

Globalisation, Western and Islamic, into the 21st Century: Perspectives from Southeast Asia and Beyond

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Many factors contributed to the evolving Islamic identity of Southeast Asian Muslims during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There was a creative mixing of local and international elements, as Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian world struggled to adapt to societies in a state of flux.

The role of the Arabian peninsula and its people was significant in this process, especially during the colonial period. Hadhrami and other Arab immigrants to Southeast Asia helped to shape local Islamic identity.² They placed their stamp on Malay-Indonesian Islam through their crucial role in stimulating reformist ideas among Southeast Asian Muslims, often in response to a perception of Islamic weakness in the face of Western colonial dominance. Furthermore, they facilitated linkages with the broader Islamic world, contributing to a kind of Islamic globalisation. Arab immigrants were active in stimulating Malay-Indonesian participation in the *Hajj*, which had long constituted a mechanism for reinforcing global Islamic identity.³

However, after playing prominent roles in diverse areas of enterprise in the colonial period, the influence of Arab minorities in the newly emerging states of Southeast Asia declined after independence. Immigrant Arab theological, financial and entrepreneurial activity in Southeast Asia became a shadow of its former self during the early decades of independence. Their important role in facilitating identification of Malay-Indonesian Muslims with the broader *umma* was on the wane.

The emerging countries of Indonesia and Malaysia, as with other newly independent Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Egypt, found that independence did not bring parity with their former colonial masters. The new Muslim states struggled to compete with the political and economic power of the West. The phenomenon of globalisation was key in this respect, with

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² Cf. Ulrike Freitag & William Gervais Clarence-Smith (eds.) *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s to 1960s*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1997; and Huub De Jonge & Nico Kaptein (Eds.), *Arabs, politics, trade and Islam in Southeast Asia*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002.

³ Cf. P. G. Riddell, "Arab Migrants and Islamization in the Malay World during the Colonial Period", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 29/84 (2001), 123-125.

many Muslim thinkers coming to see Western-driven global dominance as the greatest obstacle to the advancement of Muslim nations. In response, some Muslim leaders in Malaysia, Indonesia and beyond, sought to harness global advantages of the West and to frame them in an Islamic guise in order to compete more effectively on the international political, economic and cultural stage. In some ways these leaders were assuming the mantle previously carried in part by the Arab diaspora, which had sought ways of strengthening Southeast Asian Islam in the face of non-Muslim dominance.

This paper will address the diagnosis by contemporary Muslim thinkers of problems perceived that relate to globalisation. It will also consider the remedies they have proposed in order for Muslim nations to take charge of their destinies and assume a more prominent role in world affairs.

1. Muslim Diagnoses of Contemporary Aspects of Globalisation

There was a marked increase in attention within the Islamic world to the challenges of globalisation in the last years of the twentieth century. Interest in this phenomenon went hand in hand with the world-wide resurgence of Islamic identity in the same period.

A steadily increasing number of events connected with globalisation was held at various locations in the Muslim world. For example, the Fifth International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance was held at the University of Bahrain from January 6-8, 2003, which included a section on Islam and Globalisation. Sources of funding point to the level of official support for such activities. This event was jointly sponsored by the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah), the University of Bahrain, and the International Association for Islamic Economics (U.K.).

Conference documentation posed the following question to participants:

What is the stand of Islam with respect to the integration of mankind through various means, including the free movement of goods, services, capital and manpower, and the conditions that have been laid down by Islam and Muslim scholars for this purpose? A critical evaluation of the present globalization movement, and in particular, the effort of the WTO and the IMF to liberalize trade and capital movements. What can the Muslim countries do to promote the beneficial characteristics of globalization and to strip it of its undesirable characteristics and effects?

Southeast Asian Muslims have also been active in addressing the globalisation issue, with particular attention being given to it in Malaysia. For example, the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA) of the University of Malaya held a seminar on "Islam, Globalisation

and the Knowledge Economy: Issues and Challenges” on 26 March 2002 at Concorde Hotel, Shah Alam.⁴ The three papers presented were devoted to “Globalisation, ICT And Islam After September 11: A Brief Commentary”, “The Encounter Between Islam And The West: Changing Relationships In Knowledge And Power, With Special Reference To The History of Science” and “Globalisation And Islamisation: From Clash To Dialogue”.

Furthermore, the World Conference of Islamic Scholars, held in Putrajaya, Malaysia from July 10-12, 2003, focused on the theme “Islam in the Era of Globalisation.”⁵ This event, the brainchild of then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was attended by almost 900 participants, including 90 foreign *ulama*, from thirty-three countries, including both Muslim-majority nations and other countries. Papers presented included the following titles: “Faith in the True Religion in the Era of Globalisation”, “Prudent Management of National Wealth Resources for Muslims in Confronting Global Competitions: Malaysia’s Experience”, and “Problems of Muslim Women in The Era of Globalization”.

These events and discussion surrounding them highlight concern which many Muslims feel about the phenomenon of globalisation as they perceive it. As Prince Hassan of Jordan says, “Globalisation (*awlamah*) in our part of the world is held in deep suspicion.”⁶

As we proceed to closely examine Muslim comment upon globalisation and its effects, a word should be said about diversity. Given our interest in globalising forces, we will draw on the writings of Muslims from diverse locations – Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan and Palestine – though giving special attention to Southeast Asian thinkers. Furthermore, in order to avoid the trap of stereotyping Muslim views, we will make reference to a three-way typology of Muslim approaches to the modern world. This typology, which distinguishes between modernisers, traditionalists, and Islamists,⁷ proves to be relevant in considering Muslim perspectives on globalisation.

⁴ <http://www.um.edu.my/inpuma/>

⁵ <http://www.bernama.com/events/ulama/index.php>. The objectives of the conference were stated as follows: (a) To capitalise on a global way of thinking for the benefit of the Muslim ummah; (b) To bring forth resourceful ideas so that the Muslim ummah can be the driver and catalyst of their own success; (c) To widen the minds of the Muslim ummah so that they can set off religious issues from political affairs; (d) To elucidate the true meaning of Islam so that the Muslim ummah will not be led astray by irresponsible and extreme quarters; (e) To share the Malaysian experience in developing Islam, the economy and politics.

⁶ Hassan bin Talal, “Towards a world with 10,000 cultures”, *Discourse*, 1, August 2000, 9.

⁷ Cf. P. G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Response*, London: Hurst, 2001, 81-83. For an alternative threefold typology, cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The Western World and its Challenges to Islam”, in Khurshid Ahmad (ed.), *Islam – its meaning and message*, 2nd edn., Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1976, 219ff.

