near East, is much more sympathetic in comparison with that of Huntington, who looks at Islam merely based on abstractions published by Lewis and his like-minded predecessors.
- As John Keane suggests in *Global Civil Society*, globalisation provides the world with some new political notions, such as "global civil society", "global public spheres" and a shared sense of "long distance responsibilities." Later I will talk about all of these in some detail, but what concerns us here is the fact that the nature of these new notions of our interdependent world rejects old dualist worldviews. They also reject ideological monist attitudes. What they suggest, instead, is the recognition of plurality as a first principle of our globalised world.
- Global mass media and the internet are two unprecedented players of this age. Said observed Western media and the way they selectively cover Islam in the early 1980s. Since then, however, two important changes have occurred. The advent of the Internet has provided an acute evolution in global communications and has brought an unprecedented plurality to a globally accessible ocean of information. Likewise, diverse satellite channels have been playing an outstanding role. As noted by Kepel, Al-Jazeera has been one of significant factors throughout the War on Terror. "For the first time in the contemporary period," he remarks, "the major account of History-in-the-making was narrated by a voice and in a language that did not belong to the West" (Kepel, 2003a: 85).
- Muslim communities residing in the West, with the full right of citizenship have been influential. Their presence in a democratic society has put a question mark over Western liberalism and its ability to deal democratically with this non-liberalist community. The way the West answers this question domestically is relevant to the way it is going to deal with it at a global level. As Parekh observes, attitudes to cultural diversity within and between societies are

closely related (Parekh, 2008: 152). In fact any society can cope with the global cultural plurality of the contemporary world, only if it is used to living with its own internal diversity (Parekh, 2008: 165). Hence, the experience of having Muslim communities inside has been useful for enhancing a novel global vision. Esposito's observation of Muslims in the West appropriately shows this fact. For peoples in frequent contact with Muslims as their colleagues, neighbours, friends and at times a member of their family, the bipolar perception of "us" and "them" seems to be much less meaningful than for previous generations. Kepel too highlights a role that the Muslim diaspora can play in inter-civilisational relations.

- National interests standing behind intellectual postures, mentioned by Said, are still observable but in some different patterns. For instance, Kepel, beside his usual inclination towards French interests, advocates a European approach as well. Esposito and Lewis, though both showing an American tendency, are representing opposite poles in US politics. Such changes not only illustrate the emergence of a new polarity between America and Europe, but also show that other world players, such as supporters of Esposito and Lewis, can influence Western national sentiments.
- The escalating diversity of Western Islamic studies can help to enhance this field to an unprecedented level. As this comparative study between the three scholars shows, each scholar looks at Islam from a different angle. Once these plural perspectives (historical, theological, sociopolitical) gather together, as the theory of the growth of knowledge in Popper's philosophy illustrates, we will have a better, though more complex, estimation of Islam.
- The *de facto* democratic participation, and sometimes victory, of Islamic political movements in some countries has weakened the Orientalist dogma concerning the political system of Islam. As portrayed by Lewis (in line with Orientalism) the system was supposed to be fixed in time and place. The facts, however, show that political Islam has a rich capacity for dynamism and is able to rectify and advance itself. In this way, Esposito's opinion to a large extent has been approved. Lewis was forced to change his mind dramatically; of course this was not due to the democratic achievements of Islamic movements, but as mentioned above because of changes of political interests. Before the

changes, the contributions of Islamic movements to democracy were dismissed by Lewis as hijacking democracy. Kepel was not successful in this field either, because he regarded political Islam as a branch of extremism. At any rate it seems that facts are increasingly working against the Orientalist political dogmas.

