ISLAM AND THE WEST:
THOUGHTS FROM THE LENS AND WORK OF MURAD HOFMANN

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ABSTRACT
This paper is a reflection on some of the works of Murad Hofmann. It is not a presentation on the entire works of this scholar, but is an attempt to place in context the misconceptions of Islam by the West. In this sense, it attempts to discuss Islam and the West, from past and contemporary discourse and, through the lens of Murad Hofmann. In 1992 his book, “Islam the Alternative” caused a public scandal and he was viciously attacked as a “fundamentalist” by leftists and feminist circles in the German media and Parliament. Hofmann’s central thesis in his works is that there is an alternative to the Western paradigm of the conception of religion and the world, we live in. He argues that Islam is the alternative and that it can assist in coping with the world’s problems within the ambit of the 21st century. He argues that Islam and its civilization are hardly ever presented by the Western media, and often presented as being backward, even irrational and aggressive. Hofmann has identified and isolated over 20 such major prejudices against Islam, one of them is the interpretation, representation and misconceptions of Islam by Westerners and the West, as a whole. The paper looks at Islam and the West through the eyes and lens of Murad Hofmann. It is primarily his thoughts but, the author of this article, attempts to analyze his arguments, adds emphasis were necessary and makes contributions through his readings, observations and experiences, and also uses literary sources to the arguments, put forward by Hofmann in his thesis. In so doing the paper attempts to do this in an objective manner, very mindful that there will be sufficient criticism against the arguments proffered in this paper. However, this is totally unavoidable, but at least, it attempts to broaden the discourse in respect of Islam and the West and, hopes that the divide between these two great monotheistic religions could in some way be addressed meaningfully by theocrats, politicians, intellectuals, and people who belong to Christianity and Islam, with the idea of bringing these two great religions together in a wave of tolerance and acceptability. The idea being that greater and sustained peace and stability could be ushered in and would emerge, in making the world a better place to live in, amidst so much confusion, animosity and hatred.

Key Words: Islam; Christianity; West; Fundamentalist; Civilization; History; Conceptualization; Contemporary; Development; Cooperation; Cultural Imperialism; Political; Dominance; Postindustrial; Postmodern; Reemergence; Modern; Postmodernism; Human Rights

INTRODUCTION
Francis Fukuyama’s notion of the imminent ‘end of history in 1991, according to Hofmann (2000). (The original essay by Fukuyama was developed into a book: The End of History and the Last Man, in 1993) required and was crying out for a reply that would be historically sound, significantly honest, problem conscious, and free from apologetics.” It was an idea of a reply pointing out that there is and was an alternative to cultural monotony, because
according to Hofmann, “Islam was and is not only a viable option, but is the only alternative to an Occident that is increasingly troubled by social and ideological crises.” He goes on to state that following the collapse of communism, the world was to become one – dimensional and this was misguided triumphalism, as a misjudgment typical of what “Third World” people denounce as cultural imperialism; the Western project of modernity. In other words, profanely known as the ‘American Way of Life.” One would find little difficulty in understanding this aspect, if one ponders the misguided words of former President Bush of the United States, who said, during the misguided, unfair and falsely orchestrated war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq but, more importantly against the innocent people, of this great and historical Islamic country, and the entire Muslim world, (We do not condone Saddam Hussein’s actions). “It’s a question of the clash between civilizations (Islam versus Christianity)” and “Either that you are with us or with them” (George Bush, 2004). This was to become the obligatory model for all other societies, throughout the globe, as though there was no alternative left. That the world had to be defined according to the Western lens of interpretation. It was to be defined on the basis that ‘people of colour or ‘natives,’ had no say in grounding their views and interpreting the world and its affairs, as to how they saw it culturally, economically, politically, socially and how they interpreted, diagnosed and reacted, in order to differentiate between right and wrong. This was all insignificant in the eyes of Western governments and, particularly the United States of America. This is a tragedy of the world, as it entered the 21st century.

Not much later Samuel Huntington (1993) in his puerile and naïve espouse implied more concretely that the “Muslim World” was bound to disappear or to become fully marginalized.” This prejudice goes back to European thinking of the Age of Reason, to the infamous era of the Crusades (Think of George Bush). Since the 18th century and, to this end, history eloquently testifies to the all embracing fact of such arrogance in that, the European convinced himself that he was the measure of all things; “that his superb rationality would assure him the highest peaks of knowledge, power, happiness ever achieved in human history” (Davotoglu, 1997). This conceptualization by the Western European man is not only arrogant but defies the simple logic required to make sense of the world that he inhabits. It’s amazing because the Europeans master – minded two unnecessary World Wars and, the unspeakable atrocities in the concentration camps of Germany, the British concentration camps imprisoning and annihilating the Afrikaner in South Africa. These atrocities and many others were committed by this ‘rational man,’ including the vivisection of India, the use of atomic weapons, the holocaust, Stalinism, ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia, a host of other violent atrocities, subduing ‘natives,’ expounding Christianity but trampling upon the tenets and values of this great religion. These were bestialities and to this day nothing matters in order to shake European mans conviction that, he is God’s gift to mankind.

We are all aware of the slogan ‘Made in the United States.’ In a brave but highly confused world, it is this US and European cultures that emanate and dominate, be it New York, California, Chicago, Brussels, the cities of Germany, Paris, London, Geneva, Sweden, Norway and a host of others, with regards the onslaught of globalism, through communication technology, the media, movies, eating habits, music, fashion, male and female ideals and conceptions of beauty. The management of leisure, a nation’s sexual mores and habits, the essence of architecture, university standards, in fact the array of human desires, is a reflection of misguided western values. It is a question of accepting the Western
standards promulgated by them in terms of capitalism and the neoliberal agenda of enslaving people including workers. It is the acceptance of the Western model of vulgar development of societies that hold people in bondage, slavery, captivity and corruption, as greed and unbridled capitalism becomes the order of the day, negatively affecting societies throughout the world. This is the Western model of development. You either buy into it or perish because no other model is acceptable to Western nations. It is the question of the primacy of the West that must prevail, at all costs as opposed to the insignificant rest.

In defending Islam, placing it in the forefront, arguing cogently about its essence and its validity to contemporary society, it was found that after the Gulf War and, other instances, it was no longer feasible or politically correct to project upon Islam in any positive way. Its mind – boggling that in the 21st century, the great monotheistic religion of Islam is paid scant reference to by the West. The works of Hofmann depict the postindustrial and postmodern Western world because, the role of Islam will no doubt play a significant role in shaping culture, human rights, freedom and, will challenge the Western conception of society, state and markets. It will no doubt shape globalization, shape all aspects of life, shape the very geopolitics and international affairs of a world looking for alternatives. In this regard Hofmann (2000: IX) states that the world “will benefit from the experiences and achievements of Muslims in the West, both as emigrants and converts and to this end Europeans and, particularly American Muslims face three principle tasks:

- To transmit their religion fully intact to the next generation, in a society and in societies that are largely permissive and consumerist.
- To demonstrate to the public of Europe and particularly the United States, the spiritual as well as the democratic potential of Islam, because of the woes faced by contemporary societies in the West.
- To help rejuvenate and refocus the Islamic world at large, particularly through unhampered Islamic scholarship that concentrates on the essentials of Islamic faith, as well as the transfer of technological and administrative competence from the Occident to the Orient.”

This was the reality of past Islam and it can be rekindled to give impetus to the modern world and to contemporary societies that define their very being and existence upon Western conceptions of life, and this would be applicable for the entire world. The reemergence of Islam cannot be denied by the West, and it is in their interest to take a keener interest in Islam and Muslims, the world over, as it exerts itself rightfully so. It has lived for far too long under the shadows of the West, and will and can make a significant contribution to the world order in almost all areas of engagement. To this end, and for the purposes of peace and stability, it will be in the interests of the West to cooperate with Islam. By the same token, it will also be necessary for Islam and Muslims to cooperate with the West and all religions of the World, particularly Christianity. This must be undertaken openly and fairly and the agenda for this engagement must be set by means of consensus and not by the West alone. This cooperation cannot succeed or be achieved if the West wants to set the agenda for engagement. This needs to be done soon and sincerity and honesty must dictate the terms of reference, in order to bring about peace and stability, in a world riddled with conflict, poverty, religious strife, unemployment, inequality and the dominance of the Western way of life.

It is against this background that the paper will examine Hofmann’s analysis of Islam and the West and the Islamic view of Christianity.

