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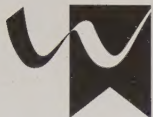


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WITHDRAWN

Imam Mahdi, Justice and Globalisation

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- 2) "Bin Ladin: The Man Who Would be Mahdi," "Middle East Quarterly," Spring 2002
- 3) "Islamic Fundamentalism," "Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism," 2001
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- 'Freedom in Imam Khomeini's Political Thought', *Mateen*, 1999, vol. 1, no. 2, (in Farsi and Arabic).

- 'Democracy in Imam Khomeini's Political Philosophy', *Transcendent Philosophy*, 2000, vol. 1, no. 2.

- 'Majoritarianism and Constitutionalism', *Transcendent Philosophy*, 2001, vol. 2, no. 2.

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Introduction

The present book is a collection of the articles presented at the international conference on “Imam Mahdi, Justice and Globalisation” on 26 September 2004, which was sponsored by Institute of Islamic Studies affiliated to Islamic Centre of England.

The eleven papers presented in this edition, despite their different themes, all are written with one important objective in mind; that is to analyse the possible correlation between the three concepts included in the title of the conference.

Although globalisation is a modern concept brought about by the new settings and amenities of our globe, the concept of globalised justice has been hanging around for many centuries. Many old and ancient nations cherished the idea in their myths, honoured it in their religions and held it out in their ambitions. However, one may justifiably ask that with the process of globalisation well underway, or already accomplished in many aspects, is the world any nearer to the old ambition of global justice?

Justice in itself is a notion as old as human being; it is the ultimate yardstick of all human values, the final measure of whatever is respected in the domain of human interaction and the most exquisite ambition of all nations. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of al-Mahdi in Islam is so much interlocked with that of justice and equity. When he comes, we are told, “He will saturate the earth with justice and equity after it is overwhelmed by injustice and oppression.”

The idea of al-Mahdi is not restricted to Islam, although the name is. Indeed the idea of ‘the final saviour’ is an idea as

old as religion itself. Yet, strangely, it is this very primordial and universal nature of the idea that leaves one to wonder. Is not this ubiquity of the idea a proof of its fictitious nature; a reflection of the unfulfilled ambitions and aspirations of human kind echoed in such a language? Or, on the other hand, is it not a good testimony for its truth and genuineness? The answer to such a puzzling question would be similar to any other theological question that has persisted throughout the history of religion. Unfaithful sociologists and psychologists have expressed the same doubts about all religious concepts including God, Prophets, afterlife and the final judgement. Although the theories they put forward to explain the universal existence and persistence of such ideas vary, yet they are all based on some core assumption, that is unfulfilled needs, unanswered quests or unaddressed worries. On the other hand the faithful have never lent any attention to such fanciful theorisations. For them God is more real than the world, Prophets talk more sense than others and the afterlife makes more logic than this life; and the very universality and commonality of these beliefs would corroborate their truth and certainty. It is in this latter context that the idea of the final saviour and specifically Imam al-Mahdi is discussed in the present book.

However, one may question the need for a new book in this area. Indeed the idea of the final saviour in general and al-Mahdi in particular and its connection with the worldwide justice has been exhaustively discussed in countless number of books, articles and lectures; therefore it is quite justified to think that the compilation of the articles presented in this conference would only add up to the stack of already existing material without virtually adding anything new to our knowledge. However, this is not true. The collective approach of the articles in this book involves a novel element, which places the whole concept of al-Mahdi in a new perspective. They try to connect the old idea of global justice, an idea closely linked to the concept of al-Mahdi, to

the contemporary trend of globalisation, and thereby to bring home an ideal that previously seemed so remote and out-of-the-way. Whether one could draw a parallelism between these two and in what way, how could the vices involved in the modern trend of globalisation be compared with the sublime ideals integrated into the event of the return of al-Mahdi, are the questions for which you could find some answers in the articles you are about to read.

However, before that, let me give a flavour of what you would expect in your readings. Examining the articles in a logical order, we first have to turn to Amir De Martino's "USA and the Capitalist Globalisation" in which he tries to analyse the less beautiful aspects of the modern trend of globalisation. De Martino starts with the United States of America, a country afflicted by all different sorts of ills and evils in which "the dollar exercises absolute power" and blue jeans, Coca Cola and Mc Donald have become the national symbols. Such an economy and such a culture are being made "the role model of all people of the Earth" and are universalized through the process of globalization.

"The USA represents the geographical circumscribed model of global village, whilst globalization itself represents the extension at planetary level of a value system which stops being exclusively "American" to become "Global"". All those illnesses that were at the beginning American, has now gone beyond American borders becoming first "westerner" and then "global".

According to De Martino someone should blow the whistles; "People of the world should take due distance from a country that consumes the brains of Africa, Asia, and Europe, and in return gives us such gifts as Coca-Cola, blue jeans, Mc Donald, Disneyland, pop art, beatniks, free-jazz, musicals, Jesus Revolution, sex revolution, etc..."

In “Fighting the Matrix: the Necessity of a Global Theological Politics – a Christian Perspective” Revd Frank Julian Gelli challenges the dominant Western culture in a totally different context. Invoking the tale of the famous science fiction movie, he defies to be caught in the ‘Matrix’ of the secular paradigm that regards politics and religion as mutually exclusive. “That is neither humanly desirable nor theologically necessary.”

However, this is what the new secular discourse is zealously preaching. There is not even a mention of God in the recently drawn up European Charter of Fundamental

Rights. God is outrageously deported and expelled from all spheres of social life and all aspects of political activity. How could then one make a compromise between such a stance and The First of the Ten Commandments: ‘I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods besides me?’

However, thanks to the Islamic presence among us today “we are beginning to wake up from our matrix-induced slumbers. Islam helps us to re-discover the fact that the contemporary Western model of politics is not the only one.” It presents “a different, alternative, living model of conceiving politics.” Islam puts forward the vision for a global, universal theological politics. “A politics informed by theology, by the science of the Absolute, the author of all reality - God.” The notion of the Imam Mahdi finds special significance in this context since too many Christians or more precisely pseudo-Christians have ceased to take seriously the belief in Christ’s Second Coming.

Saeed Reza Ameli, however, does not seem so pessimistic on globalisation as the two previous authors. In “Chosen Globalization and Hegemonic Globalizations” he differentiates between two types of globalizations, the ‘divine globalisation of justice,’ what he terms as ‘chosen

globalisation' or 'reverse globalisation,' and the 'hegemonic globalisation of injustice.' All different trends of contemporary globalisation are placed in the latter category while the former category is the type of globalisation that Imam Mahdi and Jesus will realise in their second coming. It is characterized as not being a dominant globalization forced from above, rather it is a "chosen globalization; a globalization from below;" something that every individual is willing to experience. What Ameli tries to establish as the essential point of his article, which is at the same time quite encouraging, is the fact that the chosen globalization will eventually emerge from the very lap of hegemonic globalization; in other words the latter is inadvertently paving the way for the former. This is because hegemonic globalizations produce reaction or 'reverse action' among the masses. "Reverse globalization explains how implicit aspects of life reinforce a return to universal human values of peace, respect, justice and mercy parallel to globalizations of war, disrespect, oppression and hegemony of anger."

In the same vein Seyed Sadegh Haghghat compares western globalisation with Islamic globalism in "Western Globalisation and Imam Mahdi's Globalism". In this article the author tries more to typify and categorize than to draw any definitive conclusion. According to him globalism is different from globalisation in the sense that the former is more culturally based while the latter is more based on economy. However, the author finds many similarities between the Western concept of globalisation and the Islamic concept of globalism. These similarities could be listed as flourishing of knowledge and technology, development and establishment of an integrated and homogeneous economy, fading nation-state sovereignty, establishing a hierarchical system and global citizenship. There are important differences as well; apart from the culture involved in the two concepts being different, globalisation is benefit-oriented while globalism is virtue-

oriented. Moreover injustice and inequality prevails in the Western globalisation due to the widening gaps between the rich and the poor.

Listing the differences between the two types of globalisation continues with Ali al-Hakim's article. In "The Human-Friendly and Dehumanised forms of Globalisation" he explores different types of globalisation with a historical and chronological approach. He argues that man has had a vision of human-friendly globalisation for many centuries, in which everyone could live in peace, justice and social security. However, it is from the fifteenth century onwards that the idea finds a traceable line, which could be divided into five different phases.

Hakim further examines the inevitable factors of globalisation. According to him "So ingrained has this notion of globalisation become" that even its opponents have succumbed to accept that "the process is both inevitable and inescapable." "The Anti-globalisation movement, notwithstanding its considerable capacity to mobilize intellectual and political forces of opposition and resistance, is very limited in political terms."

In light of all these, he argues, globalisation is an undeniable reality; however, it could be materialized in different ways. The model that he suggests is the human-friendly globalisation. He tries to highlight the main characteristics of this type of globalisation and to distinguish it from the dehumanised kind. Globalisation could be human friendly only if divine nature and constructive moral values are accommodated for. He concludes that the divine-negligent dehumanised forms of globalisation will not succeed, and "if they provisionally seem to do so, they will not persist unless humanity is morally metamorphosed."

S. Makki looks at the issue from a more Islamic perspective.

In “Globalisation as in the Holy Quran: Simplisation and Perfectisation” he dubs globalisation as the buzzword of the decade. Yet the term is used not with a single connotation; different people use it in different context for different purposes.

Makki examines the concept of globalisation from the Islamic viewpoint in particular with reference to some verses of the Qur’an. He tries to find answers for different questions such as, ‘Does Islam believe in globalisation?’ ‘What definition for globalisation could be found in the Qur’an?’ ‘What are the principle forces behind globalisation?’ ‘What are the positive and negative aspects of globalisation?’ and ‘The ideal model for globalisation’.

Interestingly, his findings suggest that not only Islam confirms globalisation, but also the Qur’an speaks of two different types of globalisation; a globalisation that has already taken place, and a globalisation which is in process and will finally be accomplished on the earth at the time of Imam al-Mahdi.

In almost a similar vein, Seyed Jawad Havaei tries to tackle the issue from a purely theological stance. In “One God, One Government & One Global Village” he pursues his argument in an ecclesiastical manner by moving through a logical step by step line of reasoning. He initially establishes that all the three Abrahamian religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism prescribe the formation of a holy government to implement what is revealed in the scripture in terms of laws and divine legislations. This is why according to all the three divine books the Lord’s messenger should be the Sovereign. On the other hand divine legislations and commandments are of spiritual and ethical nature and would not crystallize in the society without the authority of a divinely designated person. It is in view of this fact that the followers of the three faiths are all awaiting a heavenly

saviour.

In his article “Mahdism, Theological Globalisation, and Non-Violence” Kaveh Afrasiabi approaches the idea of Mahdism in the context of comparative theology, emphasizing on most recent post-modernist interpretations of eschatology. By taking us into a denominational discussion, he complains from the dominant tendency of Shiite literature for putting the accent on the ‘historical-Mahdi’ at the expense of the ‘theological Mahdi.’ He thinks that “The Mahdist movement has suffered for centuries from the mistakes of its various practitioners, who have taken aspects of Mahdism, e.g., resistance to the status quo, for the whole of Mahdism.” His conclusion in the article is emphatic and clear: Mahdism should not be used as a guise for recourse to violence. In his own words “in today’s “globalised village”, where the need for a global ethics is increasingly felt against the backdrop of violent upheavals around the world, the Mahdist will-to-action must respond to its built-in peacefulness and reverence for life.”

Hamid Hadji Haidar looks at the Shiite view yet from another angle. In his article “Mahdiism: A Globalist Theological Perspective” he explores the Shi’i eschatological theology and compares it with what could be regarded as its secular parallel, that is the modern theories about the “End of History.” For this purpose he examines two main theories proposed in this context, that is Fukuyama’s theory of the ultimate prevalence of liberal democracy as a universal model of government and Held’s idea of the final cosmopolitan democracy. According to him it is only the Shiite model which could address all needs of human kind in a comprehensive way. The fatal flaw of liberal democracy, that is “social and economic inequalities, which result in unequal liberty to take advantage of formal political rights” and the major concern about global democracy, which “fails to attend to human higher faculties”

by having a narrow conception of man and his potentialities, all would find remedy in the Shiite model. According to this model “at the end of human history, mankind will arrive at global prosperity, justice, security and spirituality for the first time under the rule of Imam Mahdi.” He emphasises that this theological conviction that speaks about the Act of God should be distinguished from jurisprudential duties of individual Muslims.

On the other hand Timothy R. Furnish explores the idea of Mahdi in the Sunni world, although mainly in a historical and political context. In “Appearance or Reappearance? Sunni Mahdism in History and in Theory and its Differences from Shi’i Mahdism” he concludes that despite disagreements among Sunni scholars on the idea of Mahdi and in the face of many erroneous Mahdis, impostors and false claimants “Overall, the Sunni books and websites on the Mahdi indicate that the doctrine is alive and well in the majority branch of Islam.”

The difference between contemporary views on Mahdi in the Sunni and Shi’i world mainly lies in the fact that while Shi’is await al-Mahdi as the Hidden Imam, as they always have been, the Sunnis are mainly “relegated to theorizing about their Mahdi in books and on websites, lacking any individual willing to risk ridicule or execution by grabbing such a ring of power.” Nonetheless the Shi’i and Sunni views on the subject are converging towards each other more than any other time in the history. According to his study contemporary Sunni Islamist movements are now moving “toward a more ‘Shi’ite’ view of the unjust state: acceptance of the principle that unjust governance in Islam not only should not be tolerated...but in fact requires the believer to resist it.”

Finally, Oliver Leaman gives a very deep insight about the menace of globalisation in “Mahdi, Materialism and the End

of Time”.

The danger of globalisation is not that people deny the existence of God, or that they abandon their religious affiliations. It is just that they no longer find much of a role for God in their lives, so He is dismissed to a minor and superfluous role in their lives. It encourages people to think about the world in terms of atheism and materialism despite being religious. However it is quite possible for modernity to see the world and its global aspect in a religious way. Indeed one of the important theses of the three Abrahamic religions is that a messianic age will one day take place and that time will only occur globally.

However, the paper argues that the precise nature of that age is unspecified in the Abrahamic religions. Leaman argues that there are basically two views on the nature of time in the messianic age. Some thinkers argue that time stops or is completely changed, while others see the messianic age as taking place in an ordinary way. Any of these alternative views would have its own implications for the believers; something that the author goes to some detail to explain.

I am sure that those interested in this area of investigation will enjoy reading what lies ahead; further I hope that the publication of this book add something to our knowledge and wisdom about the final destination of human race.

Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour
October 2004

Mahdism, Theological Globalisation, and Non-Violence

Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, Harvard University, USA

This paper examines Mahdism from the prism of comparative theology, focusing on recent post-modernist interpretations of eschatology. A post-modernist interpretation of Mahdism is then offered which argues against any "meta-narrative" of Mahdism as fundamentally suspect for undercutting the initial élan of Mahdism as the fulcrum of a dynamic "apocalyptic" eschatology whose *modus vivendi* is partly derived from the process history that must constantly be protected from any interpretation which conceives it as essentially closed.

Part of the paper concentrates on the salient interpretations of Mahdism, e.g., Sheikh Mufid, Ibn al-Arabi, Golpayegani and others, criticising the dominant tendency of Shiite literature for over-emphasis on the "historical Mahdi" while giving insufficient attention to theological and eschatological dimensions. This is followed by a critical consideration of Ali Shariati and his existentialist interpretation of Mahdism, which, despite characteristic insights, recycles the shortcomings of the previous literature. A major lacuna in Shiite Mahdist discourses pertains to the question of "time", and the paper seeks to provide a post-modern interpretation of "Imam-e Zaman" through a theoretical appropriation of the time-space duality, harking back to a neo-platonic and Leibnizian tradition in Islam. Finally, the re-interpretation of the "Great Occultation" is wedded here to an eco-eschatological perspective which finds several sources of theological parallelism with contemporary discussions in Christianity.

Introduction

The influence of religion on international relations has recently become a focus of considerable scholarly output, particularly in the areas of Middle East politics, Islamic studies, discourses on contemporary civilisations, post-colonial studies, ethnic studies, and global terrorism. Yet,

with few exceptions, in the burgeoning debates on globalisation, often viewed as a complex, multifarious process with diverse socio-economic, cultural, and other influences, the issue of theology and the theological dimensions and/or ramifications of globalisation is typically either ignored or relegated to the background.¹ Instead, the emphasis in the scholarly literature has often been on both the unifying and/or divisive influence of religion in world affairs, “religious wars”, and, increasingly in the context of the Islamic World, on the textual, faith-based origins of political violence. The empirical examples of non-violent Islamist movements or discourses are often viewed in the West as easily subordinate exceptions to a generally violence-prone discursive “order”. The latter is linked, in the works of authors such as Samuel Huntington, to an identity politics erupting at the nodal point of “clashing civilisations”.²

Huntington and other like-minded authors have underestimated the integrative consequences of global interdependence and, worse, have conflated the “contestation” of “parallel civilisations”, evincing global inter-religious dialogue, particularly on eco-theological issues, with pure opposition. Nor have they been adequately cognisant of the connection between the changing balance of global power and the global quest for justice by the world’s poor, including many inhabitants of Third World Muslim

¹ See, for example, John L. Esposito and Francois Burgat, (eds.), *Modernizing Islam: Religion, International Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003; Jonathan Fox, “Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations”, *Millennium*, 2001.

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. For a critique of this perspective see, Kaveh Afrasiabi, “From Clash of Civilizations to Civilizational Parallelism”, *Telos*, 1998.

countries, whose intelligentsia is increasingly heard bemoaning the discriminatory impacts of globalisation's homogenising process.³

In the plethora of "anti-systemic"⁴ movements in the modern world-system, the Foucauldian "insurrection of subjected knowledge"⁵ can be seen drawing, both defensively and offensively, on theology and theological insights as so many viable prisms through which to recast the meanings of globalisation, e.g., "globality as a moral space". This alone explains the poverty of recent writings on the "failure of political Islam",⁶ stemming from the unbounded secularism of authors ever so willing to reduce the dialectic of religion and politics in the Muslim world to mere issues of "language of protest" and a "means" or "vehicle" of political self-expression, whereas what is needed is an in-depth study of theological *assabiya* offering cross-border and cross-sect

³ Representative work is: Simon Ol Ilesanmi, "Leave No Poor Behind: Globalisation and the Imperative of Socio-Economic Development Rights From An African Perspective", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Spring 2004, pp. 71-95. Also, Antonio Tujan, et al, "Development and 'Global War On Terror'" *Race and Class*, vol. 46, no. 1, July-September, 2004. Also, Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, *Globalization in Question*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999. Randall Germain, (ed.), *Globalization and Its Critics* Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000.

⁴ See, Immanuel Wallerstein, *Anti-Systemic Movements*, London: Verso, 1989.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (tran.), New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 74. It is noteworthy that Foucault attributed a utopian element to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, describing it as a "radical rejection of the past" moving "toward a distant luminous point in which it might be possible to reconnect oneself to a faith rather than to preserve obedience". In "Ritorno al Profeta", *Corriere della Sera*, October 1978. For a critical examination of Foucault's interpretation of Iran, see Kaveh Afrasiabi, "Islamic Populism", *Telos*, 1996.

⁶ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. For a critique of this line of thought, see Kaveh Afrasiabi, "Iran and the Future of World Islamic Movements", *Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, 1996.

solidarities. Following Ibn Khaldun, *assabiyya* binds groups together through a common culture, religious heritage, language, and code of behaviour. Notwithstanding Islam's tradition of "prophetic solidarity", the movement of *assabiyya* can hardly be said to represent an "exclusion of the other", particularly in today's context of globalisation, featuring, among other things, greater and greater strides, through the "comparative mirror", towards closing the gaps, and creating Gadamerian "fusion of horizons"⁷ on such important fronts as protection of the environment and human rights – this irrespective of the widening political and geostrategic gaps observable in the interaction of the West and Islam in the Middle East both now and in the past.

Concerning the latter, as Seyyed Hossein Nasr has aptly pointed out, Mahdism, as a form of political expression of dissent from below, must be understood in the context of Islam's modernisation, even when it surfaces implicitly as in the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.⁸ Critics may disagree with Nasr's overt association of so-called Khomeinism with Mahdism, yet there is no denying the renewal of theological interest in the latter as a direct consequence of the Islamic Revolution. A quarter of a century later, the pertinent question is whether or not the revolution's outpouring of literature on Shiism has resulted in any major contribution to our understanding of Mahdism?

Mahdism and Shiite Theology: A Critical Glance

One only has to glance at the post-revolutionary literature on

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroads, 1982, p. 273.

⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Spectrum of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 106-107. For a critique of Nasr, see Kaveh Afrasiabi, "Toward An Islamic Ecotheology", in *Islam and Ecology*, Richard C. Foltz, (ed.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Shiism, Imamate, and Mahdism, and it becomes immediately evident that the “renaissance” of Islamic studies, increasingly infused with insights from hermeneutics, phenomenology, linguistic studies, (analytic) philosophy, critical theories, inter-faith dialogue, and so on, has at best only indirectly contributed to Mahdist studies; a more direct confluence towards a (post) modernist re-interpretive understanding of Mahdism remains an unfulfilled agenda.⁹ Thus, for instance, in the current “new historicist” interpretations of Islam, correctly or incorrectly billed as “Islamic reformation” in the West, the theological domain of Mahdism and its constitutive components of apocalypticism, utopianism, eschatology, cosmology, and theodicy, have yet to receive central attention.¹⁰ On the other hand, in both the Shariati-type existentialist as well as various sufi interpretations of Mahdism, the emphasis is often on the “historical Mahdi” rather than on the “theological Mahdi”, with Shariati committing the existential reductionism of deducing the theological autonomy of Mahdism from its social, i.e., oppositional, content, and the Sufis and their self-appointed “pinnacles” of divine manifestation committing a major theological error of assuming a half or fully realised eschatology by overlooking the fact that the reappearance of the Hidden Imam is a synthesis of promise and expectation that stands in dialectical contradiction to actual, real-time fulfilment, for the “occultation” (*ghayba*) and divine hope at the end of

⁹ For a review of the literature, see John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Also, Robert D. Lee, *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

¹⁰ Two notable examples are Abdul Karim Soroush and Mojtabeh Shabestari, both of whom seek to articulate a dialogical methodology in describing the relations between modern philosophy and Islam. Yet both lack a sophisticated hermeneutic theory to describe their understanding of Mahdism.

history are two sides of the same eschatological event, pointing back to the promise of the final reappearance of the Saviour properly understood as the continuation of God's self-manifestation and self-involving nature in relation to the world, especially to humanity.¹¹ In performing the "miracle" of Mahdi's concealment, understood theologically as a moment in the transcendent self-revelation of God in history, God has limited man's knowledge of him, entrusting us with the moral commitment to faith in the promise of salvation.¹²

Unfortunately, for one reason or another, the theological discussions of Mahdism have remained precariously wedded to various pre-modern, localist and sectarian interpretations, precluding the proper globalisation of Mahdist theology. The latter's evolution has been helplessly caught in the maelstrom of the Shiite-Sunni divide, irrespective of Sunni usage of Mahdism for political ends. Henceforth, what is necessary is to debunk the indefensible, prejudicial interpretations such as that of Majlesi, who clings dogmatically to countless questionable "signs of reappearance". The glaring defects of such traditionalist interpretations can only lead to a vain struggle to universalise a defective, parochial interpretation sealed off from modern scientific and philosophic knowledge. The only viable alternative is a "rationalisation" of the Mahdist belief-system that retains the essential ingredients of the faith in Imam, while subjecting this faith to a theoretical facelift.¹³ For, indeed, who can today boast of "enlightened Mahdism" while still clinging to traditional, unreconstructed

¹¹ The connection between Mahdi's occultation and God's self-disclosure bypasses William C. Chittick in his *The Self-Disclosure of God*, New York: SUNY Press, 1998.

¹² This point is only implicitly raised by Ayatollah Jaafar Sobhani in his *Doctrines of Shi Islam*, London: IB Tauris, 2001.

