

ASPECTS OF STATE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN ISLAM

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Introduction

I. Elements of State Organization in Islam :

1. The Notion of “Shoura” (الشورى) in the Holy Coran
2. The Notion of “Khilafa” (الخلافة) in the Practice of Islamic States

II.

Models for Community Building within the Islamic State :

1. The societal values

a. Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong (الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر)

b. Obedience (الطاعة)

2. The Individual Obligations :

a. The notion of Justice (العدل)

b. Miscellaneous Other Profiles of the Muslim (الأمانة والصدق والتسامح)

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Introduction

1. During the last few years, and most particularly since the regrettable events of September 11th, the Islamic world, including the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, has been under aggressive pressure from various western spheres. The openly orchestrated messianic crusade against what has been growingly considered to be an “alien civilization” reflects, in most cases, a relatively biased knowledge, if not a willingly carried out denigrating process. Clashes of ignorance have dangerously tended to take over the much desired dialogue of civilizations. Loads of angriness, dosed with elements of misunderstanding have increasingly nourished a growing trend of rejection, if not of combat, arguably dressed against Islamic values. For their part, most of the Islamic states of the MENA region haven’t offered much of a glorifying image to the rest of the world in terms of good governance or democratic settings. In his recent address to the “Council on Foreign Relations” [1], Rick Haass, Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, has particularly underlined the *“freedom deficit in many parts of the Muslim world, and in the Arab world in particular”* and expressed his intimate conviction that *“the democracy gap between the Muslim world and the rest of the world is huge...”* and that there will be *“... a long way to go before democracy is consolidated”*.

2.

3. Considering the wide range of concerned states, any generalizing approach might prove to be risky. The large variety of implied political systems further adds to the complexity of the issue. The sensitivity of the problem also implies major sources of potential discontent. It has been a proven fact, however, that until the early fifties of the twentieth century, fifteen royal families were, more or less, presiding over the MENA region’s destiny, under the no less authoritarian rule of the colonial occupants. They all excelled in adapting their ruling styles through various legitimating processes. The remaining ones, as well the republican successors of the fallen others have shown limited readiness for power sharing. The governing inspiration source for most of the rest was also the no less authoritarian model bequeathed by the Ottoman Empire. Readiness of the leaders to hand over their temporal power has not yet been solidly established as a widely accepted governing rule. That is to say that not much democratic heritage has therefore been there to draw from. Subsequent historic episodes further perpetuated theocratic power legitimating styles that contrasted drastically with some of the basic teachings of Islam.

4.

This paper intends to contribute to a renewal approach of the understanding of some of the power and state related Islamic values. It will seek to present a preliminary clearing of basic elements related to the study of political and institutional Islam. Through a meticulous exegesis of the “Holy Coran” and complementary illustrations from the “Sunna”, it will explore relevant elements of State organization as well as models of community building, for a potentially growing democratic culture in the area. It is hoped that the ongoing efforts of upgrading the democratic profile in the region may substantially draw from the pertinently prevailing teachings of Islam. Profitable progress will thus have been conciliated with traditional values.

I. Elements of State Organization in Islam :

Islam is the religion that “Allah” entrusted His messenger Mohamed with, through the “Holy Coran”. Its precepts are triple: the **convictions** (العقائد) that the Moslem believes in, the **prayers** (العبادات) which he accomplishes in veneration of Allah and the **behaviour and relationship** that define his rapports with others (السلوكات والمعاملات). Besides from its theological aspects, the Islamic faith embraces several temporal prescriptions and teachings. Among other aspects of State organization, these precepts deal with the “**Shoura**”(consultation) and the “**khilafa**”(succession or community commandment).

3. The Notion of “Shoura” (الشورى) in the Holy Coran :

“Shoura” may be translated literally as ‘Consultation’. In some instances, it has been interpreted as conveying the western value lying underneath political participation and its democratic implications. It represents a fundamental principle of the organization of the Islamic community. It is mentioned in various “Sourates” of the Holy Coran.

In the verse 159 of Sourate “Ale Imrane” (آل عمران) , it is clearly instructed to the Prophet that he should consult his community in affairs : « *It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee. So, pass over their faults and ask for Allah’s forgiveness for them. And consult them in affairs. Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For, Allah loves those who put their trust in Him* » [2] .

