

# The Muslim Spring

On the pulse of the Ummah

From the editors of The Muslim Voice

Muharram 1433

## Guilty For Believing



Munir Farooqi



Ahmed Faraz

**T**wo recent trials against British Muslims have resulted in guilty verdicts that can only be described as the criminalisation of Islamic beliefs.

On the 13th December 2011, Ahmed Faraz of Birmingham was sentenced to three years in prison in London after being convicted of disseminating a number of books which were deemed to be terrorist publications and thereby "glorifying" and "priming people" for terrorism despite, as the judge conceded, having had no role in any specific terror plot. One of those books is the well-known classic "Milestones" by the Egyptian political activist Syed Qutb who was martyred in the 1960's by the Nasser regime. In a trial which lasted over two months, jurors had the entirety of Qutb's thoughts and ideas, as expressed in his book, read out to them to decide whether or not such ideas are permissible in 21st century Britain. They concluded that they were not and Milestones has now been deemed a "terrorist publication" and effectively banned in Britain despite being published by Penguin Books and widely obtainable in mainstream book stores and libraries. It is noteworthy that the trial relied on portraying a set of ideas presented by Qutb in his book, which differ or conflict with secular, liberal ideas. Instead of arguing the intellectual weight and merit of the relative ideas, the court effectively criminalized these Islamic ideas deeming them as a 'precursor' to terrorist violence. Significantly, the trial

looked at the Islamic justifications behind the ideas and brought in witnesses whose opinions differed with those expressed by Qutb and others in the published books. But by judging against the defendant –and the works he disseminated – the trial judge has effectively legalized one Islamic view and criminalized the other!

The second conviction took place in September of this year when Manchester based Munir Farooqi, was given four life sentences for preparing "terror" acts, soliciting murder, and disseminating "terrorist literature". Israr Malik and Mathew Newton were also convicted. However, there was no plan to commit terror, or any physical evidence of materials found intending to harm any individual. The so-called "terrorist" material and evidence of intent of terrorism and murder were, some books and DVD's and the words uttered by the men to undercover police officers (pretending to have converted to Islam) in thousands of hours of secret recordings. Like the trial against Ahmed Faraz, the Farooqi trial appears to have been a prosecution of individuals for their thoughts, beliefs, and views on the occupation of Muslim lands by British forces, rather than a planned or physical plot to commit terrorism. The case could not have been better summed up, than in the words of the Head of the North West Counter Terrorism Unit (NWCTU), Detective Chief Superintendent Tony Porter:

*“This was an extremely challenging case, both to investigate and successfully prosecute at court, because we did not recover any blueprint, attack plan or endgame for these men. However, what we were able to prove was their ideology.”*

For proof of ideology, Munir Farooqi along with Israr Malik was given indeterminate sentences. So even after serving the minimum nine years Munir Farooqi may not be eligible for Parole. The length of sentence given in this case (and allowable under Section 5 of the Terrorism Act 2006), is just one issue of many, that should concern those involved in civil liberties. By prosecuting these cases in the manner undertaken by the CPS, the British state has put ideas on trial; for if it was solely interested in the issue of incitement to violence, the court would not have spent days hearing witnesses giving their views on the ideas of Qutb and others – and would not have put so much weight on small-print issues – such as which sentences appeared in a bold font – to argue there were implied meanings in the text.

### **Imposing a State-Approved version of Islam**



The classification by the British State of books, DVD's and even certain verses of the Quran used in some contexts as evidence of radicalisation, or ideological and spiritual preparation for Jihad and hence “terrorist”, should be of concern to every Muslim and supporter of freedom of thought. This is a further attempt by the British state towards imposing what is an acceptable Islam and what is a forbidden Islam; what is ‘authorised’ by the state – and what is not. It is a process that has been advancing for years. In 2003, the think-tank Civitas published a work that went into great details exploring which Islamic ideas were acceptable and unacceptable to them in their report titled “The West, Islam and Islamism” [co-authored by Baroness Cox who famously invited Geert Wilders to address the UK Parliament in 2010 and who is a co-founder of an organization that is aimed at "maintaining a united Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel"]. They concluded: **“It is not enough for the vast majority of decent, peaceful, law-abiding Muslims to renounce terror in principle: they also need to renounce the view-frequently expressed by Islamists-of an inevitable war between Islam and the rest of the world. If they choose to live in Western liberal democratic societies, they must accept the values of liberal democracy-as Jews, Sikhs, Hindus and others have done for many years”**

All the evidence suggests that this was the policy adopted by successive British governments – both Labour and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. In 2009 the Guardian newspaper leaked that a definition of ‘extremism’

went far further than advocating ‘terrorist’ violence, but included many of the political ideas of Islam. The decisions by Home Secretary Theresa May to exclude Zakir Naik and Raed Salah from the UK, similarly point to an official criteria that has little to do with violence and everything to do with ideas.