¹³ A relevant work is by Robert Sokolowski, *God of Faith and Reason*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

metaphors, e.g. of “*dajajl*”, crowding Majlesi’s *Bahar al-Anwar* or Golpayegani’s *Muntakhab al-Athar*?¹⁴ This is not at all to question the validity of religious endeavours, stretching centuries back to Sheikh Mofid, Koleini, Sheikh Toosi, and Ibn al-Arabi, seeking exegetical discernment of authentic versus inauthentic sources, particularly in the prophetic tradition (*Haddith*), rather the point here is to underline the contemporary necessity of a twin agenda that makes complementary contributions aimed at novel re-interpretations, purged of pure superstition, and deemed viable through the prism of modern philosophic and theological methods.¹⁵

Mahdism as Globalised Eschatology

We now turn to the question: What do we mean by Mahdism? The religious image of Imam Mahdi, as a sort of Weberian “switchman” of history, originates in the vast field of Imamology, forming a complex connectivity of (meta) history and theology with its subsidiary messianic, chiliastic, utopian, and apocalyptic visions or visionary elements.¹⁶ In

¹⁴ Mullah Mohammad Bagher Majlesi, *Bahar al-Anwar*, Volume 13, Ali Davani (tran.), Theran: Dar al-Ketab Al-Islamia, n.d. Ayatollah Lutollah Saafi Golpayegani, “A Reply to Mahdism in Shia Immamia: A Response to Schedina’s Islamic Messianism”, Hassan Najafi (tran.), Toronto: I.H.A., n.d. Also, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, *Hokoomat-e Jahani Eslam*, Qom: Nashr-e Javan, 1999; Sheik Mahmood Eraghi, *Dar al-Eslam: Dar Ahvalat-e Hadhrat-e Mahdi*, Tehran: Islamic Publications, 2000; Ayatollah Seyed Mohammad Kazem Ghazvini, *Imam Mahdi, Az Veladat to Dhuhur*, Tehran: Nashr-e Elhadi, 2001, especially Chapter 16 on “signs of Appearance” which devotes a small, passing reference to “improbable signs.”

¹⁵ Relevant works include Ronald Netter and Mahmood Mahmood, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity*, IB Tauris, 2000 and A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, New York: Free Press, 1960.

¹⁶ For works in English on the subject, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide in Early Islam*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994; Heins Helm, *Shiism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991. Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chicago:

the West, the subject of Mahdi is often compared with the Christian "Elijah". According to Derrida, "Elijah is the name of the unforeseeable other for whom a place must be kept".¹⁷ In terms of comparative theology, the reappearance (*dhuhur*) of Mahdi can be seen as comparable to the emergence of Elijah only so far, of course. Both come about as a "rescue" from the alienation of faith and, simultaneously, serve as a redemptive criticism of the "here and now", namely, the status quo. Moreover, both images convey salvation from sin, as well as guidance.

What makes Mahdism into a "meta-narrative" however is precisely the role and importance of Occultation (*ghayba*), functioning as a salvific event, designating the creative gap between God and humanity, and the perpetual quest to overcome this gap, which today can be conceived, among other things, as asymmetric globalisation. Having said this, Mahdism does not constitute a single, tightly connected paradigm, but rather a loosely coupled set of ideas about the multiple theological and historical linkages between Imamate and human salvation. These ideas or doctrines are embodied in the philosophical and theological method (eschatology, apocalyptic motif), epistemological presupposition (reappearance and history), and anthropological implication (hope) of Mahdism. Imam Mahdi's occultationist indwelling on earth, theologically understood, creatively assumes the centrepiece of a future-

University of Chicago Press, 1984. These works are, however, rather innocent of serious theological insights about Mahdism. A similar work, legitimating Bahais' emasculation of Mahdist doctrine, essentially into a theological nihilist "realized Mahdism", is by Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, T. Kendall and S. Benstock (trans.), New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 292. See also, Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledg*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

oriented eschatology continually speaking the language of hope and suffering, for it is suffering in the “exile” of occultation mixed with hope in close proximity to a process history that defines and re-defines an eschatological community of people in the spirit of renewal and resurrection. It is tantamount to a “sacred journey” willed by the anticipatory hope of the coming reality of the “Expected Saviour” (*Mahdi mawud*) in whom is sustained the faith in the end of human suffering and the celebration and fulfilment of justice.

Here, the gap between the Mahdist promise and the Christian doctrine of resurrection must be elaborated. In the resurrection of Christ, which converges with Mahdi’s reappearance in Shiite theology,

... the intensification of the promise finds its approach to the eschatological in the negation of death.¹⁸

In other words, even death cannot set limits to the promise of God to human beings (for salvation). This is in contrast to the Jewish concept of promise that

... finds its eschaton in the promise of Yahweh’s lordship over all people.¹⁹

By comparison, the Mahdist promise presents itself as the “epiphany of the indefinite presence” in the world, which can be understood only as part and parcel of a transcendent

¹⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (trans.), London: SCM, 1974, pp. 165, 143. Moltmann states that “Christianity stands or falls with the reality of rising of Jesus from the dead by God”. For a critique of more recent Christian theology, see Kaveh Afrasiabi, “Communicative Theory and Theology: A Reconsideration”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 1998.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

subjectivity that asserts the self-concealment of Mahdi as a divine matter of “self-revelation”. In other words, Mahdi’s absence or concealment, and the inherent obscurity thereof, opens a window to divine awareness, an awareness which builds the altars of its faith in the heart of the believer, the individual.

Thus Mahdism and Creation are entwined, for it is God’s creative work that extends the Saviour from the realm of reality to the realm of eternity, without being bogged down in Christology’s separation of death and life, what Moltmann calls the “revelation of the opposite”.²⁰ The Mahdist “event”, namely, both the minor and the major occultation, is a single activity of God that orients towards the eschatological consummation of all things. Therefore, the premise of occultation and the promise of reappearance give Shiite theology its definitive character – History as eschatology, retaining a progressive nature. The ultimate self-disclosure of Mahdi is the moment of eschaton that overcomes the qualitative difference between time and eternity, i.e., an “eternal now” that addresses the transcendence of humanity, the “not yet” actualised existential nature of humanity, for what Mahdi’s concealment reveals is faith, and the connection between divine self-revelation and faith. Put differently, what God has revealed in Mahdi is a missionary enterprise, using history as an open stage, setting out towards the promised future laden with social justice:

My Lord hath commanded
 justice; and that ye set
 Your whole selves (to Him)
 at every time and place
 of Prayer. (7: 29)

²⁰ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM, 1967, p. 15.

This is precisely where one may find striking resemblance between the Mahdi's advent and the Christ "event" in the sense that both convey the future-embeddedness of the present, where each stage of time points forward to the final completion of time in divine glory, even in the apocalyptic moment which envelopes the eschatological promise, as an aeon of a new creation.²¹ But, again, it would be a pure error to reduce Mahdism to the contours of a liberation praxis, reducing the theological meaning of apocalypse, the suffering of concealment and the hope of reappearance to social (in) justice. The parousia, the delayed appearance of Mahdi, is expressed in the limits of the consummation of time and space. The apocalyptic chaos, anticipated as prior to the end of the period of occultation, itself raises the issues of theodicy and the problem of evil, which can be read backwards to the present time as a moment in the process of self-actualisation of God, in which God is affecting the world, in part by placing the Expected Saviour in the cradle of a "hyper-space" interfaced with actual time and space, and also affected by the world, whose inhabitants, by using the compass of eschatology, shape and reshape the telos of history.

Mahdism and the Question of Theological Time/Space

We now turn to what is undoubtedly one of the most difficult aspects of Mahdist theology, equally recognised as the key to unlocking the riddle of eschatological history. In the Islamic philosophic tradition, the idea of time follows the Platonic tradition. According to Plato's *Timaeus*, time is a circular notion, a "moving of image of the eternity".²²

²¹ This point completely bypasses David B. Burrell in his comparison of Islam and Christianity. See "Freedom and Creation in the Abrahamic Traditions", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 2000, vol. 40.

²² Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, Desmond Lee (tran.), New York: Penguin, 1971, p. 51.

Within time, there are two defining elements, “is” and “shall be”, both measured in Aristotle’s *Physics* as a “circular movement”.²³ Like Aristotle, Kant asserts that the essential characteristic of time is the change in the form of succession, which happens in accordance with the law of causality “for only in appearances can we empirically apprehend this continuity in the connection of times”.²⁴ For Kant, time is linear, a self-existing category which underlies all inner intuitions. Kant writes: “The existence of what is transitory passes away in time but not time itself. To time, itself non-transitory and abiding, there corresponds in the field of appearance what is non-transitory in its existence, that is, substance. Only in relation to substance can the succession and coexistence of appearances be determined in time”.²⁵ Consequently, the qualitative difference of past and future is reduced to the quantitative variation of experiencing time without identifiable reference to the eternity (Plato’s pure “is”). This is essentially the understanding of time in modern thought.

In *Time and Being*, Martin Heidegger argues that

...the primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future.²⁶

This is in contrast with the time schema of the Hebrew tradition, which lacks any duality of time and eternity, since

²³ Aristotle, *Physics*, R. Waterfield (tran.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 223.

²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Norman K. Smith (tran.), New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961, p. 129. For Kant intuition, seen as a priori psychological and metaphysical term, is the medium of time and our experience of time in phenomena. See detailed discussions in Section II: Times, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 48-51.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Time and Being*, SUNY Press, 1981, p. 68.

there is only one time, God's time, viewed as a temporal vehicle of the eschatological promise. In Augustine's *Confessions*, on the other hand, time is created with the world, and the apocalyptic moment represents the final completion of time in the divine glory.²⁷ The eschatological fulfilment of time, equally heralded in Islam's anticipation of the return of the "Son of Maryam" coinciding with Mahdi's reappearance, acquires in the latter the form of an apocalyptic universalism that stands somewhat at odds with Christianity insofar as Mahdi's historical experience of cohabitation anticipates the eschatological fulfilment while, simultaneously, expressing an inner duality of time, namely, real time and "occultation time".

Occultation time is a term which we use to illustrate the eschatological and "hermeneutic conditionedness" of the world, when all things embrace the coming reality of Mahdi's fulfilment, a promise enveloping the here and now, subsuming time as well as space. Indeed, a viable doctrine of Mahdism must rework the concept of space as well as time. Mahdi's *ghayba* is not akin to Christ's act of withdrawal, which unties the unity of time-space-spirit of the Trinitarian theology, notwithstanding Pascal's contrast between emptiness and space, Descartes' idea of space as the extension of matter, and Leibniz's objects in space as precursor to Nietzsche's metaphysical problem of "infinite nothingness".²⁸ Seen in this light, e.g., Leibniz's point that there is no object that does not occupy a space, the question of Mahdi's perpetual indwelling nature, however invisible, becomes an atheistic notion of a self-contained universe within which the Saviour is absent. In other words, Imam

²⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, R.S. Pine-Coffin (tran.), London: Penguin, 1961, pp. XI, 12, 262. In Augustine's words, "Time itself was of your making".

²⁸ See Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, in K. Schlenchta, (ed.) *Works 10*, London, 1910, p. 1968.

Mahdi is an “imaginable individual” or “authentic fiction”, to borrow a term from Rescher, whose appearance (*dhuhur*) intuitively raises *De Res Possibilia*, or imaginable “irreality”.²⁹

The problem with the atheistic notion is, however, twofold. First, it rules out cosmology and eschatology by the fiat of a deductive reasoning centred on objectivism stripped of intuition, making it incapable of traversing its self-imposed limitations. Second, the Mahdist vision of divine eschatology is part and parcel of the outward actualisation of the omnipresent God, which in turn requires the employment of intuitive reasoning, not unlike Hegel’s *Geistesphilosophie*. There is of course a unique dialectical tension between history and eschatology, related to Mahdism, given Mahdi’s being in time and yet outside of it by the virtue of its full *potentia* in history, the fact that His *dhuhur* is an inner moment of historical contingency. All this requires a whole new understanding of Mahdi’s “existence” and the space occupied by him, giving rise to a new ontological concept of space, i.e., as a form of hyper-space traversing finite space, and outside the dualism of time and space. For indeed, Mahdism gives us the conceptual framework for a post-Leibnizian “potential space” conceived of as a divine act that is, contrary to simplistic interpretations, far more than the issue of invisibility or immortality, but rather a negation of negation that fulfils the divine eschatology anchored in the Holy Quran, envisioned by the Prophet and his disciples, captured by faith, consummated by history, but in the unique way of an internal development of history that constantly points to a new beginning, itself acting as the motif for an eco-theological epistemology following the divine duty (*amr*) for

²⁹ See Nicholas Rescher, *A Study of Unreal Possibilities*, Open Court, 2003.

measured existence. The potential failure of man in this duty is eternally inscribed in the Mahdist occultationist wisdom of Islam, predicated on the assumption of man's imperfection and the continuing battle with the forces of wickedness and amorality, i.e., *dajjal*. Concerning the latter, like almost all other "signs of appearance" (*alayem-e dhuhur*), such as the apocalyptic invasion of creatures, re-emergence of evil-doer "Seifan" prior to Mahdi's advent, and so on, it is instructive to employ the insights of semiotics, the science of signs, to the study of Mahdi's purported signs, and thus to avoid the empirical and philosophical roadblocks thrown up by forced choices between realism and idealism.³⁰

Towards a Semiological Understanding of Mahdi's Signs

The advantage of a semiotic inquiry is that it provides a context for reconceptualising the theological "science" of Mahdism and moving it along a path which can help us differentiate false and untenable signs of Mahdi's advent from the defensible and intellectually conceivable ones. On the whole, the purported signs of *Mahdaviyat* serve two distinct but often conflated purposes, namely, as aspects of a verification theory and as elements of (theological and eschatological) justification of Mahdism. Yet, the justification of Mahdism operates on a slightly different field of investigation, principally prophetic theology, whereas the verification attempts are bound up with empirical investigation. The legitimacy of *Mahdaviyat*, however, lay not in the signs attributed to it, even, to wit, the signs that could carry the discourse beyond the arbitrarily stipulated boundaries of reality, but rather in the origins of Imam's occultation, and the promise of salvation connected to it, which requires the deployment and sustenance of

³⁰ For a useful recent work on semiotics, see John Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003.

specifically communicative competences, theologically understood, relying covertly on their internal coherence for justification.

An extended discussion of this topic belongs to a separate study. Suffice to say that the method of semiotics gives us a device for filtering out those signs that signify the act of Mahdaviyat, and those that upon inspection hamper it, and appear as context-bound subjective projections assailable from the prism of historical semiotics – as dissolvable into concrete experiences with time-bound horizons. For centuries studies of Mahdism, its truth and virtues, have become encumbered with a whole string of false inferences and misleading, often dichotomous, projections. The Mahdist movement has suffered for centuries from the mistakes of its various practitioners, who have taken aspects of Mahdism, e.g., resistance to the status quo, for the whole of Mahdism, reducing the autonomy of its theological perspective to the Mahdist praxis, a problem that semiotics and modern theological and philosophical methods can help ameliorate.

Concluding Thoughts: Mahdism and Non-Violence

The most salient connection between Mahdism and Islamic non-violence can be seen in the hypothetical syllogism discernable from the comparison of *ghayba* and *hijra* (migration). Just as the Prophet's migration from Mecca and his subsequent triumphant return marked a new chapter in prophetic tolerance and non-violence, Mahdist belief strongly lends itself to non-violent leadership (*hidayat*) in the Imam's absence in pursuit of a just, virtuous and godly human order (*jameeh tawhidi*). In the words of Quran, "Slay not such life as Allah has made sacred". Mahdism has the transformative capacity, as a political creed, to generate tremendous social action, orienting the community of believers towards just action. In today's "globalised village",

where the need for a global ethics is increasingly felt against the backdrop of violent upheavals around the world, the Mahdist will-to-action must respond to its built-in peacefulness and reverence for life,³¹ and avoid the contemptible choice of strategic recourse to violence under the false guise of Mahdism. Long before Gandhi, Imam Hassan and other Shiite Imams who followed him experimented with non-violence on a broad scale in seeking to solve sociopolitical issues. Given Islam's universal message,

O mankind! We created you from a single pair and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other.
(49:13)

the interlocutor striving for righteousness is ethically bound to non-violence *as a strategic choice*. Mahdi's promise is a non-violent global transformation that is fundamentally in line with the UN Charter's quest to save mankind from the "scourge of war". It is for this reason alone that Mahdism maintains a rich source of *peace epistemology* that lies at the heart of Islam's soft power in the world today.

³¹ Holy Quran: "And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole world", (5:35).

The Human-Friendly and Dehumanised forms of Globalisation

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For centuries now, there has been an intellectual vision of a human-friendly globalisation, where everyone can live in peace, justice and social security, and where the emotional harmony of the diverse groups and races is manifest. Our aim is to analyse this concept through an historical investigation and from an ontological approach.

Our initial aim in this paper is to present the different phases of globalisation in conjunction with a rational way of defining it. We will highlight the main characteristics of a human-friendly globalisation and attempt to distinguish it from one that is, conversely, dehumanised. We consider the idea asserting the view of globalisation solely as a tool for modern colonization, to not necessarily be a correct judgment, and find it refutable. We will follow by presenting an evaluation of a correct definition of human-friendly globalisation, as well as its devastating counterparts.

Globalisation throughout History

Since ancient times, humanity has strived, with sporadic success, to establish a global empire, or an international government, led and supported by charismatic leadership. As many of these movements came about as a result of huge, or indeed, massive military campaigns, they can hardly be claimed to have all been based on just means.

It is true that there were prophets, such as Solomon (as), who reigned over an unsurpassed kingdom, and imams such as Imam Ali (as), who ruled for a time as the last of the four rightly guided caliphs, when the Muslim empire was at its most expansive.

However, despite being done with great expertise and an eye toward long-term solutions for the whole of humanity, the

efforts of the prophets and the Imams were unable to actualise their ultimate goals on a global scale. One is proud of the vital role they played in helping individuals, societies and communities; and we are mindful that today's technological performance is only one part of a much larger moral, social, political and economic fabric that must be carefully crafted by individuals, governments, civic organizations, faith communities, and committed families.

It is also possible for a person who is neither imam nor prophet to reach a position whereby he can rule the earth. The Qur'an has mentioned one such global success story in Chapter 18 (Cave). This chapter mentions a person by the name of (*Dhul Qarnain*), the one with two horns, and states how he reached the ends of the earth from where the sun rises to where it sets:

And they ask thee about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, 'I shall recite to you a mention of him.'

We established him in the land, and We gave him a way to everything.

So he followed a way.

Until when he reached the setting place of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy spring and he found near it a people. We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain, thou mayest punish them or thou mayest show them goodness.'

He said, 'as for him who does wrong we shall punish him, then he shall be returned to his Lord, and He shall punish him with a horrible punishment.

And as for him who believes and does righteousness, he shall have the most handsome reward, and we shall order him easiness in our affair'.

Then he followed a way.

Until when he reached the rising place of the sun he found it rising on a people for whom We had not made any covering other than it.

So it was; and We encompassed full knowledge of the things about him.

Then he followed a way.

Until when he reached between the two barriers, he found besides them a people who could scarcely understand speech.

They said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain, Gog and Magog are causing disorder in the land; so shall we assign a tribute to thee on the condition that thou makest a barrier between us and them?'

He said, 'that wherein my Lord has established me is better; so aid me with force of labour and I will set up a fortified barrier between you and them.

Bring me ingots of iron'. Until when he had levelled up between the two cliffs, he said, 'blow'. Until when he had made it a fire, he said, 'bring me so that I may pour molten brass on it.'

So they were unable to surmount it, nor could they dig through it.

He said, 'this is a mercy from my Lord, but when the promise of my Lord will come to pass, He will make reduce it to powder and my Lord's promise is surely true'.¹

This person travelled and conquered the entire planet from East to West and the Qur'anic commentators make it clear that he was neither a prophet nor an imam. He was an ordinary man and, one assumes, a saint or a believer. There are certain exegetes who assert incredulity as to how a person who conquered the entire globe could remain anonymous in history. In our historical narrations, there is no mention of a single person having conquered the entire

¹ *Qur'an*, 18: 83-98.

planet. So who could he be? While referring to *Dhul-Qarnain*, one becomes aware that the name was probably used as a title for Alexander the 'Great', and this is what the compilers of the exegesis have also concluded; that he could be none other than this ancient hero, who is known to have conquered vast territories from the East to the West. He is an example of a believer who reached such a high level of perfection and purity, through practicing the religious teachings of the prophets (as), that he was able to reach the status of leadership of the whole world. This means that a person of today is, therefore, also able to achieve this goal, provided that he maintains the Divine course.

We also know from historical records that the Mongols conquered the world during the reign of Genghis Khan, and his son, Houlako. After a long battle, Baghdad fell in 1258 to their brutal control.

From these historical records, one can verify that global ambitions were born from worldly drives, and that global control occurred from time to time. However, many of these forms of globalisation do not seem to appeal to contemporary human beings. It seems natural at this point to first discuss the definition of globalisation.

The Definition of Globalisation

One should begin by establishing a reasonable definition of globalisation, before moving on to speak about a technical approach for establishing its history, and its different phases. Malcolm Waters (1995) has elaborated on the definition of globalisation, and has given three versions of it:

1. Globalisation, in its primitive aspect, can be traced back to the first universal elements found in the minds of ambitious individuals; however, during recent decades it has been given a strong push forwards. This version of

globalisation is older than contemporary civilization.

2. Globalisation associated with modernity and former colonization is an outcome of Capitalism. One has, unfortunately, become accustomed to this conception of globalisation that severely limits it to the idea of capitalistic Westernisation. It is therefore in Islamic societies that globalisation constitutes a distinguished version of the notion of the triumph of Americanisation.
3. Globalisation is the eventual natural consequence of social development, which despite being associated with economic, political and strategic aspects, is still an inevitable natural, historical procedure. Globalisation comprises of a very long process, extending over the course of many centuries, involving cultural, political, socio-communicative, and economic dimensions.

More realistically, it should be argued that globalisation, belonging to ancient times, necessitated military control of foreign territory, and subsequent violation of sovereignty. Extensive use of violence, in many cases associated with ruthless cruelty, was a must for achieving this goal. It was therefore an ambitious fixation to fight for, on the one hand, and a physical threat to resist and fight against, on the other. It was a dangerous, risky full-scale project, full of potential; with a chance of either victory or defeat.

In those sporadic episodes of militarily imposed globalisation, the existence of rigorous political and totalitarian global control failed to create opportunity for peaceful cultural confrontation on the level provided in the present time. Narrow-mindedness was standard from individuals and communities alike; fertile ground for intolerant inhumane ideologies.

At a much later stage, following the First and Second

Scientific Industrial Revolutions, it became the done thing to invade other countries under the banner of exporting civilization, especially for the purpose of imposing a modern style of living on the people of the third world. Globalisationists emphasized certain social conducts and special plausible individual acts. This produced societal phenomena skimming the surface, manifested by westernising the world population with the help of certain Western products, including specific dress codes in imitation of the Western master, as a symbol of globalisation. This approach acquired momentum to make such trends the ultimate goal of Western-minded theoreticians amongst the Third World countries in the present time.

Currently, the very word 'globalisation' is a result of space and time compression, as it implies a teleological and deterministic deity bereft of human agency or of political will. Economic and technological approaches to globalisation have tended to regard globalisation in a rationalist and scientific manner. Economic, political and cultural forms of globalisation are commonly associated with a reality 'out there' and we see this perspective daily in governmental policy proposals because, as they say, 'there is no alternative' to market discipline, and the vagaries of the windswept global economy. It is more technical to leave the final definition of globalisation to a later stage, while first proceeding to study the phases of globalisation, as it may enrich our minds with regards of the correct definition.

The Different Phases of Globalisation

Many intellectuals have established different phases of globalisation, in order to contribute to the understanding of the historical background of this concept.

According to Ronald Robertson's definition of globalisation, the concept can be traced back to the fifteenth century.

Robertson has established five phases to which globalisation can be traced within the intellectual milieu:

- The Primary phase from the Fifteenth century
- The Second phase from the second half of the seventeenth century till around 1870
- The Third phase from 1870 till 1920
- The Fourth phase from 1920 till 1960
- The Fifth phase which has lasted from 1960 until the present day.²

This strict distinction - or the precise differentiation between phases (as these are distinguished through exact time and specific years) and their backgrounds is unclear for certain phases. Its beginning is especially questionable, as if globalisation is defined in its primitive context, then how one can claim it never existed in the ancient epochs of human history? If it indicates a sophisticated form of globalisation -which we are going to elaborate on later- then the last part of this division is entirely incorrect. In a nutshell, this approach totally fails to introduce a fair specification of the huge conceptual transformation into the modern phase, where the tools have greatly altered. We refer to this point here, and mark it as a postulate, which we intend to discuss at the next stage.

Globalisation: An Ontological Approach

Most academic intellectuals took the existence of the concept and its practice for granted throughout history, some

² Ronald Robertson, *Globalization*, K. Pouladi (tran.), Tehran: Nashreh Thaleth, 2002, pp. 21-32.

even considering it an unquestionable fact. Many of the materials of debate and discussions are missing the point. Many historians are also insufficiently precise while referring to the different phases of globalisation. Nor have we seen much discussion about whether globalisation has been through any essential development to cause an ontological change in its nature. Globalisation of the ancient days -where it existed- was characterized mainly through totalitarian control and the extensive use of violence to amalgamate the majority of the world's different countries and diverse territories. Therefore it was rarely brought about without bloodshed and inhumane massacres. This form of globalisation was based on completely different hardware, and therefore the primordial software is only suitable for that particular kind of globalisation.