DISCUSSION

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Towards the end of his life the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) sent messages to surrounding rulers, such as Negus of Abyssinia, Khosrow II of Persia (590 –
628) and the Eastern Roman Emperor Heraclius (610 – 641). He called on them in simple and unambiguous terms to accept Islam for their own benefit and, for their people (Ibn Ishaq /Ibn Hisham, 1955; Hadith no. 4553 in Sahih al Bukhari, 1989; Hadith no. 60175, Tafsir al Qur’an, 1979). This episode of diplomatic history, according to Hofmann (2000:1) “marks the beginning of relations between Islam and the West, never broken off, nor ever relaxed, for 1400 years; relations which, despite many fruitful economic and intellectual contacts, have always been confrontational. It is against this background that Murad Hofmann says that the reason of the historical Christian – Islamic conflict whether West and East (even today), Occident and Orient are not regarded as complimentary but straddled with overt conflict that is encompassed in most hostile worlds of this confrontation. Why is this so? It is because they face and confront each other, almost daily and worsened by the unnecessary perceptions of Islam and Muslims in the West. An understanding that defies the logic of Western intellectuals and its people; of all people and religions and cultures which are different to Western conceptions and to Christianity. They live in unnecessary fear of this monothestic religion that is expanding across the globe. It is because of this unprecedented expansion that the West therefore paints a picture of Islam being rabid, uncouth and, to a point, of influencing the geopolitical whole and the political economy of the world at that time and, in many ways even today. This perception of Islam is created and reinforced by Western nations with the United States in the forefront of this brutal attack against a mighty religion that influenced past history and continues to influence the modern world.

As long as the West interprets Islam and Muslims negatively, there will always be confrontation. Because of the historical divide between these two mighty religions; the West needs to understand and appreciate that Islam is expanding with unprecedented fervor and appeals to the minds and intellectual thought processes together, with the interpretation of its tenets, by large numbers of people in the West and is therefore, a threat to Christianity. On the other hand the West and in particular the United States and its allies have aided and abetted dictatorships in Muslim countries and have supported those in power that have sided with them (In the Muslim world). The West has failed to comprehend and fully understand that their support of minority regimes in the Muslim world does not convince the majority of Muslim people and nations that are held in bondage by the foreign policies of Western governments. This, as example, is exemplified in Algeria, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Bosnia, Georgia, and a host of other Muslim countries. There is no doubt that given these circumstances, the collective memory of both parties is wide awake and alive. The course of history explains much in terms of the early expansion of Islam immediately after the death of the Prophet (PBUH) in 632 AD. Islam had spread like a tide across Syria and Palestine (634 – 35), Persia (637), Egypt (643 – 649), Armenia (652), Cyprus (653), the Maghrib (670), and even Spain (711) became Islamic. It is recorded by Hofmann (2000), that Constantinople suffered its first siege as early as 688. On this occasion he states that in the figure of Abu Ayub al Ansari, the flag – bearer, one of the Prophets (PBUH) companions was still present. There is no doubt that these successes and the expansion of Islam as a way of life, has been completely misinterpreted by the West. It is understandable that the West clings to this interpretation and misguided notion that Islam is confrontational and an aggressive religion that owes its unprecedented expansion to the sword. It was clear and absolutely true that from a military perspective and the military acumen and superiority, the surrounding Christian and Iranian areas were unable to oppose the fearless religious fervor and genius of the early Muslims. It must also be recognized and acknowledged by the world at large that, the early, small number of Muslim warriors was fearless and, it would have been unable for them to conquer such large areas, had the population not joined them en masse and were in agreement with their reasons for invading and conquering many lands across this area of influence. These
conquering quests were not only the expansion of Islam but the consolidation of the Islamic religion, in the form of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), leaving behind a value system and the principles of an Islamic nation state, to be carried forward for the benefit of all of mankind. In agreement of this explanation Martin Lings (1983) states that “one of the reasons for this is not acceptable and flattering to the West heterodox Christians in the Maghrib and Mashriq, including Arians and Donatists, who accepted Islamic rule easily because they too did not believe in either the divine nature of Jesus (PBUH) nor the Trinity.” In spite of all the negativism in the West of Islam and Muslims, like how Islam spread to Africa in the 11th century and made dramatic inroads into Senegal, Mali, Ghana and Chad and other areas of African influence. It has to be acknowledged by the grudging West that these inroads into Africa was for all intents and purposes, not made by the sword, but were peaceful in nature and form. It also has to be acknowledged, appreciated and fully understood, by the prophets of doom in the West that, Islam is still in the 21st century spreading peacefully throughout Africa today. In Africa, it is painted by the West as an interfering and ferocious religion and clouded unfairly as “terrorist,” with an interpretation of being a “fundamentalist” expansion of the Islamic religion. Why does the West not brand or interpret, any form of Christian expansion or invading as “fundamentalist”? This is the anomalous interpretation of Islam by the West. A Western analysis that is unfairly grounded and willfully perpetuated, on the basis, according to its unfair biasness and fears, that Islam is ‘backward’, ‘fundamentalist,’ confrontational, irreligious, terrorist, and so on.

Hofmann (2000) states that “the world shattering dynamism of the Muslims deeply affected the scientific and cultural worlds of the time. The West grudgingly had to accept, the epoch-making results in all areas of the arts and sciences, including mathematics, optics, botany, surgery, ophthalmology, hygiene, lexicography, history, sociology, and the continuation of Aristotelian philosophy, made by Islamic scholars and which had been forgotten in the West.” In these and other areas, “Islamic civilization outshone Western civilization from the 9th to the 14th centuries, even if we have to take into account the likes of al Razi (Rhazes), al Biruni, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Battutah and al Khwarizmi. “ (Hamidullah, 1980; Hunke, 1960; Jayyusi, 1992). When the Muslims were finally halted, as in France in 733, the Western world launched a counter attack with crusades between the 11th and 13th centuries, and the Portuguese – Spanish Reconquista. “The Byzantine Christians soon learned the meaning of “Christian fire and sword” with the Latins’ (or ‘Franks’) sacking of Constantinople in 1204, and it was then, the West’s turn again to be afraid, following the Ottomans’ capture of Constantinople in (1453) and the advance of their armies through the Balkans as far as Vienna (1529 and 1683)” (Hofmann, 2000). Since the 8th century it seemed that these epic conflicts would gradually come to an end, but from that time to now these two worlds drifted apart in a dramatic manner. This is exemplified since the Renaissance and its accompanying Enlightenment because, the West has undergone an almost explosive scientific and technological development, giving rise to an enormous economic and military dynamism unmatched in the rest of the world and this, is still seen as proof of a general superiority of the Christian civilization.