The message to Muslims in Britain could hardly be clearer. If you wish to be engaged as citizens with an equal worth to other citizens, you must denounce and distance yourself from any Islamic ideas that conflict with secular liberal norms. The on-going Prevent strategy clearly illustrates many of the methods by which the government hopes to achieve this end. Security Minister, James Brokenshire, confirmed in November 2011 that the current British government intends to continue the policy and to widen its remit to address ideas it calls ‘non-violent extremism’.

Similarly, the message to Muslims around the world – in particular those Arab countries currently going through a process of rapid change – could not be clearer. If you establish a system that conflicts with the norms established by the West, expect to be treated as a pariah state by the West. It is ironic, that states such as Britain, and others, who claim that religion should have little to do with politics spend so much effort trying to redefine Islam!

It is essential for British Muslims and the global Muslim Ummah to take a united stand against this attempted corruption of Islam by the British and other Western states and to adhere to the truth as revealed by Allah (swt) and conveyed by His messenger Muhammed (saw). Allah (swt) says:

*“They (the Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah, and the Messiah, son of Maryam.” [At Tauba, 31]*

Imam Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Jarir At-Tabari recorded a Hadith via several chains of narration, from `Adi bin Hatim (ra), who became Christian during the time of Jahiliyyah. `Adi went to the Messenger of Allah (saw) wearing a silver cross around his neck. The Messenger of Allah recited this Ayah; *(They took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah)*. `Adi commented, **“I said, `They did not worship them.”** The Prophet (saw) said, **“Yes they did. They (rabbis and monks) prohibited the halaal (allowed by Allah) for them (Christians and Jews) and allowed the haram (prohibited by Allah), and they obeyed them. This is how they worshipped them.”** The Messenger of Allah (saw) invited `Adi to embrace Islam and he embraced Islam and pronounced the testimony of truth.... From this explanation of the honourable verse of the Quran, it is evident that Muslims cannot remain silent when any people try to corrupt the understanding of Islam and prevent the people from knowing its truth so much so that Islam linked this matter to the biggest crime of associating of partners with Allah (swt).

## Can Imran Khan's PTI Change the Fortunes of Pakistan?



In recent weeks, Imran Khan and his Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) have experienced a substantive growth in popularity with many Pakistanis now believing that the ex-cricketer-turned politician is the man to change the deteriorating situation in Pakistan.

Imran Khan's political message is simple, **“deal with corruption and everything will fall into place....”** referring to the endemic corruption of the ruling parties that has defined Pakistani politics over the last three decades. According to 2010 Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Pakistan currently ranks 143 in the world. In practise, this dismal ranking reflects that corruption has seeped into literally every sector of governance, from the police to the judges. Even during the era of Musharraf's military rule, the people of Pakistan witnessed corruption by the military through their accumulation of large corporate assets within the economy and via their assignment of lavish land grants to retired personnel. Therefore, in an environment where every ruling party has been on the take, Imran Khan's message of “clean” politics has resonance with every sincere Pakistani. Unsurprisingly, Khan has repeatedly challenged his political opponents by declaring his own personal assets and calling the leaderships of the PPP and PML-N to do likewise.

### Is Imran's & PTI's Programme for Pakistan Sufficient to turn the corner?

The PTI also has an ambitious programme for development in Pakistan which has impressed many Pakistanis. The PTI manifesto declares numerous policies to put Pakistan back on the path to progress. These include providing education for all girls up to metric, increasing private enterprise in the energy sector to address Pakistan's chronic energy shortfalls and the provision of new loans for housing to help the homeless and impoverished. However, PTI do not elaborate on how they plan to finance this ambitious development programme and remain silent on some of the major economic

problems facing the country such as how to establish both energy and food security in a volatile and inflationary economic environment.