1.1 What is Globalisation?

Prominent Malaysian modernising scholar Chandra Muzaffar sees globalisation as a mosaic of intersecting forces: “Globalisation ... is a process by which capital, goods, services and sometimes labour cross national borders and acquire a transnational character. It is often accompanied by the flow of related tastes, ideas and even values across boundaries thus helping to reshape local political institutions, social relationships and cultural patterns. It is a process, it is argued, which will lead inevitably to a single global system and global unity.”⁸

This multi-dimensional nature of globalisation is also emphasised by Ali Mazrui, whom we could also consider as a Muslim moderniser. This Kenyan-born scholar is a leading Muslim authority on globalisation, and Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at the State University of New York. He suggests globalisation has acquired three distinct meanings. The first relates to information, and is best exemplified by the information super highway. The second is economic, related to “forces which are transforming the global market and creating new economic interdependencies across vast distances.” The third usage is composite in nature, represented by the coming together of forces which act together as “major engines of globalisation: religion, technology, economy and empire.”⁹ Mazrui suggests the combination of these four forces have created globalisation processes to an extent that by the end of the twentieth century the world had become gradually and culturally homogenized as well as hegemonized. Mazrui argues this process has been reinforced by the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The journalist A.S. Gammal provides an Islamist perspective on globalisation. He sees it as essentially trade driven: “Globalization is essentially an economic process that begins in America and eventually involves its trilateral partners in Europe and Japan. Taking the ideology of neo-liberalism as its rhetorical fuel, globalization seeks to create a world economy that benefits American corporations, first and foremost, and other transnational companies that operate by American-defined rules.”

Like many fellow Islamists, Gammal sees conspiracy at work. He considers that the global media is an agent in this process of globalisation: “The global news media uniformly trumpet the virtues of ‘globalization’ ... But these media are merely an arm of the process they claim to report as news, and they have vested interest in convincing humanity that there is no choice but to

⁸ Chandra Muzaffar, “Globalisation and Religion: Some Reflections”, *Islam 21 Project The International Forum for Islamic Dialogue*, <http://www.islam21.net/pages/keyissues/key1-42.htm>, accessed June 3, 2004.

⁹ Ali Mazrui, *Globalisation and the Future of Islamic Civilisation*, lecture given at Westminster University, London, September 3, 2000, http://www.alhewar.com/globalisation_and_the_future.htm.

globalize.”¹⁰

Rahhalah Haqq, another journalist who writes for the Islamist periodical *Crescent International*, argues similarly: “...globalization is a euphemism for Westernization, (more specifically, Americanization), and that the Western corporate media have already convinced most of the world that globalization is inevitable and that everyone will have to accept it and adjust to it.”¹¹

In Southeast Asia, arguably the most outspoken critic of globalisation is former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who is particularly concerned with the impact of globalisation on the Islamic world. Though he would be best described as a moderniser, Mahathir agrees with Islamists in seeing globalisation as an instrument for re-establishing Western colonial control over the developing world:

[Developing] countries are faced with globalisation, a single world in which they know they will have little say, their voices drowned, and their interest ignored in the pursuit of global interest and objectives as defined by others ... History would have turned a full circle within just two generations. Fifty years ago the process of decolonization began and in a space of about 20 years was virtually completed. But even before all the colonies of the West have been liberated, indeed before any had become truly and fully independent, recolonization has begun. And it is recolonization by the same people.¹²

Ali Mazrui echoes this viewpoint, commenting that “Western civilization is a pretender to the status of universal validity.”¹³

In summary, the Muslim writers considered thus far see multiple dimensions to globalisation, with trade as the primary driving force, and America is held to be ultimately responsible. We will now proceed to look at a more detailed Islamic analysis of these various dimensions of globalisation.

1.2 Economic Globalisation

Most Muslim writers on globalisation draw on statistics to make a case for a serious imbalance in distribution of the world’s wealth. One such writer points out that the West has only twenty-two per cent of the world’s population

¹⁰ A. S. Gammal, “The global protests against anti-globalization, and the media’s coverage of them”, *Crescent International*, June 1-15, 2001.

¹¹ Rahhalah Haqq, “Framing a ‘third way’ for the Muslim Ummah and the world”, *Crescent International*, November 1-15, 2000.

¹² “Globalization: What it means to small nations”, Speech by the Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad at the Inaugural Lecture of the Prime Ministers of Malaysia Fellowship Exchange Programme, Kuala Lumpur, 24 July 1996, <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/small-cn.htm>, accessed May 2004.

¹³ Ali Mazrui, “Pretender to Universalism: Western Culture in a Globalizing Age”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 21/1, 2001, 11.

but consumes seventy per cent of total world resources.¹⁴ Chandra Muzaffar expresses these disparities in stark terms:

The gap between the 'have-a-lot' and the 'have-a-little' is growing at an alarming rate. In 1960, the gap between the 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent was 30 times; by 2000 it had become 90 times. The total income of the world's richest man exceeds that of the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. The three richest men in the world earn more than 48 of the world's poorest countries. At the same time, about half of humankind eke out a miserable existence from 2 dollars a day. One-fifth of humankind is still illiterate; have no access to basic health care facilities and are denied modern sanitation. Isn't it a shame that about 10 million children die each year from preventable diseases such as cholera, typhoid and polio?¹⁵

Mahathir Mohamad sees globalisation primarily in economic terms: "Globalisation is presently concerned only with opening up existing markets and maximising profits."¹⁶ And he sees conspiracy driving economic globalisation:

It is clear that the developed countries wish to use the [World Trade Organisation] to impose conditions on the developing countries which will result, not in improving human rights or labour practices or greater care for the environment, but in stunting their growth and consequently the suffering for their people ... Already, the developed West has shown they are not interested in these matters in themselves, but are interested in these only in those countries which pose a threat to the West. If these countries are absolutely poor and producing nothing that constitutes a threat to the developed countries of the West, the plight of their people in terms of human rights or labour practices or environment matter not at all. But if these countries are competing with the West in any way then their records are scrutinised and threats issued. The net effect is to prevent the development of these countries and their emergence as newly industrializing economies ...¹⁷

Mahathir further explains how economic globalisation will swamp small business enterprise in the developing world:

The effect of economic globalization would be the demise of the small

¹⁴ Mohammadi Ali, "Islamic Response to Globalisation", <http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/vol/cosmopolis/papers/mohammad.html>, accessed April 2004.

¹⁵ Chandra Muzaffar, "No Survival of the Globe Without a Global Ethic", 11 November 2003, http://www.just-international.org/article_print.cfm?newsID=20000631, accessed May 2004.

¹⁶ "Globalisation must benefit everyone", International Consultation on Globalisation, World Evangelical Fellowship, Kuala Lumpur, 31 January – 2 February 2001.

¹⁷ Mahathir, "Globalization: What it means to small nations".

companies based in the developing countries. Large international corporations originating in the developed countries will take over everything... The manufacturing, trading and telecommunications companies together with the banks will grow and merge, controlled and run by the huge core companies of the developed world. The little players from the small countries would be absorbed and would disappear. Their shareholders, big players when they were in the small companies, will wield insignificant authority in the huge conglomerates. And so will their CEOs and other executives, reduced to mere names on the payroll.¹⁸

His comments on globalisation reflect the strongly anti-Western rhetoric evident in many of his public statements.