In the ancient epochs of man's past, globalisation was made possible mainly through the extensive use of force, and therefore it was unavoidably associated with violence and aggressive campaigns. Globalisation in its former and distant ancient forms, especially before the transitional phase, was a case to struggle for, while now, as has been argued, it has become an inevitable process that should be taken into consideration, whether voluntarily or with regret.

Modern technology, consisting of modern forms of transport, such as supersonic airplanes, the vast communication networks, with satellites, mobile technologies and the Internet, are all powerful tools.

Therefore for the current period of time, one does not refer to the same concept or even to any of its extensions. The philosophy, the strategies, the tools, or to sum up: the hardware and software of globalisation have considerably changed, and global control has totally transformed into an absolutely different form, dependent on modern tools, and, therefore, equally dependant on sophisticated programs.

Globalisation, in its main contemporary new transitional status, has become neutral towards violence, opening increasing space for dialogue, communication, and even for the passive manipulation of the mass media.

Through Global Envision one hopes to reach more people in order to share accounts and the challenges of improving the quality of life, learning about different cultures and generally improving the state of the world. If one can engage those, who are either geographically or culturally distant, in discussion about life in the age of modern globalisation, one may eventually become inspired to get directly involved in implementing or supporting one's own and other people's cultural solutions with a view to establishing social justice, fighting poverty, and struggling against political oppression and tyranny.

The Last Decades of Massive Changes

The end of the Cold War opened up new opportunities for creating a new, just, global social order, based on equal opportunities, and capable of paving the way for favourable economic conditions, leading to justice and prosperity for all mankind. This global order was supposed to have been based on a set of universal moral principles, on commonsensical ideology, and on plans of social justice, all of which could have contributed to a happy future, and diminished any stress of modern technology and whatever negative impact it may have on humanity. The world had the chance to set up a prosperous standard of living and a fairly just alternative to anything that had gone before; however it has, so far, missed the opportunity and fallen very wide of the mark. The majority of sincere policy makers, decent businessmen, honest academics, and most of the public were devoid of a clear vision of what should be done, how it should be set up, and what potentially could have been achieved. However, greedy commercial financial interest-

seekers, on the other hand, knew precisely what they wanted and planned their next steps, assiduously, in order to get it. Their desire was to seize these new opportunities to design and create a new world order that would open up further interests for themselves; for the corporations of the advanced industrial countries. They used the US government to advance their perspectives. Western Europe participated in it to some extent; used its economic power, its position as the only other sole economic and military power along with the USA, which was mushrooming into a mega power. The former allied group used its powerful position to create a set of policies in the International political arena in general and in the area of trade in particular, that were grossly unfair.

In conclusion, we have all become familiar with the ongoing debate about the desirability of globalisation; pro-globalisation or repulsion; and the anti-globalisation arguments. In this work we will avoid extensive debate of being for or against, as long as it implies an optional choice; we may, however, concentrate more on analysing other more crucial aspects of the 'must-side' globalisation. It is important, now, to introduce a brief argument of both parties, i.e. pro-; and anti-globalisation.

Pro- and Anti- Globalisation

Globalisationists argue that a globalised world would be a far more prosperous and peaceful one than the world of today, advocating that one must, therefore, struggle to establish globalisation. The antis, on the other hand, predict a world of universalised poverty, social instability and oppression, urging that we should resist it at all costs, and mobilize the masses to fight it. It, therefore, becomes essential to discuss the economic, social and political implications of globalisation and everything it stands for.

The Economic Side

If we study the arguments of the pros and antis in the economic sector, one comes face to face with the main challenge; poverty. There are economic analysts who argue that globalisation has enormous positive effects on industrial production, resulting in massive over-productivity. In the same vein then, if we were, indeed, living in a new global economy, on the basis of innovative information and modern high technologies we would expect to see a significant impact on productivity growth. As history attests, during the first and second industrial revolutions, the introduction of steam power, electricity, and the internal combustion engine gave productivity a marked increase. Applying similar expectations to the information revolution, one would expect these innovations to have a profound effect in stimulating new productive investments, more productive utilization of capital and new ways of stimulating output per capital investment. However, this simply is not the case. A comparison of productivity growth in the United States over the past half-century fails to support the argument of the proponents of the third scientific Industrial Revolution (TSIR). Between 1953 and 1973 productivity grew on average by 2.6 percent; while between 1972 and 1995 productivity fell to a mere 1.1 percent (Wolfe, 1999:10).³

If we study the arguments of the antis from the perspective of poverty we see that their concern is for the impact of globalisation on the poor of the south, or the people of the third world. For those areas, globalisation offers one of its most potentially damaging effects. At the moment it is causing a widening rift between the rich and the poor by making the rich increasingly richer by acquiring gains on the

³ Henry Veltmeyer, "The Myth of the Third Technological-Industrial Revolution", in *Globalization and Antiglobalization*, Henry Veltmeyer (ed.), Ashgate/USA, 2004, p. 13.

backs of the poor.

Johan Norberg turns to the positive aspects of globalisation and tries to refute its critics. He agrees with the first claim but refutes that this is responsible for the poor becoming poorer, relying on a variety of measurements of prosperity and quality of life to back his stance. He has examined and documented, quite extensively, each of these measures of increased prosperity.⁴

The worldwide improvement in the human condition is reflected in a very rapid growth of average life expectancy.⁵

He also documents the fact that worldwide infant mortality is down, as is world hunger. Norberg claims that access to drinkable water has increased from only 10% of the world's rural population a decade ago to 75% today. Other indicators include the fact that illiteracy has been significantly reduced, and democratisation is strongly on the rise. He attributes the rapid adoption of globalisation to the freedom of decision-making that it gives to individuals, and makes a strong case for economic freedom being the required precedent to political freedom.

In the long run it is hard for dictatorships, once they have accepted economic freedom, to avoid introducing political liberty as well.⁶

In fact, it is the relationship between freedom of all kinds and globalisation that is Norberg's primary defence of global capitalism. He finds global free markets to be the best

⁴ Johan Norberg, *In Defense of Capitalism*, Cato Institute, 2003, pp. 25-47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

avenue of individual freedom of choice; which has always inspired him. Norberg is optimistic that, despite setbacks like trends toward protectionism and the failure of trade negotiations, freedom will prevail.

People who have acquired a taste for freedom will not consent to be shut in by walls and fences. They will work to create a better existence for themselves and to improve the world we live in. They will demand freedom and democracy. The aim of politics should be to give them that freedom.⁷

With these words he closes his book; words, which to several commentators sound like a utopian political cry of youthful idealism. Nonetheless, his over-optimism in the face of global critics, his inability to evaluate the dangerous side effects, and his almost stubborn neglect of his opponents' arguments are pitiful and give the reader a lopped-sided view of the globalisation debate. It is this disproportionate image based on over-optimism which has paved the way for the disregard of human rights, the increase of oppression in the global society, not to mention devastating policies.

The Social and Political Side

From a sociological point of view, we are observing an essentially different approach. One can talk explicitly, for instance, of cultural vandalism and its derogatory effect on the social structures of many conservative societies based on totally different cultural systems and, arguably, higher moral values than that of the Americans.

Many consider consuming certain American products is itself a big sign of Westernisation or rather Americanisation.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

Now, what do we see when we look closely at this so-called phenomenon: Americanisation or Westernisation is presumed to be best achieved when individuals worldwide consume American products, such as Coca Cola, Mc Donald's Hamburgers, wear western jeans, or when everybody watches Walt Disney cartoons. To my understanding these things do not really reflect a Western attitude and the claim is not correct. In fact it is not the name of the products that counts, rather the moral apathy of the life-style, which is associated with consuming these products that makes the big difference. Western culture, or American values are not summarized by those products, but rather the life-style which is combined with consuming them. Thus, the cultural aspects of globalisation are extremely complex. Even when the same products are found around the world, they may mean different things to different countries; sometimes even a contrary indication or symbol.

It is absurd to claim, for example, that a Bedouin in Mecca's Saudi Arabian Mc Donald take-away is Americanised, or that his consuming of KFC's chicken fries reflects the perfect manifestation of Westernisation, exactly in the same way that a large adoption of an Eastern form of sport, such as Yoga, or the extensive spreading of Eastern entertainments and sexual pleasure techniques, such as the kama sutra or tantra, are in any way examples of Easternisation in the West.

In fact, my personal belief is that it is moral values, which used to have a profound effect, and were constantly the cause of division and dispute among leading political, economic, social, cultural as well as religious key figures, that are the main core of making an acceptable form of 'a human-friendly software of globalisation'.

Politically, the core reason for dispute between the ruling powers is that the alternatives presented are not necessarily

religious or human-friendly alternatives. They are, thus, considered with suspicion and can never be seen as a solution, as the hegemonic party insists on removing even a shred of divine element from the historic scene and the socio-political framework as long as it poses a threat to its interests.

The distinction between different styles of imposed globalised culture had its political effects; therefore it has established the ground for a dual-term of Globalisation=Westernisation to become replaced by Globalisation=Americanisation, which actually reflects, more realistically, a substantial gap between the former allies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Many argue today that the basic purpose behind the US attack on Afghanistan was an attempt to reverse the relative decline of the US Empire and to simultaneously re-establish its hegemony in regions of conflict. The war in Afghanistan was meant to accommodate aims of a general imperial counter-offensive that had several components, such as:

- To re-establish the subordination of Europe to Washington;
- To reassert total control in the Gulf and the Middle East;
- To deepen and extend military penetration into Latin America and Asia;
- To increase military warfare in Colombia and project power throughout the rest of the continent;
- To increase state spending on weapons, and subsidies for near bankrupt TNCs (airlines, insurance, and tourist agencies) and regressive tax reductions to halt a deepening recession, which would undermine public

support for the empire-building project.⁸

Conversely, when considering both economic and social outcomes, one generally speaks of the political aspects of globalisation and its effects in the international arena in shaping new frameworks for international relationships.

These techniques are honing new facets from the original concepts and adding meaning to those already within the framework of old international relationship theories.⁹

The Inevitable Factors of Globalisation

Globalisation, according to its advocates as well as its opponents, has ushered in a new era of late or post-modernism development, the cultural, religious, economic and political dynamics of which have become focal points of a broad range of studies from diverse perspectives. So ingrained has this notion of globalisation become that even its opponents have succumbed to the submission that the process is both inevitable and inescapable.¹⁰ According to this claim some critics argue that the best and only ‘realistic option’ –as Casteneda (1993) has put it—is to enter into the globalisation process under the most favourable conditions available, and to adjust to its requirements as painlessly as possible. This may apply from both the cultural as well as political and economic perspectives.¹¹ This position is,

⁸ Henry Veltmeyer, “The Myth of the Third Technological-Industrial Revolution”, in *Globalization and Antiglobalization*, Henry Veltmeyer (ed.), Ashgate/USA, 2004, p. 37.

⁹ Sayed Abdul Ali Qawam, “The Crisis of Meaning in the Era of Globalisation”, *Foreign Policy*, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 635. See also Robert Kohen and Joseph Nay, “Globalization: New and Old News”, *Foreign Policy*, vol. 14, no. 2, p.375.

¹⁰ Basem ‘Adheeb, “Cultural Globalisation”, *Al-Qasab*, vol. 7, no. 25, p. 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

economically, most clearly articulated in the World Bank's 1995 *World Development Report*. Among others, Keith Griffin, by no means an uncritical globalist, allows for no possible alternative to an adjustment to what cannot be avoided or changed (Bienefeld, 1995; Griffin, 1995).¹²

On the other side, there are many who believe that globalisation, which is often presented as an irresistible force, is a scam. For one thing, it is designed as an ideology and as such, does not explain 'what is going on'; rather, it serves to direct action towards an end desired by the apologists, and supporters, of the existing system.¹³ These claims -to a certain extent- comprise of a true point, however, they are partly refutable. With regards to the hardware, we ought to accommodate these new technologies within the framework of the economic system, social structures, cultural and moral values, and political organizations. However, with regards to the software, one should emphasize the values that rule over the whole program, and embrace the human-friendly spirit that dominates the course.

An Evaluation

The Anti-globalisation movement, notwithstanding its considerable capacity to mobilize intellectual and political

¹² However these are against clear evidence to the contrary presented opinion in the text by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with which he is himself associated, Griffin sees a trend towards convergence, which is creating opportunities for some developing countries to participate in the fruits of development engendered by globalisation. In this connection, Griffin adopts a view held not only by the economists at the World Bank but by most sceptics and critics of globalisation. See for example: "Globalization and Antiglobalization" in *The Myth of the Third Technological-Industrial Revolution*, Henry Veltmeyer (ed.), Ashgate/USA, 2004, pp. 15-16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

forces of opposition and resistance, is very limited in political terms. Much more significant in these terms are the socio-political movements being formed in the countryside and urban centres of Latin America and elsewhere on the 'periphery' of the capitalist system. Politicians are undermining and weakening the middle classes in these societies and polarizing them between the propertied and the working classes -what Hardt and Negri choose to term 'the multitude'- and between the forces of reaction and socio-political movements for revolutionary change. Some of these movements are community-based or formed by grassroots forms of organization.¹⁴ On the other hand, one may observe how the Pro-globalisation groups are more organized, enriched with both economic and intellectual sources, which make it a high-class choice.

Although there are spirited arguments for both parties of 'for' and 'anti' globalisation, it is possible, on balance, to agree with the arguments of both sides, looking at things from each perspective, when they speak about the systematic results or the natural outcome of just or unjust policies. There is a huge flaw in the argumentation of both parties. Both pro- and anti-globalisationists are misleading and missing the point.

It is quite logical to assert that the same reasons leading to humanity's miserable and severe conditions in the past may affect, although in a different way, various aspects of the disastrous and huge economic gap between the poor in the south and the rich in the north at the present time. The growth of economic globalisation and free-markets may hold great promise for poor communities around the world, but only on condition that the process evolves with fairness and responsibility. Great attention and humane care is needed to

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

ensure that the world's rich do not leave the poorer members behind, while these immense changes are taking place. A world of overwhelming inequity between rich and poor is a recipe for hopelessness, anger and social unrest, none of which is due to high technology.

The solutions are possible and global peace and justice are attainable provided mankind is keen to follow Divine guidance and human-friendly moral values, putting them into practice, after eagerly designing policies dedicated to find the world's treasures to share them.

The Human-Friendly and Dehumanising Forms

According to some theoreticians, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world was about to surrender to Capitalism; and it was claimed that the Western model should become the final ideology for mankind to rule and be ruled by. In fact the United States, considering itself a mega power, acted as though it was capable of guaranteeing world security, and being morally fit to fill the vacuum of global moral values. The main ethical challenge is not whether technology can make life physically easier, but rather whether it can bring about mankind's prosperity and happiness. If happiness is defined as equal economic prosperity, it follows that many Western countries, especially the USA, have yet to bestow happiness on all its citizens.

No form of globalisation can be accepted by mankind unless it fulfils the people's needs and provides positive responses for their human inquiries. The core reason for accepting globalisation as successful, is its capacity to be human-friendly, while the central reason for rejecting it lies in its dehumanising methods.

The fact is that no software can lead humanity to happiness

that is mainly manifested in political liberty, economic prosperity, social stability and spiritual tranquillity, unless it fulfils the following requirements:

1. All of the programs -regardless of which field and for what purposes they are designed for - should take all of mankind's natural needs into consideration. One should also remember that there is a life hereafter where each and every individual will stand responsible for whatever has been committed.¹⁵
2. All of the programs -regardless of which field and for which purposes they are designed for- should accommodate the material as well as the spiritual and Divine values of all mankind's various beliefs.
3. All of the programs -regardless of which field and to which purposes they are designed for- should remain firm with zero-tolerance towards any form of injustice, pointless discrimination, futile invasion or oppression.

The result of globalisation based on such software is probably a human-friendly globalisation, as there is a real chance that it would enable mankind to control itself, its ego and human nature in a reasonable and balanced way. This would make a person become master of his ego and nature, rather than slave to his lustful desires and the pitiless aspects of his nature. If this version prevails, one might expect a bright future for mankind and a flourishing opportunity for humanity.

If these principles are ignored, adhering to opposite principles, the prevalent rule would definitely be 'survival of

¹⁵ Ramin Khanbegi, *Kitab Naqd*, Tehran/I.R.Iran, 2003, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 3; *Ibid.*, vol. 7, no. 1.

the fittest', where the global village would be transformed into an empowered jungle. Only spiritually and morally sick human beings can survive this kind of globalisation, which is naturally a necessary outcome of dehumanising software. There is one exemption to this, that is to say, unless they are metamorphosed.

In our narrations we have a very similar description relating to the time before the appearance Al-Mahdi's (as). In the *Kitab Al-Irshad* of Shaikh Mufid we read:

Ali b. Abi Hamza (reported) on the authority of Abu al-Hassan Musa (as):

'Concerning the words of Him, the Mighty and High: We will show them our signs on the horizons and in themselves so that it will become clear to them that it is the truth.' (Qur'an XLI: 53), He said: 'There will be a disturbance on the horizons and the enemies of truth will be changed in form.' (*Kitab Al-Irshad*, p. 544)

He also says: 'Traditions have been reported mentioning the signs for the time of the appearance, together with the indication and features of it. Among them are: The Sufyani... (until he says) a group of heretics (Ahl ul-Bida') will be transformed until they become monkeys and pigs...etc' (*Kitab Al-Irshad*, p. 542)

The same accounts of information are also mentioned in many other compilations of Hadeeth. This account of narrations, referring to the signs of the time of Al-Mahdi's (as) appearance, will one day become crystal clear for everyone.

Father Frank Julian Gelli in one of his recent rants (Number 148, on 23 September 2004) wrote under the title: 'Metamorphosis' a thought-provoking and rather pleasant

article. He says:

Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is one of the most terrifying stories ever written. It is also rather comical. A man wakes up one morning in his bedroom, to find himself transformed into a giant cockroach. His family is at first shocked, then understanding, disdainful and finally blasé - *c'est la vie...*

Watching on TV last night poor Ken Bigley – the British hostage threatened with death in Baghdad – plead with Tony Blair for his life was atrocious. The PM holds Bigley's life in his hands. But Blair, a Man of Iron, has already declared he will not deal with the militants. Sigh...how predictable.

A statesman, Machiavelli cynically observes, however wrong, must be strong – oh, yes, so very strong, strength itself. Here Kafka's mischievous shadow comes up. What if, by a fantastic transformation, Tony found himself thrust, tied and blindfolded, under imminent sentence of death by beheading, into the cruel hands of pitiless captors, in Bigley's place? Down there in that imaginary dark, murky, hot stinking hole of a cellar somewhere by the river Tigris, roughly handled, mocked, sworn at in harsh, guttural Arabic, how would he feel?

In fact he was clever here in implementing an adequate example of metamorphosis in this case. As astute readers can realize while reading between the lines through this rant that there are groups nowadays who must be morally metamorphosed. The terrorism and occupation are homogeneously disgusting in this regard and equally illegal, according to the International Law. Beyond doubt the Iraqi civilians, such as, amongst others, the late Ayatollah S. M. Baqir Al-Hakim, who was assassinated after the collapse of the Iraqi dictator's regime, and the foreign civilians, such as, the United Nations Representative to Iraq Sergio Viera de Mello, who died in a bombing incident in Baghdad, are

equivalent innocents. One should rather say: they are the scapegoats.

The Final Definition of Globalisation

Many writers have advanced a more critically astute assessment of globalisation. Here, the case is put that the characteristics of globalisation are conceived as:

A process (or set or processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact, generation transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.¹⁶

Sociologists such as Anthony Giddens and Roland Robertson have linked globalisation to a more overarching and perhaps even profound process of global modernization which has uncoupled our conventional understanding of the relationship between time and space, cemented around the concept of modern national society. Robertson argued that:

Globalisation as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world.

For Robertson, globalisation represents not only material/objective networks and flows of economics and politics but it also incurs a change in the subjective perception of the world as a concrete and authentic place to live, rather than an abstract place to live. The paradox is, as 20th century German philosopher Martin Heidegger pointed out, that an increasing sense of 'nearness' works parallel in

¹⁶ Held et al., cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham, p. 2-5.

modern society, with an uneasy feeling of 'rootlessness'.¹⁷

This is the core factor for how one should perceive contemporary globalisation, which is a natural outcome of rootlessness, with all that this word implies. The impact of the new technologies of transport and communication on our perception of space and time is socially, economically, politically and culturally significant. On the one hand we find a distancing of the condition under which time and space are recognized so as to connect presence and absence. Alternatively, the process of social and political disembeddedness occurs where social relations are lifted out of their local context and restructured. Such developments have strategic implications for the politics of globalisation. Yet a celebration of localism, even nationalism, is an understandably defensive reaction to the bewildering global politics. Globalisation can thus be defined at this intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.¹⁸

Giddens suggested that structures should be understood as the rules, resources and power, occurring in specific time and space, which are simultaneously both enabling and constraining of social/political action and are the medium and the outcome of agency. The production of social interaction is seen from this perspective as a historically contingent accomplishment of the actions of knowledgeable social actors. Consequently, present causes and outcomes of political actions are mediated through structures at specific

¹⁷ Anthony Giddens and Roland Robertson, cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham, pp. 21-22.

¹⁸ Anthony Giddens, cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham.

points by reflexive agents who then rearrange the conditions for future actions. In this critical spirit, Germain and Kenny suggested that 'by insisting on the transformatory capacity of human beings' a 'radical embrace of human subjectivity, provides one way of avoiding a deterministic and a historical structuralism'. Germain and Kenny pointed out that structural limits of, for instance, resources and power:

...are not fixed and immutable but exist within the dialectics of given social structure. And whilst it is true that this social structure both constrains and constitutes social action, it is equally true that social action has a transformative impact upon its constraining structure.¹⁹

The course of social history results from mutually constituting agent choices and structural dispositions. Neither comes before the other: there is no chicken/actor without the egg/structure and vice versa. On the one hand, structural forces largely established the range of options that are available to actors in a given historical context. Structures also generally encourage agents to take certain steps rather than others. At the same time, however, structures depend on an accumulation of actor decisions for their creation and subsequent perpetuation.²⁰

Using this critical sentiment, Cerny has suggested that globalisation must be seen to be a complex set of economic and political structures and processes deriving from the changing character and value of goods and assets as held by different actors, individuals, institutions and/or states. Through this structurationist approach Cerny contended that

¹⁹ Germain and Kenny, cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham.

²⁰ Scholte, cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham.

structures are more or less those embedded sets, patterns, constraints and opportunities for action which are both enabling and dynamic patterns of interaction that take place on or across structured fields of action. These specific fields are made up of complex multilayered economic, political, cultural and social structures that incorporate distinct structural levels or different games with different payoffs from different agents.²¹

In conclusion, globalisation today refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of world consciousness. As such it comprises of two main factors: hardware and software, which compress all former economic, political, cultural and social patterns and introduce new forms, shapes, concepts and methods that may transform our world into more sophisticated fields of interaction of the various human civilizations.

Conclusions

- Globalisation in its primordial forms is ontologically different compared with modern globalisation. One speaks of an absolutely distinct concept with dissimilar hardware, and different software. Despite this, many former colonialists may be accused of resuming their cultural hegemony and political oppression, yet any attempt to link the old forms with this contemporary phenomenon is doomed to technical failure.
- This form of globalisation, as a transitional new phase of historical development associated with an inexorable package, is inevitable. Mankind has reached its ultimate level of communication technology, which has reduced time and space, squashing the world into a global village.

²¹ Cerny, cited in *Rethinking the Politics of Globalization, theory, concepts and strategy*, Iain Watson, UK: University of Durham.

Conversely, its hardware will be implemented, and its software, being either Divine or evil, will, willingly or unwillingly, be evaluated, its consequences steadily accommodated and, within already existing frameworks, systematically adapted.

- The software is the main instrument for making it globally acceptable. When Divine nature and constructive moral values are adopted it will become human-friendly. Other Divine-negligent dehumanised forms will not succeed, and if they provisionally seem to do so, they will not persist unless humanity is morally metamorphosed.

Chosen Globalisation and Hegemonic Globalisations: Futurist Expectations of Final Revitalization of Human Life—The Second Coming

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Globalisation is about the compression of time and space displacement due to the existence of modern world communications which have greatly reduced distances between parts of the world. Globalisation as such is the result of the emergence of the global communication industry which is considered the vital point for the appearance of many forms of globalisation overtly, in cultural performance, and covertly in cognitive orientation in the search for meaning and wisdom in life. According to the literature of the Futurists, two major changes will take place in life. The first, related to technological changes in the overt aspect of life will develop pervasive computing communication that induces a single space of life similar to that in which people live. People will see, hear and even feel each other simultaneously; hence the concept of east and west, far and near will be dispelled. This technological change potentially creates a similar context for life experience and has the power of creating a common good or bad society. The second related expectation is reverse globalisation of decency in opposition to many globalisations of evil. Reverse globalisation explains the covert aspect of life reinforcement to return to universal human values of peace, respect, justice and mercy parallel to globalisations of war, disrespect, oppression and the hegemony of anger.