فبما رحمة من الله لنت لهم ولو كنت فظاً غليظ القلب لانفضوا من حولك، فاعف عنهم و استغفر لهم و شاورهم في الأمر ، فإذا عزمت فتوكل على الله إن الله يحب المتوكلين

This notion is also encountered in the verse 38 of Sourate « Shoura » (الشورى), which refers to the ideal community which conducts its affairs by mutual consultation: « Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer, who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenance ».

والذين استجابوا لربهم وأقاموا الصلاة وأمرهم شورى بينهم ومما رزقناهم ينفقون

It has been commonly established that the principle of « Shoura » was applied to its fullest by the Prophet Mohammed both in his public and his private life. He constantly consulted with his “Sahaba” (Companions). After the “Hijra” from Mecqa to Medine he continued consulting with the “Ansar”. He was also fully acted upon by his successors: “Al Khoulaftaa Arrachidoune” (الخلفاء) who were the early rulers of Islam. In his comment about the principle of “Shoura”, the Islamic theology thinker Hassan Al Basri implies that “God’s order to His prophet to consult with the Muslim community means more of a consultation pattern for them to follow in their own societal behaviour” [3].

At that time, the public conduct was to be determined by mutual consultation between the partners, were it to be in state affairs, in business or even in domestic affairs. “If they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and after consultation, there is no blame on them” (Sourate Albakara, Verse # 233).

فإن أراد ا فصالاً عن تراض منهما وتشاور فلا جناح عليهما.

5.

6. As previously underlined by Mohamed S. Dajani [4], two basic elements are included in the concept of “Shoura”: the right for the “Umma” to express itself on such important matters as the choice of its leaders and its right to self management in accordance with its will and ultimate interests. Such situations are evidently in perfect line with the expectation of classical type political democracy. What has been ailing in the Islamic context is that the development of various types of autocratic dynasties over the centuries has progressively pushed the principle of “Shoura” into dwindling to a speck.. New impulses have therefore become badly needed for an institutional renewal of the Middle Eastern and North African political arenas. The prospected reforms will need to bring about a much needed change that will subtly induce democratic systems of government . The timidly introduced reforms have so far demonstrated some readiness of the Arab-Islamic environment for new democratic visions. The newly introduced styles of representative government have tended to represent convenient forms of application of the Islamic concept of “Shoura” to contemporary state affairs management. As Secretary of State Colin Powell put it: “There are rays of hope in the Middle East, as well. Countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, and Morocco have embarked on bold political reforms” [5] .

Yet, a lot remains to be accomplished in the hindered path of democracy, as *“too many Middle Easterners are ruled by closed political systems”* [5] .

4. The Notion of “Khalifa” in the Practice of Islamic States :

Literally, the work “Khalifa” refers to the successor or the deputy. In both cases, the idea of taking over someone else’s duties is implied by the term “Khalife”. This notion is recurring in various verses of the “Holy Coran”. But, this does not necessarily imply any sacred character that is conveyed to the notion by Islam. Temporal considerations have oriented certain political systems in the Muslim world to conferring a sacred connotation to this institution for legitimacy purposes.

The exegesis of the “Holy Coran” shows the reference to this notion of “Khalifa” at least on two occasions:

The first use of the expression occurs in the verse 30 of Sourate “Al Bakara” (البقرة) when it conveys God’s will to have a vicegerent on earth: *« Behold, thy Lord said to the Angels : I will create a vicegerent on earth... »* و إِذْ قَالَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً

An other reference to this notion comes in the 26th verse of Sourate “Sad”: *« Ô David, We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth; so judge thou between men in truth (and justice), nor follow thou the lust (of thy heart), for it will mislead thee from the path of Allah »*

يٰٓدَاوُدْ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِیْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ؛ فَاَحْكُم بَیْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوٰی فِیْضُلْكَ عَنْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ

Doctrinal disagreement has been prevailing ever since the cradle of Islam on whether the “khalifa” is meant to be to God on earth or only to His prophet. Some religious thinkers have contained themselves to a narrow interpretation of the “Coran” which might convey that it is a “khalifa” to God that is meant by the “Sourates” that refer to it. Present day reference to religious and spiritual foundations of the exercised temporal power try to maintain this belief for evident legitimacy purposes. Notions such as “Amir Al Mouslimine” or “Amir Al Mouminine” contribute evidently to the institutional longevity of theocratic approaches to political power. Yet, other schools of thought have persistently excluded any possibility for anyone to claim a “khalifa” to God for the simple reason that succession may be conceived for *“those who disappear or die, while God is everlasting and never dies or disappears”* [6].