Another modernising political leader, President Husni Mubarrak of Egypt, expressed concern with economic globalising tendencies at a summit of the D8 group of the most populous Muslim nations held in February 2001: "Open markets in today's world are basically accessible for the products of advanced countries, while our exports ... are faced every day with new protectionist procedures, overt or covert, that impede their access to the advanced countries' markets."¹⁹

The D-8 members – Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey – whose combined population represents about seventeen percent of the world's population, have only a four percent share in world trade. The formation of this group was triggered in part as a response to globalisation.

While modernising politicians such as Mahathir and Mubarrak often provide a sophisticated analysis of economic factors and trends in the globalisation discussion, gut instincts tend to be evident in the statements of Islamists, who focus more on popular responses to international economic factors. A.S. Gammal warmly endorses the "People's Movement" against globalisation, which has been increasingly active through demonstrations in Seattle, various parts of Europe, Australia and other locations in recent years.²⁰ But while Muslim writers such as Gammal are happy to endorse such campaigns, the thrust of their rhetoric is not for Muslims to join such existing campaigns, but rather to seek Islamic alternatives.

Globalisation and regionalisation in the world economy, and relative marginalisation of the Muslim states from this trend, are certainly fuelling the resurgence of political Islam and of Islamist groups. But other factors are at work, especially in the area of social and cultural globalisation.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Leaders of the most populous Muslim nations Debate Response to Globalization," 27th February 2001, <http://www.khilafah.com/1421/category.php?DocumentID=1100&TagID=1#>.

²⁰ Gammal, "The global protests against anti-globalization, and the media's coverage of them".

1.3 Other Globalisations

(1) Social and Cultural

When restrictions on the formation of political parties were lifted in Indonesia following the fall of former President Suharto in May 1998, Muhammad Anis Matta became General Secretary of the new Islamist Partai Keadilan (Justice Party) at the tender age of 30.²¹ This party described itself as “one of the many parties which are based on the Islamic masses... Our party which supports the concept of a united Indonesia, rejects Pancasila as the ideological foundation of the party...”²² In rejecting the Indonesian state philosophy of Pancasila, the Justice Party was placing itself firmly in opposition to the multi-faith pluralist policies which had characterised Indonesia up to that point.

Anis Matta is particularly critical of cultural globalisation. He argues that the reality of the global village has a major impact on identity, both personal and cultural. He expresses great concern about the globalising impact of American culture, which he sees as spread by various means: tourism, Hollywood films, and fast food.²³

These themes are repeatedly articulated by other Islamist writers. Zafar Bangash, Director of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT),²⁴ similarly sees cultural globalisation in terms of Americanisation: “Globalization means not merely uniformity but also conformity to the dominant, primarily American culture. This applies as much to food as it does to music and clothes. People around the world are expected to eat greasy McDonald hamburgers, drink pepsi or coke, wear Levi jeans and gyrate to Michael Jackson music. If they have any spare time left, then the ubiquitous CNN is there to occupy it.”

Bangash laments how this cultural influence overflows in negative ways in the moral sector: “Culture is not value-free. It brings with it such other baggage as feminist rhetoric, concern about environmental issues, drugs, the ‘freedom’ to indulge in homosexuality and lesbianism, the ‘right’ to have an abortion and

²¹ In 2002 this party merged with another to become the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), maintaining an Islamist agenda and retaining Anis Matta as General Secretary. PKS won 45 seats in the 2004 parliamentary elections, compared with 6 in 1999, and looks set to further increase its parliamentary presence in the April 2009 elections.

²² <http://www.kompas.com/pemilu/partai/24pk.htm>, accessed December 2000.

²³ M. Anis Matta, *Membangun Peradaban Alternatif*, audiocassette, Ummul Quro Bandung, no date.

²⁴ Administered from Toronto and London, ICIT is the successor to the London-based Muslim Institute and Muslim Parliament of Great Britain. This Islamist body describes itself in the following terms: “an international intellectual centre of the global Islamic movement. It consists of individual activists, journalists and academics in all parts of the world who share a common commitment to developing the social and political ideas of the Islamic movement, and promoting them as an alternative worldview to that of the western civilization.” Cf. <http://www.islamicthought.org/icit-intro.html>, accessed 22 November 2003.

to have children out of wedlock.”²⁵

He sees the presence of westernised “political and business elites” in non-western societies as serving as a fifth column for the American globalisation of culture. Fellow Islamist Rahhalah Haqq considers that Western-influenced education systems play a similar role: “Foremost among the problems facing Muslims is Western education. This is a form of colonization ... While people clearly learn about themselves and their world in other settings, formal education is an important site of identity construction and validation of cultural norms ...”²⁶

Bangash points out that Western preoccupation with individual rights does not address the concerns of non-Western societies: “The problems non-western women face are not related to the right to earn equal wages with men or to be ‘free’ to sleep with as many partners as possible. They have more basic concerns: how to feed their children, get safe drinking water, clothe and shelter them and to be able to give them medicine to prevent their premature death from preventable diseases.”²⁷

In concert with Islamist individuals such as Anis Matta, Bangash and Haqq, the militant Jamaat-e-Islami party of Pakistan echoes these sentiments, seeing in them justification for Islamic resurgence: “Movements of Islamic resurgence are not allergic [*sic*] to modernity. They stand for modernisation and progress but they want to achieve modernisation and progress in the context of their own culture and values. What they disapprove of is imposition of Western culture and values through overt and covert means over a people who have their own distinct culture and civilisation.”²⁸

Furthermore, it is not only Islamist writers who are concerned with social and cultural globalisation. Mahathir Mohamad laments the effects of globalisation on local culture:

Globalization will result in all societies being exposed to the global culture... Today violence and sex already dominate the screens. Attempts to reduce this unwholesome fare have met with little success. The appeal of thrill and sensuality are too great and too effective for the profit-oriented companies to eschew these themes. With globalization the effect of the 24-hour thousand channel TV would be to standardize world culture as promoted by the broadcasting giants of the world. They are not likely to be conservative and responsible. They are going to ensure that their companies outbid each other in terms of profits. Today's youth already wear the same uniforms – the jeans. They keep

²⁵ Zafar Bangash, “McDonaldization of culture: America’s pervasive influence globally”, *Crescent International*, February 1-15, 1998.

²⁶ Haqq, “Framing a ‘third way’ for the Muslim Ummah and the world”.

²⁷ Bangash, “McDonaldization of culture”.