'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, heard the Prophet (peace upon him and his family) say: 'The world will not come to an end until a man from my family (*ahl al-bayt*), who will be called al-Mahdi, emerges to rule over my community.¹

The core meaning of civilization is the limiting of violence in inter-human relations, while in terms of historical methodology even in the last century of the second millennium; the rise of

¹ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 75.

civilization is to be connected to periods of the dissolution of order.²

Introduction

The emergence of globalisation as the second force in world power is only now being realized as a hegemonic strength that can reinforce the more powerful at the expense of demolishing the rest of the world. There is indeed a serious question and fear that arises; does globalisation work for the good of the world, enabling education to reach all people, enhancing talents and capabilities so as to free the world's population from the yoke of poverty, or will it lead to a global social justice or bring inexorably to the further domination of the majority of people by the business and political interests of the few? Is there a single globalisation in the world or are there numerous globalisations taking place relatively and partially around the world? Are these vital questions, issues of globalisation? Aside from this, according to the religious values of all divine religions, there is a strong belief that one day a saviour will come to establish justice and global peace in the society. Is there any relationship between the 'divine globalisation of justice' and the 'hegemonic globalisation of injustice'? Is it possible to explain Mahdavidism by the idea of globalisation as a phenomenon related to technological advancement or is the globalisation of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) a spectacle completely detached from globalisation as such?

This paper is an attempt to make a relationship between the literature of Mahdavidism and the technological capacity of the current world together with the gradual appearance of the 'dissident culture' and 'social characteristic' that emerged

² A. Szokolzai, "Civilization and its Sources", *International Sociology*, 2001, no. 16, p. 369.

among the masses in the form of a 'universal orientation towards justice' and the appearance of fairness and righteousness, which seems to be detached from patriotism and even religious dogmatism.

From this perspective, on the one hand, the intensification of injustice and ignorance among rulers of the world, and on the other hand the expansion of knowledge and the emergence of motivation for justice, are important grounds for the appearance of the 'chosen globalisation of Imam Mahdi' as opposed to the 'hegemonic globalisations of injustice'. It seems that this is an inevitable result of the 'cause and effect circle' and that it is indeed an expected future, the signs of which are already becoming visible. To explain this vision of the future, we will firstly discuss two different approaches to Mahdavidism, and then take a glance at the idea of globalisation as a sociological term and relevant typology. In the third part, different aspects of Mahdavidism will be explored and finally we will try to present a picture of Imam Mahdi's Age as a 'post-globalisation era'.

1. Two Approaches to Mahdavidism

Belief in Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) is not a kind of 'ism' or kind of 'ideology'. It is more about the natural demands of humanity and the common values of all members of human society, as opposed to the ideology of a particular society or community. Mahdavidism therefore is not used here as an ideological term causing divisions among human society, but rather it is a term which explains the idea of 'Imam Mahdi' and the characteristics of his time.

There are two different visions for the day of 'Imam Mahdi's Appearance'. According to the first series of discussions, everything seems to appear like a miracle. The Imam will dominate all hearts; everyone will submit to his

orders and his commands, he will speak to a global human society and everyone will be able to hear him simultaneously and he will demolish all superpowers miraculously. This vision explains the Imam's position in relation to the people rather the people's loyalty towards the Imam. Everything is therefore related to a miraculous leader. The second orientation is more or less a vision or a historical philosophy that explains Imam Mahdi's Government according to the logic of causality. Here, while interpreters articulate on the divine power of the Imam, they try to explain all incidents based on the logic of cause and effect. They endeavour to discern as to why people will submit to his message as well as to why people love their Imam and why is society so hungry for his message? What is the main factor causing society to turn from materialism to spiritualism? Answers to all these questions explore the reasons as to why people deliberately and consciously choose the Imam as their leader as opposed to how the Imam penetrates the hearts of the people or how the people unconsciously accept the Imam. According to the second vision, the globalisation of Imam Mahdi's message is not a globalisation from above, it is not domination, but conversely, his globalisation is a chosen globalisation; a globalisation from below; a globalisation that every single person is willing to experience.

The Imam's justice and the purity of his message, the beauty of his manner and intention; his divine personality and generosity, in particular his acquaintance, knowledge and wisdom are the main factors, which will bring all individuals together around his spiritual leadership. The Imam's knowledge and his concern regarding knowledge and intellect is crucial evidence that underlines the Imam's time as a society of knowledge and rational choice. During the Age of the Mahdi, human reason will have reached its ultimate perfection. General information among people will have advanced to such a degree that women will be able to formulate judicial decisions while at home.

Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said³:

Knowledge is divided into twenty-seven parts. No more than two parts have been acquired by human beings so far. When our *Qa'im* arises he will expose the rest of the twenty-five parts and distribute it among the people.⁴

The time of the Imam can also be distinguished as an 'ethical society' in which not only all human beings, but also all creatures of God, including animals, nature and environment are highly respected. No one will lose their opportunities in life because of others and justice will prevail in all aspects of life. That is why the globalisation of the Imam will reign supreme, as it is the ultimate desire of humans. Any violence will solely be due to *Jihad* against those who act against justice and look for superiority over others.

According to a *hadith* reported by the *ahl al-bayt*, it appears that when the world has become psychologically ready to accept the government of God and when general conditions have become auspicious to the idea of the rulership of the truth, God will permit Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) to launch his final message. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) relates:

When the Master of the Age appears, the young among his followers, without any prior appointment, will rouse themselves and reach Mecca that very night.⁵

³ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52. p. 363.

⁴ قال صادق عليه السلام: العلم سبعة و عشرون حرفا و جميع ما جانت به الرسل حرفان، فلم يعرف الناس حتى اليوم غير الحرفين، فاذا قام قائمنا، اخرج الخمسة و العشرين حرفا، فبيثها في الناس و ضم اليها الحرفين حتى يبيثها سبعة و عشرين حرفا.

⁵ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 370.

2. Globalisation: Contemporary Meaning and Power

Globalisation is about the compression of time and space, which has caused the displacement of the world's communications. Globalisation as such is a result of the emergence of the global communication industry which is considered as a vital point for the appearance of many globalisations that “overtly” formed in cultural performance and “covertly” in cognitive orientation in one's search for new choices and new experiences — globalisation is about the development of ‘power of choice’. According to Futurist literature, two major changes will take place in life.

The first relates to the technological changes — explicit aspects of life, which develop pervasive computing communication that induce a single space of life — people live in a similar space. They see, hear and even feel each other simultaneously, hence the concept of east and west and far and near is dispelled.

This technological change creates a similar context for life experience that potentially has the power to create a common good or bad society. The second expectation is related to a “reverse globalisation” of decency as opposed to “many globalisations” of evilness. Reverse globalisation explains how implicit aspects of life reinforce a return to the universal human values of peace, respect, justice and a mercifulness parallel to globalisations of war, disrespect, oppression and hegemony of anger.

To understand the concept of globalisation, one needs to know as to why globalisation is considered to be a new phenomenon. There have always been global networks of power and empires, often accompanied by fierce local resistance from colonized entities. Globalisation is new in terms of the speed at which it has occurred and the involvement of communication technology, which appears

to shrink geographical distance and time (Cvetkovich and Kellner, 1997). Communication occurs beyond time and space. The message arrives at the destination a thousand times more quickly than if the senders of the message delivered it themselves.

Instantaneous communication through a variety of media has changed our experiences of time and space. They have become distanced – we experience distant events unfolding instantaneously on the screen in our homes – or ‘compressed’ – spatial and temporal differences are radically undermined.⁶ Gillespie (1995) suggests that this speeding up, or growing intensity of time-space compression, has resulted in significant effects on social, economic and cultural processes. Society has been subjected to a constantly accelerated pace of change.

In this paper four types of globalisation are apparent and distinct. This aids us in our attempt to elaborate on its implementation, in relation to the globalisation taking place by Imam Mahdi’s society as opposed to the diversity of globalisations that are imposed by other forces looking for greater markets or expanded empires.

Non-Ideological Globalisation

Non-ideological globalisation has arisen from ‘usual’ globalisation, which historically goes back to a long history of global relationships and the historic exchange of civilization and culture, knowledge, information, money and goods. Non-ideological globalisation views globalisation more as natural trend taking place in the multi-processes of interconnectedness between the people of the world. The only difference between present-day ‘typical’ globalisation

⁶ M. Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 3.

and the past is the advancement of communication technology, which has ‘demolished’ the obstacles of place and time. As we see nowadays, people can access each other almost simultaneously, without any delay or attention paid to time and place. ‘Non-ideological’ globalisation can be made more transparent and comprehensible if one were to compare a world with an overarching ideological management by an overbearing superpower with a world-society in which the ‘natural process’ of communication and inter-change operated, independent of any ideological imposition upon the world’s people.

Ideological (Dominated) Globalisation

Ideological globalisation can be seen as a programme for changing the world in accordance with, say a superpower’s ideological interests. Such an understanding of the world creates two simultaneous orientations; an exclusive orientation that arises from a mono-centric perception of the world and an inclusive orientation, which is more based on communal and kinship-based notions of friendship and family networks. This type of orientation arises according to the motivation for more expansion of cultural and political domination.

Non-Cognitive (Light) Globalisation

While non-cognitive globalisation is extremely light and sprawling, it is indeed overtly very superficial in nature. One could argue that ‘light’ globalisation can be a result of both the natural process of the compression of the world into a single world society and the impact of ideological globalisation on everyday life in the form of consumerism. Non-cognitive globalisation induces non-cognitive changes, the result of the commodification of everyday life.

Cognitive (Powerful) Globalisation

Cognitive globalisation introduces the inward and deepening aspect, if not the more powerful effect of globalisation. Powerful globalisation, in contrast is not very extensive but it is covertly influential, significant and directive. Such a globalisation is more powerful than a non-cognitive one, as its effects remain more permanently among those who were penetrated by such an orientation.

Finally let us note that what is common between, and supported by all these definitions, is that communication technology — from transportation, telecommunication, mass media, global TV and radio, to cinema, internet and newspaper and news agencies, in addition to the development of international affairs — has linked the cultural relations of all societies, and in effect created what McLuhan called the ‘Global Village’ (Gary, 1999). If, in the past, neighbourhood meant being in the same avenue or small town, today the notion of ‘neighbourhood’ has a much wider social scope. Instantaneous communication has become available to everybody, from one side of the world to the other. This has enabled and vastly expanded social, economical as well as cultural contact between institutions and individuals at the local, regional and global level. It is the concomitants and ramifications of this process of expansion that one intends to look at here. Avoiding any kind of dogmatic, predetermined conception of where globalisation is heading, our starting point is the essentially cultural dimension of the process of globalisation. The technological, economic and political aspects of the material, formal processes of globalisation are viewed from this perspective as secondary and derivative. That is, they derive their significance from the impact they make on the cultural sphere, and from the role they play within the domain of the dissemination, propagation and ideologisation of cultures — particular, local ones extending in a global direction, as well

as those with already established global outreach. Moreover, it is not simply a question of a major, global culture — that of the West — dominating and extinguishing, one by one, all other local cultures. What is observed is rather more complex and nuanced. One sees a process of mutual interpenetration, whereby local, particular cultures — whether defined ideologically, religiously, ethnically, or in civic, communitarian, sectarian, or any other terms — interact with, are affected by and in turn impact upon the major producers of ‘global’ culture in the West. The lines of influence are thus two-way, they are complex and their consequences cannot be predicted in any precise fashion. Rather, one needs to examine particular contexts, asking precise questions, in relation to specific themes that can be empirically investigated. Conceptual analysis will then be based upon concrete findings rather than on theoretical generalizations; despite the fact that the analyst cannot escape entirely from the effects of primary assumptions such as enter into the very definition of the situation being examined, the choice of methodology, the nature of the questions asked, etc. But an effort is at least made in the direction of eliminating as far as possible any theoretical prejudices that will determine in advance the nature of the research. This having been said, let us briefly note the following three aspects of the cultural dimension of globalisation which, following observation and reflection, appear to us to be of a fundamental nature, and which form the conceptual basis of framing our research

1. Diversity of choice. Both within the local and from the local to the global level, the choices available to individuals, groups, and communities have been expanded, and are continuing to expand, exponentially. These choices are, at the most obvious level, within the sphere of consumption: goods and services, which were barely conceivable a generation ago, are now both available and instantly accessible. At a more subtle level,

the choices extend into life-styles, ideologies, and cultural attitudes. Not only do the goods available carry loaded cultural messages, but, more directly, cultural forms, icons, ideas, discourses, propaganda are also being disseminated on a global scale and with an intensity and variety that have immeasurably diversified cultural choice for individuals and groups around the world.

2. This trend has also intertwined cultures of different local regions all over the world, such that not only have already cosmopolitan cities become more overtly multicultural, but also all over the world, cities, towns and villages have been drawn into this ever-expanding web of interconnected cultural relations [Burayidi (1997), Kisbui, (1997) and Smith (1997)]. This global multiculturalism does not only solely mean that different nationalities live together in a society, which promotes cultural pluralism and tolerates ethnic diversity. This newer form of multiculturalism entails also the less tangible, less formal or empirical, processes by which different cultures interpenetrate on the plane of ideas, attitudes, ideologies; this interpenetration is made possible by the new global technologies. It is no longer necessary to live in a physical context composed of diverse cultures in order to participate in multiculturalism: in the global era, the instruments of communication bring multiculturalism into one's own home, wherever one may be living. Cyber space is the territory where multiculturalism takes root; virtual reality not only makes accessible a multitude of cultures, an infinitely expandable set of cultures; it even creates its own cultures and subcultures. Here, is the presence of a multiculturalism that knows no boundaries.
3. The unprecedented interaction between local and global cultures has produced a set of conditions in which the precise outcome cannot be defined in exclusively local or

exclusively global terms. The mutual influence between the two sources of cultural production, local and global, results in a reproduction, both of culture and identity fashioned in accordance with that culture; this new type of culture has been given the appropriate name, 'glocal' following on from those intertwined processes that Robertson terms 'glocalisation'. Neither local nor global forces are considered separately, and can reveal the dynamics of operating in the production of culture. The culture that shall be focused on in this study is that culture out of which British Muslim identity arises; and it is this notion of 'glocal' culture that forms one of the key conceptual orientations guiding this research.

From what we have discussed, the capacity and functions of globalisation as discussed in new literature of different disciplines of human sciences become transparent. From here I will try to explain the literature on Mahdavidism and I will try to explore the relationship between what we discussed so far about globalisation and the globalisation of Imam Mahdi.

3. Globalisation and the Time of the Imam's Appearance

Imam Mahdi's time has two interrelated elements, which incorporate the globalisation era into the Imam's Age. The first is the 'communication industry' and the second explains the cultural circumstances of the Imam's Age. To explain the first instance, one needs to review globalisation in a historical trend to find out how Imam Mahdi's Age can be incorporated with globalisation as discussed today. World society has experienced three types of globalisation (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000) so far; the fourth period is under procedure. Globalisation therefore from one perspective is not a new phenomenon, because the common global experience and shared values have existed since the emergence of politics and religion. However there are

differences overtly and covertly between these three types of globalisation.

1. **Traditional Globalisation:** The first globalisation refers to the emergence of political and religious power. Global empires such as the Rome Empire and the Persian Empire could subordinate many regions of the world. In this period one political destiny could be imposed on many parts of the world, therefore the similar policy could assimilate the people, same sort of tax system or perhaps land rules experienced by many people around the world. In a more extensive and profound manner the globalisation of divine religions should also be considered as an initiation of 'globalisation'. The emergence of divine religions such as Christianity and Islam brought inclusive and intensive common experiences for many people. Muslims around the world started to worship in the same way and carry out the same religious practices. They had common values despite their ethnic, geographical and gender differences around the world. Divine Religions can be considered as a 'globalisation force' because their messages had a universal address and the followers integrated themselves into an almost similar message. On many occasions in the Bible, the people of the world are addressed as the main audience of the Holy Book. The same thing can be found in the Qur'an; on several occasions Allah addresses mankind (Nas) and even when He addresses His message to the Believers (Momeneen), there is no geographic or demographical restriction and believers no matter where they are, become the subject of Allah's message. In this period changes were slow and communications were literally face to face and in person. That is why the expansion of Islam in world history is itself a global or proto-global process with its own distinctive internal dynamics (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000, Arjomand, 2004). Many of the other forms of globalisation have profound

ruts in the religious globalisation, some even believe that Economic globalisation has always required ideological legitimacy. In the first instance this legitimacy was explicitly theological; today in Roman Catholic circles it continues to be (Strenski, 2004).

2. Modern Globalisation: The industrial revolution and the machinisation of economic production reinforce the possibility of mass production and the common experience of consumption. In this period, numerous similar experiences, experienced through the standardization of production and education and commodification of everyday life with similar commodities, worked as a homogenisation of the life standard around the world. The invention of mechanical transport systems, integration of mail systems and telecommunication networks, create new grounds for distance communication. Although these communications created a smaller world, people still however led an isolated life when compared to the next period of time, when simultaneous communication started.
3. Simultaneous Globalisation: In this stage the interaction via telecommunications became much easier with a significantly lower cost price. The appearance of the internet was a turning point and it is indeed an initiation for the emergence of the second world—the virtual world parallel to the first world—the real world (Ameli, 2003 and 2004). Here dual globalisations become part of the life reality.
4. The fourth globalisation, w|
‘future globalisation’ is the pervasive globalisation . Pervasive globalisation is ‘communication without a visible instrument’. Pervasive globalisation is a concept that has arisen from ‘pervasive computing’. Pervasive computing is the next generation computing environment

with information and communication technology everywhere, for everyone, at any time. There are many methods proposed to reach the ultimate design goals of pervasive computing. Most of them are still at the hypothesis and early stages. In this paper, an initial investigation has been carried out to use active networks as the operating platforms for pervasive computing. Upon taking advantage of the active network paradigm, which offers flexibility and extensibility within networks, the active pervasive network infrastructure (APNI) framework is proposed (Eddie Law and So, 2004). Indeed, these new forms of pervasive computing challenge some of our fundamental ideas about subjectivity, visibility, space, and the distinction between public and private. This generation of computers is so well integrated with the environment that it will be difficult to distinguish between the two, which represents a profound transformation for everyday life (Cuff, 2003). The time of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) seems to reflect 'pervasive globalisation' rather than modern or simultaneous globalisation. It is the time when people will be able to see each other no matter how far or near, whether they are in the West or the East.

According to historical references that go back to time of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family), hidden forces from Allah will support the Imam, but this does not mean that everything will manifest itself in a miraculous way. The Imam's tradition is not detached from his ancestors. As the previous messengers and Imams were acting in a natural process of cause and effect without benefiting from wide and extensive miraculous interactions, Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) is expected to do the same. Therefore we need to explain his time and circumstances from that orientation.

What has been evidenced in previous literature concerning

his communication with mankind is very close to what we are observing today. Simultaneous communication creates a situation whereby firstly people around the world can communicate without any restriction of place and distance. Distance becomes meaningless, and here and there, far and near has lost its implication.

Abi Rabie Shami reported that Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said:⁷

When Imam Mahdi arises, Allah will extend peoples' listening and their vision in a way that there will not be any barriers between Imam Mahdi and them, therefore they don't need communication through the mailing system, the Imam will talk to them and they will hear the Imam while they are in their own place⁸ (even if they are far from Imam).

It means that Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) will distantly oversee the entire earth himself, with its widespread regions and extensive affairs accessible to him like the palm⁹ of his hand. His disciples and helpers will also observe and talk to him from remote distances¹⁰. The entire earth will be filled with justice and equity. In another *hadith*, Ibn Mascan suggested that he heard Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) say¹¹:

⁷ عن ابي ربيع الشامى، عن الامام الصادق عليه السلام، قال: ان قائمنا اذا قام مد الله لشيعتنا فى اسماعهم و ابصارهم، حتى لا يكون بينهم و بين القائم بريد، يكلمهم فيسمعون و ينظرون اليه، و هو فى مكانه.

⁸ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 327.

⁹ عن ابي بصير قال: قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: انه تناهت الامور الى صاحب هذا الامر رفع الله تبارك و تعالى له كل منخفض من الارض، و خفض له كل مرتفع حتى تكون الدنيا عنده بمنزله راحتته، فايكم لو كانت فى راحتته شعره لم يبصرها.

¹⁰ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 328.

¹¹ عن ابن مسكان، قال سمعت ابا عبدالله عليه السلام: يقول: ان المومن فى زمان القائم هو بالمشرق ليرى اخاه الذى بالمغرب، و كذا الذى فى المغرب يرى اخاه الذى فى المشرق.

The believers at the time of Imam Mahdi can see each other from abroad, while they are in the West, they can observe the people in the East and visa versa¹².

This is exactly what globalisation theorists such as Robertson (1992a and b) or Held *et al* (1999) have articulated. For them globalisation is about changes in the concept of 'time' and 'space'. In reality, time was the main reason for 'space distinction'; by the emergence of simultaneous communication, people are relatively living in a 'single space'. Morley and Robins¹³ suggest that new information and communication technologies have played a powerful role in the emergence of new spatial structures, relations and orientations. Corporate communications networks have also produced a global space of electronic information flows. The new media conglomerates have created a global image space. What is particularly significant is the transformed relationship between boundary and space that this entails. Things are no longer defined and distinguished in the ways that they once were by their boundaries, borders or frontiers.

The cultural and cognitive consequences of this new relationship between time and space in the age of instantaneous communication are of critical concern for the present research. The concept of 'time' and 'space', being 'far' or 'near', 'in here' or 'out there', 'alien' and 'compatriot', the meaning of 'citizenship' and 'Diaspora' and finally the concept of 'society' and 'community' have been partially changed. This has changed our social understanding, our sense of belonging and therefore our

¹² *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 391.

¹³ D. Morley and K. Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 75.

identity.

In terms of the cultural circumstances of the Imam's Age, many signs have been addressed through the Prophet of Islam and the late Imams. Before we review those narrations, we need to distinguish between the circles of globalisation, which have two circles of influence, which Roberston¹⁴ called: 'the universalisation of particularism and the particularization of universalism'. Universalistically it covers all aspects of life – one may call this the umbrella function of globalisation. The normative function of globalisation is the particularistic effects it has across the globe. This is the concept, which Mann¹⁵ explained as the 'global networks coverage'. He gave an example of the feminist movement, which spread through almost all countries, but usually only among rather particular, small groups. Another example is the Muslim fundamentalist movement, which has some presence in all continents but only has a relatively narrow base across Europe and the United States, while being one of the universal influences throughout the Muslim world. Capitalism may also be considered as a universal global network, which diffuses through economic and social life just about everywhere.

Coming back to the 'cultural circumstances' of the Imam's time, it seems that the globalisation era as discussed in the new literature, portrays many common grounds in relation to what had been raised in Islamic and even Christian literature about the second coming of the Mahdi and Jesus (peace be upon them both). Here we will discuss the similarities and differences in certain details. The first point that should be discussed is the 'global agony and global sympathy for the

¹⁴ R. Robertson, *Globalization*, London: Sage, 1992, p.97.

¹⁵ M. Mann, "Has Globalization Ended the Rise and Rise of the Nation-State?", Paper presented in the "Directions of Contemporary Capitalism Conference", in University of Sussex, April 1996, p. 24.

global disasters within human society around the world. Our current situation gives the impression that human societies around the world feel nostalgic and frustrated over the lack of a 'wise leadership' in the world. The world's leaders are either egocentric or nationalist. They do not have the capacity for leadership or to take action for the benefit of all human societies. People no matter in the West or the East, feel extensively insecure and in some instances they have been subordinated with 'great fear'. Phobia and stress is observable in daily matters of life. Consequently on the one hand, people are exhausted from being used as instruments of power and paradoxically being asked to confront each other. On the other hand, there is a great interest that is observable between all individuals and the masses for peace and security in the form of global friendship. Here I will highlight a few important points, which will provide a better understanding about the globalisation of Mahdavidism.

3.1. A Pervasive Globalisation among many Globalisations

Held *et al* (1999) identified four types of globalisation. The differences between them related to their intensity, velocity, extensity and the level of impact they have in the global trends. According to Islamic literature, the globalisation of ideas, values and beliefs at the time of the Imam will be predominantly popular for all people around the world. The Imam's globalisation will be demanded, chosen and popular among all his followers. This is a first 'global simultaneous and pervasive globalisation of religion' that will be cultivated in all individuals around the world. Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) is a source of wisdom as well as a source of generosity and mercifulness. He is the soul of the religion. It has been narrated in Kamal al Din that Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said:

Knowledge of God and the traditions of the Prophet will be nurtured in the Mahdi's heart like the cultivation of crops. If anyone of you meets him, you should greet him: Peace be upon you oh Household of Prophethood, mercy and the treasury of knowledge and the pillar of *Resalat*.¹⁶

Mohammad ibn Moslem¹⁷ narrated that on the day of the appearance, everybody will hear a divine voice from the sky, consequently all people in the East and the West will react to the voice, then those who were sitting will stand and those who were standing will sit. That voice will be from the Angel Gabriel¹⁸.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) was appointed, people worshipped stones and wood. However, when our *Qa'im* arises, people will interpret the ordinances of God against his interpretation, and will argue with him and dispute by means of the Qur'an. By God, the justice of the *Qa'im* will enter inside their homes, just as the heat and the cold enter them.¹⁹

3.2. Reverse Globalisation and the Emergence of a New Islam

There are many signs that will precede the time of the Imam; a general and very important sign is that he will come at a time when there is great frustration, intense disputes and

¹⁶ عن جابر، عن ابي جعفر عليه السلام قال: ان العلم بكتاب الله عزو جل و سنه نبيه صلى الله عليه و اله ينبت فى قلب مدينا كما ينبت الزرع عن احسن نباته، فمن بقى منكم حتى يلقاه فليقل حين يراه: السلام عليكم يا هل بيت الرحمة و النبوه و معدن العم و موضع الرساله (بحار الانوار، جلد ٥١، ص ٣٦، حديث ٥).