Therefore, the “Khalifes” have always been known to be the successors of the authority holders. With the geographic expansion of the Islamic territories, multiple “Khalifes” have also been called upon to govern the various Islamic communities. Specific rules of designation have therefore been set forth for the “Imama” through the various historic phases of Islamic history. As for “Ahl Al Ikhtyar” (أهل الاختيار) (those who are called upon to choose the leader, or, in modern terminology “the electoral college”), they have to comply with these conditions: justice (العدالة), knowledge (العلم) and wisdom (الحكمة). Concerning “Ahl Al Imama” (أهل الإمامة) (the potential candidates for leadership), they have to comply with further conditions than those expected from the “choosers”: along with the conditions of justice, knowledge and wisdom are set forth other conditions pertaining to good governance, courage, origins and good physical and mental health [7].

The choice of the rulers is thus entrusted to the “Ahl Al Aqdi Oua Lhall” (أهل العقد والاحل) [literally meaning those within the community entitled to doing and undoing, the decision makers]. Widening the scope of community contribution to the selection process of state, regional, provincial and communal leadership, within a democratic perspective, has proven to be very relevant in a few Middle Eastern Islamic instances: why not in others?

II. Models for Community Building within the Islamic State :

A wide range of precepts are set forth by the “Coran” and the “Hadith” for the Muslim to comply with in his daily life. Through the Islamic “Sharia” (الشريعة الإسلامية), the “Mouminoune” (Believers) are instructed to follow the religious path which leads to the right choices. God has reminded His Prophet and Messenger Mohammed to follow this religious path set forth for him and for his followers: *«Then we put thee on the right way of religion ; so follow thou that way, and follow not the desires of those who know not »* (Sourate Al Jathiah, Verse # 18).

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

« Sharia » has grown to mean « religious law » which basic sources are the « Coran » and the « Hadith » (Sunna) ; other sources such as the « Ijma » (Consensual interpretation of the religious issues by the oulemas) and the « Ijtihad » (creativity by the most knowledgeable) are also considered as valid sources by some Islamic rites. Conviction (العقيدة), spirituality (التعلق بالروحانية), and legal stipulations (الأحكام) also constitute fundamental elements and basic components of the Islamic society. Applying the “Sharia” therefore means for the Muslim a thorough

application of his Islamic spirituality and religious beliefs, starting with the five pillars of Islam [8] . It is also a mode of life and a moral conception of existence.

Within this framework, the Muslim believer has quite an imposing array of obligations to comply with in order for him to live, both individually and collectively, up to the societal expectations of his community. Let's but explore a few of them.

2. The societal values:

One of the basic elements of Islamic teachings is the transcendence of the “self” on behalf of more superior moral values. All human beings are bound to weave cross boarder relationships, as there is no difference between them except the extent of their righteousness: “*O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you*” (Sourate Al Houjourate, Verse 13)

يا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

This expectancy of righteousness from the Muslim believer is echoed by a few Hadiths of the prophet: “*The most honoured amongst you is the most righteous one, there is no preference of an Arab over a ‘Ajami’ except for righteousness*”

(إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ لَيْسَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ فَضْلٌ عَلَىٰ عَجَمِيٍّ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَىٰ)

And in other Hadiths, he has been quoted as having said:

- “*None of you will consider himself ‘Moumine’ (believer) until he will wish for his fellow men what he wishes for himself*”
(لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ)

- “*The most complete ‘Moumine’ is the best mannered*” (أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا)

It is within this context of Islamic high standard expectancies from the believers that Islamic societal values may be appreciated. Two main aspects of these noble values may be underlined in the

present research: “obedience” (الطاعة) on one side and “enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong” (الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر) on the other side.

a. Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong :

One of the most recurrent obligations of the Muslim is his constant duty of redressing the torts of his fellow citizens. Multiple “Sourates” call upon him to do so; and so does the “Hadith”. Let’s quote a few illustrations:

- « *The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another. They enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil.* » (Verse 71 of Sourate “Attaoubah”).
والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم أولياء بعض يأمرون بالمعروف وينهون
عن المنكر

- « ... *Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah...* » (Verse 110 of Sourate “Ale Imrane”)

تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون .
وتؤمنون بالله
عن المنكر

- « *Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity* » (Verse 104 of Sourate “Ale Imrane”).