²⁸ “Islam and the new world order”, *Worldview*, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, <http://www.jamaat.org/world/worldorder.html>.

their hair long and as untidy as possible. They only care for the pleasures of life. They have little regard for traditional values, for age and the family and institutions such as marriage and family.²⁹

Again, in Mahathir's statement we see that economic globalisation forms the primary driving force behind other manifestations of the globalising phenomenon. Fellow Malaysian moderniser Chandra Muzaffar reflects further on the deleterious effects of cultural globalisation:

Perhaps, what is at stake is more than the decline of cultural diversity and variety. Isn't globalisation also guilty of propagating a superficial American pop culture which titillates the senses but deadens the spirit? Built around television singers and movie stars, it is a culture which is absorbed "in the moment" and does little to encourage reflection and contemplation. This is one of the characteristics of the contemporary globalised entertainment culture that distinguishes it from the music and plays of earlier religious civilisations which very often sought to raise the moral consciousness of the community.³⁰

(2) Political

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and first Gulf War victory, American President George Bush senior came out in early 1990 with a fresh call for a new world order. Bush's call was based on the following six principles:

1. 'no aggressor would in the future be allowed to go unpunished';
2. 'occupation by force would not be tolerated';
3. 'international boundaries would not be allowed to be changed arbitrarily';
4. 'human rights would have to be respected by all';
5. 'it would be ensured that any violence of human rights is brought to an end without the constraint of national boundaries';
6. 'the United Nations would play a new role as the peace-keeper of the world.'³¹

In contrast with President Bush's anticipation of new possibilities for global political stability, the response from most Muslim commentators was cynical. They considered that this call was motivated by an American desire for greater political hegemony.

Ahmed Kamal Aboulmagd,³² a prominent Egyptian Muslim moderniser, points to the change in the world political order during the last quarter of the 20th

²⁹ Mahathir, "Globalization: What it means to small nations".

³⁰ Muzaffar, "Globalisation and Religion: Some Reflections".

³¹ "Islam and the new world order".

³² Currently professor of law at Cairo University, and former Egyptian Minister of Information. His concern is with political globalisation.

century as a key factor in stimulating the contemporary march of globalisation. The collapse of the former Eastern Bloc is seen to enforce the notion that there is “only one way ... and that way is capitalism”, according to Aboulmagd. He asks how Islamic societies can contribute to the “march of humanity” without losing their individuality, because, “to lose your individuality is to become irrelevant.”³³

The Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan characteristically expressed its opinions in more conspiratorial terms. It was not persuaded that the USA as the sole military and political superpower would create utopian conditions in the world: “Pax Americana is as revolting as Pax Britainica or Pax Espania. All talk about [a] unipolar world and only one supreme power gives rise to newer fears and apprehensions. This is seen as the beginning of a new imperial order. A just world order cannot be produced through hegemonistic encounters.”³⁴

The Bush statements stressed the spread of democratic values and human rights as central to principles of the new world order. In this context, Robert Hefner says “there can be little doubt that the cross-cultural diffusion of democratic ideas is one of the defining globalizations of our age.”³⁵ The Jamaat responded cynically to President Bush’s call in the following terms: “Democracy at the philosophic level, which affirms the principle of sovereignty of man and denies existence of eternal and absolute religious and moral values, is at variance with the Islamic concept of world and society. Islam affirms the sovereignty of God and believes that man needs divine guidance. By definition the Muslim is one who accepts the divine law as the source of guidance for his individual and collective behaviour.”³⁶

2. Muslim Remedies: Islamic Globalisation

Having examined the diagnosis of a wide range of Muslim writers, let us now turn our attention to the remedies proposed by Muslim writers on the much-discussed topic of globalisation.

Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, a Palestinian modernising writer on Islam and globalisation, says, “most thinkers in the Muslim world, from the radical to the most conservative, assume globalisation is an ‘inevitable phenomenon.’”³⁷ He concludes that the globalisation process by the West will effectively recolonize the Islamic world. Similarly Ali Mazrui, the modernising Kenyan academic considered earlier, sees an inevitability about the ongoing challenge of globalisation, predicting that the Muslim world will become “a battle ground”

³³ Amil Khan, “Role of Islam in the Age of Globalization”, *Middle East Times*, <http://www.mafhoum.com/press/metisgl.htm>, accessed July 2001.

³⁴ “Islam and the new world order”.

³⁵ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 3.

³⁶ “Islam and the new world order”.

³⁷ Ali, “Islamic Response to Globalisation”.

of the forces of globalisation in the 21st century.³⁸

Mahathir Mohamad diagnoses the cause of the Muslim world's ills in the context of globalisation in terms which have been regularly heard throughout Muslim history, especially at times of weakness:

We must ask ourselves why the Muslims have to endure this humiliation presently; why we have become so weak and incapable of standing up for our rights. What has changed which has made the great Muslim civilisation fall to such a low level? Is it because Islam is a backward religion; is it what Allah has ordained for us, or takdir or is it that we, the Muslims have wrongly understood our religion and not practised it correctly? ... The only conclusion that we can make for the sad fate of the Muslims is that they are not practicing the true teachings of Islam, that the Islam that they now practise is wrongly interpreted...³⁹

This diagnosis resembles that provided at many points in past Muslim history when Islam was weak. Examples can be found in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, writing in the 13th century when the Arab world was recovering from the devastations of the Mongol invasions, as well as the writings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab during the reformist revolution in Arabia in the late 18th century.

What of the remedies proposed to address this state of affairs? The Islamist Egyptian scholar Muhammad Qutb characteristically has an edge to his writing when proposing solutions. For him, Islam is the future for all mankind:

Islam establishes not only peace and harmony but also rids mankind of tyranny and oppression ... Islam brings to an end man's rule over man. It makes the rulers as much subject to the Divine Law as are all other men and women ... an Islamic State will not only liberate its citizens from all tyrants at home but shall safeguard their freedom against any outside aggression as well ... Let Man therefore turn towards Islam for this is the time for all human beings to flock together under its banner so as to wipe out from the face of the earth all the vestiges of imperialism and exploitation of man by man.⁴⁰

Chandra Muzaffar from Malaysia is somewhat more nuanced, yet predicts essentially the same scenario in writing: "The Global Age itself, which has broken down so many barriers – geographical, economic, cultural – may well

³⁸ Mazrui, *Globalisation and the Future of Islamic Civilisation*.

³⁹ "Speech By The Prime Minister Of Malaysia The Hon Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad At The Opening Of World Ulama Conference At Putrajaya Marriot Hotel, Putrajaya On Thursday, 10 July 2003", http://www.bernama.com/events/ulama/rspeech.shtml?speech/se0608_pm.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Qutb, "Islam and the Crisis of the Modern World", in Khurshid Ahmad (ed.), *Islam – its meaning and message*, 2nd edn., Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1976, 252-253.

compel the followers of different religions to move in that direction ... As we deepen and broaden the popular understanding of religion, the realisation will develop that at the core, is a shared universal spiritual and moral worldview rooted in the Transcendent, in God. Such a worldview, as we have hinted, may well be the philosophy that the Global Age is yearning for.⁴¹

Writers from all streams of Islam agree with such general statements about the appropriateness of Islam for the future world. However, greater detail in terms of methodology is needed. Mahathir makes a contribution in this regard, eschewing violence in identifying a remedy: "Our salvation will not be achieved by blindly killing innocent people.⁴² Rather we should plan and execute a long term development plan and to excel in all fields. Our rehabilitation will take a long time. We have to be patient."⁴³

How is such a development plan to be laid out? What specific remedies are proposed by our Islamic writers, thinkers and leaders to address what they see as the destructive effects of Americanisation/globalisation?