- As observed by Esposito, Islamic modernism has provided better alternatives to traditionalism and fundamentalism. Theories like “Global *convivencia* (living together)”¹ promoted by Anwar Ibrahim, “The Dialogue of civilisations” by Mohammad Khatami and “Cosmopolitan Islam and global diversity” by Abdurrahman Wahid have improved the overall picture of Islam. Moreover Islamic modernism has provided Muslims with a new sense of confidence by which they have been able to safeguard their identity on rational terms. Modernists have also revived Islam as a voice that is worth being heard even by Western intellectuals. These are all against the Orientalist dogma that “the Orient is eternal” (Said, 2003: 301).
- The election of Barack Hussein Obama as the President of the United States can change many conditions which were responsible for the reinforcement of dualism after September 11. As Esposito observes, Obama is welcomed as an internationalist president. His Kenyan father, early schooling in Indonesia, race and name all symbolise for many a unique internationalist presidential profile, one that contrasts sharply with his predecessor.² Taking into account the fact that the United States which until recently had a deeply racist culture could change its perspective to the extent that it was able to elect a black president, one can plausibly think that it is possible for America to witness even a Muslim president.

Third, beside all of these positive factors of change, there are some negative factors that are reinforcing the dualism of the West and Islam and that have crystallised a brand of neo-Orientalism:

¹ *Convivencia* alludes to the spirit of Muslims’, Christians’ and Jews’ coexistence in twelfth-century Sicily and Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula.

² http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/2008/11/07/an-internationalist-president [accessed 3/03/2009]

- The collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakdown of the highest symbol of Marxism brought the West to a threat vacuum in both political and ideological realms. The worldview of the dualism of the West and Islam seemed to be capable of filling both vacuums. Lewis was quite timely in getting the point and attempted to replace the dualism of the Cold War with the dualism of the West and Islam. Huntington among some other intellectuals followed him, producing a totally hostile philosophy for a new political paradigm. Although to a great extent they were successful in attracting policy-makers and media, it seems that they could not effectively convince Western academia as it is evident in works of Esposito and Kepel.
- The emergence of the state of Israel in the twentieth century and the continuing existence of the unresolved Palestinian question as an open wound helps maintain dualism in both the West and Islam. During the Cold War era, Western support of Israel was justified by the fact that Israel was in the Western camp, while its enemies, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, were in the Soviet bloc. In the post-Cold War era and even before that when the intifada materialised, however, the main ethos of Israel's enemies was coloured by Islam, and therefore, the Western support of Israel could be easily translated into Western hostility towards Islam. The United States more than any other issue has vetoed in the Security Council, or resisted against the will of majority in the General Assembly, for Israeli and against Palestinian interests.³ The idea that the unconditional support of Israel is one of the most important sources of hostility and hatred between Islam and the West has been suggested by many intellectuals, including Esposito and Kepel. An empirical study of all interstate wars between 1950 and 1992 also confirms that that issue has been quite at the centre: "The substance of the purported clash between the West and Islam is simply the familiar Arab-Israeli conflict" (Russett, 2000). Lewis, however, as mentioned, consciously attempts to underestimate the role played by Arab-Israeli question. Moreover, he suggests that US has the right to acts as a dishonest broker in Middle Eastern peace negotiations (Lewis, 2004b: 435). Such an approach, which has been employed in US foreign policy, can gravely fuel dualism.

³ For details see http://www.krysstal.com/democracy_whyusa03.html [accessed on 13/11/2008]