On the issue of Pakistan's alliance with America's war on terror, Khan has been vocal in his condemnation of drone attacks which have killed many civilians but has also stated that he would assist America to leave Afghanistan. Yet Khan knows that the war on terror has been keeping the generals of the Pakistani army with a healthy cash flow from America. According to a report by The Times of India, the U.S. aid to Pakistan since 9/11 has reached nearly \$20 billion. During the Obama administration, the aid to Pakistan has gradually risen, from \$2 billion in 2008 to \$3 billion in 2009 and \$4 billion in 2010. Therefore, the reality on the ground is that the interests of the US and the Pakistani military leadership are far out of synch with Pakistani public opinion which is fed up with the master-slave relationship. However, Khan while playing up to public opinion against the US has been careful not to isolate himself from both the US and the Pak military leadership. Perhaps this is why Imran Khan in a recent interview appears to have abandoned the Kashmiri Muslims by stating that the Kashmir issue should be left for future generations to solve and that Pakistan and India should increase trade relations in the meantime.

Imran's PTI promote their policies under the banner of an “Islamic Welfare State” along the lines envisaged by Pakistan's founder Qaid e Azm, Muhammed Ali Jinnah. After careful examination of its manifesto, the Muslims of Pakistan should be clear that Imran Khan's PTI is a secular party seeking to continue Pakistan upon a path of following western economic and social principles. For example, following a privatization policy to create energy means that prices for key products and services such as electricity, gas and telecommunications, previously subsidised by the government, will continue to rise in an economy already facing runaway inflation. Moreover, PTI wants to use private investment to fund new power plants but again do not appear to conceive at what cost to the consumer? It is difficult to see how such policies will alleviate the economic hardship that the Pakistani people are currently enduring.

Furthermore, to increase housing, the PTI state that the 'leasing and mortgaging' of property will be developed. In other words, PTI aim to introduce long-term, interest-based loans and the use of debt to finance property purchase. It would seem that PTI are blind to what is taking place in the Western world where highly diverse and developed economies are facing an economic crisis not seen since the Great Depression because of debt-fuelled growth policies. Putting the people of Pakistan into further debt is not a solution to poverty but a disastrous policy. Moreover, how is the further introduction of usury (riba) in PTI's 'Islamic Welfare State' consistent with economic principles of Islam?

And this is where the policies of Imran Khan's party become truly exposed for what they really are; a continuation of the

failed capitalist policies of the past, which can only keep Pakistan underdeveloped and enslaved by crippling debt servicing. The PTI state that they will “*negotiate a long-term debt management strategy with the donors to limit the annual debt repayment to a percentage of the foreign exchange earnings*”. What this means in practise is that PTI will continue to keep Pakistan in debt by placing the growing debt burden on future generations, allowing interest (riba) payments to accumulate year on year. In the current financial year (2010/2011), Pakistan will pay an estimated Rs 800 billion in interest (riba) payments alone (domestic and foreign) out of a total government expenditure of Rs 2800 billion. When the actual loan principal is included in this figure, it rises from Rs 800 billion to Rs 1 trillion, indicating that the Pakistan’s loan repayments are 36% of total government expenditure (of which 29% is purely riba). It is precisely this payment of interest (riba) which Khan wishes to continue that is crippling Pakistan and preventing development at the pace that is needed in order to maintain regional competitiveness. Moreover, why should Pakistan continue to pay interest when she has paid back the principal on several domestic and international loans many times over? How can Pakistan ever hope to progress when such a large proportion of the country’s wealth is being lost to this oppressive and unislamic practise?

In his bid to achieve power, Imran Khan’s PTI has been actively recruiting many high profile politicians from among his main political opponents, the PPP and the PML-Q who have secured parliamentary positions through bradri loyalty and financial patronage. Consequently, Pakistan’s parliament is composed of numerous land owners and industrialists who have used their position to protect their assets and avoid a fair and just taxation regime. For example, Pakistan is deprived of Rs300 billion of agricultural tax due to resistance from these “elected representatives” who prefer to impose General Sales Tax (equivalent to VAT) on the poor rather than pay a tax on agriculture. It seems hypocritical that Khan would recruit this class of politician since they represent the very corruption that Khan talks about eradicating. The biggest heavyweight recruit thus far is former PPP Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi who has incredibly been installed as PTI’s ‘Vice Chairman’. Qureshi is the man who oversaw PPP led government’s secret pact with the US allowing the use of Pakistani airbases for drone strikes which PTI have continuously denounced. The fact that the PTI leadership have allowed Qureshi into a senior position seriously undermines PTI’s stance on justice and claim to accountability/transparency. How will Khan provide justice to the drone victims’ families in FATA when one of the architects of the bloodshed now sits alongside him? This clearly shows how Khan’s bid to achieve power through the democratic path has already begun to erode the principles upon which he claims to believe. What can one expect from Khan if he were to achieve the power he craves when the reality of governing within Pakistan’s corrupt political environment is forced upon him?