It is crucial to note that the solutions proposed are not built on an opposition to globalisation per se. As Miasami observes, "Islam is not against the process of globalization per se, but rather ... the tension is due to the process of Westernization."⁴⁴ Solutions are based on harnessing the forces of globalisation for different ends. In other words, globalisation itself is not necessarily bad as an idea, providing that it is the right kind of globalisation.

This is clearly articulated in the final resolution of the World Conference of Islamic Scholars, held in Malaysia from July 10-12, 2003, which focused on the theme "Islam in the Era of Globalisation." It succinctly proposed Islamic globalisation as the remedy for existing forms of globalisation in identifying future objectives: "Striving to create awareness among the Muslim community on the dangers of globalisation whose concept is designed by the superpowers which are the new colonialists (neo imperialists) in the field of politics, economics and culture, and to enhance efforts to explain the type of globalisation enjoined by Islam as a system which brings mercy to the universe."⁴⁵

But such high-sounding ideals need to be unpacked to be of much use. Prince Hassan of Jordan suggests interfaith dialogue,⁴⁶ mutually agreed codes of conduct, and a recognition of a necessary balance between rights

⁴¹ Chandra Muzaffar, "Religion & Society in a Global Age", presentation made at the conference on *Religion and Globalisation*, Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture, Payap University, Chiang Mai, July 2003, summarised at http://www.just-international.org/article_print.cfm?newsID=20000630, accessed May 2004.

⁴² This is an oblique reference to the 9/11 attacks, as is evident from the context of his speech.

⁴³ Mahathir, "Speech At The Opening Of World Ulama Conference".

⁴⁴ M. Miasami, "Islam and Globalization", *The Fountain*, Issue 43 (July-September 2003).

⁴⁵ "Resolution Of World Conference Of Islamic Scholars", Kuala Lumpur, 10-12 July 2003, http://www.bernama.com/events/ulama/rspeech.shtml?speech/se2002_resol.

⁴⁶ Cf the Common Word dialogue process initiated in 2007 by 138 Muslim scholars from diverse settings.

and responsibilities, or rights and obligations.⁴⁷ Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, speaking at the D8 summit in February 2001, questioned whether industrialized countries were ready to open their markets and help bridge the “digital divide” threatening to marginalize developing countries further. She said: “A truly globalized world has to be based on give and take and a better understanding of the mutuality of interests [between developed countries and developing ones]... We want a win-win outcome of the fruits of globalization.”⁴⁸

In a similar vein, Mahathir calls for “globalisation in the service of mankind. Globalisation must serve us and not we humankind serve globalisation.”⁴⁹ He calls for globalisation to be planned carefully, and for the planning to be carried out by people from all parts of the globe, not just by rich westerners. He argues for an Islamic dimension to globalisation for it to be desirable.

2.1 Islamic Economic Globalisation

The “Cairo Declaration”, issued after the summit of D8 leaders in February 2001, voiced concern that developing countries were unable to get a fair share of the benefits of globalisation, and stressed the private sector’s role in development. In a vote for Islamic unity, the D-8 leaders agreed to negotiate as a bloc with developed countries during the forthcoming meeting of World Trade Organization economy ministers.⁵⁰

This sense of greater solidarity, plus the recognition of the need for Muslim nations to act in the face of economic globalisation, were reflected in the final resolution of the World Conference of Islamic Scholars held in Putrajaya in July 2003: “Efforts must be carried out to enhance the economy of the ummah by managing its wealth and resources systematically, effectively and competitively; and by establishing a resilient economy network and strong cooperation among Islamic countries, besides establishing smart cooperation with countries across the world in order to create an economic balance among the international community.”⁵¹

Muslim nations, groups and individuals were exhorted to respond with concrete suggestions. Malaysian leaders have been especially prominent in moving ahead with these proposals.

Mahathir unpacks his ideas in interesting ways. He points out that there is a significant volume of business and trade between Malaysia on one side and Europe and America on the other. He proposes that a way out of this dependence

⁴⁷ Hassan bin Talal, “Towards a world with 10,000 cultures”, 9.

⁴⁸ “Solidarity against rich states pledged”.

⁴⁹ “Globalisation must benefit everyone”.

⁵⁰ “Solidarity against rich states pledged”, 26th February 2001, <http://www.khilafah.com/1421/category.php?DocumentID=1094&TagID=1#>.

⁵¹ “Resolution Of World Conference Of Islamic Scholars”.

on the West is for greater Islamic solidarity in trade: “Much of this business and trade can be redirected to the Islamic world ... We have asked Petronas, the national petroleum company of Malaysia, to invest in transportation, oil and gas exploration projects in Sudan.”⁵²

In fact, the oil reserves of Muslim nations are a key factor in this alternative Islamic economic globalisation. This idea is developed by Datuk Ishak Iman Abas, Director of Finance of Petronas, Malaysia’s national petroleum company, who proposes that income from oil of Muslim nations is the “Basic Economic Strength of the Ummah”. He states that lack of economic productivity in Muslim nations is largely due to lack of capital. He puts forward a specific proposal:

As a long-term measures [sic] to effectively address the capital resource inadequacy, it is necessary that [Islamic Development Bank] Member countries establish a capital formation mechanism with the sole objective of accumulating and building capital resource to fund investments on productive capacities within IDB Member countries. For the capital formation initiative it is suggested that IDB Member countries incorporate an Investment Corporation. The Corporation is funded by way of contributions by oil producing IDB Member countries. The contribution be set at 1.5% of the value of oil produced and that the contribution be made monthly or quarterly. The contribution should be classified as Capital Fund and not loan or grant. Profit made by the Corporation is distributable as dividend [sic] to the contributors of the Capital Fund.⁵³

Mahathir even proposes a unified currency for the Muslim world:

...the gold dinar was the single currency of the Muslim world until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924. Trade flourished and a prosperous Muslim rule was established based on knowledge, a strong economy and global conquests. Through trade, Islam also spread to the farthest corners of the earth. In recent years, however, Islamic currencies have become tools of speculation and manipulation... I ... suggested that the gold dinar be adopted in trade deals among Islamic countries to cushion them from foreign currency risks and protect the sovereignty and wealth of Islamic nations from the ravages of globalisation.

Specific matters of trade cooperation and currency sharing could fall within a broad-based Islamic economic and financial system, according to Mahathir:

⁵² Essam El-Din, “The voice of reason”, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, Issue No. 613, 21 - 27 November 2002.

⁵³ Datuk Ishak Iman Abas, “Oil as Basic Economics Strength of the Ummah : Its Prudent Management for the Benefit of the Ummah ”, paper presented at the World Conference of Islamic Scholars, Putrajaya, 10-12 July 2003, http://www.bernama.com/events/ulama/rpp.shtml?pp/pe1107_9.