- In parallel with financial support received by sympathetic studies of Islam, some hostile approaches are externally supported by Israel to go in the opposite direction. Martin Kramer, who has Israeli citizenship and spent his career at Tel Aviv University running the Moshe Dayan Centre, and Daniel Pipes – or one can say Lewis’s wing – are examples mentioned by Esposito (Esposito, 2003c). Such suspect forms of scholarship in Western universities provide misinformation and therefore render a disservice to the cause of mutual understanding.
- Beside its presence on the political and financial scenes, Israeli-Palestinian issues have also found themselves to be a major force behind the intellectual battlefield. Edward Said, as he admits, was mainly motivated to enter the realm of Islamic studies because of his Palestinian origin (Said, 2001b: 374). Esposito’s orientation towards this field originally crystallised under Raji al-Faruqi who was also a Palestinian refugee. On the other side, Lewis and his wing clearly and persistently take the Israeli side. As noted by Kepel, it seems that contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in America, is fully polarised under Israeli or Islamic loyalties.
- Capitalism, now without any major rival ideology, for its own interests tends to corrupt Western Islamic studies. This was noted by Esposito once he highlighted a role played by “the marketplace” in partially selecting some narratives of Islam. This point was also raised by Kepel about US universities. The communication revolution in this new era can foster the negative role of capitalism to an unprecedented level.
- Despite its positive effects, globalisation has also had a dark side in which global networks of terror could reinforce hostility and otherness. This fact was observed by both Esposito and Kepel. In response, they attempted to inform the West that such extremist tendencies by no means represent Islam. Lewis, however, abundantly employed the actions of such networks to confirm his dualistic rhetoric. The negative image of those networks was also used by US neocons to justify their imperialist ambitions to further fuel dualism.
- The global resurgence of religiosity, observed by Kepel and Roy, can reinforce dualism in both Islam and the West. Given the fact that religious belief has a lesser chance of negotiation and compromise and considering that both

Christianity and Islam believe in a universalist mission and taking into account that horizontal forms of religiosity – observed by Roy – can be dangerous because of their superficial and selective nature, the rise of religiosity in these two civilisations can easily be translated into the rise of dualism. It is estimated that there are 90 million evangelical Christians in the US, and that 59 percent of Americans believe that St. John's prophecies foretold in the Book of Revelation will be fulfilled, probably during their lifetime.⁴ This appropriately explains why President Bush in an interview on 17/09/2001 described war on terrorism as a crusade.⁵ The rise of religious sentiment also explains why Barack Hussein Obama during his electoral campaign, perhaps more than any other president, needed to show that he is a good *Christian* even though his father was a *Muslim*. People in the United States could tolerate a black president, but apparently not a Muslim one.

- Although in Popper's philosophy the explosion of publications on Islam in the West can be interpreted as new conjectures and apparently show the growth of knowledge, it can also be misleading. As we have seen just in three Western perspectives, a vast spectrum of analyses, evaluations and judgments, all apparently based on cogent arguments, can produce contradictory conclusions. Hence, Western policy makers from Bush to Obama, from Blair to Sarkozy, have a bulk of academic justifications for whatever decision they want to make. In this way, the explosion of information can ironically distance the West from truth. The false identification of Iraq before the invasion, despite thousands of research projects by so-called highly qualified academics, can be mentioned as an example. Perhaps nowhere this point was obvious more than what remarked by Prime Minister Tony Blair in Parkinson show in March 2006. He explicitly said that the decision to go to war in Iraq was at the end of the day taken based on faith, God and conscious.⁶

These changes in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century can potentially reformulate old ways of dealing with others and lead the world either towards a brighter or otherwise towards a darker future. If the change is considered as an

⁴ *Guardian*, 4 May 2004.

⁵ See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html> [accessed on 21/11/2008]

⁶ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4773874.stm [accessed 22/02/2009]

opportunity to embrace the plurality, to recognise diversity and to respect others, the world will witness a brighter future. However, if the new situation is redistributed according to the old methodology of dualism to produce hate, rage, conflict and war, a darker future is yet to come. No doubt, every political analyst wants to facilitate the former, but some philosophies, perhaps unintentionally, tend to lead the world to the latter. Their main fault seems to be applying a dualistic model which with its dangerously simplistic and Manichean view of the world can ultimately change the West into the mirror image of its terrorist enemies and profoundly corrupt its way of life. To avoid such a dark future, the key factor is how a philosophy manages to reject dualism by formulating a new account of identity and by recognising global plurality.