The rest of the world, including Islam concedes the above to the West, but at the same time, it has to be acknowledged that this superiority also came with its military arrogance which we see even today in the 21st century. The West’s development of superior military arrogance which we see even today in the 21st century. The West’s development of superior military arrogance which we see even today in the 21st century. The West’s development of superior military arrogance which we see even today in the 21st century.
other words, irrespective of the development of democracy and the human rights mantra that the West sings, it negates these humble callings and prescripts and breaks these laws almost every day with great impunity and continually and consistently. Laws that the West has developed, but they flout these laws, to the peril of the worlds’ innocent populations and, is in pursuit of destroying the remaining Islamic influence. Its imperative is to subjugate the peoples of the world to live according to the standards it defines and a western culture that, it wants to impose upon people defined differently. The world has seen and experienced this phenomenon and evil design at the close of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century with utmost ferocity; in the killing of thousands, in fact millions of Muslims in Afghanistan, (The propping up of President Karzai of Afghanistan, a puppet of the United States of America) Pakistan; the lies in respect of invading Iraq and killing the spirit of people that sat at the very pinnacle of civilization itself (We do not condone the actions of the dictator Saddam Hussein); the oppression and wanton killing of innocent men, women and children in occupied Palestine with ‘Israel’ backed by the United States, and Great Britain (Great Britain the culprit, in the formation of the illegitimate state of Israel) with the greatest amount of impunity and disregard for equality and human rights; the chaos that it has sparked in Lebanon; the protracted enslavement of Muslims in Guantanamo Bay, is an indictment to President Barak Obama and the United States government, including the entire West; the dismantling of a legitimately elected democratic government in Egypt under President Morsi’s Brotherhood Party, after the uprising against United States propped up dictator Hosni Mubarak, who ruled with impunity for more than thirty years, amassing more than $72 billion dollars of taxpayers’ money illegally and, for according favours to the elite and the army, and being pro ‘Israel’ and the United States. Propping up Hosni Mubarak to support the imperatives of United States policy towards ‘Israel’, in order to subjugate the legal demands of freedom by the Palestinian people. This has led to the United States now supporting the Egyptian Army and its leader General Abdullah Alfateh Sisi, who leads and rules with an iron fist, aided and abetted by the United States and its Western allies and, with an impotent United Nations that cannot intervene decisively. General Sisi of Egypt has passed death sentences on hundreds of Brotherhood supporters, and in terms of human rights, the United States and the West standby as onlookers and do not intervene or denounce the actions of this tyrant, supported by them. General Sisi has stood down as the army chief and will contest the elections as a Presidential candidate. As of the 27 of May, 2014 indications are that Sisi will win the elections in Egypt. This will again place Egypt within full grasp of the United States and its hegemony. This is mind boggling democracy supported by the United States and the West. The Egyptian Army panders to the West and to its predatory elite of which there are equally divided Muslims and Christians (the minority). The toppling of Morsi’s government has given expression by Muslims throughout the world of anti United States feelings and expressions of resistance by Muslims; ordinary people, intellectuals, students, politicians, governments and some resisters in the West; who see the West as an oppressor that defines the world according to its state of play and geopolitical agenda. Even more disheartening is that President Morsi, it has been indicated will be slapped with a minimum of 10 years in imprisonment by an illegal Egyptian military government. The West has to reevaluate its policy towards the Muslim world and it has to begin an honest dialogue, in order to win the minds and hearts of Muslim people and Muslim nations. Failure to recognize this will further lead to the rise of organizations such as Boko Haram, Al Shabab and a host of others. This will hamper the emergence of any efforts of peace and stability and, thus threatens the reconciliation of Muslim and Christian countries and their respective people. It has given rise to militancy experienced in Islamic countries and by Muslims because the West has not acknowledged the plight of these peoples, who are in the majority
Muslims and, they consider Western action, policies and utterances as a direct attack upon their religion, values and culture. Their very dignity stands in tatters. This is dangerous because the masses will sooner or later rise to reclaim their dignity. In the case of Nigeria we do not condone the actions of Boko Haram and the capture of innocent school girls. The Nigerian government will learn sooner or later that by allowing the United States into the country, it would have ceded its sovereignty and compromised its security.

The protracted fighting in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Algeria, The uprising in Tunisia, the attacks in Kenya and, other countries were brothers kill brothers because of the imperatives of Western imperialism. In Algeria we saw a democratically elected government that was controlled by a Muslim majority party toppled by the United States and an illegitimate government put into place. This has led to continuing fighting in Algeria and the BBC reported on the 12 of May, 2014 that, 16 Muslim insurgents were killed in Algeria. Where is the justice? And where is so - called Western democracy and human rights? The brutal killing of Libyan dictator Gadaffi (We do not condone the actions of this dictator). The capture and killing of the Al Qaeda icon and master mind Osama bin Ladin and his burial at sea in a unislamic manner. The intimidation of Muslims in previously designated USSR countries. The unnecessary sanctions imposed upon Iran, which does not relent to the calls by the United States and the West to abandon its nuclear development programme. The stories are endless and a great shame on the West. The issue that the West does not realize is that, it’s fighting a losing battle. It should make peace with these Muslim nations and with Islam, as a whole because, India, Pakistan and Iran are nuclear powers and, if pushed the situation will be disastrous to the world and, particularly to the Western world. The issue that requires urgent attention by Western governments, is the all embracing fact and reality that, how is it that nearly half of the countries in the Developing world, almost all Muslim countries and, some countries in the West including Russia, given the crisis in Crimea and the Ukraine are anti the United States of America and the West generally? Their reading of the geopolitics of the world has gone awry, and they want to rule the world by stealth, fear and intimidation. Their efforts will not be successful and the West and the United States will have to abandon their tactics sooner or later or face devastating consequences by a host of nations globally.

The issue arises as to why the United States and the West are not prepared to attack Russia, for Crimea voting by referendum to be part of Russia again and the impasse in the Ukraine and, therefore, go to war but imposes insignificant sanctions against Russia, which do not seem to hurt Russia. This is again a question of double standards and not remaining consistent in terms of its foreign policy. It is obvious that the US and its allies are only prepared to attack weaker Muslim countries and nations that are not powerful enough to challenge the United States. The same situation arose with China in the South China Sea, when China used force to annex some islands that Japan has rightfully laid claim to. Besides rhetoric the United States looked on passively and, did not threaten China nor intervene in any form. There can only be a few explanations to this scenario. That the United States is unable to call to order powerful nations such as Russia and China, because these countries would stand up against the United States and its Western allies. Moreover, any confrontation with these countries could lead to very serious consequences and could permeate into a world war. Is it a question of fear on the part of the United States, which is the bully of the world? On the other hand the powerful like China, Russia, India and others have stood by not challenging the USA and the West. This is an indictment to these powerful nations that now have an opportunity to change the geopolitics of the world by challenging the US and the West.

It is the advancement of United States geopolitics and foreign policies that are supported by the West in subjegating the Islamic and other countries to toe the line of Western values and culture, by which it seeks to dominate the world. It is also the greed of the West, in order to
cement its capitalist, imperialist and neoliberal agenda, in order to subjugate the world to its designs, by fragmenting any forms of unity that may emerge from these countries, and this poses a very serious threat and fear among Western nations. It is the issue of dividing and ruling nations, causing disharmony among them, which is best illustrated by the Western nations led by the United States, purporting to understand the issues and challenges of Islam and Muslims, in respect of playing on the unnecessary psychology of Muslims the world over; that the US and its allies advance the notion of confrontation between the majority Sunni Muslims of the world and the Shia Muslim world. The great divide and rule strategy of tyrants like the United States. It props up illegitimate regimes, displaces the people, and when it does not suit the US, it drops these countries as allies. The time as arrived for purposes of peace to call America’s bluff.

The world has continually seen this foreign policy imperative by the United States and, it is achieved with the utmost impunity. This is a scenario and imperative created by the United States and generally supported by the West. On the other hand, it is a question of greed. It is a question of the economic recession and massive unemployment in Western countries and their inability to keep their welfare states intact. It is a question of keeping the rich oil producing countries of the Muslim world, in bondage and enslavement, by means of continual war between themselves, depleting their resources and thus these countries cannot fulfill the fundamental precepts of governance and public administration? It’s a question of protecting Muslim dictators at a great cost to the populations of these Muslim countries. All of this is exemplified by the all embracing fact that, the West thus capitalizes on this set of disjuncture’s by playing on the sentiments of the illegitimate governments that it props up in Muslim countries and, thus keeps the Islamic world in constant conflict ideologically. On the other hand, the Islamic countries being in constant conflict with themselves and due to the fighting between themselves and, their countries being torn asunder and infrastructure destroyed are reliant on the United States and mostly Western countries to rebuild their destroyed economies and countries.

The United States and Western countries win huge contracts running into billions of dollars to rebuild these destroyed countries that they themselves have destroyed and install weak and pro – west leaders in these countries. It is obvious that this keeps the Muslim countries in a state of bondage and slavery, in terms of repaying loans enlisted from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other Western countries and banking institutions. These loans have to be paid at exorbitant interest rates and stymies development and modernization of Islamic economies, and results in these governments unable to provide basic human services because, the Muslim countries are in a constant state of debt and war perpetuated and master – minded by the West. This is the objective reality and state of affairs within Muslim countries.

The time has come for the Muslim world to unite and to put an end to this diabolical plot of the West. It is a time to place immense pressure on the United States and the West. It is time to boycott Western countries. It is time to lessen trade with them. It is time not to buy their obsolete weapons. It is time, not to supply them with oil and gas. It is time for a consensus between Islamic countries, in order to define the modalities of engagement with Western countries and, it is time to set the agenda. This can only be achieved by Muslim countries coming together in a show of unity to confront the United States economically, confront them in terms of resources, confront them in terms of human rights and display an overt non – compliance of their rules of engagement and expose those Muslim countries that consolidate the agenda of the West and, particularly the agenda of the United States of America. The Arab world is not the reflection of total Islam, but is an important part of world Muslim affairs. However, the agenda about the Muslim World and Islam cannot be set by the Arab Muslim world alone, because the Muslim populations of Indonesia, India, Pakistan,
Bangladesh, Iran, countries in Africa and other parts of the world far outnumber the Arabs, as Muslims and, they must be given equal status to set the agenda in respect of any dialogue with the United States and the West. This has to be clearly understood by the United States and the West.