¹⁷ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 290.

¹⁸ عن محمد بن مسلم، قال عند ظهور المهدي: ينادى مناد من السماء باسم القائم فيسمع ما بين المشرق و المغرب، فلا يبقى راقد الا قام و لا قائم الا قعد و لا قاعد الا قام على رجليه من ذلك الصوت، وهو صوت جبرئيل الروح الامين.

¹⁹ *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 7, p. 86.

violent deaths. People will be afflicted by disturbance and experiencing great fear. Extensive Islamophobia and a sense of fear for the believers is part of this exhaustive and oppressive environment. Calamities will fall upon the people, so much so that a man shall not find a shelter to protect himself against oppression. Before the Imam's appearance there will be many battles and corruption (*fitnaa*) will be widespread. Every time a certain corruption ends, another will start, spread and intensify. The people will be troubled to such an extent that they will long for death. It is then that Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) will be sent.

Such factiousness will generate inclusive demands for a 'just saviour' and people will become thirstier for the truth.

According to the literature of 'the second coming of Imam Mahdi and Jesus', these gradual reverse globalisations will lead to a 'swift globalisation' that aims to achieve a 'major revitalization of justice and peace in human society'. The second coming is destructive for oppressors and promising for the oppressed. It is supportive for believers and obstructive for disbelievers. While the *New Justice Global Order* is considered as a global change for the renewal of the message of Mohammad and Jesus. At the same time it manifests a 'New Islam' compared to the Islam that people experienced in everyday life. This paper is an attempt to examine technological changes in our time based on narrations regarding the second coming. We will show why 'a chosen globalisation' arising from the Imam's justice will be preferred over all other 'hegemonic globalisations' in human society and why chosen globalisation will be highly demanded by, and popular among all people of the world. Chosen globalisation arises from the pure natural aspect of human beings, while hegemonic globalisation is a result of unwanted attachments in human life formed from many globalisations of evilness, structured by the marriage of selfishness, superiority and arrogance.

Hegemonic globalisations produce reverse actions among the masses. The emergence of extensively and globally wide cultural and political campaigns against social, economic and political actions of the current political leaders of the world, are evidence of this reverse trend. It seems that gradually a 'dissident culture' within the 'mainstream culture' has emerged. The dissident culture is a sign of dissatisfaction and 'new wishes' and 'new needs'. Imam Mahdi's movement will also appear as a type of reverse action against all social and political norms. It is new and at the same time considered as an experience that people feel they have lost, and are enthusiastic to regain.

According to Imam Sadiq²⁰ (peace be upon him):

When our Imam comes again, he will emphasis on issues that have not existed before²¹.

In another narration²², it is even reported that in response to the question of Abd Allah b. 'Ata in which he asked, "What would be the Imam's social policy?" or what sort of social behaviour will be revealed by him: Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said:

He will eradicate prevailing innovations, just as the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) destroyed the roots of Ignorance (*Jahiliya*) and then he will commence the New Islam²³.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ عن ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: اذا قام القائم جاء بامر غير الذي كان.

²² *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 354.

²³ عن عبدالله بن عطا قال: سألت ابا جعفر الباقر عليه السلام فقلت: اذا قام القائم عليه السلام باى سيره يسير فى الناس؟ فقال: يهدم ما قبله كما صنع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و اله و يستأنف الاسلام جديدا.

In another *hadith* Abu Khadija relates from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him)²⁴, who said:

When the *Qa'im* rises he will come with a new commission, just as the Prophet in the beginning of Islam called the people to a new commission.²⁵

Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said:

When our *Qa'im* arises he will call people anew to Islam, guiding them to the old thing from which people have turned away. He will be called the Mahdi because he will guide people to the thing from which they have been separated. He will be called *Qa'im* because he will be commanded to establish the truth.²⁶

The newness of the Mahdi's Islam is not because it will differ to the essence of Islam established at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), but because it will appear new in comparison to the many changes that have occurred within Islam throughout history.

The Prophet and his companions have reported the unification between the Imam's message and that of the Prophet of Islam, on many occasions. Once the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said:²⁷

The *Qa'im* will be from among my descendants. His name will be my name and his patronymic will be my patronymic. His

²⁴ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 338.

²⁵ روى ابو خديجه، عن ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: اذا قام القائم عليه السلام جاء بامر جديد كما دعى رسول الله في بدو الاسلام الى امر جديد.

²⁶ *Kashf al-Ghumma*, vol. 3, p. 264; Mufid, *Irshad*, pp. 240, 343.

²⁷ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 73.

character will be like my own. He will call people to my custom and to the Book of God. Anyone who obeys him would be obeying me, and any one who turns away from him would be turning away from me. Anyone who denies his existence during his concealment would have denied me, and anyone who falsifies him would have falsified me. Anyone who confirms his existence would have confirmed my existence. As for those who are engaged in falsifying what I have said about him and thereby mislead my community, I will complain against them to God. Those who do wrong shall surely know by what overturning they will be overturned.²⁸

3.3. The End of History: The End of Statism — Global Government

The Nation state system has become a source of 'world division' and has led to the appearance of patriotic nationalism, which in turn has caused tremendous confrontations and wars between people worldwide. Statism divides the world into the poor and rich, developing and developed. Just because people are born in developed countries, they have more advantages as compared to those born in poor developing regions.

When the promised Mahdi (peace be upon him) appears, he will administer the entire world under one Islamic government. He will appoint well-qualified individuals as the governors of different regions of the world with similar instructions and programs for the peaceful and just administration of the region under their governance²⁹. The entire earth will flourish under their administration.

²⁸ *Quran*, Chapter 28: 228

²⁹ Tabari, *Dala'il al-Imama* (Najaf Edition), 1369, p. 249.

Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said³⁰:

Our government is the last government (relating to Imam Mahdi's authority); no government will remain, unless under our supervision.³¹

3.4. The End of Frustration and the Emergence of Unification

The actual reality of human life together with numerous historical narrations regarding the future of the world elucidates that human society will face universal social and political frustration. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said³²:

When the *Qa'im* has arisen; Allah will remove all exhaustion from the believers and replace it with strength and power.³³

Sadiq narrated from Abu Fakhta that Imam Zein al Abedin (peace be upon him) has said:

When Imam Mahdi rises up Allah will remove illness from our followers and strengthen their hearts and give each man the power of forty men. They will become leaders of the earth and societies.³⁴

Also during Imam Mahdi's time, an intensified and inclusive homogenisation will take place, the homogenisation of

³⁰ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 332, p. 332.

³¹ عن ابي جعفر عليه السلام قال: دولتنا آخر الدول، و لن يبقى اهل بيت لهم دولة الا ملكوا قبلنا لئلا يقولوا اذا راو سيرتنا: اذا ملكنا سرنا مثل سيره هولاء، و هو قول الله عزوجل "والعاقبه للمتقين.

³² *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p 364.

³³ عن المفضل بن محمد، عن حريز، عن ابي عبدالله، عن ابيه، عن علي بن الحسين عليهم السلام انه قال: اذا قام القائم اذهب الله عن كل مومن العاهه و رد اليه قوته.
³⁴ قال الصادق عليه السلام: اذا قام قائمنا اذهب الله عز و جل عن شيعتنا العاهه و جعل قلوبهم كزبر الحديد و جعل قوه الرجل مهم قوه اربعين رجلا و يكونون حكام الارض و سنامها.

goodness. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) describing Imam Mahdi's followers says:

Their hearts will be united...He will take allegiance from his followers that they will not conserve gold and silver, will not store up wheat and barley and dress in coarse cloth.³⁵

Conclusion

Mahdavidism is not a kind of ideological 'ism' or kind of particularism that creates a sort of separatism. Mahdavidism is more about the natural demands of humanity and it is more about the common values of all members of a human society; not an ideology of a particular society or community. Mahdavidism, if present as an 'ism', is indeed a universalism which unifies believers and creates respect for all without any sort of offensive distinction. Mahdavidism, as mentioned in Islamic resources, is a threat for oppressors. It is deconstructive for those who emphasize on injustice and it is a global support for the rest of humanity. Mahdavidism, therefore is not an ideological term dividing human society, but rather a term, which explains the idea of 'Imam Mahdi' and characteristics of his time as well as of his followers.

We have discussed globalisation as embodied in two different ways, one is hegemonic and the other takes place in the form of chosen globalisation. It is certain that hegemonic globalisations produce a reverse action among the masses. The emergence of extensively and globally wide cultural and political campaigns against social, economic and political hegemonic and egocentric actions of the current leaders of the world, are evidence for this reverse trend. It seems that gradually a 'dissident culture' out of this reverse action will construct a new culture within the 'mainstream culture'. The

³⁵ *Uomo-al-Khalas*, p. 223.

dissident culture is a sign of dissatisfaction as well as of the emergence of new wishes, new needs and serious demands for a new and wise leadership. Imam Mahdi's movement will also appear as a type of reverse action against all social and political norms. It is new and at the same time considered as an experience that people feel they have lost. Therefore great loyalty will become evident by the 'Imam's Appearance'. It has been reported that the main slogan of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) is that: 'The Greatness belongs to Allah'. This means the end of selfishness and egocentrism as well as hegemonic policy is core and central element of Imam Mahdi's governance.

The Imam's government will be considered as a good government. A 'good government' is a government that can provoke satisfaction, pervasive justice and social security for all including convenient housing and proper food. According to what we have learnt about Imam Mahdi's time, all these necessary elements of a good government will be embodied in a full and global scale in his time. Furthermore, evidence indicates that the faith of people will have attained excellence and their hearts will be free from malevolence and resentment. When society has become turned upside down, hope for peace and ambitions for the best choice is to be expected. According to Islamic narrations, during the time of the Mahdi, the global environment will experience a pervasive peace. Prophet Mohammad³⁶ (peace be upon him and his family) said:

...the earth will be filled by Justice as it had been dominated by injustice in the past, in the shadow of his governance

³⁶ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 95.

everybody will be happy in the earth and in the sky; even the birds shall feel happy during his time.³⁷

Abu Sa'id al-Khudari has related a tradition from the Prophet who declared:

The earth will be filled with injustice and corruption. At that time, a man from among my progeny will rise and will rule for seven or nine years and will fill the earth with justice and equity.³⁸

In the Mahdi's Age, all the inhabitants of the earth will experience pure freedom and liberation from all forms of hegemony and domination. The Prophet (peace upon him and his family) said:

....at this time the Mahdi will stand up and he is one of the descendants of Ali. Allah will eliminate falsehood from the hearts of people, eradicate their hardship and free them from the yoke of slavery.³⁹

It has also been narrated from the Prophet (peace upon him and his family) that he said:

The sky will bring him rain and the earth will start yielding crops. The Mahdi will also cover the earth with justice after it had been corrupted by oppression and injustice.⁴⁰

All these narrations portray that the Mahdi's globalisation

³⁷ قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و اله: المهدي رجل من ولدي لونه لون عري جسمه جسم اسرانيلى، على خده الايمن خال كانه كوكب درى، يملء الارض عدلا كما ملئت جورا، يرضى بخلافته اهل الارض و اهل السماء و الطير و الجو.

³⁸ Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, p. 27.

³⁹ *Behar-al-Anwar*, vol. 13, p. 284.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p 285.

will be a chosen globalisation, which is result of the global frustration of injustice, as well as intense demands for going back to a natural human life.

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USA and the “Capitalist Globalisation”

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It is not easy to describe globalisation as simply a positive or negative phenomenon. We can find opponents and supporters on both sides. That a form of globalisation can and has brought improvements to the people of the world is undeniable. However, we must look at lesser known facts behind the “globalisation revolution” and identify the major machinery that has pushed this project forward.

While technological advances in communication have made the world inevitably a smaller place, causing us to know more about each others’ cultures, motivation for the globalisation process has not come out of a genuine desire to communicate with one another but rather from another more sinister craving to achieve economic control over a large area of the world.

By globalisation, we understand, in economic terms, that the model economic system is based on worldwide competition amongst capitalist enterprises.

According to such a model, businesses do away with the difference between internal and external investment. Instead, they consider this planet a single market. Consequently, their products and goods will be targeting types of consumers everywhere in the world who behave according to analogous purchasing motivations.

The elements for the realization of the globalisation plan are:

The creation of a global government

The spread in all countries of the globe of a homogeneous model of consumption.

This philosophy of brute economic expansion has found fertile ground in America with “the American way of life” as the model to copy. It is from here that the most negative aspect of globalisation has laid its roots; “Capitalist Globalisation”.

This paper will analyse the less “beautiful” aspects of this phenomenon, its origins and its danger for humanity in general and Muslims in particular.

Over the last few years, when we examine the plot against humanity by those whom Imam Khomeini has termed “the world’s arrogance”, we come across the word “Globalisation”. In economic terms, this is a model based on

the globalisation of economic competition among capitalist enterprises. According to this model, by overcoming the operating differences between internal and external investments, businesses approach this planet as a single market; their products and goods target consumers who everywhere behave according to identical purchasing motivations. The globalist plan requires the creation of a "Global Government" and the spread, across all countries, of homogeneous models of consumption. These are the main objectives of the present "global oligarchy".

The first objective, the creation of a Global Government, was originally pursued by strengthening the UN and institutionalising periodic summits held by the most industrialised countries: "G8", "GATT", "Trilateral Commission", "WHO", "IMF", "NAFTA", "FTAA", etc. These are the official forms of the global government. A system of parallel organisations, including bankers, industrialists, politicians, and journalists exists however alongside them. The last group, which controls the means of information, is essential to spreading the above-mentioned project among the inhabitants of this planet. The summits held by these organisations constitute the real control centre serving the globalist plan.

The second aim, the diffusion at planetary level of a homogeneous model of consumption, is achieved by destroying a human being's sense of belonging to his/her country, breaking the natural bond that exists between people and their land, religion and culture, and trying to modify and homogenise their way of life. The intent is to impose, gradually, a social model that favours the spread of pseudo-cosmopolitan values. This model, which has been termed the "multicultural society", is very different from the

multiculturalism expressed in the Holy Qur’an.¹ There are clear links between the global strategy of unification of world markets and the imposition of the multicultural human proposed by them. The global market is the economic configuration of this world plan just as a multiracial society represents its social configuration.

Let us look, briefly, at the stages of this “Project of Globalisation” that aims to eliminate the peculiarities of different people in order to create a sort of undifferentiated humanity; it is a project likely to satisfy only consumption needs. Since antiquity people have manifested a tendency to extend the exchange of goods beyond their own countries’ borders. To this end, the protagonists of world commerce have been merchants of various nationalities who, often moved by the spirit of adventure, would acquire goods from one place to resell them in another far away country.

Leading up to the modern era, within the great colonial empires of the last two decades of the 19th century, the first multinational enterprises grew. These were groups of companies, present in various states and directed by a single control centre. This development was particularly marked in the USA: it rapidly and systematically penetrated all major sectors of production, igniting the globalisation project that would prove so damaging to all of humanity. In this regard, Henry S. Commager wrote:

¹ The Quran says in chapter 49:13, “O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and female and made you nations and tribes that you may identify with one another.” Or in another verse, “Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours.” (Quran 30:22).

...the gathering in a few hands of the power represented by goods of millions of human beings is superior to the power exercised by most monarchs.²

Those holding such power became so powerful that they could influence domestic and foreign policy. Among the major operators of this concept of wealth concentration in the USA, we must mention the “Rockefeller Group” founded by Davison Rockefeller, a businessman of Jewish origin, the “Morgan Group”, founded by Jewish banker Pier Pont Morgan, and the “Manhattan Bank”, property of the Jewish Warburg family. These men were the most influential representatives of the new money oligarchy, intimately connected to the globalisation of production. At the beginning of the century these men orchestrated two events of great historical significance. The first was the formation of the “Federal Reserve” (1913), a law permitting twelve Federal Reserve banks to issue banknotes; these banks were controlled by a council called the “Federal Reserve Board”. In 1913 the USA possessed 35% of total world gold reserves. All major exponents of this money oligarchy were fully aware of the strategic importance of their objectives when they created the Federal Reserve: those who control American gold can govern the world.

The second event was the support of the capitalist and Jewish bankers for the “Bolshevik Revolution”. Days after the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky travelled abroad, to Switzerland and the USA respectively. Trotsky received financing from Jacob Schiff of twenty million dollars and an account was opened in his own name at the Warburg Brothers Bank. Lenin meanwhile entrusted the Jew, Fürstenberg, with the task of finding useful allies. Lenin left

² A. Nevins & H. S. Commager, “Storia degli Stati Uniti”, *Readings in American History*, 1960, p. 300.

for Russia with a six million gold loan. He was accompanied by the Jews Zinonief, Radek and Sokolnikof.³ Fürstenberg would become the people's commissioner of commerce. In 1919, of 48 commissioners, 42 were Jews. Overall the Bolshevik administration comprised 545 members, 444 of whom were Jews. "Kuhn Loeb & Company" financed the first Soviet five-year plan. A study by Anthony Sutton on the importance of western technology to Soviet development shows that in 1944, two-thirds of Russian heavy industry was built with the technological assistance of the USA.⁴

During the peace conference held in Paris in 1919, Colonel House had a meeting with some members of the English secret society "The Round Table" and together they decided to create an international organisation for the propagation of the idea of a "world government". Rather than creating a single organisation they decided to create two apparently independent ones: the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) based in England and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in the USA. John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Paul Warburg, Jacob Schiff, Nelson Aldrich, Bernard Baruch, Frank Vanderlip, all the Jekyll Island conspirators⁵ and the main financiers of the Bolshevik revolution were included among the founding members of the CFR; this constitutes the first nucleus of the globalist oligarchy.

The participation of Jewish people in the Second World War, which took place as a result of the Jewish presence

³ Gary Allen, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, Buccaneer Books, 1976.

⁴ Anthony Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development*, 1968, vol. 2, p. 3.

⁵ The super-secret meeting of insider financiers and Rothschild agent Paul Warburg on Jekyll Island in 1910 where the basic plan for what became the Federal Reserve Act was formulated. See *The Creature from Jekyll Island* by G. Edward Griffin, American Media.

within the dominant oligarchy of the allied countries was made official by Chaim Weitzmann, president of the Zionist organisation known as the Jewish Agency and later first president of the so-called Republic of Israel. In 1939 he declared war on Germany in the name of all Jews and stated that “the Jews will fight side by side for the victory of democracy”. The Jewish Agency was ready to take immediate measures in order to utilise manpower, technology, know-how and Jewish resources. This is indeed what happened. The Jewish people were in all respects a nation at war and can rightly claim full participation in the conflict, not only as victims with great losses like many other nations, but also as strategists, thanks to their large numbers among the summit of allied countries dominating oligarchy.

At the end of the Second World War the globalist machine roared back into action, commencing in the West. The engine of this machine was the USA: its origins, mentality and military potential clearly underpin these hidden manoeuvres. The American way of life penetrates the world by means of media-generated publicity. The USA represents a geographically circumscribed model of the global village, whilst globalisation itself represents the extension to the planetary level of a value system which has ceased to be exclusively “American” and has become “Global”. The illness which was initially described as American has gone beyond American borders, becoming first “western” and then “global”. The American illness of globalism, a type of multiracial society of consumers based on the American model, should, according to them, be the role model for all the people of the Earth. I ask: is this what the underprivileged of this world really need?

We do not ask those caught in this race to stop, nor do we approach the careerists constantly undergoing psychoanalysis, because both have emptiness in their lives

resulting from the lack of relationship with their Creator. We rather ask the underprivileged of all races, living marginalized lives in metropolises, young criminals awaiting their turn on the electric chair, alcoholics, drug addicts, those affected by AIDS and all those who live on the edge of the American dream. We will certainly hear them say that, for them, the American dream is a dreadful nightmare from which they are unable to wake up. We must also ask the people of the third world, whom the globalist oligarchy, in accordance with its models of exploitation, dictated by its own logic and desire to keep control of strategically important technology, subjects to a sort of technological apartheid, condemning them to permanent underdevelopment and compelling them to provide manpower at a cheap rate; they are exploited either in *loco* or are forced to emigrate abroad.

Globalism, to penetrate among people, needs a model and the chosen model is the American one, a society in which one is valued for what one owns rather than what one is. One's bank account is of central importance and represents one socially. Possession of wealth is key. In American society, the dollar exercises absolute power. Consumption is not a means but an objective, an aim. The American life form is "techno-form". The spread of the American way of life involves a slow substitution process from the organic to the mechanical, a materialisation of all social relations. American civilisation transforms a live society into a mechanical one. It is based on "things" because things are the only American common denominator. The American way of life is based on possession of identical goods which determine ones "standing".

The race towards money is the myth of the consumerist society. With money a man can buy an ever-increasing number of goods and services which grant social prestige, comfort, security, amusement, and new emotions. Every

dream can be purchased in another general store. Man is degraded to the level of a machine, a mere consumer, projected towards the search for a little happiness, torn by dissatisfaction that can only be soothed by purchasing new goods. His or her desire for more is regenerated every time the TV or newspapers advertise a new, improved, version of a product. But once the satisfaction created by the new product wears off, it is quickly replaced by another desire, a desire for something one still lacks. One's happiness is destroyed when one realises that one lacks the money to placate this desire. Western consumerist society in particular has substituted the stable Eternal Reality with ephemeral business models, and the universal eternal values with a set of partial ideologies and frivolous temporary fashions. One of the characteristics of fashion is its short life compared to a man's life. A stable and long-lasting fashion would risk becoming a custom, blocking the consumer cycle. Fashion must renew itself constantly, often proposing new re-arranged themes to give a sense of future, different from the recent past. Only these conditions can regenerate the "consumer summit": a new fashion means a new look and style, and new music to persuade the consumer to purchase a new range of products and services. A new film on the market may for example launch a new style, followed by a new fashion in clothing, music, cosmetics, etc. We can see the birth of such multidimensional cultural products (books, films, records), often launched together with a vast range of accessories (such as stickers, posters and photos). Consumer products such as clothing and foods like blue jeans, Coca Cola or McDonalds, have become the symbols of a nation's cultural domination, in this case the USA.

This, in black and white, is the lifestyle that globalism proposes for humanity in its new world order, an order that has spread from America to embrace the entire western world and aims to spread to the entire globe. Everywhere the "American way of life" is implanted, nations loose their

identity, and people are “de-culturalised”, deprived of their own culture. This is the most silent and efficient form of genocide. This American globalism is a great threat. People of the world should keep their distance from a country that consumes the brains of Africa, Asia, and Europe, and in return gives us such gifts as Coca Cola, blue jeans, McDonalds, Disneyland, pop art, beatniks,⁶ free-jazz, musicals, Jesus Revolution,⁷ sex revolution, etc. To the whole of contemporary humanity, as with the native Americans, America gives its “firewater”.⁸ When all are drunk on the American way of life, the USA will be able to control the entire world economy.

The flow of human history has shown us how various ideologies have come and gone through the centuries, and that whatever is the fruit of the human thought is not eternal and therefore destined, in one way or another, to die. Because of its huge resources and military power the globalist oligarchy may appear invincible. Undoubtedly, it

⁶ Members of the “beat” movement, in the United States, in the 1950s. Beatniks frequently rejected middle-class American values, customs, and tastes in favour of radical politics and exotic jazz, art, and literature. The movement was often classified as bohemian. The poet Allen Ginsberg and the novelist Jack Kerouac are examples of beatnik authors. (Definition taken from: *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, third edition, 2002.)

⁷ A revival movement that saw thousands of hippies become “Jesus freaks”. This Jesus revolution saw lives transformed as people ditched drugs and free sex and sought a new high – walking the Christian lifestyle. Many young believers joined Christian communities that sprung up coast to coast. One common element of the Jesus movement, as it spread across the country, was music. Jesus music became an expression of worship and an anthem for evangelism.