Embracing global plurality

Rumi, in one of his poems, talks about identity:

What is to be done, O Muslims? for I do not identify myself.
I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Magian, nor Muslim.
I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens.
I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire;
I am not of the empyrean, nor of the dust, nor of existence, nor of entity.
I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulghar, nor of Saqsin;
I am not of the kingdom of 'Iraqain, nor of the country of Khurasan.
I am not of this world, nor of the next, nor of Paradise, nor of Hell;
I am not of Adam, nor of Eve, nor of the Garden and the Paradise.
My place is Placeless, my trace is Traceless;
'Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the souls.
I have put dualism away, I have seen that the two worlds are one;
One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.⁷

Six centuries later, Victor Hugo, the great French writer, in his exilic *credo* talks in a similar way:

⁷ Cited from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1270rumi-poems1.html> [accessed on 01/02/2009] with some minor changes in English translation.

It is therefore, a great source of virtue for the practised mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about in visible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether. The person who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign place. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong person has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his (Hugo, 1961: 101).

Rumi and Hugo have something similar in mind. They want to say that to be human is much more than one's religion, one's gender, one's place or one's nationality. To be recognised merely by these identifications is to reduce the actual value of humanity. To read them in political terms, they consider humanity as the major part of identity. Other social labels are secondary and are easily changeable, and thus, unimportant identifications. In Parekh's words, human identity for analytical purposes can be observed from different but inseparable angles: as a person, as a social actor and as human (Parekh, 2008: 9). While a dualist attempts to highlight the second angle, Rumi and Hugo try to show that the main part is being human.

A tentative way for the categorisation of people, social identity involves interpretation and judgement, and is not a matter of an empirical description of a solid fact. It matters greatly how people are being categorised and the world looks differently when it is seen based on different categorisations. We need to be careful how we classify people officially, with what motivations and for what purposes. We have to leave some room for those who wish to identify themselves differently. For people have the right to look at the world differently and to change their views dynamically. As a result, it would be a false conjecture to utter the dualist *credo* that "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." Perhaps one does not see the world in such black-and-white terms and wants to put oneself in a third position. Such a dualistic view is rooted in a positivistic concern, in which identity is a vehicle for asserting a pre-existing typology. We need a transformative and reflective politics in which all human beings enjoy the possibility to challenge their so-called inherent identity, as Rumi and Hugo suggest, and create the conditions conducive to self-determination.

For obvious reasons, dualist ideologies tend to insist that their members should be identified with their group, internalise the identity and relate to it in an identical way. They also alienate “others”, dissociating themselves from them and trying to produce some sort of demarcation in line with their egoistic interests. When a single identity becomes dominant, insiders guard it fiercely against external threats from outsiders and purge it of ‘alien’ internal elements, taking an excessively simplistic and ultimately unsustainable view of it. Parekh elaborates this strict tendency: “Far from possessing an identity, they are possessed and virtually enslaved by it” (Parekh, 2008: 24). As I explained in the introduction, this view was responsible for crystallisation of Orientalism in which the factor of being powerful played the first role. Said explains this phenomenon in the Orientalism paradigm that “the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society, and is therefore anything but mere academic wool-gathering... [H]uman identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright” (Said, 2003: 332).

In dualism collective identity plays a dangerous role. It tends to essentialise identity and impose on the two sides a unity they do not and cannot have. Through reductionism and oversimplification a solid “us” is generated in opposition to a monolithic “them”. As a result, since the consciousness of (simplified) differences is accentuated and reinforced, it generates conflicts and the politics of identity becomes the politics of hate, rage and conflict. Ignoring all actual commonalities, dualism exaggerates minor differences and even engineers conflicts when none exists.