The Islamic world declined at such pace, into a state of such incompetence, lethargy, and decadence, which led to colonialism of the imperialistic Western powers of the 19th century, which was inevitable. It was not unrealistic in 1924 to believe that Ataturk of Turkey had dealt Islam its death blow with the abolition of the Caliphate. “What was Muslim about Ataturk? Why did he imbibe the Western value system and for what reasons did he want to make Turkey, essentially a Muslim country to adopt these Western values, culture and way of life, including western administrative systems, and dress codes? It has not worked in today's Turkey, for Islam is on a path of great growth and great influence not only in Turkey, but among Muslim countries, particularly in the Middle East. Although Turkey is not an Arab country and its language is not Arabic, it has great influence in the Muslim world and in the West also. Was Ataturk a lackey of the West? It was only up to 1683 (not too long ago) that, Muslim influence was rife in this part of the world right up to Vienna, but it was the same Austria, that denied the acceptance of Muslim Turkey into the White club of nation states in 1887. Was this because Islam and Christianity, in the form of Muslim Turkey and Christian Austria, which is separated by the Bosphorus River clashed with each other, in terms of East meeting West or was it simply the racist attitude of Austria, given its role in the World Wars? And yet we see again that it was Austria through Vienna that opposed Turkey's acceptance and entry into the European Union, less than a decade ago. This is double standards by the European Parliament, when one considers that a host of other countries that are not essentially European in character, values and culture have been allowed and accepted as full members of the European Union. Many of these countries are a major burden on the European Union in terms of their monetary capabilities and, require continuous bail outs and hand outs, in order to survive. Turkey, in the manner of its explosive growth would most certainly not have been a burden on the European Parliament and its fiscus. Is it again a question of fear or a clash of civilizations and, a situation of disregarding the emergence of Muslim countries to join the European Union because, they are Muslim, as is the case with Turkey or is it a question to deny the first Muslim country entry, in order to keep the European Union essentially Christian in character, as was the case in 1887?” (Karodia, 2008).

Thus from the middle of the 20th century, it seemed only a matter of time before Western culture would become the obligatory example, the world culture, implying the westernization of all other cultures. Warum (1988), states that “the causes of the demise of the Islamic world are still under discussion.” But according to Hofmann (2000), quoting Alfred Muller (1948), there are three reasons in his opinion as to why this decline occurred. These are:

- “First, in the 13th century the Christian world and the Mongols, almost simultaneously, put the screws on Islam, militarily speaking, hitting a major nerve as both centers of Islamic intellectual culture were overrun, Cordoba in 1236, Baghdad in 1258. To this day the Islamic world has not recovered from these catastrophes.

- Second, in the 14th century the idea became fixed in Islamic jurisprudence and soon after within the general community that everything worth knowing had already been known and was better understood by earlier generations closer to the source. This led to scholarship being based on imitation (taqlid), a general Islamic stagnation in intellectual life and a neglect of natural sciences.

- Third, the last and by far the most important factor is to be found not within the Islamic world but within the Western world: it cannot be denied that its huge material boom from the 19th century onwards was inextricably linked to a gradual break with the Christian faith. Indeed, the motivating force behind the scientifically and
economically successful scientism and positivism of this century without God was a world centered attitude, if not always atheism, then an agnosticism of which Feuerbach, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud were the apostles.”

Science then, scientific rationalism, which only admits the validity of quantifiable sensory perception, has become the dominant Occidental ideology of efficiency.” Belief in God is perhaps tolerated as a probability theory a la Swinburn (1979), but anything to do with ultimate issues becomes taboo, thanks to a "magic of death repression” (Freund, 1986). In the 20th and 21st centuries even the masses carry these ideas, as a result of the subjectivism and relativism they have acquired, they live a vulgar de facto atheism whose idols are power, money, beauty, popularity and sex. It was accepted that science, as opposed to the religion it had repressed, was incompetent for determining the meaning of life. It was thought that the issue would simply disappear together with the irrational Christian beliefs that had fathered it.” (Bell, 1976; Freund, 1986). The loss of transcendence, the vulgar materialism found in both the East and the West, has led to the “greedy hedonism of a people without constraints, who see their emotions as the measure of all things and who expect unending ‘progress’ to lead to a consumer paradise on earth” (Guenon, 1983). This is where even ‘post modern’ industrial society is heading, a society whose highest principles continue to be of economic nature – growth, efficiency, full employment, profit maximization, specialization, the Western mores of living, increasing poverty, the expansion of inequality and the subjugation of the masses of poor people. Hofmann (2000) using Alfred Muller – Armack’s description captures this as follows:

“Because man has paid for his freedom to deny God with the compulsion to populate his world with idols and demons, the history of faith is incomplete without the history of the lack of faith. God as the highest value is replaced by idols which lead to a progressive loss of substance. This history of the perversion of faith, of pseudo-religion, is the history of destructive forces which lead to catastrophes.”

It is obvious and real therefore, that neither Islam, nor any other culture possessing a religious nature, could withstand the material power generated by an onslaught motivated in this hedonist way. If one therefore analyzes the aspects put forward as regards the main reason for Islamic “backwardness,” it will be erroneous to ask what has ‘gone wrong’ recently with the Muslims of the world and their societies; for in fact, it is the Western world which has gone wrong. We find that in the 1960’s and 1970’s, contrary to what one had grown to expect, both sides underwent momentous breaks in development. But Islam though wracked with crises, was not buried, like today, in spite of the onslaught against it by the United States and the West, which has also influenced the geopolitics and global political economy of the world and, a host of countries against Islam both inside and outside the Muslim World. Islam remains intact and is not buried, but has stood its ground and is flourishing throughout the world. It is resilient and has weathered many storms and, would continue to withstand the onslaught against it. This is because of the resilience, conviction and faith of its followers throughout the world and, it is only a matter of time that, it would emerge as a power of influence, culturally, socially, intellectually and politically. Islam has become reanimated to the contrary, to such an extent that ancient fears of Islam have been revived by the United States and the West. This is because of its rising popularity, way of life and its fairness that people appreciate in Islam; for its constant fair play of standing against oppression and on the side of justice. These developments must be seen as inevitable, as Islam rises in popularity and appeals to the masses of people throughout the world, both in the West, the East and in large parts of Africa.
Sociologists such as Daniel Bell (1976) “Have observed that the economic success of the capitalist world undermines the very values and the behaviour of the Max Weber – like Protestant ethic on which it is based. This self – destructive mechanism can be observed in the fact that in affluent societies virtues such as diligence, thrift, discipline, patience, brotherliness and courage are defamed and perverted so as to become negative qualities, or are replaced with new values and new codes of conduct, which are really ‘post – industrial, to the extent that, generally practiced, they could not sustain an industrial society.” They (sociologists) state unanimously “that individualism in the West is perverted to narcissism, brotherliness to the para – rational collective behaviour of groupies of rock concerts, self – determination to moral anarchy, liberality to libertinage, tolerance to value – neutrality, competition to consumer madness, equality to leveling, instead of equal chances and equal results, sensitivity to whining, being careful to a refusal to take risks, respect to fear, eroticism to sexual athletics, diligence to workaholism, and flexibility to contempt for tradition. In other words such perversions are inevitable when the “key factors of rationality, freedom, and love, are no longer held in balance. This is easily worked through: rationality without freedom leads to the ‘Gulag Archipelago’ and rationality without love to Auschwitz, freedom without love leads to the exploitation of others, freedom without rationality to self – destruction” (Boisot, 1997). This is so true of Western capitalism, its hedonism, self – indulgence, oppression of the weak, in fact in all facets and walks of life, and, in the way of how the world has evolved. Societies that are not Western have in many instances been consumed by this way of life.