ولتكن منكم أمة يدعون إلى الخير ويأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر، أولئك هم المفلحون

- « *Ô my son, establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong. And bear with patient constancy what ever betide thee; for this is firmness of purpose in the conduct of affairs* » (Verse 17 of Sourate “Loqmane”).
يا بني أقم الصلاة وأمر بالمعروف وانه عن المنكر واصبر على ما أصابك، إن ذلك من عزم الأمور

- « *Those who, if We establish them on earth, accomplish regular prayer, give out the ‘zakat’ and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. With Allah rests the final end of all matters* » (Verse 41 of Sourate “Al Haj”).

الذين إن مكثناهم في الأرض أقاموا الصلاة وآتوا الزكاة وأمروا بالمعروف ونهوا عن الله عاقبة الأمور
المنكرو

- Hadith (Imam Moslem) : « *That who shall have witnessed an evil must try to change it through his acts ;*

if not, he shall call upon his words to bring the change about; otherwise he can refer to his heart for reaching such a purpose; and that is what is least expected from him».

من رأى منكم فليغيره بيده فإن لم يستطع فبلسانه فإن لم يستطع فبقلبه وذلك أضعف الإيمان
منكراً

The important impact of the mission of tort redressing within the Islamic community, through forbidding the wrong and enjoining the right, has led to the development of the original institution of the ‘Hisba’ in the Islamic communities. In this respect, the ‘Mohtasseb’ is a sort of ‘Ombudsman’ that Islam has developed more than fourteen centuries ago. Control attributions conferred to the Mohtassib not only covered activities of the executive branch, but his moral competencies also extended to due fulfilment of judicial duties [9].

b. Obedience :

The true Muslim is constantly compelled to obey and comply with authority. But, he is also expected to resist tyranny and rebel against injustice. In Islam, the ultimate authority rests in Allah; His prophets derive their authority from Him. In their temporal practices, the “khalifes” have also tried to keep up to the expected standards of good leadership. Historical examples have shown resistance to those who fail in their mission of “Imama”. As the Islamic faith does not make a sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it has developed to expect the governing elites to be imbued with righteousness.

Examples that invite Muslims to obedience are numerous:

-

« Ô ye who believe ! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you » (

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم.) Verse 59 of Sourate “Annisae

- « Ô ye who believe ! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and turn not away from him... » (Verse 20 of Sourate “Al Anfale”)

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا رسله ولا تولوا عنه

- « And Obey Allah and His Messenger ; Fall thou into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart ; and be patient and persevering ; for Allah is with those who patiently persevere » (Verse 46 of Sourate “Al Anfale”)

وأطيعوا الله وأطيعوا رسله ولا تنازعوا فتفشلوا وتذهب ريحكم، واصبروا إن الله مع الصابرين

- Hadith (Bokhari) : « *Listen and obey your leader even if he were an Abyssin slave* ».

اسمعوا وأطيعوا لمن ولي عليكم ولو كان عبداً حبشياً

Various stories have accompanied some of the above mentioned “Sourates”, explaining the reasons behind them. Concerning the verse 59 of “Sourate Annisae”, for example, Imam Boukhari, based on tales from Ibnou Abbas, reported that the content of this verse was in relation with Abdullah Ibnou Houdafa Ibnou Kaïs, whom the prophet had appointed on people who had remained disrespectful of the appointee. The “Ayate” (Verse) then came to remind everyone about the Islamic duty of obedience towards “those charged with authority” [10] . Yet, obedience is sought with the perspective of societal organization, quietude and peace that mark civilized communities. Disorder and anarchy are fully resisted in well structured Islamic states, which offer their citizens all the conditions of trust and justice.