Dualism is a false identification and by no means represents the reality of social life. Since human life is inherently plural, different identities cannot be reduced and subordinated to any one of them, however far-reaching it might be. As Parekh rightly notes, “Human beings have plural identities, and this is not a contingent but a necessary factor about them. Their identities further do not co-exist passively but interact and shape each other” (Parekh, 2008: 37). He then suggests that global interdependence requires us to act in the spirit of human solidarity and activate our commonalities and indeed our human identity. At the same time, we are also members of different political, cultural and other communities. Since these are rich sources of moral energy and mean a great deal to us, human solidarity should not be

constructed on their ashes or behind their backs. Instead, we should respect these identities but redefine and reconstruct them in the light of, and bring them into harmony with, the global human identity (Parekh, 2008: 3).

The increasing human interdependence brought about by globalisation has made the cultivation of common human identity necessary to a degree previously unimagined. The allegedly opposed identities could be seen, in fact, as interdependent and products of a common system of social relations. Black makes no sense without white, nor West without East. Thanks to modern technologies, nowadays peoples from different civilisations are increasingly becoming closer to each other and this facilitates further cultural exchanges. Since they are not self-contained and irreducible wholes, they share much in common and are best seen as partners in a global coalition and dialogue.

The new global situation calls for a widely agreed body of universal principles, or one can say a global ethic, to guide our choices and regulate our relations with others. Parekh suggests that rational deliberation is the only way to arrive at this. We have to examine different moral principles weighing up the reasons for and against them, and choosing what can build a better future for our world. Moral consideration is comparative in nature. In a Popperian methodology, Parekh adds, we can just make conjectural judgments and we have to follow our strongest conjectures until a stronger one refutes it. It is not, therefore, enough for the critic to say that our arguments are inconclusive but he or she has to provide a stronger proposition. Then he suggests three principles for global ethics: human beings have, or rather should be assigned, equal worth; we have to consider human solidarity; and we have to accept plurality in the global society (Parekh, 2008: 204-227).

Keane looks at the problem differently. He suggests the pluralistic idea of a “global civil society”, which refutes dualism as well as all sorts of ideological monisms. The concept of a global civil society, he argues, has five tightly coupled elements: it includes non-governmental structures; it is a society with dynamic interlinked social processes; it is based on civility which means respect for others and acceptance of strangers; it enjoys a pluralistic nature that provides it with huge diversity as well as long-term dynamism; it is a global phenomenon that contains unbounded many components from the four

corners of the globe. Considering it as “a force for globalisation from below,” (Keane, 2003: 64) global civil society could be described as an autonomous social space within which individuals, groups and movements can effectively organise and manoeuvre on a world scale to bypass such dualistic categorisations rooted in the embarrassing history of colonialism.

Our world is today coming, Keane contends, under the influence of a new form of governmental power that can be called, *cosmocracy* (from *cosmo*=world and *krato*=to rule). Cosmocracy can be defined as a conglomeration of interdependent and overlapping sub-state, state and superstate institutions and multidimensional processes that interact, and have political and social effects, on a global scale (Keane, 2003: 98). Within its structure power is not necessarily concentrated in a hierarchical way (though it often is), but it consists of different minor and major players with interlocking relations. The cosmocracy has a significant lack of driving seats and steering mechanisms, and that fact shows cosmocracy’s political entropy, which is one of its striking weaknesses. Although its main core (North America, Japan, South Korea, Europe and Australia) contains some rich networks of democratic procedures, cosmocracy definitely has an affinity with authoritarianism, rather than being representative of democratic procedures. Hence, it suffers from problems with lack of accountability. In addition, Keane argues, the body of cosmocracy contains a destabilising anti-body, a dominant power, the United States, which wishes to transfer the whole world in its favour. Although Keane supports that different versions portrayed so far for a cosmopolitan democracy lack the core values of democracy such as public participation and therefore is unconvincing, he adds that some brand new democratic thinking – implicit in the theory of global civil society – can be a remedy for falling into the trap of fatalism.