⁸ The first white men to meet Plains Indians probably also carried alcohol as a trade item. Whisky and other forms of alcohol soon became known as “firewater” and became a problem for tribes across the plains. Its use in the fur trade was widespread. Even though some governments banned the sale of alcohol to tribes, it was still carried by many government expeditions.

has an enormous capacity to influence events. But experience, even in this century, has taught us that not all that appears lost is actually so. The Holy Qur'an tells us how people plan but says that God is the best planner. A series of events, including the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the revival of Islam in Muslim countries, has forced the globalist oligarchy to change their strategy in order to stay in power. The generation born after the Second World War has seen the American triumph. We may Insh-Allah see the collapse of the American empire as we have witnessed in the twentieth century the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, triggered by its invasion of Afghanistan. The America of today is a corpse in good health. With its material power, geographical extension and the growth of its capital, America (just like the Soviet Union) has been able to create an illusion. Stressing the importance of the material and of quantification, it has imposed on the world its principles of super-production and globalism. Today global integration is marked by the hegemony of Anglophone powers who try to shape world events on the basis of their convenience, as they have done for the last century. America took over from the British empire and since then they have become partners.

In the second half of the 1990s the USA surpassed itself. It managed to bring in capital from all over the world in a speculative bubble, as with the Internet. Americans do not like saving, and are indebted to the rest of the world. The USA's trade deficit hit a record \$55.82 billion in June of this year.⁹ And yet they continue to rule. How is this possible, if the process of globalisation is purely economic? Huntington is hardly read and Quigly is unknown even though Clinton was one of his students. Yet they are the most important

⁹ Figure obtained from the *Casper Star Tribune*, Wyoming, USA: Lee Publications Inc., Saturday August 14, 2004.

Anglophone historians of this century for understanding globalisation. "The Clash of Civilizations",¹⁰ like Quigly's book, works with the concept of civilisations. Globalisation at the beginning of the 21st century, like the Navigation Act of Cromwell¹¹ and the City of the 19th century, is the means by which a civilisation, in this case the Anglophone one, renews its power over others.

Huntington reports the thesis of William Carroll Quigley,¹² according to whom civilisation passes through seven stages, the last of which is the "universal empire". He believes that the West is developing the equivalent of a universal empire in the form of a complex system of confederations, federations, regimes and other types of cooperative institutions. Well, I am afraid this universal empire already exists, and it speaks English. Globalisation is the final stage of the consolidation of an Anglophone universal empire. The Anglophone Empire is universal in the sense that it eliminates any kind of diversity and transforms nations into collections of consuming plebs. The internet completes this process of standardisation of language, cinema, songs and fashion. The key stimulus of American growth after the Second World War came from the immigrant masses. These are the cosmopolitan plebs that wear blue jeans, once worn only by American farmers, and who listen to the same type of so-called music. This kind of multiracial society is idiotic. The glue that holds the immigrants and the host nation together is the sloppy culture of Americanised plebs, including their way of dressing, TV, music and computers. This now applies in Europe too.

¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

¹¹ H. E. Egerton, *A Short History of British Colonial Policy 1606-1909*, Ams Pr. 1974.

¹² William Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*, New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Is all this sufficient to guarantee its perpetual survival? We Muslims know the answer. Only Allah is eternal. A prisoner of desire and fast living, the United States will brutally disappear just as it was born, perhaps earlier than expected. Within the American world, there are no possibilities of salvation. The two utopias of the 20th century, communism and global capitalism, as stated by Imam Khomeini, are largely the same, and are destined to meet the same end. Islam, which means submission to Allah, represents real liberation, total liberation from the yoke of Satan and liberation of the oppressed people from the slavery of the oppressor.

Islam currently stands alone as an effective way for the people of the world to fight the capitalist globalist plan. The globalist oligarchy is aware of this. It has an immediate need to extend over the entire planet this deadly model that has found in America its most fertile ground.

Islamic theories applicable in all fields form a serious competitor to the globalist plan. Any state or organisation which offers successful and viable alternatives must therefore be confronted and undermined, firstly through the power of international organisations capable of applying all sorts of political and economic pressures and secondly, if all else fails, directly through military intervention. The growth of Islam and Islamic infrastructure, whether within a country or organisation, is seen as a threat that must be contained. But Muslims know and believe that however hard they try, at the end they will not prevail. From an Islamic viewpoint setbacks should be seen as a relative concept, since God is above everything and ultimately everything moves in the direction set by Him. Our first responsibility is to be aware that naive ideas about the intentions of the current so-called super powers can be extremely dangerous. Awareness is the first step towards formulating a strategy for action. In order to defend ourselves and the oppressed of the

world, we must know that all that glitters is not gold. Behind the glitter of the American way of life there is the deepest obscurity and a grave sense of injustice.

This paper should be considered an effort to familiarise Muslims with a particular type of discourse that analyses the activities of international institutions with their particular world agenda and to increase interest in further research in this area. I conclude by quoting God's words from the Qur'an, addressing the Prophet and referring to the characteristics of those who will be victorious:

And (the Godway) who believe in that which has been sent down to you (Prophet Mohammad^(S)) and that which was sent down before you and they are sure of the Hereafter.

Those follow their Lord's guidance, and it is they who are the felicitous.¹³

¹³ *Qur'an*, 2:4-5.

Appearance or Reappearance? Sunni Mahdism in History and in Theory and its Differences from Shi`i Mahdism

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Belief in the Mahdi is an integral part of both Shi`i and Sunni Islam, contrary to conventional wisdom in the field of Islamic studies which holds that only the former emphasizes Mahdism. In fact, many of the most influential Mahdist claimants throughout history have been Sunni, most notably: Ibn Tumart and the Muwahhids of the 12th c. CE Maghrib; Muhammad Ahmad and the 19th c. CE Sudanese Mahdists; and the abortive 1979 CE rebellion against Sa`udi rule led by Juhayman al-`Utaybi.

Of course, from a Shi`i perspective each of these (and other) Mahdist movements throughout history was led by a *mutamahdi* or "pseudomahdi", not by the true reappeared Hidden Imam. And as Mahdist yearnings in the Sunni world have increased since 1967 (especially in the Arab world, following the shattering defeat of the Six Days War), the Shi`i and Sunni Mahdist believers have entered into a somewhat polemical discourse over the true nature of Imam Mahdi and over which branch of Islam has the correct understanding thereof.

One major aspect of this war of words has been the view of the state of affairs prior to the Mahdi's (re)appearance; that is, what will be the prevailing world and regional (Middle Eastern) geopolitical, economic, cultural, religious and military conditions that set the stage for his coming? My own research on this topic indicates many points of convergence, but of course significant divergences, between the expectations of Sunnis for the Mahdi and Shi`is regarding the Hidden Imam. Both draw upon Mahdist *hadiths* and try to fit them into current events, but Sunni and Shi`i Mahdists come to rather different conclusions about when, where and how the Mahdi will come. My paper will compare these two approaches, utilizing Arab works on the Mahdi (both Sunni and Shi`i) written in the last several decades.

Introduction

Belief in the future coming of the Hidden Imam/Mahdi is a very deep and real one in Islam, Shi`i as well as Sunni. It is thus with trepidation and respect that this author, who has

long studied Islamic history but is nonetheless a Christian and thus an outsider, approaches this topic and dares to write and speak concerning it at a conference of such learned Muslim scholars and religious leaders. It is never my intention to disparage anyone's religious beliefs, and thus I would ask the sponsors and attendees of this august gathering to keep in mind that I write as a historian and a non-Muslim, and that my analysis of Mahdism and its doctrines is an attempt to present the topic in a historical light. Any slights toward Islam or Muslims are unintentional, I wish to assure you.

Of course, for the vast majority of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims who believe in the Mahdi, by definition all previous attempts by individuals claiming to be him are ipso facto false. This means primarily Sunni Mahdist claimants, for they are almost exclusively the only kind that manifest. While conventional wisdom (at least among Western Islamicists) in the field of Islamic history and Islamic Studies holds stubbornly, by and large, to the erroneous view that only Shi'ism evinces a belief in the Mahdi, Sunni revolutionary leaders claiming to be him continue to rise and fall throughout history, confounding the experts.

While the actual number of Mahdist movements throughout history may never be known, the number is almost certainly in the hundreds, if not thousands.¹ However, the best documented and thus most accessible to historical analysis number some eight in total. They are, in chronological order, those of:

¹ David Cook says 5,000 or more in "Alternative Apocalypses", interview with Rachael Kohn, www.abc.net/au/rn/relig/spirit/stories/s22196.htm (August 18, 1999). Cook is perhaps the West's foremost authority on Muslim apocalyptic traditions, as evidenced by his *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002.

- 1) Ibn Tumart (d. 1130 CE) in Morocco
- 2) Muhammad Jawnpuri (d. 1505) in India
- 3) Ibn Abi Mahallah (d. 1613), also in Morocco
- 4) Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831), also of India
- 5) Muhammad Amzian (d. 1879) in Algeria
- 6) Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1995) of Sudan
- 7) Mehmet (d. 1930) of republican Turkey
- 8) Muhammad al-Qahtani (d. 1979), proclaimed the Mahdi by his brother-in-law, Juhayman al-`Utaybi (d. 1980) in Sa`udi Arabia.

Besides being well-documented, these eight manifestations of Mahdism each exhibit three common meta-characteristics: an overt Mahdist claim; adherence to orthodox Islam (for the most part); and origins in, as well as employing the discourse of, Sunni NOT Shi`i Islam. A number of "Mahdist" movements throughout history really were no such thing but instead had that label wrongly affixed to them by critics: Muhammad b. `Abd Allah Hassan (d. 1920), for example, who led the Somali fight against British imperialism never claimed to be the Mahdi but yet his movement is often found listed under the rubric of Mahdism. Likewise for Ali Shamil (d. 1871), who led the Chechens against Russian imperialism.² Men like these usually declared jihad against a perceived illegitimate regime (Muslim or imperialist), but jihad alone does not a

² See, respectively, I. M. Lewis, "Muhammad b. `Abd Allah Hassan," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* [hereafter *EI2*]; A. Knysh, "Shamil," *EI2*.

Mahdi make. Even declaring oneself a *mujaddid* or renewer of Islam³--as did Usman don Fodio (d. 1817) founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in what is now northern Nigeria⁴--is not on the same audacious level as claiming to be the eschatological Mahdi. Furthermore, while an overt Mahdist assertion is not accepted by most Muslims, the claim itself--at least in Sunnism--does fall within the bounds of orthodoxy. However, once a Mahdiyah has been declared and inevitably crushed, the direction the surviving Mahdists (if any) then choose to go determines whether their movement is absorbed back into mainstream (Sunni) Islam, or whether they transform into an entirely new religion. The latter is what happened with the Ahmadiyah movement, founded by Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) in India upon his claim to be the Mahdi, Jesus and an avatar of Hindu deity rolled into one person.⁵ Perhaps the most famous example of an Islamic Mahdist group developing into an entirely new religious movement is that of the Baha'is, co-founded by 'Ali Muhammad (d. 1850), the Bab "gateway", and his disciple Baha'ullah (d. 1892) in Iran. The former claimed to be standing in for the Mahdi/Hidden Imam, but after his death the latter claimed he had actually been the Mahdi.⁶ The Baha'is, like the Ahmadis, are now considered to be outside the pale of Islam, unlike formerly Mahdist movements whose followers more-or-less admit the error of their ways (no matter how many decades it may take) and rejoin orthodox Sunni Islam. And finally, each of the

³ E. van Donzel, "Mujaddid," *EI2*; Aziz Batran, *Islam and Revolution in Africa*, Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1984.

⁴ Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of Shehu Usman don Fodio*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

⁵ W. Cantwell Smith, "Ahmadiyya," *EI2*.

⁶ Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989; Mustafa Muhammad al-Hadid al-Tayr, *al-Qawl al-Haqq fi al-Babiyah wa-al-Baha'iyah wa-al-Qadiyaniyah wa-al-Mahdiyah*, Cairo: Dar al-Misriyah al-Lubnaniyah, 1986.

movements studied herein was quintessentially Sunni, drawing primarily upon traditions, rhetoric and expectations from that aspect of Islam and eschewing—for the most part—any expectations relating to the Hidden Imam's return.

Sunni Mahdist Movements in History

Muhammad b. Tumart, or Ibn Tumart, declared himself the Mahdi in the 1120s and spawned a movement—the Muwahhids—that eventually overthrew the ruling Murabit regime in Morocco and southern Spain.⁷ Ibn Tumart and his followers recapitulated the hijrah (by fleeing to southern Morocco, then returning re-empowered) and declared jihad upon the allegedly apostate Murabits and their state. Interestingly, Ibn Tumart is one of the few Sunni Mahdis to adopt a characteristic of the Shi'i Imams for himself: `ismah, or "infallibility." In fact, Ibn Tumart went so far as to fashion a genealogy linking himself back to `Ali and Fatimah.⁸ Ibn Tumart may have been influenced in this regard by the still-extant legacy of the Fatimids, the Isma'ili dynasty that ruled Egypt (after arising in the Maghrib) from 969-1171 CE and which considered at least some of its

⁷ Some sources on this man and his movement include: J. F. P. Hopkins, "Ibn Tumart," *EI2*; Roger Le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969; M. Shatzmiller, "al-Muwahhidun," *EI2*; H.T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, London: Longman, 1982, especially pp. 157-183, "Ibn Tumart: the Mahdi of the Moroccan Masmuda"; Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*, Ralph Mannheim (tran), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977; Ahmad `Azawi, *Rasa'il Muwahhidiyah*, Qunaytra: Ibn Tufayl University, 1995.

⁸ See Hopkins; Mohamed Zniber, "L'Itineraire Psycho-intellectuel d'Ibn Toumert," in *Mahdisme: Crise et Changement dan l'Histoire de Maroc. Actes de la table ronde organisee a Marrakech par la Faculte des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat du 11 au 14 Fevrier 1993*, Abdelmajid Kaddouri (ed.), Rabat: Royaume de Maroc Universite Mohammed V, 1994, pp. 9-13; and Laroui, p. 177.

caliphs to be Imams, equal to the Mahdi. However, despite his appropriation of this Shi'i doctrine, Ibn Tumart was motivated largely by a belief that Sunni Islam was under assault from not only Christian Crusaders but also these very Fatimid Shi'ah⁹ and that God had invested him as the Mahdi to save true (Sunni) Islam. Ibn Tumart al-Mahdi died in 1130 but his caliph `Abd al-Mu'min (d. 1163) continued on the conquests and by mid-12th century CE the Muwahhid Empire, officially imbued with the belief in Ibn Tumart as the Mahdi, stretched from what is today Portugal to Libya. By the early 13th century the Muwahhid caliphs had openly repudiated the doctrine of Ibn Tumart's Mahidyah and by 1269 the empire has disintegrated.

In 1495 CE, on the other end of the Islamic world, Sayyid Muhammad Jawnpuri of Gujarat declared himself the Mahdi,¹⁰ probably influenced to some extent by the fact that the year before had been the onset of the year 900 AH—and both mujaddids and the Mahdi will come at the turn of a new century. The Gujarat Sultanate, a Muslim state itself, did not take kindly to this threat, especially when Jawunpuri was accusing its rulers of takfir, “unbelief.” Jawnpuri's Mahdist followers came to be known as Mahdawis or Mahdavis and they exhibited a communitarianism and socio-economic egalitarianism much greater than most Mahdist movements.¹¹ And somewhat similarly to Ibn Tumart's Muwahhid Mahdism, Jawnpuri's—although Sunni—drew upon Shi'i themes in that its founder claimed descent from

⁹ Laroui, pp. 159-160.

¹⁰ See Derryl N. MacLean, “La sociologie de l'engagement politique: Le Mahdawiya indien et l'Etat,” in *Mahdisme et millenarisme en Islam. Revue de mondes Musulmans et de la Medieterranee*, Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (ed.), Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 2000, pp. 239-256.

¹¹ See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. Volume 3: The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, pp. 70-71.

Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam of Twelver Shi`ism.¹² So although officially Sunni, the Mahdavis of Jawnpuri incorporated at least one major Shi`i aspect into their body of doctrines. After Jawnpuri died the movement's first few caliphs tried open rebellion against the Gujarati sultans, but finally dissuaded by decapitations, being ripped apart by elephants and—probably most importantly—the failure of Prophet `Isa to appear in the year 1000 AH (1591 CE), the Mahdavis sunk into a quietist phase under the Mughal Empire and eventually died out.

In the 17th century CE, back in north Africa, Ibn Abu Mahallah declared a Mahdist jihad against the ruling Sa`diyan dynasty of Morocco, commencing in 1610.¹³ The proximate cause seems to have been Sa`diyan territorial concessions to the encroaching Spanish, while the deeper reasons likely included the lingering legacy of Ibn Tumart and the recent onset of the Muslim millennium in 1591 CE. No overt Shi`i themes were utilized by Abu Mahallah in his temporarily successful, but crushed by 1613, Mahdist rebellion.

In the early 19th century another overt Mahdism irrupted in India: that of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi¹⁴ who, after making the hajj in 1821 returned to the subcontinent and proclaimed himself prepared to purge Islam of unacceptable practices such as Shi`ism and devotion to shrines, and to remove the

¹² Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 449.

¹³ Sources include Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, "Imam et Mahdi: Ibn Abi Mahallah," in *Mahdisme et Millenarisme en Islam*, pp. 157-179; Abdelmajid Kaddouri, "Ibn Abi Mahalli: a Propos de L'Itineraire Psycho-Social d'Un Mahdi," in *Crise et Changement*, pp. 119-125; Chantal de La Veronne, "Sa`dids," *EI2 Extract*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Marc Garborieau, "Le mahdi oublie de l'Indie britannique: Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786-1831)," in *Mahdisme et millenarisme en Islam*, pp. 257-273.

unIslamic Sikh or British yoke from Muslims' necks. In 1831 Barelwi disappeared during a battle and was never seen again. His followers soon declared that he had not died but had gone into *ghaybah* and that he would return as the Mahdi. Although later Indian Muslim writers speculated that he was more *mujaddid* than Mahdi, a number of his followers persisted for some time in the belief that he was a new hidden imam. That such a description would attach to an overtly Sunni leader is fascinating, but the minority status of Muslims in predominantly-Hindu India may predispose charismatic leaders, and their followers, there toward a more "ecumenical" view of Mahdism than in the central lands of Islam.

In French-occupied Algeria of the 19th century a number of near-Mahdist jihads were declared by self-styled "deputies" of the Mahdi, and eventually one of them—that of Muhammad Amzian—proclaimed full-blown Mahdism.¹⁵ He and his followers were destroyed by the French military in 1879 and no overt Shi'i ideas were appropriated by Amzian.

The same is true for perhaps the most famous Sunni Mahdist movement of all time, that of Muhammad Ahmad in the Sudan of the late 19th century. Muhammad Ahmad declared himself the Mahdi in 1880 and led a jihad against the apostate Ottoman Egyptian occupiers and their British allies, conquering all of Sudan by 1885.¹⁶ The Sudanese Mahdi

¹⁵ Peter von Sivers, "The Realm of Justice: Apocalyptic Revolts in Algeria (1849-1879)," *Humaniora Islamica*, 1973, vo. 1, pp. 47-60; Julia Clancy-Smith, "La revolte de Bu Ziyen en Algerie, 1849," in *Mahdisme et millenarisme en Islam*, pp. 181-208.

¹⁶ The sources are copious, but the most important are: Muhammad Sa'id al-Qaddal, *al-Imam al-Mahdi: Muhammad Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah, 1844-1885*, Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992; P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1898*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970; John Voll, "The Sudanese Mahdi: Frontier Fundamentalist," *International Journal of*

died in 1885 but his caliph Abdullahi led the Mahdist state until its conquest by the British in 1898. Muhammad Ahmad did not utilize any obviously Shi`i themes, but he did claim *ilham*, or “direct revelation,” as Mahdi which made him alone capable of correctly interpreting Qur’an and Hadith—a claim reminiscent of the Shi`ah one about the Imam(s).

Neither of the remaining two Mahdist movements that arose in the 20th century—Mehmet in the early days of the Turkish Republic, and the al-`Utaybi-led one 25 years ago in Sa`udi Arabia—utilized any overt Shi`i beliefs. Mehmet seems to have been a Sufi shaykh pining for the recently-deceased Ottoman Empire and deeming himself and his six followers the “Seven Sleepers” of Surah al-Kahf [18].¹⁷ His declaration of a Mahdiah in the town of Manisa was met with the full shock and awe of the Turkish Republican Army.¹⁸ Al-`Utaybi’s attempt to overthrow the Sa`udi government on the strength of a Mahdist claims for his brother-in-law also had no overtly Shi`i parallels, despite official Sa`udi pronouncements branding this movement a Shi`ah one.¹⁹

Middle East Studies, 1979, vol. 10, pp. 145-166; Abd Allah Ali Ibrahim, *al-Sira’ bayna al-Mahdi wa-al-`Ulama*, Khartoum: Dar Nubar, 1994 [1966].

¹⁷ See also Abudllah Yusuf Ali’s explanatory note 2337 in *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’an*, Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Masri, 1934, pp. 730ff; and R. Paret, “Ashab al-Kahf,” *EI2*.

¹⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, “Le mahdisme en Turquie: L<<incident de Menemen>> en 1930,” in *Mahdisme et millenarisme en Islam*, pp. 237-319; Ayse Kadioglu, “The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, April 1996, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 177-193.

¹⁹ Rifa`at Sayyid Ahmad, *Rasa’il Juhayman al-`Utaybi, Qa’id al-Muqtahim lil-Masjid al-Haram bi Makkah*, Cairo: Matba`ah Atlas, 1988; Joseph A. Kechichian, “Islamic Revivalism and Change in Sa`udi Arabia: Juhayman al-`Utaybi’s ‘Letters to the Sa`udi People’”, *The Muslim World*, January 1990, LXXX, 1, pp. 1-17; `Abd al-`Aziz Ibrahim Mat`ani,

Since the al-`Utaybi uprising was crushed by the Sa`udi forces (with a great deal of assistance by British and/or French), no Mahdist movement has been declared in the Sunni world. But in the last quarter-century Sunni Mahdist aspirations have continued to be propagated in a myriad of Arabic books published on the topic and, in very recent years, in pro-Mahdist websites.

The "Virtual Mahdi" of Modern Sunni Arab Writings

Since 1979, Mahdism in the Sunni world has lacked any claimants but nonetheless been kept alive as a doctrine and belief by its proponents writings. Over 40 books on the Mahdi have been published in the Arab world since 1967, and 20 of these were available to be examined for this paper (13 that defend the belief in the Mahdi, 7 that denigrate it). The pro-Mahdist works are:

- Muhammad Ibrahim al-Jamal, *al-ʾIʿtida wa-al-Mahdi al-Muntazar*²⁰
- Ibrahim al-Shawkhi, *al-Mahdi al-Muntazar: Silsilah Amarat al-Sa`ah*²¹
- Muhammad Salamah Jabbar, *Ashrat al-Sa`ah wa-Asrariha*²²
- Hamzah al-Faqir, *al-Hashimi al-Muntazar*²³

Jarimat al-`Asr: Qissah Ihtilal al-Masjid al-Haram. Ruwayah `Ayan, Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, 1980; R. B. Winder, "Makka," EI2.

²⁰ Cairo: Maktabat al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, 1980.

²¹ Amman: Maktabat al-Manar al-Zarqa`, 1983.

²² Cairo: Dar al-Salamah lil-Tiba`ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi` wa-al-Tarjamah, 1993.

²³ Amman: Matabi` al-Ayman, 1993.

- Basim al-Hashimi, al-Mahdi wa-al-Masih: Qira`ah fi al-Injil²⁴
- Kamil Saf`an, al-Sa`ah al-Khamisah wa-al-`Ishrun: al-Masih al-Dajjal, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar, Yajuj wa-Majuj²⁵
- Hamzah al-Faqir, Thalathah Yantazuruhum al-`Alam: al-Mahdi al-Muntazar, al-Masih al-Dajjal, al-Masih `Isa²⁶
- Amin Muhammad Jamal al-Din, `Umr Ummat al-Islam wa-Qurb Zuhur al-Mahdi²⁷
- Fahd Salim, Asrar al-Sa`ah wa-Hujum al-Gharb qabla 1999²⁸
- Basim al-Hashimi, al-Mukhallis bayna al-Islam wa-al-Masihiyah: Bahth fi Ta`awun al-Mahdi was-al-Masih²⁹
- `Abd al-Alim Abd al-Azim al-Bustawi, al-Ahadith al-Waridah fil al-Mahdi fi Mayzan al-Jurh wa-al-Ta`dil. I. al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi Daw` al-Ahadith wa-al-Athar al-Sahihah wa-Aqwal al-`Ulama wa-ara al-Firqah al-Mukhtalah. II. Al-Mawsu`ah fi Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa-al-Mawdu`ah³⁰
- Usamah Yusuh Rahmah, Iqtabarat al-Sa`ah: bi-Warid Zuhur al-Mahdi wa-Nuzul al-Sayyid al-Masih wa-Sinariu al-Ahdath al-Mustaqbaliyah fi Daw` al-Ahadith al-

²⁴ Beirut: Dar al-Mahajjah al-Bayda', 1994.