“The IFSB [Islamic Financial Services Board] was suggested some time ago but its creation became very important after 11 September. It is aimed at reinforcing the stability of the Islamic banking system and making it a global force in the face of conventional Western markets... if we persist and act rationally, we will be able to build a sound and strong Islamic financial system.”⁵⁴

A key factor in resisting the trend for Muslim economies to follow western models is the rapidly developing Islamic banking system. The huge increase in oil prices in 2007-08 was accompanied by the rapid spread of Shari’a finance cooperations, with Islamic banks established in Western countries and many western banks opening Shari’a-compliant banking windows.

Malaysia is at the very forefront of innovations in Islamic banking principles and practice.⁵⁵ In the two decades following the establishment of the country’s first Islamic Bank, Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, in 1983, Malaysia’s Islamic financial institutions increased to thirty-six in number, comprising fourteen commercial banks (of which four are foreign), ten finance companies, five merchant banks, and seven discount houses.⁵⁶ Indeed, the Bank Negara Malaysia has claimed that the country’s innovations in Islamic banking are “recognised by many Islamic countries as the model of the future,” though that model has attracted criticism from some quarters within the Muslim world.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the impact on the Southeast Asian region is unquestioned, as indicated in the following report: “The Malaysian experience of Islamic banking has had a tremendous impact on neighboring countries. Indonesia established its first Islamic bank in 1992, followed by Brunei Darussalam in 1993. Thailand has also announced the creation of its first Islamic bank...”⁵⁸

Malaysia wishes to promote itself as the hub of the rapidly developing market for Islamic investments, especially bonds. HSBC Holdings estimates the global market for Islamic investment products as worth more than \$200 billion. Malaysia made a significant entry into this market in 2002 when it issued \$600 million of five-year Islamic bonds denominated in dollars.⁵⁹

Another key mechanism for achieving the Muslim solidarity called for in the statements cited previously relates to aid and development in the Muslim world. The largest provider of international development assistance among Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia, directs its assistance predominantly

⁵⁴ Essam El-Din, “The voice of reason”.

⁵⁵ Joni T. Borhan, “Islamic banking in Malaysia: Past, Present and Future”, *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 10/2 (2003), 31-74.

⁵⁶ “Malaysia: Islamic Financial System”, *Q-News*, October 2003, 40.

⁵⁷ *Money and Banking in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Bank Negara Malaysia, 1994, cited in Matt Richards, “Islamic Contracts of Finance in Malaysia”, *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 10/1 (2003), 161.

⁵⁸ “Malaysia: Islamic Financial System”, 40.

⁵⁹ William Pesek Jr. “Commentary: Building an Islamic financial hub in Asia”, *The International Herald Tribune*, August 19, 2003.

to Muslim countries, with the principal beneficiaries being Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Bangladesh, and the Sahel zone in Africa. Most money is disbursed as budget subsidies, not to specific projects. In addition to Saudi Government development aid, the Saudi royal family also provides substantial development funding. This is similarly primarily provided to Muslim communities, and is particularly supportive of Muslim religious and educational institutions.⁶⁰

2.2 Other Islamic Globalisations

(1) Social and Cultural

Islamist writers are outspoken in proposing Islamisation as a counter to western social and cultural globalisation, which they see as an extension of the colonial-era domination. Zafar Bangash comments: “The west’s cultural imperialism is predicated on the same arrogant belief in the superiority of its value system that propelled colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... Western culture offers people an escape from reality, only if they have the financial resources to do so. Others, particularly Islamic culture, offer its adherents an opportunity to live in harmony with themselves, their neighbours and the environment.”⁶¹

A key mechanism for promoting an Islamic form of social and cultural globalisation is the media in its various forms. The Islamist writer Rahhalah Haqq proposes an engagement with modern technologies:

The time is ripe for Muslims to launch their own media conglomerates, with independent satellites and broadcasting. There is certainly ample wealth and talent in the ummah for this, and colonization and fear are the only real obstacles. This needs to be done not only for *da’wah* or providing information about Islam for public-relations purposes, but in order to provide an alternative perspective—in this case Islamic—on how the world works, why it got that way, and where it might be heading.

Haqq also sees education as a crucial vehicle in this quest, first asking “How might an Islamic educational system operate?”, then responding by emphasising the important role to be played by Islamic sacred scripture in this process: “by mining the Qur’an, Seerah, and other sources of Islamic wisdom and insight, Muslims can contribute to an emerging ‘third way’ and leave the West to its own devices, to implode or self-destruct, or simply fade away.”⁶²

Anis Matta also stresses the importance of Islamic education. He argues that if Indonesians are not strong in knowledge (i.e. education), then Indonesian

⁶⁰ Juergen Bellers, “Aiding Their Muslim Friends: Saudi Arabia’s Development Policy”, *Development and Cooperation*, no. 4, 1993, 28-29.

⁶¹ Bangash, “McDonaldization of culture: America’s pervasive influence globally”.

⁶² Haqq, “Framing a ‘third way’ for the Muslim Ummah and the world”.

culture will not be strong. He stresses that the new generation of Muslims must be educated in both Islamic and secular knowledge if they are to compete with the globalising American culture.⁶³

Malaysian scholar Osman Bakar picks up on this theme, and points out how Malaysia has emphasised the Islamisation of knowledge in its quest to respond to modernity in a way which does not sell out on Islamic values:

In the last two decades Muslims in Malaysia at both governmental and non-governmental levels have been involved in what is popularly known as Islamisation of knowledge. This ... is not a project against the acquisition of modern knowledge but rather an attempt to provide an Islamic conceptual framework for the pursuit, acquisition and teaching of modern knowledge. Islamisation of knowledge may be described as an attempt to maintain a balanced and harmonious relationship between traditional and modern knowledge within the framework of tawhid. It is a facet of Malaysia's post-independence experience of Islam and modernity.⁶⁴

A clear call for the Islamisation of knowledge is found increasingly in development activities conducted in the Muslim world by Muslim development theorists and practitioners. For example, the Islamic Development Management Project conducted at the University of Science Malaysia aims to understand Islamic development in an integrative and holistic manner, by focusing on study of primary sacred texts, conferences, publishing, consultancies and teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students.⁶⁵

Ali Mazrui provides evidence of the "counter-penetration of Islam and Muslims at large in the Western World. The evidence of significant Islamist presence in the Western world may reverse the wheel of cultural homegenisation", he concludes.⁶⁶ Echoing this, the prominent Christian scholar Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad writes of "The Globalization of Islam: The Return of Muslims to the West."⁶⁷

There are various other instruments for achieving a kind of Islamic globalisation in social and cultural spheres. These include the increased prevalence of wearing head-covering by women throughout the Muslim world, in addition to this phenomenon increasing among Muslim minority communities in the West. Also noticeable is the increased adoption of the

⁶³ Anis Matta, *Membangun Peradaban Alternatif*.