We find in the world today that young people are manifesting something very fundamental through their specific problems, obsessions, or ‘hang ups’: pervasive fear, the need for emotional security, malaise towards the secret compulsions of technology, resistance to ‘consumer terror’ and rejection of the idolization of unmitigated rationality, whether in the economy or in nuclear deterrence. In fact according to Hofmann (2000) “they are demonstrating that one cannot take away man’s transcendental links without subjecting him to a meaningless, boundless cultural freedom of the damned.” They have everything, autonomy, protection from the cradle to the grave, sex without taboos, drugs on demand, a great deal of free time, lots of cash, and every human right imaginable. But what do they feel? A feeling of existential emptiness and loneliness. They long for warmth in society and a mentor who radiates authority. It is an urgent quest for meaning. “This is the background of the emergence of charismatic churches, the sudden appearance of religiosity and their subjective contemplation. This trend towards the esoteric may follow strange paths to God. It is a search for a religion, like we saw with the rock band the Beatles, Cat Stevens (Converted to Islam and took the name Yusuf Islam, Cassius Clay who took the name Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X who took the name of Haji Shah al Abbas and so on) and many more like them, and perhaps this religion is Islam which is the antecedent, and which is now understood as the third way between the utopia of Western and Eastern materialism” (Fulton and Gee, 1994; Akbar and Donnan, 1994).

The corresponding development in the Islamic world began with the independence movements of the 20th century that finally led to its political self – determination. “With Algeria in 1962 being the last colonized Muslim state except for occupied Palestine, to regain its sovereignty. Initially these young states and their heroes, Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Pakistan), Gamal Abd al Nasser (Egypt), Habib Bourgiba, Ben Bella and others sought to copy Western models: liberalism, nationalism, socialism, communism and so on. Islam played no specific or prominent role, since early Arabism was as unreligious as early Zionism. The Algerian FLN and the Tunisian Neo – Destour were secular at
leadership level. This assimilation of the West, which continued after independence, corresponded at heart to the Kemalist doctrine and the ideals of westernized, modernistic Muslims such as Muhammad Arkoun in France and Bassam Tibi in Germany (Kramer, 1966). But all of these experiments failed due to the inability to deal with and cope with population growth, low exports, flight of capital, nepotism, corruption, debt and the emigration of intellectuals, despite the fact that many attempts were made to solve the problems through Arab and Muslim organizations. Against this background, “at the beginning of the 1970’s the phenomenon of re – Islamization arose, and has been relentlessly analyzed ever since, with its aspects of Islamism ((Islamiyah), fundamentalism and integrist projected upon by Western governments and the Islamic world” (Basam, 1981; Freund, 1982; Khalid, 1983; Guazzone, 1995).

Arnold Hottinger (in Hofmann, 2000) states that Bassam Tibi “had shown that the term ‘re – Islamization’ contained a false premise, because amongst some western – oriented urban ‘intellectuals,’ Islam had never lost its significance anywhere as a belief and reference system, not even in Turkey, but had retained its relevance under a ‘thin veneer of modernization.’” Today, it is agreed that the renewed manifestation of Islam must be seen as the re – entry of the sacred into the public domain and Gilles Keppel (in Hofmann, 2000) emphasizes this “in the title of his book La revanche d’Allah. Logically this translates according to Hofmann (2000) into a “fundamental rejection of Western secularism and, the Islamic world regards the Western loss of, and break with, the transcendental as a mutilation of human faculties, reacting to it with a counter – project which does not herald the end of modernism as such but Eurocentrism. After the demise of Communism the world is once again a bi – polar one, as far as the history of ideas is concerned.”

The revival of Islam also offers the traumatized Muslim of the so – called ‘Third World’ a chance to retrace his roots and affords an opportunity of restoring loss dignity and above all else the withdrawal from competition with the West in the consumer sector and the West’s pursuit of the exploitative and vulgar capitalist system. This is also exacerbated by the apparently endless chain of humiliation of the Arab world, especially in Palestine and the increasing attack on Muslim countries by the United States and Western countries as allies of the United States. There is therefore no doubt that this has prepared the Islamic world and prepared Muslims across the globe for political action and for a religious and moral revolt. This phenomenon in the 21st century has begun and is being intensified with speed. The Islamic forces in the Islamic world motivate and justify their political aims of changing the status quo, Islamic terrorists (who we denounce) among them. These terrorists are in the minority and are a creation of the United States and the West. In the context of the revolutionary seizure of power from the United States puppet and tyrant the Shah of Iran, led by Imam Ayatollah Khomeini there has been a massive revival of this spirit among Muslims both Shia and Sunni. The time has come for a show of unity amongst all Muslims of the world and, and not to be swayed by the divisions caused among them by the United States and the West. This time is not too far off and it is therefore time to call the bluff of the West and particularly the United States of America. The unnecessary Gulf War of 1990 – 1991, which damaged Islam because of the false intervention of the United States and its Western allies, lingers in the memory and minds of Muslims throughout the world crying out for justice. “This event damaged Islam more than anything else in this century.” (Wolfgang Gunter Lerch, in Hofmann, 2000). It has therefore nurtured the spirit and desire to emerge once again against all odds. It has the numbers, the finance, the courage, the spirit the intellectual capacity to set the agenda for fruitful and meaningful dialogue with the United States of America and the Western nations.
Christian missionaries attribute the rapid penetration of Islam into West Africa, Senegal, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast to the simplicity of its teachings and its freedom from complicated mysteries. If this is true, then it must be possible to describe Islam in a single chapter. To be Muslim rests on two assumptions (1), the belief in a personal but genderless, transcendental God, but who is active in the world (Ayat ul Kursi, 2: 255), and (2), the belief in His revelations, ultimately leading from Abraham to Muhammad (PBUH). It includes both the acceptance of Moses (Judaism, PBUH) and Essa (Jesus Christ – PBUH). This is what the followers of Judaism and Christianity do not believe and pay scant reference to. The monotheistic religions have so much in common to celebrate together and usher in an era and period of tolerance, peace and love among them. “Muslims believe in God (Allah) because His existence is logical to them in view of the existence of the world, that is ontologically and its contingency, that is causally, despite their knowledge that, from a scientific point of view, it is questionable to infer what cannot be perceived by the senses from what can, especially since the validity of our logic for such operations are not verifiable” (Hofmann, 2000).

In the first part of the two – part Islamic profession of faith the Muslim professes his faith in God (ashhadu), though not in the simplest possible form (ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah) but following Surat (verse) al ikhlas (112), he declares his opposition to dualistic, Trinitarian or polytheistic ideas of God (Allah). With the formulation “I profess that there is no God besides God (Allah) (ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah) the Muslim emphasizes the unity and uniqueness of God (Allah). From a Muslim point of view, the principle of unity (tawhid) applies to spirit and matter, soul and body, science and religion, man and nature and also to Muslims as social beings – their aim is always to unite as a community (Ummah)” (Yusuf Ali, 1996).

Finally, it is important to bring to bear, in respect to the content and discussion in this article, the conclusion posited by the Governance Studies Report, Faith in Equality from Brookings, United states (2012: 49), who appeal to the citizens of America and particularly the youth of America and sum up their report in the words of the authors, who state as follows: “Two things are striking. The first is the obvious problem for the religious conservative cause in the United States: it lacks the strong foothold among the young that a movement needs to build for a future. The enormous gap between the oldest and the youngest generations in their respective orientations towards the religious right points to a troubled future for religious conservatism. The edge that religious progressives have among the young also presents an opportunity to the religious traditions of the United States: a focus on social justice and inclusion offers a more promising path to engaging the energies and allegiances of the new generation than does a continuation of the culture wars and Pope Francis is one religious leader who seems to have noticed this.” On the other hand the Catholic church is in tatters because it has once again been revealed, only recently in the latter part of the month of May, 2014, that high ranking priests have been embroiled in sex and pedophile behaviour. This has resulted in Pope Francis classifying such behaviour as satanic. This is the moral value system that permeates the Western Christian Church and this paper has alluded to, in great length of the decay of the moral standards in the West.

On the other hand they state that, “large – scale religious disaffiliation among the young means that religious progressives do not have a foothold in the new generation comparable to the powerful sentiments in favour of religious conservatism among older Americans. Religious progressives clearly outnumber religious conservatives among the young. But because of their relativity of formal religious commitment, a majority of the millennials identify with neither religious progressives nor religious conservatism. A renewed religious social justice movement must thus find ways of speaking both to those motivated by faith, including theological conservatives who, are increasingly engaged in justice issues, and to more secular Americans.” This is precisely what Hofmann has alluded to in the thrust of his work and underscores this aspect brilliantly, in his works and has alluded to the decay of both
United States and Western culture and especially its youth, who are searching for answers, which religious conservatism, the older generation and to a large extent the church, cannot provide for their societies and therefore, the West faces moral bankruptcy and an ethical dilemma, as things unfold and stand in the 21st century. Who better can understand this phenomenon but Hofmann, who is a son of the West, lived in the West for most of his life, born in Germany and brought up in a Christian Catholic family and who converted to Islam? And this is why in the United States of America the civil rights era model for religious commitment has broad relevance to the current moment and times, when one considers the earlier emergence of the Nation of Islam that brought to their fold giants from the American black leadership to fight and confront racism and oppression against blacks and people of colour, in the United States of America. The civil rights movement interwove religious and civic themes. It appealed to the array of religious organizations dedicated to progressive concerns. And given the strong views on economic justice issues held by African – Americans and Latinos, their religious leaders regularly find themselves at the heart of mobilizations on behalf of the oppressed working class Americans and greater assistance to the poor. These should be the imperative of the progressives in the United States. They have a great opportunity of influencing the world order in terms of consolidating peace and ushering cooperation and greater understanding between Christianity and Islam, for the benefit of mankind.