## A new system and politics is needed to bring change



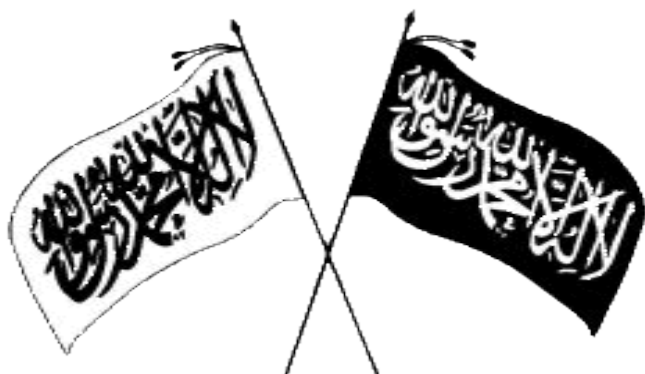
The situation in Pakistan has reached a very severe point where the US has openly weakened Pakistan through its campaign in Afghanistan while simultaneously strengthening India in its bid to curtail the influence of China and prevent the resurgence of Islam. Pakistan is in need of courageous leadership but most importantly, it is in need of changing its political system in order to break itself free of the shackles of dependence upon foreign influence. Since its creation in 1947 as an Islamic state, Pakistan has never implemented the systems of shariah but has rather implemented a secular constitution that pays lip service to Islam. Imran Khan’s PTI aims to continue Pakistan upon the same failed path as other secular political parties of the past and will inevitably fail to bring Pakistan out of the quagmire she has let herself fall into.

The potential of Pakistan can only be realised when a radically distinct approach is undertaken guided by the shariah rules. For example, under the Islamic economic system, Pakistan’s finances will have to be reorganised in an interest (riba)-free manner. This means that Pakistan will restructure its debts by paying back the principal sums borrowed in full without further interest payments. On this, Pakistan can learn the lesson of countries like Argentina who in 2001 defaulted on repayments of crippling IMF loans and used the money it saved to rejuvenate its economy within just four years, becoming able to pay back all its IMF loans. This will give Pakistan the space it needs to invest up to Rs 800 billion in development and infrastructure programmes that will allow its economy to grow and increase its foreign reserves. For example, Pakistan could exploit its vast Thar coal reserves and Balauchi gas reserves to make it a regional energy exporter rather than continuing to import expensive Middle Eastern oil. Islam forbids giving the ownership of these vast energy resources to the hands of individuals, private companies or the even the state. The shariah injunctions on public properties ensure that the minerals and energy resources are available to the public and economy at cheap prices, rather than exposing them to exploitation by multinationals.

Under shariah, the current laws which protect land property rights of Pakistani landowners will be reviewed and the shariah would not allow for unused and neglected land to remain in the ownership of those who do not use it for more than 3 years. Instead, the land would be given to those who have no land so that they may revive it and make a living from it. The great Khaleefah Umar ibn al Khattaab (ra) stated **“Whoever neglected a land for three years without using it and another person came and used it, it becomes his.”** A total of 2.66 million acres of farm area remains uncultivated in the large farm category (100 acres plus) of Pakistan’s farms. This corresponds to approximately 25% of the total unutilised farm area. Some 30,000 landlord families would lose this non-cultivated land and up to one million landless families would gain from it, if redistribution under the 3-year shariah rule is applied. Furthermore, under shariah, kharaaj (land production tax) would be placed upon all agriculture output generating revenue for the state to use for further development of unutilised agricultural land. Such a land policy will bring people out of poverty and make Pakistan self-sufficient in food production.

Finally, Islam forbids the Muslims from allowing the disbelievers from interfering in their affairs. Since its inception, Pakistan has been under the influence of the British and subsequently the Americans. An Islamic government will immediately remove all American military and agency personnel from its soil and stop all support for the occupation of Afghanistan. An Islamic government will prevent any form of sectarian organisation from operating and will unify the people upon Islam. Such a policy will eradicate all forms of instability and sectarian grievances from the nation allowing the Muslims to focus on development and unity. The armed forces of Pakistan must return to protecting the nation from foreign designs both on its borders and beyond. Such policies are beyond the scope of secular parties such as Imran Khan’s PTI or any other party that works according to the current political order. It is only through the implementation of the shariah via a Khilafah political system that Pakistan can return to a state of progress and stability.

## **Political unity can only be achieved through the Islamic Creed (Aqeedah)**



**A**s 2011 draws to a close, we are witnessing many changes in the political landscape of the Muslim world. Countries like Egypt and Tunisia have removed their despotic regimes and this has culminated in the emergence (or façade) of democratic elections. In contrast, the uprisings are still continuing in places such as Syria and Yemen, where the leaders are still holding onto power with the promise of reforms and democracy. On other fronts, the US military is withdrawing from Iraq having left a so-called democratically elected government in place.