⁶⁴ Osman Bakar, "Islam and Modernity: The Malaysian Experience", paper presented at the World Conference of Islamic Scholars, Putrajaya, 10-12 July 2003, http://www.bernama.com/events/ulama/rpp.shtml?pp/pe2002_5.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Islamic Development Management Project: Managing Development the Islamic Way", *ISIM Newsletter*, May 2000, 45.

⁶⁶ Mohammadi Ali, "Islamic Response to Globalisation".

⁶⁷ In John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 601-641.

Islamic calendar alongside the Western calendar in Islamic societies, increased amounts of Islamic TV and radio programming in majority Muslim countries,⁶⁸ and the promotion of both the study of Arabic language as well as the use of Arabic script for local languages in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Furthermore, reinforcement of Islamic values and themes is sometimes achieved by legislating against western influences. For example, in Saudi Arabia religious authorities banned barbie dolls, declaring them a threat to morality and arguing that the revealing clothes of the dolls were offensive to Islam. Some Muslim entrepreneurs went a step further, deciding to compete with the West by developing and marketing Muslim-style mass products to rival famous American products.

So several Muslim “barbie” dolls were developed, promoting a more modest image than Barbie and attired in Muslim garb. A doll called Laila was developed for young girls in the Arab League’s twenty-two member states as a culturally and religiously acceptable alternative to Barbie.⁶⁹ In Iran two dolls called Sara and Dara were launched as Islamic counterparts of Barbie and Ken. The two grew out of a children’s cartoon in Iran. Furthermore, a US-based company, NoorArt Inc., founded in the mid-1990s by an American Muslim, Ammar Saadeh, developed a Muslim-style barbie doll called Razanne.⁷⁰

In another example of efforts to create alternative Islamic global products, several Muslim attempts were made to produce a rival for Coca Cola. Zamzam Cola, an Iranian drink named after the holy spring in Mecca, received a positive reception in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Perhaps the most successful example of this phenomenon is provided by Mecca Cola, developed by the French entrepreneur Tawfik Mathlouthi, who commented in interview with the BBC that this product was designed to combat “America’s imperialism and Zionism by providing a substitute for American goods and increasing the blockade of countries boycotting American goods.”⁷¹

In response, the Coca-Cola company was dismissive of Mathlouthi motives, saying he had “identified a commercial opportunity which involves the exploitation in Europe of the difficult and complex situation in the Middle East.”⁷² In the context of our interest in alternative Islamic globalisation, it is valid to question the extent to which the above Islamic products represent genuine attempts to promote Islam, rather than simply being attempts to cash in on potentially lucrative markets.

⁶⁸ Cf. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*, ch. 13.

⁶⁹ This product was not a success, never being marketed in retail outlets.

⁷⁰ Tarek El-Tablawy, “Doll Offers Modest Image for Muslim Girls”, *Associated Press*, October 8, 2003, http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=519&ncid=519&e=10&u=/ap/20031008/ap_on_re_us/muslim_barbie

⁷¹ Verity Murphy, “Mecca Cola challenges US rival”, *BBC News Online*, 8 January, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2640259.stm

⁷² *Ibid.*

(2) Political

The key instrument for achieving a kind of Islamic political globalisation is the concept of the *umma*, or the worldwide Islamic community. This concept embodies a push for identity which transcends family, tribal, clan, ethnic or national identities, and dates back to the Covenant at Medina drawn up between Muhammad and the various tribes of Medina in AD 622. This concept is prioritised in the rhetoric of Islamist groups, such as Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami. Commenting on the ubiquitous nation state structure, the Jamaat states in its documentation:

We can accept the nation-state as a starting point, although it is not the Muslim ideal. It constitutes the present day reality and we do not want to dismantle political systems in an arbitrary manner. We want to bring about a greater sense of unity in the Islamic ummah, greater cooperation and increasing integration between the different Muslim states. Under Islamic idealism, every nation-state would gradually become an ideological state and these would go to make up the commonwealth of Islam.⁷³

Islamist groups have been increasingly prominent in recent decades as part of the worldwide Islamic resurgence. The 1990s, the first decade since the collapse of one of the world's two superpowers, witnessed the burgeoning of Islamic activist organisations with worldwide connections, often referred to as "The Islamic Movement". Many of these organisations established their headquarters in Britain, benefiting from Britain's long tradition of liberalism in providing sanctuary for groups in exile from hostile home governments.

Many such Islamist groups have increasingly called for the resurrection of the *khilafa*, arguing that the institution of Caliph, heading the worldwide Sunni community and abolished by Kemal Attaturk's secularist government in Turkey in 1924, should be re-established so that God's blueprint for the world has an earthly structure which can oversee its implementation. They see this as a key step in their overall goal of strengthening Islam's place in the world and, in effect, empowering a process of Islamic political globalisation. The Jamaat-e-Islam of Pakistan embodies this approach in writing: "Islam has also propounded the principle of human vicegerency (Khilafat). This Khilafat is a popular Khilafat and is not confined to any group of people or class. Divine law provides the framework."⁷⁴

The last sentence is key, indicating the central role of Islamic *Shari'a* in achieving the worldwide Islamic society considered as ideal, especially by Islamists. This theme was central to the statement by Muhammad Qutb encountered earlier. The increasing influence of Islamic law in various Muslim

⁷³ "Islam and the new world order".

⁷⁴ Ibid.

societies at the turn of the 21st century – e.g. Nigeria, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia – is testimony to the slow but steady advance of this form of Islamic globalisation.⁷⁵

Modernising Muslim writers do not give such emphasis to the re-establishment of the Caliphate or the full implementation of *Shari'a* in their support for the concept of *umma*. They prefer instead to place emphasis on international Islamic co-operative bodies, such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), an association of fifty-seven Islamic states. The OIC charter “aims to strengthen:

Islamic solidarity among Member States;

Cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields;

The struggle of all Muslim people to safeguard their dignity, independence and national rights.”⁷⁶

The OIC thus sees its role as being to establish global conditions where Islam can thrive. To this end in 2005, in the context of Danish cartoons portraying Muhammad, prophet of Islam, in comical terms, the OIC urged the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to pass a resolution “combating defamation of religions”. As a result, in December 2007 Pakistan introduced a resolution on behalf of the OIC on the defamation of religion to the UN General Assembly, which passed it by a vote of 108-51. The text of the resolution expresses “deep concern that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism.” A similar resolution, again sponsored by the OIC, was passed in March by the U.N.’s Geneva-based Human Rights Council.⁷⁷ This particular issue clearly highlights the extent to which the OIC serves to promote Islamic issues on a global stage.