NOT THE WAY OF ISLAM
The distortion of Islam by Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria cannot and must not be tolerated by Muslims globally and the entire world. The forced conversions of more than 250 abducted Nigerian schoolchildren must be condemned alongside the vitriol that it broadcasts and above all the violence in the name of Islam must be condemned in no uncertain terms. Its claims are nothing but distorted Islamic theological claims and cannot and must not be accommodated by Muslims and Muslim societies. ‘Acts of wanton violence and barbarism are contrary to the teachings of Islam. In Islamic ethics, the end does not justify the means. Religious extremism has no virtue in Islam. And extremism is unequivocally condemned by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), who is reported, in a tradition, to have declared thrice, that “extremists shall perish.” It is important to remember, though, that only a small minority of Muslims in the world are extremists. Extremism grew in response to the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan” (Buccus, 2014: 1), and the brutality of the armies of the United States and the West among innocent men, women and children, in these depraved and poor countries. All of this points to the all embracing fact and reality that Islam has to be better understood by the West and perhaps a progressive Islam is misunderstood and not considered by the designs of the West led by the United States, in which Islam as a whole condemns brutality and extremism, which has no place in Islam. This is a thorny issue because Muslims and Islam the world over feel that their future is under threat and therefore conspiracy theories abound and are rife, in relationship to the West undermining Muslims from within and without. Thus, this has led to an overt dislike of the United States negative foreign policies in respect of both Muslims and Islam, which leads to violent reaction.

There is no doubt that some honest and objective questioning is necessary and long overdue because many practices have nothing to do with Islam and its value system, but are being reproduced and re – enacted as if they were articles of faith, says Imraan Buccus (2014). This calls for progressive practice but the progressive current seems weak. It has to deal with the harmonious recognition of coexistence, despite the complex diversity of the world. However Buccus (2014) states that “the political realities of many Muslim countries, in which authoritarian regimes often work hand in glove with reactionary religious forces and sometimes with the West to perpetuate the status quo. This makes it extremely difficult for
new progressives to be heard. The culture of hate speech, intimidation and slander is commonplace in the battle for ideas that, in many cases, they have become regarded as the norm for public debate. Despite the brutality of the occupying forces, senseless killings and kidnappings with horrific endings cannot go unchallenged by both Muslims and Christians and the world population.” These brutalities are often in violation of both Islamic and Christian commands during conflict.

A contentious issue according to Buccus (2014) “must be the concern to break the banks of conservative dogma which have been reinforced by the Muslim conservatives and authoritarian elites. Extremism has no place in Islam.” Similarly, a world without Western invasions upon Muslim countries that are driven by capitalist greed and a world without extremism are possible and this goal must be relentlessly pursued, and should be the goal for the first half of the 21st century, in order to create a better world for all, were peace and harmony reign supreme.

**ISLAMIC HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Western World is most proud of its human rights track record and of its history, and this seems to have taken place almost exclusively in the Christian cultural sphere. The milestones of this development are: The Magna Charta Libertatum of 1215.

- The Habeas Corpus Act of 1679.
- The British Bill of Rights of 1698.
- The American declaration of Independence of 1776.
- The French Declaration of Human and Civil Rights of 1789.

The above is known by a number of people throughout the world but psychologically, it has far-reaching consequences. On the other hand it is commonly know and has been experienced by those not defined as Europeans and Americans that, it assumed that Western legal development and implementation and, as it stands claims universal validity. By the same token, the rest of the world encounters Western legal experts who recognize and regard the legal history of the “rest of the world, and particularly the Islamic one, as barbaric, despite of the fact that they know nothing about it. This, in no uncertain terms explains the triumphal march of the, in actual fact non–binding, Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations of 10 December 1948 and the two International Pacts of 19 December 1966 on (1). Civil and political and (2). economic, social and cultural rights, which were also ratified by many Muslim Countries. The fact that this was not an unbroken line of development is often overlooked, despite the fact that these breaks could bring about the collapse of the entire edifice of human rights. The first and probably most important break took place between the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of human rights only a few years later. This was exemplified by the fathers of the American revolution who traced back to God the ‘truths’ or rights which they regarded as self–evident. The French Jacobins, however, understood human rights only in terms of natural rights as agreed upon” (Hofmann, 2000). Can there be any doubt that given the above reality that the axe was already laid against the future edifice of human rights. For it can only be stable if fundamental rights are understood, in agreement with the Islamic view, as rights laid down by God, not created by man, but simply discovered or recognized by him as already and eternally existing.

It must be recognized by intelligent people and jurists in the entire West, who subscribe to the initial prescripts of these human rights declarations as was expounded by both the Americans and the French, then without a doubt that human rights stands or falls with the belief of God. Those who deny Him involuntarily place all rights at the mercy of human disposition, even if they deceive themselves by referring to punitive ‘natural rights.’ No one has ever been able to derive a concrete and generally convincing legal system from the contemplation of nature. In fact, those who try only project their own ideological ideas onto ‘nature.’ in these cases the
real validity of the law is actually founded not in nature but in convention, in a social consensus.” (Social contract, as explained by Islamic Council for Europe, 1981; Organization of the Islamic Conference, 1980; Schact, 1964). The results speak for themselves: the signing of human rights pacts and declarations by no means led to an improvement in the legal protection of the individual in atheist countries, especially in the former Communist world. “The second break came from the development of human rights conceived as demands on the State. As is well known, the formulation of classical human rights in past centuries aimed at the curtailment of State power only, by giving citizen freedom from something or liberty to do something. The State, reined in by a bill of rights, was to be prevented from taxing, arresting, dispossessing or executing at will. The accent was not on what the State should do, but on what it should not do. Recently, however, human rights have been formulated in terms of demands for Welfare State action. The State should guarantee employment, housing, healthcare, even the enjoyment of the natural world and the happiness of the individual. This has led to the inflation of ‘human rights’ and to an inflation of the State sector. Both perversions can be equally dangerous for the survival of the lofty ideal of human rights as the loss of transcendental links. At any rate, true human rights are discredited when, for example, we talk of a ‘fundamental right’ to feel afraid, for example nuclear war or to drug oneself. Even more absurd ‘fundamental rights’ will probably follow. In other words, Islam refuses to go along with such fad and folly, the innate misconceptions by the West, and yet is one of the earliest and most comprehensive classical human rights systems in the world. For Muslims, every right deserving the name must be traceable back to divine sources, the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH). There is therefore no doubt whatsoever, when matched with the prescripts of both the American and French codes of human rights which places human rights in the hands of God, Islamic jurisprudence is exemplary in its insistence that fundamental rights cannot be created by man but can only be brought to light by him. Thus human rights have found their most solid foundation of all in Islamic history. “Despite this interpretation and fact, human rights do not occupy a particularly prominent position, even in contemporary Islamic legal literature (OIC, 1990 and ICE, 1981), and even as a rule they are not even regarded as a specific category of rights” (Schact, 1964; Doi, 1984; Kruse, 1979).