²⁵ Cairo: Dar al-Amin, 1995.

²⁶ Amman: Dar al-Isra' lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi`, 1995.

²⁷ Cairo: Maktabah `Ali, 1996.

²⁸ Cairo: Maktabah Madbuli al-Saghir, 1996.

²⁹ Beirut: Dar al-Mahajjah al-Bayda', 1996.

³⁰ Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 1999.

Nabuwiyah min `Alan wa-hatta Qiyam al-Sa`ah³¹

- Ihyab al-Badawi and Hassan al-Zawam, Usamah bin Ladin: al-Mahdi al-Muntazar am al-Masikh al-Dajjal?³²

What is the view of the Mahdi, the geopolitical context prior to his coming, and his role in history (including the state he will create) in these Arab works? In general, the approach is:

- Cite supporting Hadiths
- Adduce sympathetic `ulama from Islamic history
- Refute opponents' criticisms pre-emptively
- Malign the Shi`ah idea of the Hidden Imam
- Dismiss all previous Mahdist claimants as false
- Modernize the Mahdi and his accompanying eschatological figures and attempt to fit them into current events.

The relevant traditions from the Sunni compilers—Ibn Majah (d. 887 CE), Abu Da'ud (d. 888) and al-Tirmidhi (d. 892)—are cited and their alleged unsound isnad, “chains of transmission” back to the Prophet, are explained (away) and rationalized. (The Qur'anic lack of any specific references to the Mahdi are passed over in silence.) Scholars such as Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328 CE) and Jala al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505 CE) are adduced for at least mentioning the Mahdi in their writings. Ibn Khaldun's (d. 1406) extreme scepticism regarding the Mahdi is dismissed as a topic outside of his

³¹ Damascus: Dar Quraybah, 2002.

³² Cairo: Madbuli al-Saghir, 2002.

speciality (history). “Orientalists” are said to be the source of much opposition to the doctrine of the Mahdi, their pernicious ideas having crept into Islamic intellectual circles. Interestingly, both pro- and anti-Mahdist Sunni Arab writers are often critical of the Shi`ah idea of the Mahdi: the former contend that Shi`ism has a wrong understanding of Mahdism, while the latter (as we shall see) allege that the Shi`i Hidden Imam is the source of the erroneous belief of Mahdism itself and its unfortunate injection into Sunni Islam.

The Shi`i doctrine of *ghaybah* comes in for particular condemnation by pro-Mahdist Sunnis. And even more narrowly, the caricature of Shi`i beliefs, in which Imam al-Mahdi has been sleeping in a cave for over a millennium, is sometimes ridiculed as especially erroneous.

Of course, even Sunni Mahdism’s supporters will denigrate all previous Mahdist claimants (including the Sunni ones) as impostors; usually Ibn Tumart, Muhammad Ahmad, al-`Utaybi are included here, as well as Barelwi, the Fatimid caliphs, the Bab and Baha’ullah, and Ghulam Ahmad. Sunni Arabic works on Mahdism, however, also often point out that no amount of false Mahdis can change the fact that the real Mahdi WILL come, eventually, to restore justice—political as well as socio-economic—to the world and restore Islam to its rightful place at the head of the nations. When, however? The Islamic world seems to be in the grip of the “tyrants” phase of history (which probably began with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924). It may not be long, in the Sunni Mahdist view, before the other major figures of the penultimate End Times³³ begin to appear:

³³ “Penultimate” because Islamic eschatology has really two phases: that within history, the penultimate one, in which the Mahdi, Jesus, the Dajjal and the Sufyani are historical actors; and the “ultimate” phase, which takes place some time after the Mahdi and Jesus have established their just

Jesus, the Dajjal, the Dabbah, Yajuj and Majuj, the Sufyani.³⁴

In fact, one popular endeavour among these Sunni pro-Mahdist authors is to engage in what in a Christian eschatological context is sometimes called “newspaper exegesis:” scouring the headlines and trying to fit the End Times figures into the current world geopolitical context. For example, sometimes modern wars are said to actually be the fitan predicted by the Prophetic traditions, four of which must take place before the Mahdi can come. Several Sunni Mahdist writers have maintained that the third fitnah will consist of the “false Mahdi,” the Shi`i Twelfth Imam, leading an attack on the Arab Gulf states, which will be followed by the fourth fitnah: an American attack on Iran.³⁵ Other elaborate eschatological scenarios are sometimes offered, many of which posit that when the Mahdi—of course an Arab leader—comes, he will at first ally with “al-Rum” (the West, primarily the Americans) to fight against the Sufyani and/or the Dajjal (probably allied with the Shi`ah), but once the Mahdi leads the entire Muslim world he will have to deal with the perfidious Americans (and their allies the Israelis and Turks). Some Sunni Mahdists reach back into history and argue that the coming strife between

state, and which includes events like the Sun rising in the West and the Last Trumpets and, eventually, the Judgment.

³⁴ General sources on all these figures, and on Islamic eschatology, are: Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1981; Ibn Kathir, *The Signs Before the Day of Judgement*, Huda Khattab (tran.), London: Dar al-Taqwa, 1991; A. Hijazi, *But, Some of its Signs Have Already Come! Major Signs of the Last Hour*, Arlington, TX: Al-Fustaat Magazine, 1995. More specifically, see A. Abel, “Dadjjal,” *EI2*; Surah al-Naml [27]:82; Revelation 13:11ff; A. J. Wensinck, “Yadjudj wa-Madjudj,” *EI2*; Ezekiel 38, 39; Revelation 20:7ff; Surah al-Kahf [18]:95ff; Surah al-Anbiya’ [21]:96.

³⁵ Salim, pp. 93ff and al-Din, pp. 21ff.

their true Mahdi and the false one of the Shi`ah has its origins in the struggles of the Safavids against the (righteous) Ottomans.

Other, more irenic (and ecumenical) Arab Mahdist writers attempt to describe the worldwide caliphate that the Mahdi and Jesus will create. It will be tantamount to the “kingdom of God” which Christians are expecting, a golden age and a state ruled jointly by the benevolent diarchy of the Mahdi and Prophet Jesus—at least until each of these eventually dies, sometime after which the signs of the ultimate End will commence, leading up to Judgement.

Besides books on this topic, there are a number of websites in Arabic and English which discuss various aspects of the doctrine of the Mahdi. The most interesting might be “MahdiUnite,”³⁶ which states that it

... is a group aimed at fostering unity among all Muslim [sic] schools of thought....all Muslims unanimously agree in [sic] Al-Mahdi who will appear in the last days of this world to bring back all the lost justice.

This site claims over 4,000 members since its inception in 2002. Overall, the Sunni books and websites on the Mahdi indicate that the doctrine is alive and well in the majority branch of Islam.

However, besides pro-Mahdist works, a (smaller) number of anti-Mahdist ones have been published in the Arab world in recent years. They are:

– Abd al-Qadir Ata, *al-Mahdi al-Muntazar bayna al-*

³⁶ <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MahdiUnite/>

Haqiqah wa-al-Khurafah³⁷

- Abu Muhammad Harbi, al-Sayf al-Abtar ala Kitab Muhandis al-Azhar (Kashf Haqiqah Kitab `Umr Ummat al-Islam wa-Qurb Zuhur al-Mahdi³⁸
- Muhammad Farid Hijab, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar bayna al-`Aqidah al-Diniyah wa-al-Madmun al-Siyasi³⁹
- Abd al-Karim al-Khatib, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar wa-Man Yantazurunuhu⁴⁰
- Abd Allah b. Zayd al-Mahmud, La Mahdi Muntazar ba`d al-Rasul Khayr al-Bashir⁴¹
- Abd al-Mu`ta Abd al-Maqsud, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi al-Mayzan⁴²
- Adab Mahmud al-Hamsh, al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi Riwayat Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Shi`ah al-Imamiyah. Dirasah Hadithiyah Naqdiyah⁴³

Overall, the lines of attack upon Mahdist doctrine exhibited in these books is tripartite: 1) stress the baselessness of Mahdism: that the Qur'an lacks any mention of the Mahdi and that the Hadiths purporting to predict his coming are either false or counterfeit; 2) tar Mahdism's believers with guilt by association: since Mahdism is strongest among, and almost certainly came from, the Shi`ah (who are heterodox),

³⁷ Cairo: Dar al-`Ulum lil-Tiba`ah, 1980.

³⁸ Cairo: Maktabah Madbuli al-Saghir, 1998.

³⁹ Algiers: al-Mu`assasah al-Wataniyah lil-Kitab, 1984.

⁴⁰ Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-`Arabi, 1980.

⁴¹ Qatar: Ri'asat al-Mahakim al-Shari`ah wa-al-Shu'un al-Diniyah, 1981.

⁴² Alexandria: Matabi'a al-Thaqafah, 1980.

⁴³ Amman: Dar al-Fath lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi`, 2001.

the belief is ipso facto off-limits to Sunnis; 3) litany of terror: cite the wars, fitan, revolutions and bloodshed engendered for over a thousand years by self-styled “Mahdis.” But the gravamen of the Sunni anti-Mahdist attack on Mahdism is that the idea is an erroneous Shi`i one, spread into “orthodox” Sunnism by the nefarious Sufis; this was largely the argument of Ibn Khaldun in his section on the Mahdi in *al-Muqaddimah*⁴⁴. Anti-Mahdists also largely adopt Ibn Khaldun’s prejudice that only the “ignorant” hoi polloi on the fringes of civilization believe in the Mahdi.

These Sunni Arab writers will grudgingly admit that Mahdism has occasionally been useful as a means of inspiring revolutions against unjust governments, and/or as a means of helping provide Muslims hope of a better day at some point in the future. But by and large these two nominally positive aspects of Mahdist belief are outweighed by the strife and death caused by Mahdist movements throughout the course of history.

Conclusion

The charge among Sunni opponents of Mahdism that the Shi`ah are particularly prone to falling under the sway of false Mahdis is actually, judged by history, seemingly an example of projection: for it seems much more true that it is the Sunni world that falls under the spell of self-styled Mahdis much more readily than does the Shi`i one. But in the last several decades—in particular, in the wake of the founding of the Islamic Republic in Iran and its undeniable influence even on the Sunni part of the Dar al-Islam—both Shi`i and Sunni Mahdism have begun to evoke

⁴⁴ N.J. Dawood (ed.), Franz Rosenthal (tran.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967. The Arabic text is available at Etienne Marc Quatremere, *Prolegomenes d’Ebn Khaldoun*, II, Paris: Didot, 1858.

... a new type of eschatological movement without a specific person as the leader.⁴⁵

Shi`is await the Hidden Imam al-Mahdi, while Sunnis are relegated to theorizing about their Mahdi in books and on websites, lacking any individual willing to risk ridicule or execution by grabbing such a ring of power. But even more important is this confluence of beliefs (and interests) between Sunnis and Shi`is:

Almost as if receiving inspiration from the historical vision of the Shi`a, Sunni Islamist movements today are moving to distance themselves from the oppressive state and denouncing ‘suborned clergy’ who serve the interests of the state and not of Islam...[C]ontemporary Sunni Islamist movements have actually now moved toward a more ‘Shi`ite’ view of the unjust state: acceptance of the principle that unjust governance in Islam not only should not be tolerated...but in fact requires the believer to resist it. The theology of these Sunni Islamist groups is often accused of being ‘Shi`ite’ by authoritarian regimes who feel their legitimacy thus threatened.⁴⁶

But despite this discernible convergence, the Sunni world remains the one much more willing—at least in some sectors—to entertain the plausibility of a Mahdist claim. The aforementioned book on Ibn Ladin, as well as a recent web posting by al-Qa`idah in which the growing Mahdist fervour among its members had to be tamped down,⁴⁷ provide strong

⁴⁵ Sabine Schmidtke, “Modern Modifications in the Shi`i Doctrine of the Expectation of the Mahdi (Intizar al-Mahdi): The Case of Khumaini,” *Orient*, 1987, 28, pp. 389-406.

⁴⁶ Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi`a: The Forgotten Muslims*, London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1999.

⁴⁷ *God Does Not Entrust Knowledge of the Mahdi to Anyone Before His Appearance*, formerly available at www.tawhed.ws/r?I=657.

circumstantial evidence (if not quite proof) that if anyone in the Sunni world today could make a Mahdist claim that might fall on at least some receptive ears, it is Usamah bin Ladin. These would have to be Sunni ears, because a number of Shi`i posters to “MahdiUnite” have pointed out that Ibn Ladin is at best a criminal and at worse a tool of American and/or Israeli intelligence. But even if only 1% of the world’s Sunni Muslims were willing to even briefly consider Usamah al-Mahdi, that could be as many as 10 million people. One might be forgiven for hoping that Sunni Mahdism continues to emulate Shi`ism—and in particular its “eschatological movement without a specific person as the leader”—if Ibn Ladin is the leading contender for Mahdi today.

Fighting the Matrix: The Necessity of a Global Theological Politics - A Christian Perspective

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In this paper I set out to challenge the dominant Western secularist paradigm that sees politics and religion or faith as mutually exclusive (I shall call it 'the Matrix'). That is neither humanly desirable nor theologically necessary, I argue. To demonstrate that, I provide an examination of some key passages from Holy Scripture. The *locus classicus* of the mistaken, separationist view – Christ's words about the relation between Caesar and God (St Mark 12: vv. 13-17) – is suitably criticised. An historical perspective is provided by considering visions of a just State in Christian history, such as the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Alliance. The thought of the Russian writer Vladimir Solovyew is referred to. Philosophical ideas are mentioned. The eschatological and messianic dimensions in the Christian tradition are discussed and their relevance to the vital matter at issue – the urgent necessity of a global theological politics – is analysed. Finally, I offer examples as to areas where Islam and Christianity's common interests should induce us to treat each other as friends and cooperate in the great struggle ahead.

Introduction

"The Matrix", for those of you who are not movie buffs, is the title of a cult science fiction film. The hero, a young man called Neo, a computer programmer, starts receiving mysterious messages from cyberspace. Gradually, he learns the shocking truth. Reality is not what he has so far taken it to be. In fact, reality isn't real at all. A malignant, universal, pervasive computer program has taken over the human race. All of Neo's perceptions, thoughts, impressions about the external world are actually illusions; Fabrications; Digital manipulations. He, along with millions, billions of other human beings is actually entombed, plugged as in batteries to the Matrix's mainframe, which fabricates and controls all his mental life. There, inside the Matrix, he dreams of being awake, active and free, whereas he is asleep, passive and

enslaved. The story is first about Neo's awakening from his all-too-real nightmare, and then about his fight, along with a few fellow resisters, to defeat the Matrix and eventually rescue the human race from the evil program's all-powerful grip.

(Some have suggested Neo stands for a Christ-like Saviour. To my Muslim friends, I suppose, I could suggest that Neo could equally be seen as a Mahdi-like figure...)

Reality and God

Let me be very bold. I want to suggest to you that today the Western world – what used to be called, honourably, Christendom – is also living a false, illusory reality; A lie. A lie that is assiduously fed, reiterated, reinforced and asseverated, again and again, in relentless fashion, by the media, the language of public discourse, the opinion-moulders, virtually everybody. A lie that, to put it very simply and a little crudely, that God is irrelevant. That God does not matter. That God and life are mutually exclusive. The matrix – not the fantastic entity conjured up by the movie but an actual, well-nigh universal, all-pervasive conspiracy – has conditioned the Western mind to believe that God is irrelevant to the public sphere, to social, moral, economic and financial matters – matters that really do matter to the way in which people live.

But how could that be? God, the author of the cosmos, reality, Himself ultimate reality, the *Ens Realissimus*, to use the language of scholastic theology, the Supreme, most real Being, He is alone is ultimately real, how could God be kept out, segregated from the public structures that shape our common life? Is it not tantamount to implying that reality isn't real? That the world isn't what we take it be? That people are living a lie?

(Note: Significant that Lenin said: ‘As far as the State is concerned, religion is a private affair’.)

If I wanted to vary the metaphor, I would say that the Matrix has fabricated a paradigm, a fundamental universal pair of conceptual spectacles that have been thrust unto the nose of every single man, woman and child in the West. That paradigm, again, is that religions and politics are like chalk and cheese. They are incompatible. They do not mix. Those who occasionally dare to challenge the paradigm, fight the Matrix, like Neo, are ritually abused, anathematised and dismissed with various epithets like ‘fundamentalists’, ‘theocrats’, ‘religious fanatics’, ‘jihadists’, ‘mad mullahs’ and the like.

One small but telling example. The recently drawn up European Charter of Fundamental Rights does not mention God at all. Not even once. Despite the pleas of the Pope, John Paul II, the name of God was wilfully, deliberately excluded from that egregious document.

God: The Absolute

Against the arrogance, the malevolence, the deception of the Matrix, I wish to invoke the words of Holy Scripture, the Bible. The First of the Ten

Commandments, give by God to Moses on tablets of stone on Mount Sinai, declares:

I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods besides me.¹

This statement is an absolute. A statement, an injunction, a

¹ *Exodus* 20:1.

command, that admits of no exceptions. It is neither relative nor comparative. Nor is it subjective. It allows of no qualification, no more or less, no minus or plus, not 'but' or 'it depends'. No cultural conditioning or hocus-pocus of that sort. It is an unconditional value, an absolute, objective standard that declares what it says:

'I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods beside me.'

Human rights, democracy, equality, parliaments, political parties, kings, rulers, presidents, prime ministers – all institutions, concepts, things that may be good or less good or no so good. It does not matter. That is not the point. What is the point is that none of them are absolutes. They are relative, conditional values. They depend on historical, cultural, ethnic, sociological circumstances. Although today in the West they are revered, worshipped I should say, as god-like categories – as gods besides the One True God – they are not. They have no absolute validity. Not so with God. Because God is an Absolute – indeed, the Absolute. The Absolute to which everything an everybody, every human value and human person must be subordinated and must submit. (Islam=submission)

A corollary. If God is the Absolute, the most real Being, supreme, ultimate Reality – the Lord our God - it cannot humanly desirable, even conceivable, that he should be kept out of the public sphere – regardless of how attractive life inside the Matrix, life within the false, fake reality might appear to be. Anymore that it was desirable to Neo, the hero that leads the fight against the Matrix, that he should remain bio-drugged, plugged to the matrix's mainframe, subjectively happy but objectively the most wretched, pitiful of slaves. God, the Lord of Life and Death, the all-powerful Creator, the Most Real Being, cannot be excluded from public life, politics, buying and selling, banking, health,

education, the family, the real world. Theology – *theo+logos*: the science of God - is a global science, it affects, it envelops, includes the whole of reality because its supreme object, God, is the Most real Being, reality itself.

Note: in my title I speak of ‘necessity’. I chose this logical modality very deliberately. Our task is no optional extra. Not just a possibility but a necessity. A necessary task. Because a) of the very logic of reality, caused and dependent on the divine, and b) because of the perilous, grave conditions in which humanity today finds itself.

One Key Theological Objection

I must now confront a standard objection to the line that I am running – that God cannot, should not, be kept out of the public sphere. An objection

Emanating, apparently, from the Christian tradition. In the Gospel according to St Mark, chapter 12, vv. 13-17, Jesus is asked a question. A question the import of which has reverberated down the century and it still does today. The Evangelist relates that some Pharisees and some followers of King Herod went to Jesus, seeking to lay a trap for him. They asked him: “Teacher, we know you are true and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or should we not?” St Mark goes on to say that Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy, replied: “Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, and let me look at it.” They brought him a coin and he said: “Whose likeness is this?” They replied: “Caesar’s.” Jesus said to them: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” St Marks say “And they were amazed at this.”

Indeed. Jesus’ enemies, the hypocrites, who cared not, truly,

for God's law, had sought to entrap him. It was not a sincere request for spiritual guidance. It was a trick. Had Jesus replied: "Yes. It is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman authorities", they would have made him out to be a collaborator, a heathen, an untrue Jew, willing to serve the hated pagan foreign rulers, the Romans. Conversely, had he replied "no, it is not lawful", they would have reported him to the Romans and accused him to be a rebel, a revolutionary, an agitator stirring up unrest against the State. Either way, the Messiah would have undermined his God-given mission. But Jesus beat them at their own game. He gave a brilliant dialectical answer, a fulminating Zen-like repartee that passed neatly through the horns of the dilemma. "Give to Caesar – the State - what belongs to the State, and to God what belongs to God."

The Objection Refuted

Note, however, what this answer does not mean. It does not mean, it does not imply, even for a moment, that Caesar and God are on an equal footing, categories of equal standing. Think on this. Could the Messiah, God's anointed, the awaited Deliverer, the Saviour, the hope of Israel, the promised Redeemer, have equated the state and God? Do me a favour! What an absurdity! What a nonsense! Nonsense psychological, spiritual and theological! Of course, the Messiah, the Son of Man, for Christians indeed the Son of God, the Messiah knew that God is supreme. That God is paramount. That God is the absolute reality. That Caesar, the state, however you construe it, is subordinate, subjected to Him. That the Christ, the Messiah, God's Anointed might have meant anything different is a religious and metaphysical impossibility.

God's Kingly Rule

Nor could it be the case that Jesus intended to divide reality into two different, separate, unconnected realms, the

spiritual and the temporal. This is not possible, for the reasons given above. Although some ceremonial and ritual distinctions may be allowed – in ancient Israel, for example, a special tribe was set apart for priestly duties, as in the Christian Church priests alone are permitted to celebrate certain key saving rites called Sacraments, such as Holy Communion – the classic distinction between the spiritual and the temporal is NOT the same as the modern one between the religious and the secular. The classic distinction assumes a conception of reality, and of human society, which is God-dependent, God-shaped, God-informed and God-ruled. The very nature of Revelation – God’s Word, God’s Law promulgated for the sake of human guidance – surely implies that such is the case. Christian history and tradition supports my interpretation. In the Byzantine Empire, or the Holy Roman Empire, for example, the distinction between Church and Emperor was certainly not the modern one between secular and religious, Church and State. The Holy Roman Emperor was no mere secular ruler. His power too was derived from above, not from below. Even today, in a thoroughly corrupt, decadent and thoroughly unchristian society like Great Britain, the ceremony of coronation of the British monarch contains the rite of anointing by the Archbishop of Canterbury – a rite first used for the coronation of the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar at Bath Abbey in 973 AD - derived straight from a conception of authority which is not of earthly, but of divine origin. In this connection the Russian writer Vladimir Soloviev has argued for the idea of a Christian state, an idea going back to Emperor Constantine, as an idea that would be a deduction from a key category of the Christian Gospel – that of the Kingdom of God. Such a Kingdom would consist, on earth, of three connected aspects: the Christian Church, the Christian State and the Christian Society. A threefold dimension sharing the same essence: the Kingdom, the kingly rule of God on earth. The Church worships God as the absolute truth. For His sake she ministers to humanity.

The state in its relative sphere administers and dispenses God's sacred justice to men. Christian society, aided by Church and state, seeks to develop and fulfil God's Kingdom in institutions of social solidarity, facilitating the realisation of true freedom and mutual love.

Conclusion

Finally, I wish to conclude this presentation by paying homage to the organisers of this conference. This is no matter of mere courtesy. I wish to say we all in the West who care about God and his kingly rule on earth owe an immense debt of gratitude to Islam. It is thanks to the Islamic presence among us today that we are beginning to wake up from our matrix-induced slumbers. Islam helps us to re-discover the fact that the contemporary Western model of politics is not the only one. That the current paradigm is not, unlike the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone. That is so because Islam presents us with a different, alternative, living model of conceiving politics, the relations between secular and religious, Church and state, profane and spiritual. Islam puts to us the need, the vision for what I have been contending: the necessity, the urgent necessity of a global, universal theological politics. A politics informed by theology, by the science of the Absolute, the author of all reality - God. The notion of the Imam Mahdi is especially significant. As too many Christians, or I should say pseudo-Christians, bogus Christians, false Christians, have ceased to take seriously the belief in Christ's Second Coming on earth, Muslims remind us of this key eschatological figure, Imam Mahdi, who is to realise a realm of righteousness, of justice on earth. What a tremendously inspiring teaching! What a great, wonderful hope! May it inspire us all to do what I have sought to suggest in this paper: to fight the Matrix.

Mahdiism: A Globalist Theological Perspective

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This paper is intended to explicate a Shia conviction about the end of history, as their belief in Mahdiism implies. The Shia conviction in Mahdiism indicates a Godly promise about the ultimate victory of Divine rule at the end of human history on the Earth in the form of a global Devine governance providing peace, security, prosperity and spirituality for all human beings. This 'theological perspective' suggests an alternative view to two related theories proposed in the West about the end of human society. A 'universalist political theory' proposed by Francis Fukuyama in 1989 assumes that the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe marked not only the failure of a particular attempt to implement socialism and, even more, the collapse of the idea of socialism itself, but also marked the end of human social and political evolution by arriving at the final stage, i.e., liberalism. A 'globalist political theory' suggested by David Held in 1995 goes one step forward by asserting that not only is liberal democracy a victorious model for governance across the globe, but also it is the most appropriate political system for the cosmopolitan global governance, which is going to take place; that is, a cosmopolitan democracy.