In a very different vein, the World Conference of Islamic Scholars meeting in Malaysia in July 2003 indicated in its final resolution that enhancing military co-operation among Muslim states was a desirable objective in order to increase the political power of Muslim nations: “Striving to build a military force which is not dependent on foreign powers, by intensifying research and development (R&D), intelligence and training activities, mastering military technologies,

⁷⁵ For a detailed study of increasing influence of Shari'a Law in Muslim societies at the turn of the 21st century, cf. Paul Marshall (ed.) *Radical Islam's Rules: The Worldwide Spread of Extreme Sharia Law*, Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, forthcoming (2005).

⁷⁶ “OIC in brief”, <http://www.oic-oci.org/>, accessed January 2003. For a detailed study of OIC efforts to facilitate greater cooperation among Muslim countries, c.f. Abdullah al-Ahsan, “Cooperation for Economic Development among Muslim Countries: the OIC Experience”, *Jurnal IKIM* 5/1 (January/June 1997), 19-34.

⁷⁷ Critics of the OIC say the resolution is designed to stifle legitimate debate and to restrict religious freedom. Patrick Goodenough, “UN Urged to Stop ‘Defamation of Islam’ Campaign”, *CNSNews.com*, July 15, 2008, <http://www.cnsnews.com/Public/Content/article.aspx?RsrcID=32386>

and inculcating the spirit of jihad. This is achieved through continuous and solid cooperation among the Islamic countries in the field of research, military equipment manufacturing and marketing.⁷⁸

(3) A Sufi Perspective

Discussion thus far has considered the views of modernisers and Islamists on the various dimensions of globalisation. What of the Sufis, the mystics of Islam, who could be considered as expressing a traditionalist, far less politicised approach to their faith? We will consider the thinking of a local Sufi notable in Java, Muhammad Zuhri, who is collecting a following in his region of central Java.

In one of his writings, Zuhri cites the famous medieval Sufi scholar Jalaluddin Rumi as saying:

Come, come, whatever you are
It doesn't matter
Whatever you are
An infidel, an idolater, or a fireworshipper
Come
Our convent is not a place of despair
Come
Even if you violated your oath
A hundred times
Come again.

These verses embody a pluralist dimension usually lacking from Islamist writings. Zuhri suggests that Rumi had a globalising mindset centuries before the term "globalisation" was coined. Zuhri writes: "Seven hundred years ago before mankind had ever dreamed whether the thought of globalisation could occur to humanity or not, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (born 30 September 1207 in Balkh, Afghanistan) called to all people, whether infidels, idolaters or fire worshippers to approach him so that he could whisper in their ears that God's earth is not a place of despair and that their being was eternal."

Zuhri argues that Sufism, not a modern understanding of globalisation, is the default. He insists that one should not question whether the Sufi path is still relevant in the era of globalisation, but rather whether the modern understanding of globalisation is relevant. Zuhri goes on: "Because a concept which has been established as clear and final does not need to be made an issue [for investigation], but rather should be either chosen as a way of life or not. Sufism, the path for the individual person to Godliness, is actualised through servanthood to all mankind for life."

Zuhri argues that in contrast with Sufism, globalisation is a term which

⁷⁸ "Resolution Of World Conference Of Islamic Scholars".

has only recently been coined and is only in the process of being accepted by society. He insists that it is the “newcomer” which should be made to justify its existence as a term, rather than Sufism which is frequently subjected to challenge by Islamist as well as modernising writers. In fact, says Zuhri, globalisation has been around in the form of Sufism for centuries: “... ‘globalisation’ can be seen as nothing new except for its name.”⁷⁹

Zuhri’s writing, though localised in impact, nevertheless reminds us that we need to exercise caution in uncritically accepting either modernising or Islamist opinions as representative of all Muslim viewpoints. Clearly Zuhri and his followers look to Sufism as providing the path ahead.

3. Conclusion

Our survey of Islamic writers has shown us that Muslims of various types hold deep-seated reservations about globalisation as it is most commonly perceived today; i.e. as a Western-driven set of forces impacting upon the political, economic, social and cultural fabric of Islamic societies. The prominent Malaysian scholar Farish Noor, of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies, speaks of “the predicament of a Muslim world that feels itself increasingly threatened and marginalised by the forces of globalisation, leading to the defensive posture being adopted by many Muslim leaders themselves.”⁸⁰

Modernising Muslims are especially concerned with economic and political dimensions of globalisation. Islamists express grave concerns about the impact of Western globalisation upon Muslim societies and cultures. Their response is typically defined in much more combative and rather more backward-looking terms.

Muslim criticism of Western-driven globalisation does not advocate its replacement by greater regionalism and localisation. Indeed, Muslim writers, whether modernising, Islamist or indeed Sufi look to the inner resources of Islam for solutions to the challenges of globalisation. Islam itself offers a number of different angles on an alternative globalisation, be it in the political, economic, social or cultural spheres. Many of these paths of alternative globalisation are already being trodden, as part of the worldwide resurgence of Islam. The World Conference of Islamic Scholars in Malaysia in July 2003 drew up plans to set in place structures to work towards objectives agreed at the gathering, with Malaysia to play a central role: “In order to foster continuous cooperation and interaction among Islamic scholars and intellectuals across the world, it is crucial

⁷⁹ Muhammad Zuhri, “Jalan Sufi di Zaman Globalisasi” (The Sufi Path in the Era of Globalisation), *Salman Kau*, Rajab, 1415H, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/5739/globalisasi.htm>, accessed April 2004.

⁸⁰ Farish A. Noor, “The Evolution of ‘Jihad’ in Islamist Political Discourse: How a Plastic Concept Became Harder”, essay for the Social Science Research Council, <http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/noor.htm>, accessed 18 November 2003.

to establish a permanent secretariat based in Kuala Lumpur whose function is to act as a catalyst to build and produce sound and constructive ideas in order to enhance the status of the ummah and contribute towards the development of the Muslim world.”⁸¹

These sentiments were echoed in the statements issued by the 10th session of the OIC Islamic summit conference held at Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 11 -18 October 2003, which called for “coordinated, focussed and regular interactions and exchange of views and ideas among Muslim scholars, businessmen, entrepreneurs, industrialists and policy makers on important issues of concern to the Muslim Ummah in the fields of economics, business, research and development, particularly in the context of the rapid process of globalisation and liberalisation.”⁸²

In the five years since these events, most of the above suggestions have been taken up and implemented, with a resulting surge in activities aimed at enhancing Islamic globalisation.

To borrow and adapt a phrase from Samuel Huntington, we may well be on the threshold of a clash of globalisations, with Islamic globalisation in its multiple forms posing an increasing challenge to the Western-driven form of globalisation which has dominated world trends for several generations. This has ramifications for all parts of the Muslim world, including Southeast Asia, where some of the most sophisticated thinking on the methods and mechanisms of Islamic globalisation are being developed.

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⁸¹ “Resolution Of World Conference Of Islamic Scholars”.

⁸² “Putrajaya Declaration On Knowledge And Morality For The Unity, Dignity And Progress Of The Ummah, the 10th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference Putrajaya, Malaysia 11 -18 October 2003”, http://www.Oicsummit2003.org.my/declarations_05.php, accessed November 2003.

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