2. The Individual Obligations :

In her “Iftar” address hosted in Washington, D.C. by the “Alkaramah” group of Muslim Women Lawyers on December 4th, 2002, U.S. National Security Advisor Condolezza Rice was quoted as having said that “ *Islam is a great faith that inspires people to lead lives based on honesty, justice and compassion*”. Her words definitely fall within the scope of what both the “Coran” and the “Sunna” expect from the true Muslim: “Assidq” (الصدق) [Sincerity], “Al Amana” (الأمانة) [Trust and Confidence], “Attasamouh” (التسامح) [Tolerance], and “Al adl” (العدل) [Justice]. Let’s explore a few of them.

a. The notion of Justice :

In the Islamic community, as in any other human setting, justice represents a basic element of social dignity and a clue component for assessing the prevailing democratic values within the concerned society. In Islam, justice is built on fairness and equity between the contenders. Strong and influential members of the community are to have the same rights as the weak and less prominent individuals. Omar Ibnou Al Khattab, the second Khalife after the Prophet’s death, was particularly known for his meticulous sense of justice. In his recommendations to Abou Moussa Al Achari, whom he had appointed as “Cadi” (Judge), he particularly stated: “*Justice is to be built on wisdom and responsibility. Try to comprehend before reacting. Speaking with no issue is pointless. Remain fair and even in all your acquaintances, so that neither the strong may indulge in your favours or the weak may give up on your*

equity. The accusing party must produce the proofs; and so must the accused pledge his innocence. Yet, doors to reconciliation must always remain open. And error reconsideration is a valuable quality...

When establishing David as a vicegerent on earth, God has particularly ordered him to “judge between men in truth (and justice), nor follow the lust” [11] (فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى). In an other context, Allah addresses “those Muslims who believe and do deeds of righteousness” to comply with the requirements of due justice: «When you judge between people, judge thou with justice» (Sourate An-nissae, Verse 58) (وَ إِذَا حُكِمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ). And finally, in a verified “Hadith”, the Prophet Mohammed has been quoted as having said: “Allah’s shade will protect but seven on the day when there will be no other shade than His : ...an equitable justice-rendering Imam...”;

سبعة يظلهم الله تحت ظله يوم لا ظل إلا ظله : ...إمام عادل...

b. Miscellaneous Other Profiles of the Muslim :

They are numerous. The true Muslim has to live up to their requirements in order for him to fully deserve belonging to the Islamic community. We will quote but a few:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أوفوا بـ «Ô ye who believe ! Fulfil all obligations» (Verse 1 of Sourate “Al Maïda”) لعقود

- « Allah does command you to render back your entrusted items to those to whom they are due » (Verse 58 of Sourate “An-nissae”). إن الله يأمركم أن تؤدوا الأمانات إلى أهلها

- « Ô ye that believe ! Betray not the trust of Allah and the messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you » (Verse 27 of Sourate “Al anfa”).

يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تخونوا الله و الرّسول و تخونوا أماناتكم و أنتم تعلمون .

- « Come not nigh to the orphan’s property, except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength. And fulfil every engagement, for every engagement will be inquired into (on the day of reckoning) » (Verse 34 of Sourate “Al Israe”).

و لا تقربوا مال اليتيم إلا بالتي هي أحسن حتّى يبلغ أشده, و أوفوا بالعهد, إنّ العهد كان مسؤولاً.

- « For those who say ‘Our Lord is Allah’, and further stand straight and steadfast, the Angels convey not to fear and not to grieve, but receive the Glad tidings of the Garden (of Bliss) to which ye were promised » (Verse 30 of Sourate “Foussilate”). إنّ الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا تتنزل عليهم الملائكة ألا تخافوا ولا تحزنوا وأبشروا بالجنة التي كنتم توعدون

- « Those who say 'Our Lord is Allah' and remain firm on the path, shall have no fear nor grieve. Such shall be companions of the Garden, dwelling there forever as a gift for their deeds » (Verse 14 of Sourate "Al AhkaF").

إن الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا فلا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون . أولئك أصحاب الجنة خالدون فيها , جزاء بما كانوا يعملون

- « Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents, whether one or both of them attain old age in thy home ; say not to them a word of contempt nor rebel them, but address them in terms of honour. Out of kindness, lower on them the wing of humility and say: My Lord, 'bestow on them the Mercy, for cherishing me in childhood» (Verses 23 and 24 of Sourate "Al Israe").

وقضى ربك ألا تعبدوا إلا غياها وبالوالدين إحساناً إمّا يبلغن عندك الكبر أحدهما أو كلاهما فلا تقل لهما أف ولا تنهرهما وقل لهما قولا كريماً . وأخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة وقل ربني ر حمهما كما ر بيا ني صغير أ.

