

Exploiting Western Dhimmitude

Author : Jacob Thomas on Feb 08, 2008 - 12:38 AM

By Jacob Thomas

I couldn't believe my eyes! As I was surfing the Internet on 31 January, 2008, my eyes caught the headline of an article that appeared in the daily online, Elaph, "Bidayat Tahawwol Fikri fi America Hiyal al-Islam." The Beginning of Rethinking about Islam in America.

The author was commenting on Professor Graham E. Fuller's article in Foreign Policy journal. He was delirious with joy to discover one Western intellectual who truly understood Islam, and defended it against the calumnies of Americans and other Westerners.

I would like to share with you excerpts from his article, adding my analysis and comments.

"Professor Graham F. Fuller's article in the January-February, 2008, issue of Foreign Policy, represents an important intellectual change in the United States, specifically, and in the West, generally. It is a truthful report that does justice to Arabs and Muslims; after the total injustice that has been inflicted on them, both practically and theoretically.

"The appearance of such a vision that approximates the truth vis-à-vis the Arabs and Islam is an indication that truth cannot be falsified or hidden forever. Some Western circles are trying to see the truth as it is; with patience and more hard work, the truth will be known.

"The important question now is: are these indications that manifest a proper understanding of Islam, going to impact the political circles in the West, before it is too late? In other words, unless this rethinking about Islam takes place, a total rupture would result between Muslims and the West, as we may notice from the events in that vast expanse between Jakarta and Casablanca.

"The author of the article is not an academician living in an isolated ivory tower; he was a deputy director of the C.I.A, and was charged with forecasting future events. At present, he is professor of history at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. In 2003, he published his famous book, "The Future of Political Islam."

"While we do understand that the interests of states may be in conflict in certain areas, nevertheless, to deny the truth does not help even those states whose interests are in question. In fact to persist in ignoring the truth would eventually lead to the destruction of these interests. For example, to keep on ignoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and to support the occupation of their land, leads to what the West calls Irhab

(terrorism). Actually this response is nothing but a type of self-defence that has lost its way and led to self-destruction. It is what the weak have to resort to, as they feel their impotence and despair, having no other means to express themselves, except by resorting to acts of violence.

“Professor Fuller employs a unique way of showing the truth as he attempts to convince the reader to visualize a world without Islam, a world where Islam had never risen. Violence and wars would still have happened. Ethnic clashes from the dawn of history have been going on; the wars between the Persians and the Greeks, Eastern and Western Christians, had nothing to do with Islam.

“Indeed, what is very disturbing, especially after the events of 11 September, 2001, is that Western discourse has been transfixed by Irhab, without any prior mental or psychological preparation for understanding the causes of terrorism.

“Graham Fuller’s article indicates that a change in the Western attitude towards world events is happening. It goes against the ideology of the Neoconservatives who see in Islamofascism, as they claim, the new foe of the West. Professor Fuller reminds Western Christians that they were the first to persecute the Jews for more than a thousand years, ending with the holocaust.

“The West’s preoccupation with terrorism, claiming its connection with Islam, ignores that it has manifested itself long ago in many parts of the world. Terrorists are not just Arabs and Muslims. Here is a list of terrorist acts in recent history: Jewish violence against the British in Palestine, Tamil Tigers acts in Sri Lanka, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in India, the Sikh’s murder of Indira Gandhi, the IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland, the Mau Mau crimes in Kenya; all these historical events point to the fact that terrorism has been a universal phenomenon.”

Analysis

The Elaph article belongs to a genre of Arab and Muslim apologetic writings that loves to find a Western author come to the defence of Islam. No sooner had the Foreign Policy issue with Graham Fuller’s apologia for Islam appeared, than a Mideastern writer jumped to the occasion, heralding the hoped-for beginning of a Western change of attitude vis-à-vis Islam.