The concern for us as a Muslim Ummah is that this passage to democracy is being implemented in Muslim countries where disunity exists upon sectarian lines (like the Sunni and Shi’a in Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain) and religious lines (like the Muslim brotherhood and Salafis in Egypt and Tunisia). The foundational pillar of Democracy is that the majority vote and political alliances establish the basis for governance. Therefore, the call to democracy in these areas will lead to politicians utilising the sectarian and religious differences in order to win support and power. A look at the sectarianism that has plagued the Iraqi democracy since its inception, and the problems with the confessional system in Lebanon, highlight that democracy is a totally inadequate solution, which only incites rather than coping with differences.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that diversity within religious and sectarian opinions has been distorted to create schisms within the Muslims Ummah. In the mid-19th century, the Deobandi Madrasas bought together Muslims who were hostile to British rule and were inclined towards a strict interpretation of Islam. On the opposing side, the Barelvi movement was founded as a reaction against the strict Deobandi and Salafi version of Islam. They called for a more liberal interpretation of Islam rejecting what they coined as extreme practices in Islam. These differences unveiled themselves in a detrimental way in the 20th century when the Barelvis allied themselves with the Ismailis and Ahmediyas to form the Pakistan movement. The Pakistan movement’s agenda was separation from India, whereas the Deobandis opposed the formation of Pakistan as they wanted to islamise all of India. Pakistan’s population today is made up off 50% of the people who are Barelvis and 20% are Deobandis; this has led to internal conflict in the country often erupting in violence and bombings. The Islamic institutions in Pakistan also segregate themselves along these lines with over 60% of the Madrasas following the Deobandi Muslims compared to 25% run by the Barelvi Muslims. These Islamic institutions promote an agenda where each side refuses the other and some elements pronounce takfir (pronunciation of disbelief) on the other.

The sectarian division between the Sunnis and Shi’as has also led to the political disunity that exists today in Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and Pakistan to mention but a few. The armed struggle between Sunnis and Shi’as in Yemen, Iraq and Pakistan alone has led to the death of thousands of Muslims. The origins of this disagreement can be traced back



to the time of the Companions (ra) and the subsequent generation. The dispute was political in nature, with those who preferred Ali (ra) to be Khalifah ahead of the other companions labelled as Shi'atu Ali ('the faction of Ali'). As time went on, different beliefs developed and Shi'ism came to encompass all those who preferred Ali (ra). The majority simply had a political preference to Ali (ra), whilst a minority believed in the divinity of Ali (ra).

The questions that we need to ask ourselves as an Ummah are: Do variations in religious beliefs justify disunity within the Muslims? How did the scholars of the past deal with differing points of view? What are the core Aqeedah issues that Muslims can bond upon? How can this spiritual and political unity be achieved?

If we look back at the scholars and pioneers from our illustrious past, we find that the Ash'ari scholars disagreed strongly with the views of the Literalists on many issues. These issues ranged from the definition of iman (belief), the manner in which to understand the sifat (attributes) of Allah (swt), in the usage of qiyas (legal analogical reasoning) and the permissibility of taqlid (following qualified legal opinions of a mujtahid) to a school of thought (madhhab). It is true that the Ash'aris strongly criticised the Literalist camp for their approach and views, but this was on the scholarly, intellectual level and must be taken in this context. Therefore, these differences in opinion did not result in the Ash'aris condemning the Literalists as heretics. On the contrary, the books of Literalist scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathir were respected and quoted by Ash'ari scholars throughout history.

Similarly the Literalist scholars, whilst they also harshly criticised the Ash'aris, especially on some of their views such as the attributes of Allah (swt), their definition of the Qur'an as an expression of the speech of Allah, their definition of iman as being tasdiq (assent) in the heart and not including actions, and their justification of taqlid – they did not consider them as heretics or deviants deserving the wrath of Allah (swt). Look at what Ibn Taymiyyah himself says:

**“It is not necessarily the case that everyone who makes a mistake in matters of ‘aqeedah is destined to be from the destroyed and the losers. Perhaps, the disputant was a mistaken mujtahid for whom Allah will forgive his**

**mistake. It is also possible that he did not receive enough information about the topic to conclude that the proof has been established against him.”** [Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmū' al-Fatāwa, Vol. 3 p.179]

Further on in the same book, he mentions that even the Salaf differed on various issues related to belief. Regarding this he writes:

**“The early pious people (al-salaf) disputed about many of those issues. Yet none of them declared the others of having unbelief, evil or sin.”** [Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmū' al-Fatāwa, Vol. 3 p.239].