However, it would be wrong to conclude that, therefore, there is insufficient legal protection in this sphere. The theoretical underexposure of human rights is a result of the traditional system of compiling Islamic law. Since all laws based on the Quran being equally divine have the same status, Muslim literature usually does not deal with ‘human rights’ as a specific group, but rather in the context of various subjects, marital law, criminal law, economic law and so on. Textbook chapters on the rights of aliens come closest to Western systematic. Furthermore, Islamic Law differs in that it takes into account that all rights whatsoever, including human rights, are only guaranteed in reality if the entire social and legal system is in good shape, in that the noble aim of justice can only be realized as a by – product of a comprehensive and just social system, and not in isolation. More important than systematic is the substance: the question of whether Islam in theory, if not in fact, guarantees human rights. Fortunately, there are no major differences between the western and the Islamic perception of the ideal relationship between citizen and State, on life, corporal inviolability, liberty, equal treatment, nondiscrimination, property, freedom of conscience, marriage, legal hearing, the assumption of innocence, nulla poena sine lege (no punishment without prior threat of punishment), protection from torture, and asylum” (Hoffman, 2000; Islamic Council for Europe, 1981; OIC, 1990; Schact, 1964; Doi, 1994; Mawdudi, 1976; Emphasis added by Karodia, 2014).
All of this has been guaranteed for 1400 years. A summary of the differences to western Human rights is summarized into a few points below, as applicable to the discussion on human rights, from the works of Abd al Rahim, 1997 (in Hofmann, 2000). This is as follows:

1. “The human rights pacts, including the European Human Rights Convention of 4November 1950, contain formulations on the equality of men and women, in particular before the law and in marriage, which Muslim States can only ratify with reservations. Islamic law does not discriminate against women when comparing them to men, in as much as that which is different may be treated differently and only that which is the same must be treated the same. And this is the crux of the matter: for Western theory simply denies the legal relevance of differences between men and women while Islam refuses to go along with this fiction (for an in depth analysis one has to see the works of Hofmann ‘Women in Society). (These aspects have been painted by the West, in its interpretation through the Western media, in a simplistic and derogatory manner, in order to paint Islam and Islamic law as archaic and backward).

2. According to Islamic Law the right to change one’s religion without legal disadvantages does not exist for a Muslim. At the very least his conversion to another religion would have consequences regarding inheritance and possibly marriage (invalidation of his marriage with a Muslim woman), even though there is certainly no Quranic command to execute renegades) (See bibliography). This situation will be easily understood if to be a Muslim is to be equated with citizenship in a Western country. Nobody denies there that certain privileges and special duties are linked to the possession of citizenship. (The West misinterprets these injunctions for its own purposes, and conveniently ignores these aspects in order to run away from the objectives and thus vilifies Islam in the eyes of its citizens, who do not know any better).

3. Non Muslim citizens in Islamic States do not have equal access to political office, but only in so far as they are denied the office of head of State. The West also paints this picture in a negative manner and thus indicates to its citizens that Muslim countries and their religion are backward and oppressive and does not allow equal access. In this respect let it be known and acknowledged by Westerners throughout the world that in this regard and in respect of a non – Muslim, incidentally, is no worse off than an American citizen born abroad who cannot present himself in the united States, Presidential elections (Recall the incident of the President of the US Barak Obama, who was challenged by Donald Trump in a derogatory manner and who challenged that Obama was not a true citizen. This so – called democracy in the US).

4. Since judicial mistakes, a miscarriage of justice, cannot be corrected in cases of capital punishment many countries would like to see the death penalty abolished world – wide, not least because it was abused a hundred thousand times during the Nazi period and in the former Communist world. but the Islamic world has not joined them because the Quran allows death penalty for three offenses. These are for high treason; murder; and robbery. There is no obligation to carry out such punishment regardless of circumstances, yet a general deletion of the death penalty from the books is not possible in Islamic States (Certain States in the USA and other European countries invoke the death penalty and nothing is stated about this to the West, and in the West).

5. A Similar, thank God only formal problem is represented by slavery, despised the world over, because it was tolerated at the time by the Quran as part of the existing marital law. Enslaved non – Muslim prisoners of war became bondsmen with
concrete rights and duties, not reified true slaves according to Roman Law, who could be treated as chattels. “  

However, in many a surah (verse) of the Quran God suggested the liberation of servants taken prisoners of war was a particularly deserving act. The Quran itself therefore paved the way for the abolition of slavery. Although pockets of slavery continue to surface in some parts of the world, as may be concluded from its periodic official abolition in Mauritania, no serious Muslim would today wish to maintain this historical institution, overcome at Gods wish, except in order to preserve the text of the Quran integrally. Given all these facts that, before the coming of Islam, the Arab Muslims engaged in the trade of men as slaves, but slavery was primarily a Western institution, perfected by them in the early days, especially in the United States of America as a dastardly crime against blacks imported and captured from different parts of Africa. (The gruesome stories of slavery in the United States went against the grain of human rights and yet we find that the United States pontificates to the world about Human Rights – What a contradiction of so-called civilized and Christian men). We also are aware of the British that termed indentured labourers (slaves) brought to their illegal colonies, Indians and others to work on the plantations for their own capitalist imperatives and greed. 

Since God described it as a good deed to free slaves, and since it has been de facto abolished anyway, it should at least be permissible today to renounce slavery contractually, as in Article 8 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and Article 4 of the International Pact of civil and political rights. Thus, there are really no essential contradictions, certainly no cultural clash, between the Islamic and the Western human rights doctrines” (Hofmann, 2000). On the contrary Islam is a complementary human rights system. Alas, Muslims have reasons to believe that many in the West have a vested interest in “perpetuating the damaging myth that Islam and human rights are incompatible” (Hicks, 1997), and that the Occident will continue to use human rights as a political weapon against Muslim countries, which it has so skillfully done and continues to do with the United States at the forefront of consolidating this view and painting Islam, Muslims and Islamic States as barbaric, while the West itself, being deplorably selective in honouring them, and they historically and even today espouse human rights on their own terms and in fact are themselves overtly barbaric and behave like barbarians to enslave the majority of the world’s people, who they define differently to themselves. It is time for the United States and the entire West to redefine their understanding of the Human Rights doctrines for greater peace and stability of the world. The 21st century presents this opportunity to do so.

UNITED STATES AND UNITED KINGDOM RIGHTS RECORD A DISGRACE 

The above heading appeared as a letter to the editor, in the Star newspaper, in South Africa, on May 19, 2014 and the letter was penned by Firoz Osman, regular writer to various newspapers in the country. Hereunder follows his letter to the editor, in full. His response is most pertinent and relevant to the subject matter discussed in this article. He writes “there is a great deal of misrepresentation and distortion by western writers in extolling the virtues of the US and UK in world affairs. Former President of South Africa and world icon, the late Nelson R. Mandela, in an interview with the Guardian in 2000, accused the UK and the US of encouraging chaos. This response is a rebuttal to Richard Woolfrey who has written in the South African press on May 12 that, the US has always done its bit for world peace and prosperity. “Tony Blair said Mandela, is a young man I like very much, but, I am resentful about the type of thing America and Britain are doing. They want now to be the policemen of the world and I am sorry that Britain has joined the US in this regard.” The accusation emanated from a catalogue of human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the US and UK and, Woolfrey’s gratitude to the US, will not be shared by many South Africans, the Muslims of the world, many Islamic States and the
oppressed masses of the world. Without the overt and covert support of the US and UK and their business and military elites, the white racist regime of South Africa would not have been able to sustain apartheid, one of the most inhuman systems in human history.”

Osman goes on to write that “it stripped the victim, the indigenous African, of every iota of self – respect by virtue of the colour of his skin alone. And yet the US and UK, supposed passionate defenders of human rights, tolerated and supported apartheid for so many decades. When the Congo obtained independence in 1960 and Patrice Lumumba asserted sovereign control over its natural resources, he was murdered by the CIA. In fact, it was the CIA that tipped off South African intelligence of Mandela’s whereabouts, which got him arrested and imprisoned. Globally too, the US, UK, Israel and its Western allies have sown mayhem, conflict and chaos. Since the horrendous nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the US has dropped bombs on more than 23 nations and assisted in 20 coups. The CIA has been responsible for six assassinations of political heads of state. they have sent troops abroad and struck other countries 216 times. Their troops have been allowed to rape and pillage conquered peoples from the Philippines to Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, just as US troops before looted and robbed in Grenada, Panama and Haiti. Guantamano Bay, Abu Gharib prison, torture, renditions, assassinations, arming of dictators, slavery, exploitation, killing of civilians by drones and so on make a mockery of their claims to be the champions of peace, security and democracy, in the world. Woolfrey states that “if the African continent were to disappear there would be negligible impact on the US, which continues to provide financial aid and support in combating terrorism.” Osman begs to differ and probably all sane people will differ. “The US and UK’s human rights record taken as a whole is appalling. If the US and its allies would sink into the ocean, human dignity would be restored to the majority of the world’s population.” The time has come to set an example at the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC), in the Hague, to charge US and UK generals involved in crimes against humanity. To charge Tony Blair, George Bush, Ronald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and many others for the atrocities committed against many countries and their people. The world has to bring them to book. Justice cannot be selective and cannot be meted out on the basis of Western values alone. They must be pursued, charged and incarcerated.