- « Let there be no compulsion in religion : truth stands out clear from error » (Verse 256 of Sourate "Al Bakara")

لا إكراه في الدين , قد تبين الرشد من الغي

- « Argue not with the people, of the Book unless in good manners...Our God and your God is but One, and It is in Him that we all believe » (Verse 46 of Sourate "Al Ankaboute")

ولا تجادلوا أهل الكتاب إلا بالتي هي أحسن... وإلهنا وإلهكم وإله

حد ونحن له مسلمون

- « Invite to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and convince in ways that are best and most gracious » (Verse 125 of Sourate "Annahl").

أدع إلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن

- « Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms between us and you; that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah » (Verse 64 of Sourate "Ale Imrane").

قل يا أهل الكتاب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألا نعبد إلا الله ولا نشرك به شيئاً ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضاً أرباباً من دون الله

7.

8. These selected verses are but a small sample of "Coranic Ayates" which underline the wise call of the Muslim community towards good deeds. The Muslims are constantly invited to adopt exemplary attitudes and behaviours, be it in their common daily life, in their temporal relationships or in their transcendental prayers. Yet, tangible deficits are presently identified among all Arab and Muslim communities. Various degrees of progress have been sporadically perceptible. But objective reports have been extremely discouraging so far. Among them, Adrian Karatnycky, Freedom

House's president, documents in his organization's 2001-2002 Survey of Freedom *"a dramatic gap between the levels of freedom and democracy in the Islamic countries - particularly in their Arabic core - and in the rest of the world."* Furthermore, the above mentioned Haass address to the 'Council on Foreign Relations' [1] drastically states that *"the democracy gap between the Muslim world and the rest of the world is huge. Only one out of four countries with Muslim majorities have democratically elected governments. Moreover, the gap between Muslim countries and the rest of the world is widening. Over the past twenty years, democracy and freedom expanded in countries in Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. In contrast, the Muslim world is still struggling"*

9.

10. To what extent, then, can the Arab and Muslim Middle Eastern and North African communities, presently portrayed as undemocratically managed, rise their standards up to the universally admitted expectations, without necessarily giving up on their deeply rooted convictions and beliefs?

Dr. Hassan RAHMOUNI

Casablanca, December 20th, 2002.

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- [1] – Richard Haass, *"Reinforcing Democracy in the Islamic World"*, Presentation to the "Council on Foreign Relations", Washington, D.C., December 4th, 2002.
 - [2] – All the English translations of the "Coranic" verses used in the present paper are drawn from *"Mushaf Al Madina An-Nabawiyah: The Holy Coran, Meanings and Commentary"*, revised and edited by the General Presidency of Islamic Research, Iftaa, Call and Guidance, King Fahd Printing Complex, Al Madinah Al-Munawarah, 1990.
 - [3] – Mohammed Redha, *"Muhammad Rassoulou Allah"* (In Arabic), Dar Al Kitab, Beyrouth, 1945.
 - [4] – Mohammed S. dajani, *"The Importance of Dialogue after the 11th of September: Islam, Culture and Democracy"*, paper presented at the first Mediterranean Conference in Athens, October, 5th, 2002.
 - [5] – Collin Powell, *"The Middle East Partnership Initiative"*, Presentation to the "Heritage Foundation", Washington, D.C., December, 12th, 2002.
 - [6] – Abou El Hassan Al Mawardi, "Al Ahkam Assoultania wa Al wilatyate Addinia"(In Arabic)[Sultanian Orders and Religious Emirates], first edited in 450 of the Hegire Calendar (11th century), modern re-edition by Dar Al Koutoub Al Ilmya, Beyrouth, 1982.
 - [7] – Ibidem.
 - [8] – Which are : (a) The 'Shahada' that Allah is but one and that Mohamed is His messenger; (b) Fulfilling the prayer; (c) Acquitting the 'Zakat'; (d) Accomplishing the pilgrimage to Mecqua, and; (e) Fasting 'Ramadan'.
 - [9] – For further readings on the "Hisba", cf. Abou El Hassan Al Mawardi, op. cit.
 - [10] – Jalalou Dine Abdurrahmane Ibnou Abi Bakr Assyouti, in "Asbabe Attanzil"(In Arabic), included in "Tafsir Al jalalayne" Religious Sciences Editions, Beyrouth, 1979.
 - [11] – Sourate "Sad", op. cit. p. 6.
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