One lesson we learn from these past scholars is that our religious differences should only be confined to intellectual and scholarly dialogue and debate and not spill over into accusations of heresy, segregation and violence. Another lesson is that these scholars had a very pure understanding of what constitutes disbelief, and what differences Muslims can have while still remaining within the creed of Islam; this allowed them to always remain unified in their bond as Muslims. Therefore, for Muslims to look beyond their differences today, it is essential that we understand what pillars of faith make us believers and where debate is allowed. Allah (swt) has said in the Qur'an:

*“O you who believe – believe in Allāh and His Messenger, and the Book which He sent to His messenger and the Book which He sent to those who came before him. Anyone who denies Allāh, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Day of Judgement has gone far astray.”* [TMQ Al Nisa:136]

This verse makes it clear that belief in Islam is based upon belief in Allah, the Angels, all the revealed books ending with the Qur'an, all of His Messengers and the Day of Judgement. Anyone who disbelieves in any of these is outside of the fold of Islam. Anything which is confirmed definitely in the Qur'an as part of our creed, or is known by necessity, forms the conditions for belief in Islam. There are matters in the Qur'an which are not known by necessity, or are not definitely agreed upon and hence fall under the realm of ijthad. These areas form the scope for diversity in opinions and scholarly debate; it is not permitted to make takfir of the person who holds the different opinion, though they may be disputed with.

Revisiting the matter of the Sunni and Shi'a divide, there are many assertions made against the Shi'a creed. In particular there are four contentious areas: the claim that the Qur'an was altered; the claim that the Qur'an was intended for Ali (ra) and was wrongly revealed to Muhammad (saw); the claim that Ali (ra) is a divine being; the claim that all the Sahabi are not Muslim. These set of beliefs are held only by a few sects today; therefore, as long as Shi'as adhere to the fundamental aspects of the Islamic creed and do not deviate into any of these four erroneous beliefs, they should be regarded as Muslims. Other controversial issues include the

cursing of specific individual companions and the belief that ‘Ali is better than Abu Bakr; though this behaviour is reprehensible, it does not constitute disbelief. A study of past scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, who is often quoted as an authority on Rafidah (the more extreme Shi’as are labelled in the classical texts as the Rafidah), confirms this point of view. When asked about someone preferring the Jews and Christians ahead of the Rāfidah (a good example considering that today some scholars have told the Muslims to be more afraid of Iran than Israel), he replied:

**“Everyone who was a believer in that which Muhammad (saw) brought, then he is better than everyone who disbelieved in it, and even if that believer had an aspect of innovation, irrespective of whether it was the innovation of the khawarij or the shi’a or the murji’ah or the qadariyyah or other than them; the Jew and the Christian are disbelievers and their disbelief is known by necessity from the deen of Islam. And if the innovator considered himself to be in agreement with the Prophet (saw), not against him or disbelieving in him – then even if it was considered that he had committed disbelief, his disbelief is not like the disbelief of the one who lied against the Prophet (saw)”** [Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmū’ al-fatāwa, Vol 35 p 201]

This illustrates that Ibn Taymiyyah harshly criticised those he deemed as holding deviant beliefs; however, he still considered them separate and better than the non-Muslims since they share the same fundamental belief in Islam and are therefore are part of the Ummah.

The stance taken by the aforementioned scholars shows us that first and foremost we need to unite upon the fundamentals of Islam and understand that we are one Ummah. The differences that exist between us need to be accepted, as long as they lie within the remit of Islamic difference of opinion as defined above. Indeed, these differences and others like them are unlikely to ever be resolved completely, and the Muslims lived for centuries under the Khilafah, despite their differences in the details of belief. This unity can only remain in the hearts of the Muslims until it is transformed into a political reality; this political unity cannot be achieved through democracy as we have discussed. As a system, democracy will always take the majority vote and legislate in accordance with this view and hence cause disunity amongst the factions. This political unity based upon the Islamic creed can only be realised through the Khilafah. The Khilafah system is not dependent upon the whims of the majority; rather each human being’s rights under the Khilafah are guaranteed by the revelation, which is used as the basis of law.