Nowadays more than at any time before, Keane’s argument goes, we have well understood that human life is closely bound up with the fate of our planet, of rocks and rivers, birds and flowers, winds and clouds. We have gradually realised that our biosphere is in severe danger, which is mainly caused by our own actions. Furthermore, surrounded by a triangle of violence, i.e., the possibility of a nuclear war, uncivil conflict and terrorism, humanity is in need of more coalition building to tackle these devastating problems. To cope with these dilemmas we have to dismiss

ideologies that give us swords to fight against each other, making us ignore such major threats of our common environment, of our common existence. Global civil society – as a good beginning – can give us flexibility and openness, the willingness to be humble and to respect others, self organisation, curiosity and experimentation, non-violence, peaceful networking across borders, a strong sense of responsibility for the fate of others, even long distance responsibility for the fragile biosphere in which we and our offspring are condemned to dwell. One important means of global civil society is global public spheres. Thanks to modern technologies we are living in a world in which distance has virtually lost its traditional sense. Boundaries between native and foreigner are blurred. This, in turn, brings us to understand and respect other places, other problems and other ways of life. “Global public spheres make it clearer that ‘global civil society,’ like its more local counterparts, has no ‘collective voice,’ that it is full of networks, flows, disjunctions, frictions, that it alone does nothing, that only its constituent individuals, group initiatives, organisations, and networks act and interact” (Keane, 2003: 172).

As for an initial principle for ethics beyond borders, Keane quotes some different arguments such as natural law, a human consensus, some neo-Kantian approaches, as well as some religious arguments. Not being convinced by any of these, he suggests that if we look at different arguments by various players of the world, we come to the fact (defended by Parekh as well) that plurality is the very quality of our interdependent world. As the “Law of Unending Controversy” suggests and as globalisation unfolds, humanity increasingly faces escalating diversity in all aspects of life, including ethics. Following Wittgenstein, Keane suggests that all ethical debates, religious and secular alike, at the end of the day are some sort of language games. The best way for us, thus, is to recognise the principle of plurality and avoid the dangerous simplistic suggestions of monistic and dualistic ideologies (Keane, 2003: 192-197). In this way, though he initially denies any universal principle of global ethics, he appears to accept that respect for pluralism can play that role. Finally he concludes that ‘our’ morals and ‘their’ morals, self and other, the internal and external are not in fact oppositions but are *always inside one another* (Keane, 2003: 201).

How the West deals with the rest?

By the consideration of global plurality, the West knows that its ethos, its values and its way of life is not necessarily the best solution for humanity regardless of time and place. Theories like Fukuyama's 'The End of History', which puts Western liberal democracy as the ultimate solution for all, ignore its actual limits and do not appreciate plurality, diversity and dynamism. Such theories, identified by Keane as "conceptual imperialism" (Keane, 2003: 29), are just heirs of the Orientalists' dogma that modernisation is nothing but absolute Westernisation. If liberals want to convince Muslims that their values are correct, they need to give transculturally compelling reasons. As Parekh observes, "While such reasons are available in the case of some liberal values such as respect for human life, human dignity, and equal human worth, they are not in the case of such others as individualism, personal autonomy, choice of spouses, and minimum restraints on freedom of expression" (Parekh, 2008: 118). Accordingly, the liberal society at most represents one good way to organise human life, and that is a strong enough moral basis to stand up for it. Nevertheless, this by no means could be employed to provide compulsion on Muslims, or any other society, that the liberals' choice is unavoidable and imperative. No evidence supports that liberalism is universally the best, the most rational, or the only valid form of a good society.⁸ Hence, advocating Western values should be modest and limited in the sense of defending a particular society rather than issuing a universal prescription. The West must globally promote its invaluable experiences, but simultaneously it must recognise that one size does not fit all and also has to bear in mind deficiencies of its model. Western ethos should be promoted with humbleness and solidarity, not through aggressive actions and terms like waging war for 'exporting democracy', which revives old Colonialist slogans such as 'mission to civilise'.