Comments

I have already commented in my article, “A Confused and a Misleading Forecaster” on Graham Fuller’s contribution to Foreign Policy, having read about it in Wall Street Journal. Naturally, at the time, I did not know that Fuller’s apologia was to be made known in the Arab world so quickly, thanks to the Internet! (See FFI of 31 January, 2008, for my previous comments on Fuller’s article)

The Elaph article is full of misrepresentations of the facts of Arab-Islamic history. At the very time when in our globalized and interdependent world, candor and honesty are in great need, here we have a Western dhimmi's article being exploited and praised as pioneering a Western rethinking movement regarding Islam!

I don't want to comment on every paragraph in the Elaph article. Instead, I quote from some well-known scholarly sources regarding Islamic history, as a rebuttal to the panegyric of Islam as chanted by Graham Fuller.

First I turn to a book that appeared in 1993, "Islam and War: A Study in Comparative Ethics," authored by Professor John Kelsay, published by Westminster/John Knox Press, in Louisville, KY.

"The territory of Islam is theoretically the territory of peace and justice. ... Islam provides the best and most secure peace available to humanity... The peace of the world cannot be fully secure unless all people come under the protection of an Islamic state. Thus there always exists an imperative for Muslims: to struggle to extend the boundaries of the territory of Islam. Thus ... the classical Sunni perspective on peace involved a program of action. The struggle to extend the boundaries of the territory of Islam is the jihad." P. 34

"[For] Sunni intellectuals, a 'normal' war is connected with the effort to extend the boundaries of Islamic territory. This struggle, for which the preferred means is the spread of the Islamic message through preaching, teaching, and the like, may nevertheless take on the character of war. When it does, there is a collective obligation laid upon the Muslim community to supply the necessary manpower for a successful military action. ...the territory of Islam --- really, the world --- could not be a secure place until and unless Islamic hegemony was acknowledged everywhere. To secure such hegemony was the goal of the jihad, or 'struggle in the path of God.' According to the Sunni theorists, war or jihad by means of killing is justified when a people resists or otherwise stands in opposition to the legitimate goals of Islam." P. 61

More than a decade after Professor Kelsay's book appeared, "Islamic Imperialism: A History" of Professor Ephraim Karsh, was published by Yale University Press. Here are some pertinent quotations: [One school of thought regarding the root causes for the Islamists' attacks that have taken place in many parts of the world claims these] "attacks were a misguided, if not wholly inexplicable, response to America's arrogant and self-serving foreign policy by a fringe extremist group, whose violent interpretation of Islam has little do with the actual spirit and teachings of this religion." Pp. 1, 2

"The worlds of Christianity and Islam, however, have developed differently in one fundamental respect. The Christian faith won over an existing empire in an extremely slow and painful process and its universalism was originally conceived in purely spiritual terms that made a clear distinction between God and Caesar. By the time it was embraced by the Byzantine emperors as a tool for buttressing their imperial claims, three centuries after its foundation, Christianity had in place a countervailing ecclesiastical institution

with an abiding authority over the wills and actions of all believers. The birth of Islam, by contrast, was inextricably linked with the creation of a world empire and its universalism was inherently imperialist. It did not distinguish between temporal and religious powers, which were combined in the person of Muhammad, who derived his authority directly from Allah and acted at one and the same time as head of the state and head of the church. This allowed the prophet to cloak his political ambitions with a religious aura and to channel Islam's energies into 'its instrument of aggressive expansion, there [being] no internal organism of equal force to counterbalance it. "Whereas Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, Muhammad used God's name to build an earthly kingdom." P. 5

"Arab rulers and Islamist ideologues systematically convinced their peoples to think that the independent existence of their respective states was a temporary aberration that would be rectified in the short term. The result has been a violent dissonance that has haunted the Middle East into the twenty-first century, between the reality of state nationalism and the dream of an empire packaged as a unified 'Arab nation' or the worldwide 'Islamic umma.'" Pp. 7, 8