Ibn Taymiyyah writes about ruling by the laws of Allah (swt) in his book, Minhaj-As-Sunnah:

**“Undoubtedly, whoever does not believe that it is obligatory to rule according to that which Allah has**

**revealed to His Messenger is a Kafir (disbeliever), and whoever thinks it is permissible to rule among people according to his own opinions, turning away and not following which Allah has revealed is also a Kafir...So in matters which are common to the Ummah as a whole, it is not permissible to rule or judge according to anything except the Quran and Sunnah. No one has the right to make the people follow the words of a scholar or ameer, shaykh or king. Whoever believes that he can judge between people according to any such thing, and does not judge between them according to the Quran and Sunnah is a Kafir.”** [Ibn Taymiyyah, Minhaj as-Sunnah, 5/130-132]

The above statement of Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates how vital the Khilafah is for the Muslims. The Khilāfah would adopt the necessary rules and laws from the shariah that are required in the society, such as the hudūd punishments, the levels of taxation and so on. It would leave the personal issues to the individual and his own relationship with Allah, and upon this basis a solid foundation for the unity of the Ummah would be established. History has shown us (as with the fitnah at the time of Imām Ahmad), that it is not productive for the Khalifah to try to impose one set of beliefs upon the whole Ummah as it simply leads to disunity, resistance and is ultimately futile. It has also shown us that when rulers adopt sectarian positions, thus dividing the Ummah, the Muslims as a whole become weaker and open to outside exploitation.

In conclusion, with the Muslims unified under a single leadership to run their affairs according to Islam, the effects of sectarian and religious differences will be minimised. All Muslims will have recourse to the courts and to be judged according to Islam, and will be left alone with respect to the details of their personal worship. The State will clearly define the fundamentals of the Islamic Aqeedah and delineate those who fall outside of Islam (such as the Alawi and Ismaili sects) and will represent Islam on the international stage, not a particular sect.

## **The 21st Century Financial Crisis – A Lesson in Arrogance**

**A**s of writing this article, the future of the Eurozone looks bleak. Greece is on the cliff edge of default, while Italy, Portugal and Spain’s debt levels are perilously close to the point of no return. It is as if the Eurozone may collapse at any moment: leading to the major Eurozone economies, Germany and France, seeking a new European treaty that will effectively protect them from the debt of poorer member states. The US economy is also facing major debt and growth-associated problems and rest of the World fears entering into a global depression. It goes without saying that understanding economics is not easy going stuff but even to the layman there is plainly something deeply wrong with the major Western economies. In Britain, the economic outlook is deteriorating with youth unemployment recently hitting 1 million and university

degrees, with all their soaring fees, offering no guarantee of securing a decent job. But it is not as if this hasn't happened before: since the great economic crash of the 1920's there have been 6 or 7 major crashes, some of which have had greater affects than just unemployment and increases to the price of cappuccinos! Take for example the great Far East Crash of the 1990's, which caused people in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines to turn from millionaires into paupers virtually overnight! So what has gone so horribly wrong with the world economy?

### The Source of Error

Like so many civilisations aforesaid, the states espousing democratic capitalism have arrogantly assumed that they have all the answers to man's problems and it is as if history is repeating itself once again. Francis Fukayama, for example, whose book entitled "End of History" argued that liberal democracy was the culmination of the best of human thinking on how to run society, smacks of this very self-fulfilling arrogance. For many, Fukayama's thesis was confirmed by the success of western economies that under secularism has allowed man to freely choose how to live and in particular, how to run the economy- leading to the greatest economic growth and material advancement in human history! So what has gone wrong with the western economic miracle? The truth is that although culminating in extraordinary economic production, western capitalism has increased global inequality as shown by the growing divide between first and third world economies. Furthermore, economic growth has often been driven by either colonialism or by sophisticated methods whereby rich countries like the G8 have forced poorer countries into debt through the use of interest-based loans that were tied to the restructuring of their economies to suit the requirements of international markets as opposed to the needs of their people. This is why in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, extreme poverty rose from 41% in 1981 to 46% in 2001, a period in which world economy experienced tremendous growth. This failure to provide an equitable distribution of the world's resources and wealth has become the defining parameter of global Capitalism. While under questioning during the heat of the 2008 crisis, Alan Greenspan, the ex-head of the US Federal Reserve, admitted at a senate hearing that the western economic system was fatally flawed:

**"Rep. WAXMAN: In other words, you found that your view of the world, your ideology was not right. It was not working.....**

**Mr. GREENSPAN:That's precisely the reason I was shocked, because I've been going for 40 years or more with very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionallywell".**(Source:<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96070766>)