The limits, shortcomings and deficiencies of the West should not be ignored either. Although Western societies enjoyed an early start and have made considerable

⁸ Richard Rorty believes otherwise. He asserts that 'North Atlantic culture' is 'morally superior' because it has an ingredient of "a culture of hope – hope of a better world as attainable in the here and now by social and political effort – as opposed to the cultures of resignation characteristic of the East" (Keane, 2003: 184 from Rorty, 1998: 197). It goes without saying that subjective notions of 'hope' and 'resignation' and the way Rorty assesses them has no more value than traditional approach of Orientalism.

progress in the direction of democracy, they leave much to be desired. The deficiencies of the West are appropriately understood by outsiders who at times are victims of unjust Western actions. This is perhaps more than anything else evident when Muslims look at how the West for its own interests easily sacrifices its values, advocates a brutal tyranny, keeps silent before a military coup, unconditionally advocates violent Israeli actions and wages a totally illegal war in Iraq in contrast to Western public's will. Democracy, thus, needs to be promoted not only outside the West, but also within it.

Since the West, in practice, attempts to follow its interests first and foremost, its promotion of democracy is therefore episodic, self-serving, half-hearted, selective, and often designed to embarrass inconvenient regimes or to provide a moral justification for its imperialist ambitions. President Bush's speech in Bahrain, a country which is among the most tyrannical regimes in the region, was an example. Bush addressed the King: "Your Majesty, I appreciate the fact that you're on the forefront of providing hope for people through democracy." Every independent observer without much difficulty understands that the King's programme for democratisation of his country was merely a cover for reinforcing dictatorship. The main motive for praising him, however, as Bush states in the same meeting, was the fact that "Bahrain has welcomed the United States Navy and is now home to our Fifth Fleet."⁹

The War on Terror is another example for seeking Western interests under the guise of Western values. As mentioned by Kepel in detail, US neocons opportunistically used September 11 to achieve their imperialist plans. But military actions have largely failed and showed that anti-terrorist policies need to consider other strategies. Terrorists require not only finances and training, but also a supportive group of people, a justifying ideology, and widely perceived grievances around which to mobilise support. Dismantling their physical networks is never enough, as Esposito rightly argues; their grievances must also be addressed. Ignoring all of these, the War on Terror, in contrast, dramatically escalated the hatred for America in the Middle East as well as many other parts of the world. This, in the long run if not in the short term, can further expand ideologies of hate, extremism and terrorism.

⁹ See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080112-5.html> [accessed on 16/11/2008]

As globalisation unfolds, we need more mutual understanding and more democratic patterns for global politics. It is the biggest intellectual and political challenge of the coming period, one could say. Separating the West from the Rest leads our world to new barbarianism in which conflict, war, and terror are legitimate means, because there is no institutionalised means to communicate peacefully for solving problems. If the West based on its superiority and the inferiority of the rest insists on its current benefits, inherited from the Cold War, as it is doing, the world will face increasing instability which lead human beings towards a dark future. Instead, based on a global egalitarian approach, the international order should be revised to be more democratic in the new paradigm, integrating all new-coming partners and providing some brand new democratic means for all. We should attempt to promote democratic actions not only in non-democratic states of the Middle East but also at the global level. This seems to be the sole possible solution that we have. Some areas such as global sport associations, global scientific cooperation, and global environmental campaign have already developed successful examples. We should elaborate such patterns of these global networks in other areas of human life, accepting and even protecting and promoting diversity in a more peaceful world and forgetting about dualistic ideologies.

As dualism of the West and Islam was first theorised in the European intellectual sphere of the eighteenth century, the same sphere seems to be responsible for refuting this flawed and harmful ideology. Now, more than three centuries on Western academia is one of the most cosmopolitan spheres. Deterritorialised intelligentsia – regardless of race, religion, nationality cooperating closely with each other – play an important role in producing values, teachings and worldviews adapted to globalisation. Intellectuals seem to be closer to Others than any time before and this provides an unprecedented opportunity to eradicate Orientalism and Occidentalism forever. This research humbly tended to be just a step forward in this way.

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