SHARIA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

It must be acknowledged by the world and particularly Western countries and the Islam does not condone the misuse of Shariah, in terms of Islamic law and as enunciated within the prescripts of the Holy Quran (Chowdhury, 2014). In this regard, it has been reported that, in terms of Section 84 (b) of Brunei’s new Sharia “His Majesty and president of Brunei can do no wrong in either his personal or any official capacity.” This has been questioned vehemently by Muslims and many Islamic states because he puts himself above God. A truly supreme being. This is blasphemous and therefore, under the law of Sharia, and Islamic law and its prescripts, he should be punished. Thus, we find that Islamic law is being misinterpreted in some quarters in the Muslim World and, it therefore cannot be condoned and, has to be condemned. This interpretation of the law, gives Islam a bad name and, it is therefore ridiculed by non – Muslims of the world and, particularly the West. This is where the hypocrisy lies. The king and the powerful can do whatever they like. It is only the commoners that can be punished, under Sharia or no Sharia. The privileged class can easily use Sharia to seduce simple minded people and the illiterate.

When the rulers declare themselves above the law then good governance goes out of the window. The Holy Quran according to Anis Chowdhury (2014) states as follows that the Quran lays out guidelines and rules pertaining to good governance in several verses:

“Behold Allah bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice. Verily, most

One can also find rules of conduct by the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet said “behold each one of you is a guardian, and each one of you will be asked about his subjects. A leader is a guardian over the people and he will be asked about his subjects. Whosoever of you sees and evil action, let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue, and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart – and that is the weakest of faith.” (Hadith, Shai Bukhari). it can thus be clearly seen, observed and understood that, according to Sharia (The Quran and Sunnah), “practices and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the principles of good governance in Islam are consultation between the ruler and the ruled; freedom of speech to speak out against corruption and other wrong doings, ensuring justice to all, and achieving and promoting the welfare of people. In Islam, there is zero tolerance for injustice, oppression, and violation of the rights of other human beings” (The Quran, 4: 75 by Yusuf Ali; Anis Chowdhury, Opinion, 2014). The rightly guided Caliphs understood the Islamic (Sharia) governance principles. For example we find the following guidelines of Ali the fourth rightly guided Caliph of Islam in the United Nations Human Development Report (2002: 107) which stated “He who has appointed himself an Imam of the people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others. His teaching of others must be first by setting an example rather than by his words, for he who begins by teaching and educating himself is more worthy of respect than he who teaches and educates others. No good can come out in keeping silent to the government or in speaking out of ignorance.

Islam, through the Holy Quran and its teachings says that choose the best among your people to administer justice among them. Choose someone who does not easily give up, who is unruffled by enmities, someone who will not persist in wrong doings, who will not hesitate to pursue right once he knows it, someone whose heart knows no greed, who will not be satisfied with a minimum of explanation without seeking the maximum of understanding, who will be the most steadfast when doubt is cast, who will be the least impatient in correcting the opponent, the most patient in pursuing the truth, the most stern in meeting out judgment, someone who is unaffected by flattery and not swayed by temptation and these are but few. Your concern with developing the land should be greater than your concern for collecting taxes, for the latter can be obtained by developing; whereas he who seeks revenue without development destroys the country and the people” (The Quran by Yusuf Ali).

Copies of various Qurans (See Bibliography) in terms of their translations talk eloquently about security, no special privileges belong to a ruler, men are equal, do not seek favours from others, do not flatter those in authority, speak the truth, let your conscience be your guide, let your intentions be good, government is a sacred trust and therefore not to betray the trust, endorse discipline, run the administration fairly and in the public interest, in order to promote the public good, orders have to conform to the prescripts, edicts and tenets of the Holy Quran. The principles of al – amanah (responsibility and accountability) must be upheld fairly and in a just manner. From all of this, there is no difference between what we know as good governance and the principles of governance laid down in the Sharia and elaborated by the rightly guided Caliphs. The ultimate aim of Islamic governance is grounded in human rights, the achievement of development and the promotion of human welfare. All of this has
to be studied by the West and fully understood, because Islam acknowledges that in the past some Muslim rulers and governments, including some Muslim governments today in the 21st century have moved away from the principles of good governance to the peril of the people they govern and rule over. To this end the state has been captured by the elite and the capitalist and neoliberal agenda of certain Western nations. It must be remembered that dynastic rule is also completely against Sharia.

The law of Sharia in respect of governance is clear and unwavering and the injunctions of the Holy Quran in terms of law is explicit and therefore, there can be no unnecessary criticisms by those that are unschooled in matters Islamic. It is hoped that greater reading by the West and their scholars can lay to rest the unnecessary criticisms of the Shariah, and the Muslim and Islamic way of interpreting the world, through the prescriptions of the divine revelation of the Holy Quran.

CONCLUSION

As so often in their history, Occident and Orient once again are witnessing scenes of destruction, scenes of plundering, scenes of killing and confrontation. “During the Gulf War, fear spread amongst Muslims in Europe and the United States of America, just as amongst Europeans in the Maghrib and the near East. It seemed that the world, Muslims and Christians alike were all waiting for new crusades, in both directions. There was no more talk of a Christian – Islamic dialogue. Islam was more demonized than it had been for a long time” (Sigrid Hunke, in Hofmann, 1990).

From this sad 1400 year history of the relations between Islam and the West, the lesson can be drawn that both worlds, especially in the era of weapons (nuclear and other types) of mass destruction, must approach each other with tolerance, if world peace is to be maintained and for creating a better world for all that inhabit it, because there is prediction that the clash of civilizations can reach devastating and destructive proportions. “The better the West understands Islam and Islam the West, the easier it will be to attain peace and goodwill. The culturally determined barriers to understanding between the two that are standing in the way of mutual comprehension” (Hofmann, 2000). If Islam means submission to God’s will. Then Muslims believe and prostrate to Allah daily, for in Islam, all Muslims live and die. Nothing shakes their belief in God and Islam and, to this end Islam is neither fanatical nor aggressive as perpetuated by the West. It is in the interest of the West to understand this fundamental and basic tenet of Islam or unnecessarily be in confrontation and conflict with this popular and great monotheistic religion which has a large following throughout the world, making great inroads into the mind of Western people and its numbers are increasing on a daily basis, in spite of the West’s negative painting of Islam. Where shall we begin?

A NOTE ON AUTHOR MURAD HOFMANN

Murad Hofmann was born in Germany and into a Catholic family on the 6th of July 1931. His works on Islam was viciously attacked in the German media and Parliament by leftist and feminist circles who accused him as being a ‘fundamentalist’ Muslim. The attacks upon his persona were also premised on the basis that he had converted to the religion of Islam, having being born into Christianity. His works, particularly his seminal work – Islam the Alternative was also translated from German into Arabic and titled, Al Islam ka Badil, in Munich and Kuwait. Islam 2000, the other work presented is a continuation of his earlier thinking. In this book he describes where the Muslim World is at the threshold of the twenty – first century and what it takes to make Islam the relevant religion throughout the world. His university studies began in 1950 at Union College in Schenectady, New York. He completed his studies of German law with a doctorate in jurisprudence at Munich University in 1957 and his bar exam. His subsequent studies of American law led to a master’s degree at Harvard Law School in
1960. He served as Director for Information for NATO at Brussels from 1983 to 1987. He was Ambassador to Algeria from 1987 to 1990 and Ambassador to Morocco from 1990 to 1994. In 1980 he embraced Islam performing umrah in 1982 and hajj in 1992. In 1985 he published the German version of his diary of a German Muslim which is available in Arabic – Yawmiyat Muslim Almani. He has a son from his late American wife. Upon retirement, he took up residence in Istanbul, home of his Turkish wife. 

The Author of this review article Professor Anis Mahomed Karodia of the Regent Business School, Durban, South Africa, salutes this Muslim intellectual and scholar, on behalf of all Muslims, wherever they reside and suffer immense pain and hardships; for his contribution to Islam and for his stance against the oppression of Muslims throughout the world, for his courage on the affairs of women and his contribution to the political life of Germany and the world at large, against all odds.

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Large tracts of this article are also the thoughts of the author who has expanded on some of the thoughts of Murad Hofmann, for purposes of emphasis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOTE: Some of the references used are not cited in the paper and were used to crystallize the thought processes of the writer in the formulation of the article and for emphasis. The references used are cited in the paper and reflected within the bibliography accordingly.