### Will the West look to Islam for the answer?

The tumult surrounding the 2008 crisis led to a lot of soul searching within the west. "Das Kapital" by Karl Marx shot up in sales and even newspaper columnists began discussing whether this marked the end of capitalism (See "We need reform – but that does not make Marx right" CityAM newspaper, Source: <http://www.cityam.com/news-and-analysis/allister-heath/we-need-reform-does-not-make-marx-right>)

Yet despite the perpetual negative media frenzy that surrounds Islam, more aware commentators have noticed that Islam offered solutions to the on-going financial crisis as the Islamic finance industry, despite its unislamic aspects, had offered an oasis of stability during the instability of the credit crunch (see Asia Times, "Islamic finance - steady amid chaos"). In reality Islam has provided many coherent economic solutions one and half thousand years ago which if implemented today could produce the much needed



economic stability that comes from an equitable distribution of wealth and resources. Even for those who have no view on Islam's divineness can appreciate that the Islamic economic system manages to produce an economic environment that discourages exploitation within society and produces economic fairness and justice. The most well understood aspect is that Islam forbids all forms of usury (riba) in trading, which underpins the entire capitalist banking system. It goes without saying in an interest-free banking sector, the current financial crisis could never have occurred. However, it should be considered that the Islamic economic system has more to add to the discussion that simply denouncing interest. Ironically, despite the attacks on shariah law and Islamic values by the media, many anti-capitalist protesters seem to almost home in on solutions that are particularly emphasized by Islam.

For example:

- **They have asked for a stable currency since the value of money has consistently decreased since the Nixon administration dissociated the dollar from the gold standard in 1971.** Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank, stated recently that the international community "should also consider employing gold as an international reference point of market expectations about inflation, deflation and future currency values. Although textbooks may view gold as the old money, markets are using gold as an alternative monetary asset today. "(Source: Forbes). Islam confirmed the currency (an Nuqood) to be the bimetallic standard of gold and silver and did not permit other forms of currency. The Prophet (saw) standardised the weights for the gold dinar and the silver dirham in the hadith narrated Ibn Umar (ra): **"The weight should be that of the people of Makkah."** (Abu Dawood)

- **They have come to the conclusion that various types of trading and financial products such as credit default swap's, short selling and other debt or futures**



**trading is problematic and stability in trade is needed -** Islam answered this more than a thousand years ago by prohibiting trading in debt and with products that one doesn't own (gharar). Therefore, Islam only allows trading in real, known commodities with prices agreed at the time of trading.

- **They ask now for stable company structures giving rise to stability in jobs and trading -** Islam determined that companies should be funded through stable company structures where the owners of the company are liable for its debts and that its parts should not be funded through volatile in and outflows as seen in public floatation.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

The sad fact of both the current recession and the credit crunch is that it is a repeated story of capitalist boom and bust economics. Civilisations generally tend to err when they think that they are the masters of their own destiny. The arrogant boasts and claims of the end of boom and bust and the so-called triumph of capitalism with its veneer of success

built upon delayed troubles and hidden poverty seem particularly hollow at this time. Islam offers an alternative economic system characterised by many of the principles people are looking for today such as the ability to trade freely, no cap on the amount one owns, ability to set up companies and to seek shared risk and reward investment and a stable currency. However, it offsets these abilities and anchors them to ensure stability such as forbidding interest, forbidding of trading of debt, restricting how companies are invested in such as limiting to physically present partners etc.

The only question remaining is why such a system doesn't exist and that lies in the absence of a legitimate Islamic ruling system which is needed to implement these principles: the Caliphate system (Khilafah) that existed for longer than any other ruling system. Its absence is now noted and it is only when this system is resurrected that Islamic economic solutions will once again begin to solve people's problems. People fleet with failed communism and debate whether Marx was right; perhaps it is worth looking at something else with a longer success record, that is, Islam.

### **Poet's Corner**

A poem about Yusuf the Truthful & the Poor (peace be upon him), translated from Imam al-Lubudi's Kitab al-Iktisab:

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*O he who fills his stomach utterly seduced,  
becoming senselessly enamoured of his caprices.  
Awaken your soul's eyes from somnolent drowsiness.  
Heed your Lord Who takes account even as you slumber!  
Many are the poor coming to you seeking mercy,  
but you reject them entirely not showing sympathy.  
Sated you retire while your neighbour is awake hungry  
sprinkling murky dark tears wrought of privation.  
But look at the Truthful (Yusuf AS), many an evening was he  
retired in gnawing hunger and awakened abstaining!  
Rendering barley his meagre meal though his treasuries  
were brimming with food abundant and wholesome.  
In anxiety was he of disremembering the needy  
for such negligence is tightfistedness most flagrant.*

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