"As in countless other cases of imperial expansion throughout the ages, the quest for booty had been a central impetus behind the Islamic conquests, enabling the Arab aristocracy to live in great luxury. But nowhere was the splendor of Islamic empire more extravagantly pronounced than under the Abbasids, not only during Harun's reign (786-809), widely considered the golden age of the Abbasid era, but continuing well after the caliphs had lost their prowess: the gem-studded golden dishes on the caliph's table, the thousands of gilded curtains at the royal palace, and the golden tree and the ruby-studded golden elephant in the caliph's courtyard are only some of the more ostentatious possessions that bear witness to this extravagance." P. 43

"I was ordered to fight all men until they say 'There is no god but Allah.' With these farewell words the Prophet Muhammad summed up the international vision of the faith he had brought to the world. As a universal religion, Islam envisages a global political order in which all humankind will live under Muslim rule as either believers or subject communities. In order to achieve this goal it is incumbent on all free, male, adult Muslims to carry out an uncompromising struggle 'in the path of Allah,' or jihad. This in turn makes those parts of the world that have not yet been conquered by the House of Islam an abode of permanent conflict (Dar al-Harb, the House of War) which will only end with Islam's eventual triumph. In the meantime, there can be no peace between these two world systems, only the temporary suspensions of hostilities for reasons of necessity or expediency." P. 62

"The quest for Allah's empire thus passed from the monarchs to political activists and ideologues, or Islamists as they are now commonly known, who set their sights far higher than their predecessors. For the monarchs, the caliphate meant little more than added legitimization of their ambitions for a regional empire. They had little interest in the deeper inculcation of Islam's precepts in their Muslim subjects, let alone in spreading Allah's message beyond the House of Islam. The Islamists, by contrast, modeled themselves on Islam's early conquerors, and aspired to nothing less than the substitution

of Allah's universal empire for the existing international system. 'The power to rule over the earth has been promised to the whole community of believers,' argued the prominent Islamist Abul Ala Mawduddi (1903-79), founder of the fundamentalist Jamaat Islami in Pakistan.'" Pp. 207, 208

"In the historical imagination of many Muslims and Arabs, bin Laden represents nothing short of the new incarnation of Saladin. The House of Islam's war for world mastery is a traditional, indeed venerable, quest that is far from over. Only when the political elites of the Middle East and the Muslim world reconcile themselves to the reality of state nationalism, forswear pan-Arab and pan-Islamic imperialist dreams, and make Islam a matter of private faith rather than a tool of political ambition will the inhabitants of these regions at last be able to look forward to a better future free of would-be Saladin's." P. 234

Finally, I turn to the dean of Middle East scholars, Bernard Lewis and quote from his "The Political Language of Islam" published by The University of Chicago Press.

"According to Muslim teaching, jihad is one of the basic commandments of the faith, an obligation imposed on all Muslims by God, through revelation. ... The basis of the obligation of jihad is the universality of the Muslim revelation. God's word and God's message are for all mankind; it is the duty of those who have accepted them to strive (Jahada) unceasingly to convert or at least to subjugate those who have not. The obligation is without limit of time or space. It must continue until the whole world has either accepted the Islamic faith or submitted to the power of the Islamic state. "Until that happens, the world is divided into two: the House of Islam (dar al-Islam), where Muslims rule and the law of Islam prevails; and the House of War (dar al-Harb), comprising the rest of the world. Between the two there is a morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory state of war, until the final and inevitable triumph of Islam over unbelief." P. 73

How sad, even tragic, that an article in a Western journal that exonerated Islam from its age-long impulse for world supremacy, and acts of terrorism that occur frequently in Iraq, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Gaza, all done in the name of Islam, are "explained" away by a Western forecaster of the future, and joyfully picked-up by an Arab journalist. I leave it to the readers of my article to judge between the historiography of Graham Fuller and that of Bernard Lewis, Ephraim Karsh, John Kelsay, and a host of other writers on Islam, such as V. S. Naipaul, David-Pryce Jones, and Robert Spencer. At the very moment when Arabs and Muslims need to view their history properly and objectively, a Western interpreter of Islam intervenes with a flawed article that gets instantly translated into Arabic, and uploaded on the most widely-read Arabic daily, further adding to the confusion of the subject. What a pity!