This paper is intended to explicate one aspect of a Shia conviction about the end of human history. To obtain a comparative perspective, I first look at Fukuyama's descriptive assertion about the ultimate victory of liberal democracy as a universal model of government, which involves a prescriptive claim about ultimate plausibility of liberalism. I then explore the idea of cosmopolitan democracy, which David Held proposes as the most appropriate form of global government. Finally, I focus on some verses of the holy Qur'an along with some traditions of the Prophet Mohammad and his successors (peace be upon them), which promise and predict a Divine global government at the end of human history as the most plausible Godly programme for humankind.

Fukuyama's Universalist Political Theory: Liberal Democracy as the Ultimate Victorious Model of Plausible government

In the summer of 1989, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Eastern Europe was moving towards democratisation, Francis Fukuyama published his sweeping article 'The end of History?'¹ Later, in his book *The End of History and the Last Man*,² published in the spring of 1992, he advanced the idea of the victory of 'liberalism' over all its rivals forever. By liberalism he means liberal democratic capitalism. This model of government is characterised by the following features:

- (a) Politically, it includes parliamentary democracy, that is, an elective government with universal suffrage.
- (b) Economically, it involves a free-market economy, that is, capitalism.
- (c) Philosophically, as well as legally, it contains a collection of liberal rights based on individualism usually referred to as 'fundamental human rights'.³

Viewing human history as a linear, coherent, and evolutionary process as does Marxist sociology, Fukuyama rejects the Marxist view that the last stage in the development of human society is a communist society;

¹ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", *The National Interest*, no. 16, 1989.

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Hamish Hamilton/New York: Basic Books, 1992.

³ Christopher Bertram and Andrew Chitty (eds.), "Introduction", in *Has History Ended? Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity*, England: Averbury Ashgate Publishing, 1994, p. 1.

rather, it is liberal democracy.⁴ Dismissing ‘Islamic doctrine’, as well as ‘nationalism’ as sufficient alternatives to liberalism, he argues that liberal democracy has had three major rivals since it was established by the French and American Revolutions in the eighteenth century: (1) medieval theocracy, (2) fascism, and (3) communism.⁵

Before 1989, liberalism had seen off the challenges of both medieval theocracy and fascism. He maintains that the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe marked not only the failure of a particular attempt to implement socialism, but also the collapse of the idea of socialism and communism as a feasible social doctrine.⁶ Consequently, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of Eastern Europe indicated the end of humanity’s social and political evolution towards its last stage: liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy is superior to communism, argues Fukuyama, because unlike the latter it satisfies consumer desires. Liberalism has proved in practice that it can produce incomparable material prosperity. Moreover, all human beings desire not only the satisfaction of their material requirements but also need to be recognised as human by others. With liberal society, a stage has been reached where all human beings can receive recognition.⁷

However, recent research on the third wave of

⁴ Joseph McCarney, “Shaping Ends: Reflections on Fukuyama”, in *Has History Ended? Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity*, Bertram and Chitty (eds.), England: Averbury Ashgate Publishing, 1994, p. 14.

⁵ Christopher Bertram and Andrew Chitty (eds.), “Introduction”, in *Has History Ended? Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity*, England: Averbury Ashgate Publishing, 1994, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 1-2.

democratisation, as O'Donnell makes clear in his article 'Illusions about Consolidation', dismisses the notion that the new democracies have perfectly duplicated liberal democracy. He argues that 'many of the new polyarchies at best poorly institutionalised anything but elections, at least in terms of what one would expect from looking at older polyarchies'. Therefore, he proposes the notion of 'electoral democracy' to describe some countries that have undergone third wave democratisation in contrast with 'liberal democracy',⁸ which indicates the failure of liberal democracy to impose itself on new democratic countries throughout the globe.

Liberal democracy encounters a more fatal flaw even in established democracies in the West with a long tradition of human rights and liberalism: social and economic inequalities. These result in unequal liberty to take advantage of formal political rights. This real insufficiency contradicts Fukuyama's assertion that liberal democracy satisfies human desires. Norman Daniels, for instance, suggests that (1) inequality in economic power results in inequality between poor and wealthy 'to select candidates, to influence public opinion, and to influence elected officials'. Hence, the equality of political participation is damaged. Furthermore, he proposes that (2) as far as the equal right to a fair trial is concerned, the poor have less access to high quality legal counsel, as well as less ability to influence laws, which determine the crimes. Moreover, (3) since the wealthy have more power to influence the media, formal equality in expressing one's own opinion is shifted to the

⁸ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions about Consolidation" in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*, Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, (eds.), USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 42-3.

interests of the wealthy.⁹ Finally, (4) wealthy citizens' greater ability to influence what is taught in schools reinforces their capacity to advance their own interests.¹⁰ Overall, inequality in economic possessions and social positions nullifies the usefulness of formal political liberty as far as citizens' interests are concerned. This fact is recognised by John Rawls, the greatest liberal philosopher of the twentieth century,¹¹ who is basically concerned with the justice of political and social institutions. With regard to the real constitutionally democratic regimes in the West he states:

Historically one of the main defects of constitutional government has been the failure to insure the fair value of political liberty. ... Disparities in the distribution of property and wealth that far exceed what is compatible with political equality have generally been tolerated by the legal system. Public resources have not been devoted to maintaining the institutions required for the fair value of political liberty. ... Political power rapidly accumulates and becomes unequal; and making use of the coercive apparatus of the state and its law, those who gain the advantage can often assure themselves of a favoured position. ... Universal suffrage is an insufficient counterpoise; for when parties and elections are financed not by public funds but by private contributions, the political

⁹ Norman Daniels, "Equal Liberty and Unequal Worth of Liberty", in *Reading Rawls, Critical studies on Rawls' A Theory of Justice*, Norman Daniels (ed.), California: Stanford University Press, 1975, p. 256.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹¹ Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 15.

forum is so constrained by the wishes of the dominant interests.¹²

What is more, Fukuyama's victorious model ignores a deeper human desire for spirituality, which elevates human life to a stage where the higher faculties can be perpetually satisfied. Put another way, liberal democracy has constructed its values on a narrow conception of Man, whose major desires and potentialities are conceived of as this-worldly and temporal. The higher potentialities and desires are implicitly ignored in favour of a collection of this-worldly interests. This narrow conception of Man and his potentialities cannot overcome the problems with which human societies are currently grappling. Fukuyama himself acknowledges the failure of liberal democracy to recognise the full range of human potentialities. In the final section of his book, he admits that one may dismiss the sufficiency of liberal democracy to satisfy the twin desires of material satisfaction and interpersonal recognition.¹³

Held's Globalist Political Theory: Cosmopolitan Democracy as the most Appropriate Model for Global Government

In his book *Democracy and the Global Order* published in 1995, David Held put forward for the first time the notion of 'cosmopolitan democracy'; he developed this notion further in later writings. Held takes a step beyond Fukuyama, suggesting not only that liberal democracy is the victorious model for the conduct of a country, but also that it is the most appropriate model for the global government he

¹² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 198-199.

¹³ Christopher Bertram and Andrew Chitty (eds.), "Introduction", in *Has History Ended? Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity*, England: Averbury Ashgate Publishing, 1994, p. 3.

believes is going to be established. He divides human history in three periods.

- 1- In the era of imperial systems in ancient times, human societies were composed of separate civilisations including Islamic, Chinese, Japanese and so on with the following features: separate and independent worlds, albeit featuring some economic exchange; rare mutual influence in the domain of culture; internal cultural development; lack of a coherent and common culture in any civilisation; and finally lack of sovereignty of emperors over their populations.¹⁴
- 2- In the next period, when nation states were established by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a new global order took the place of imperial time.¹⁵ In contrast to the previous period, in this phase the government could determine the public affairs of its nation. Furthermore, through national elections people could control and restrict the exercise of power by government to keep it in line with their interests. Finally, a difference between internal and external affairs with regard to institutions and actions can be recognised.¹⁶
- 3- Held further suggests that the third period, in which we are now living, marks a new global order, that is, globalisation: we all live on one globe,¹⁷ and the world is

¹⁴ David Held, "The Transformation of Political Community: Rethinking Democracy in the Context of Globalisation", in *Democracy's Edges*, Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 84-88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ David Held, "The Changing Contours of Political Community", in *Global Democracy*, Barry Holden (ed), London: Routledge, 2000, p. 18.

¹⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World*, London: Profile Books, 1999, p. 7.

experiencing a process of 'shrinking' or 'compression'.¹⁸ Theorists of globalisation mention different spheres, such as the economic, political, technological, military, legal, cultural and environmental, in which the interconnectedness of states has increasingly expanded.¹⁹ The consequence of globalisation processes is not, however, happy for democracy. For democracy confronts cardinal difficulties related to its principal value: accountability of representatives to the electorate. Not only has "accountability" become problematic, but questions of "constituency", "representation" and the way of "participation" arise in relation to issues such as AIDS, nuclear energy, nuclear waste disposal, rain forest destruction, the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, and so forth. Held suggests that democracy under conditions of globalisation can be maintained if it becomes 'cosmopolitan democracy'.²⁰

His cosmopolitan democracy is characterised, firstly, by multilevel governments, each level of which is entrusted with specific tasks for which it is accountable.²¹ A collection of democratic laws, related to the health, social, cultural, civic, economic, pacific and political spheres will take the place of current international law on human rights.²² Finally, there should be multiple citizenship at national, regional and global levels²³ with the right to choose the authorities of

¹⁸ James Fulcher, "Globalisation, the Nation-State and Global Society", *The Sociological Review*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2000, p. 524.

¹⁹ David Held, "The Changing Contours of Political Community", in *Global Democracy*, Barry Holden (ed), London: Routledge, 2000, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27-8.

²¹ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd edition, California: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 354.

²² David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, U.K.: Polity Press, 1995, 270-2.

²³ David Held, "The Changing Contours of Political Community", in *Global Democracy*, Barry Holden (ed), London: Routledge, 2000, p. 30.

every organisation at all levels and hold them accountable in the scope of their tasks.²⁴

However, so far as the nation-state order is concerned, it is seriously doubtful if it is going to disappear. In almost all processes of globalisation, the main players are still nation-states themselves. Some of those processes are based on the sovereignty of national units, such as international law or collective defence treaties. The interdependence of states does not necessarily mean that a transnational sovereign is going to take their place; it is still independent states that participate in international institutions and organisations. Therefore, no independent power can dictate policies to states, other than some superpower states, which are in themselves nation-states.

Saward presents a hierarchy of four democratic reactions to the problem of transnational issues, the last of which is cosmopolitan democracy. The first is to tighten co-operation among democratic governments. Secondly, a semi-permanent or permanent structure could be established in order to direct and intensify such co-operation, if a particular problem persists. The third response could be the establishment of a confederation among states, on the basis of agreed rules for determining the scope of collective decision-making, which would be dominant over the participating states. The last response would be to construct a set of new institutions or even a dominant state over the nation-states that possess authority to deal with transnational issues. Held favours this last approach.²⁵

Saward suggests temporary mechanisms to deal with

²⁴ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd edition, California: Stanford University Press, 1996, pp. 354-5.

²⁵ Michael Saward, "A Critique of Held", in *Global Democracy*, Holden (ed.), pp. 35-36.

international problems that take precedent to what Held believes. One solution might be a deliberative forum consisting of representatives of communities facing a given problem; each community would have, at least, a formal say in the issue in question. Another mechanism proposed by Saward, following Dobson, involves 'reciprocal representation', according to which states facing a certain difficulty would have a seat in each other's parliaments. The third proposal is to establish 'functional representation', meaning that the governments themselves shape and support cultural communities transcending national borders, which cope with related problems. Finally, transnational referenda can be used to solve some problems.²⁶

Furthermore, whilst liberal democracy has been successful in providing a peaceful framework for people with various commitments to promote their particular way of life, it is more favourable to secular ways of life, which ignore the higher human requirements. Rawls, for instance, admits that a just constitutional democracy would have some positive effects on liberalism and democracy. It is obvious, therefore, that a liberal state would benefit a liberal way of thinking rather than, for instance, strong religious convictions. Dismissing the possibility of the neutrality of the liberal state with regard to its effect on different conceptions of the good life, Rawls announces that 'It is surely impossible for the basic structure of a just constitutional regime not to have important effects and influences as to which comprehensive doctrines endure and gain adherents over time'.²⁷ Thus, a global democracy would fail to attend to higher human faculties.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-2.

²⁷ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 193-4.

The Islamic Theological Perspective: The Divine Promise of a Religious Global Government

First of all, it is worth noticing that the Islamic perspective on the end of human history, far from being a jurisprudential precept, is a matter of theology, which deals with God's actions. This idea is approved implicitly by Imam Khomeini, too.²⁸ Hence, it is a Divine prediction and promise of a period when human society, exhausted of various doctrines and ways of life, is able to accept a Divine government determined to promote the real essence of Man and strive towards his deserved perfection. Furthermore, the Islamic perspective on the end of history is based upon revelational evidence, rather than social and political arguments. Thus, what Shia Muslims generally believe about the end of history indicates that God will bring human society to the point where everything demands the establishment of a Divine government on Earth under which humankind can live peacefully, justly, and prosperously. In what follows, a few pieces of Islamic evidence in this regard will be discussed.

(1) The holy Qur'an indicates that a global government will definitely be established as a matter of Divine will:

Certainly We wrote in the Psalms,
after the Torah:
'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.'
There is indeed in this
a proclamation for a devout people.
We did not send you

²⁸ Imam Khomeini, *Sahifeye Nour*, Tehran: Guidance Ministry Publication, 1982, vol. 12, pp. 480-3.

but as a mercy to all the nations.²⁹

In *Majma-ul-Bayan*, a leading interpretation of the holy Qur'an by Mohammad Hasan Tabarsi, a saying of the seventh Imam (peace be upon him) is reported which states that by righteous servants, it is meant the followers of Imam Mahdi at the end of temporal life. He (peace be upon him) then reports a saying from Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him & his family) in which he states: 'If it does not remain but one day in the temporal life, God will extend that day until He sends a righteous servant from among my family, who makes justice and the truth prevail on the Earth, as the Earth was dominated by injustice before that'.³⁰ With this interpretation, then, these verses indicate the victory of Divine religion and God's righteous servants on the Earth. This perfect victory will definitely not be attained unless they are in charge of the government of the world.

(2) The holy Qur'an again points to the ultimate victory of religion and spirituality on the Earth when citing the ambition of disbelievers to eradicate religion by their weak efforts:

They desire to put out the light of Allah
with their mouths,
but Allah is intent on perfecting His light
though the faithless should be averse.
It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the
religion of truth,
that He may make it prevail over all religions,

²⁹ *The Qur'an: The Prophets*, verses 105-7, 'Ali Quli Qara'I (tran.), London: Islamic college for Advanced Studies Press, 2004.

³⁰ Mohammad Hasan Tabarsi, *Majma-ul-Bayan*, vol. 7, Beirut: Dar El-Marefah, 1986, pp. 106-7.

though the polytheists should be averse.³¹

Mohammad Husein Tabatabaee, a prominent philosopher and interpreter of the holy Qur'an, argues that these verses indicate that by sending Prophet Mohammad and Islam, God has decided to make Islam dominant throughout the globe by defeating all ideologies about human life, although disbelievers dislike this.³² Obviously, however, one may suggest that this promise will not be kept unless a Divine global government is established and conducted by God's righteous servants. Otherwise, the victory of religion over all other ideologies cannot be guaranteed.

According to *Tafseer-e-Nemooneh*, a famous interpretation of the holy Qur'an, many sayings of the Prophet Mohammad and his successors tell us not only that a Divine global government will be established one day in the history of men, but also that all people throughout the globe will then submit to God and His will.³³ Likewise, Mohammad Hussein Tabatabaee argues that, whilst in the era of Divine global government Muslims rule the earth, the followers of other Divine religions, such as the Jewish and the Christian, will securely and equally follow their religions.³⁴

(3) As indicated above, the idea of Divine global government is a Godly promise, rather than a jurisprudential precept. This idea is explicitly declared in the holy Qur'an:

Allah has promised those of you who have faith
and do righteous deeds

³¹ *The Qur'an*, Repentance, verses 32-33.

³² Mohammad Husein Tabatabaee, *Al-Meezan fi-Tafseer-el-Qur'an*, Moosavi-e-Hamedany (tran.), vol. 9, Qum: Islamic Press Office, p. 329.

³³ Makarem Shirazi et al, *Tafseer-e-Nemooneh*, 19th edition, vol. 7, Tehran: The House of Islamic Books, 1997, pp. 368-89.

³⁴ Tabarsi, *Majma-ul-Bayan*, p. 341.

that He will surely make them successors in the earth,
 just as He made those who were before them successors
 and He will surely establish for them
 their religion which He has approved for them,
 and that He will surely change their state
 to security after their fear,
 while they worship Me,
 not ascribing any partners to Me.
 And whoever is ungrateful after that
 it is they who are the transgressors.³⁵

In *Majma-ul-Bayan*, Tabarsi quotes some sayings by the Prophet's successors (peace be upon them), in which they promise that at the end of human history the twelfth Imam, Mahdi, will make justice and faithfulness prevail in the world. The reports interpreting these verses thus explicitly declare that one day the whole world will be dominated by a Divine global government conducted by Imam Mahdi.³⁶ In addition, Tabarsi argues here that when God says He 'has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors', He refers to great prophets such as Adam, David and Solomon. This analogy made between the rule of Imam Mahdi and Adam, David and Solomon, each of whom possessed a fairly strong and broad government, definitely indicates that Mahdi will run a strong government.³⁷ Furthermore, the assurance of "perfect safety and security" implies a global government. For as long as disbelievers possess powerful governments on earth this goal cannot be achieved.³⁸

³⁵ *The Qur'an*, The Light, verse 55.

³⁶ Tabarsi, *Majma-ul-Bayan*, pp. 239-40.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Therefore, this part of the verse indicates the prevalence of that government across the whole world.

Features of Divine Global Government

Overall, by examining explicit traditions along with several verses of the holy Qur'an we can infer the features of the Divine global government as follows:

- a. First of all, the authorities of such a global government are all righteous servants of God, led by Mahdi, the twelfth Imam of Shia Muslims. This characteristic is the key element, by which worldwide justice is guaranteed for humankind for the first time, such that there will be no grounds for worry about human rights, which concerns Held.
- b. The unprecedented laws and regulations implemented by that global government are religious laws and values, rather than liberal laws as Held maintains. The efficacy of these laws is guaranteed, however, by the fact that an infallible leader with divinely revealed knowledge, who will be in charge of the government, can adjust or complete the traditional religious laws we possess at present, if necessary.
- c. As opposed to Fukuyama's assumption, the perfection of Man will be materialised at that time through the guaranteed dominance of spirituality by religious government, the first priority of which is the promotion of spirituality for mankind. This circumstance will enable human beings to freely obey the Divine commands, to worship God with no fear, and to reach the position of the perfect man.
- d. The religious society will enjoy perfect peace and security by defeating all evils and idolatries throughout

the world. The eradication of every idolatrous ideology throughout the world will pave the way for human society to consolidate a pleasing state of affairs with no place for insecurity and hostility. Obviously, however, perfect peace and security will be accompanied by the preliminary need of men for prosperity. Several traditions explicitly promise worldwide affluence. This rejects the monopoly on prosperity Fukuyama attributes to capitalist liberal democracy. When a Divine global government is conducted by an infallible leader with divinely revealed knowledge, the problem of accountability, which causes Held to resort to cosmopolitan democracy, is solved.

To sum up, at the end of human history, mankind will arrive at global prosperity, justice, security and spirituality for the first time under the rule of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him).

Western Globalisation and Imam Mahdi's Globalism

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The term “globalisation” emerged from management and business literature in the 1970s to describe new strategies for worldwide production and distribution, entering the social sciences through geography and sociology, and the humanities through anthropology and cultural studies.¹ Following the rise of such ideas as the “global village”, “one world”, “global civil society”, “world order” and global culture and notions of the “end of history”, globalisation refers to significant transformations in communications, technology, capital and production. “Globalism” means that events in one country cannot be separated from those in another and that a government should therefore consider the effects of its actions in other countries as well as its own.²

This article compares western globalisation with Islamic globalism, concentrating on Imam Mahdi's government and justice. Globalisation can be considered a process or project. Certain ideas are assumed in the present article:

1. Globalism differs from globalisation. Muslims' belief in a single world state is compatible with globalism, though this term is more general than the Muslim conception.
2. Globalism and globalisation overlap.
3. Despite their similarities, globalism and globalisation differ in many important respects.

¹ William Maurer, “Globalization”, in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winqvist (eds.), London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 158.

According to the hypothesis of this article, the western concept of globalisation and the Islamic concept of globalism both emphasise:

1. Expansion of knowledge and technology
2. Development and establishment of an integrated and homogeneous economy
3. Fading nation-state sovereignty
4. Establishment of a hierarchical system and global citizenship
5. Trans-national affairs

However, the two concepts differ in their approach to:

1. The relation between religion and politics
2. Divine sovereignty (Welayat)
3. Morality and salvation
4. Social and economic justice
5. Jihad
6. Ummah
7. Trans-national responsibilities

² *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Globalisation: Definitions

Globalisation is viewed as one of the most important phenomena in the contemporary age. It is defined in various ways:

1. The inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before – in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before . . . the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world.³
2. The compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century.⁴
3. A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.⁵
4. The historical transformation constituted by the sum of particular forms and instances of making or being made global (i) by the active dissemination of practices, values, technology and other human products throughout the globe (ii) when

³ T.L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 1999, pp. 7-8.

⁴ R. Robertson, *Globalization*, 1992, p. 8.

⁵ M. Waters, *Globalization*, 1995, p. 3.

global practices and so on exercise an increasing influence over people's lives (iii) when the globe serves as a focus for, or a premise in shaping, human activities.⁶

5. Integration in pursuit of “market rule on a global scale”.⁷

6.

As experienced from below, the dominant form of globalisation means a historical transformation: in the economy, of livelihoods and modes of existence; in politics, a loss in the degree of control exercised locally . . . and in culture, a devaluation of a collectivity's achievements. Globalisation is emerging as a political response to the expansion of market power [it] is a domain of knowledge.⁸

7.

By globalisation, we refer to a more advanced stage of the process of development in which all aspects of economy – raw materials, labour, information and transportation, finance, distribution and marketing – are integrated or interdependent on a global scale. Global media are also part of the complex pattern of trans-border information flows.⁹

8.

Globalisation is invoked to develop the significant transformations of the mid - to late 20th century in communications, technology, capital and production. These

⁶ M. Albrow, *The Global Age*, 1996, p. 88.

⁷ P. McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, 2000, pp. xxiii, 149.

⁸ J.H. Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome*, 2000.

⁹ Kevin Robins, “Globalization”, in *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper (eds.), London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 345-346.

transformations have been marked by new patterns of consumption, large flows of people between and across states leading to a whole series of interlocking diasporas and the spread of universal norms and social movements around issues of human rights, democratisation and ecology.¹⁰

According to the above eight definitions, globalisation can be defined as the expansion of global linkages, organisation of social life on global scale, and growth of global consciousness, and hence the consolidation of world society. The story of our increasingly global order – “globalisation” – is not a singular one. Globalisation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

Imperialism, Nazism, the East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, Soviet expansion, the European Union, the World Trade Organisation, the spread of modern Western culture around the world: all the major political and economic forces of the last 150 years can be viewed as events in the saga of Globalisation versus Geopolitics on the world stage.

The term “modernisation” refers to the process in which the structures of traditional societies are dismantled and replaced by new economic, social, political and cultural structures. Modernisation can be defined in a number of ways, but it is sufficient for the purposes of this paper to mention its major features: humanism, rationalism, welfare, technology, capitalism, and new concepts such as human rights.

Globalisation is often described as a process: steadily progressing over time, pervasively spreading over space, and clearly inevitable in its development. But globalisation is also a revolution, one of the most profound revolutions the

¹⁰ Albert J. Paolini (ed), *Between Sovereignty and Global Governance*, Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, p. 165.

world has ever known. Indeed, globalisation is the first truly world-spanning revolution. For some analysts, especially in the third world countries, globalisation is a project planned by the west.

Globalisation limits and relativises state sovereignty; frees capitalist markets and civil society from their territorial-juridical embeddedness in state and nation and, as a result, dissolves the particular fusion of nation and state which emerged out of Western modernity and became institutionalised worldwide, at least as a model, after the French Revolution. Globalisation does not mean the end of states or the end of nations and nationalism, but it means the end of their fusion in the sovereign territorial nation-state.

Globalisation: Cultural, Political or Economic?

During the second half of the 20th century, a complex relationship developed between two major historical dynamics: the intensifying globalisation of all aspects of human life and the continuing affirmation of special human identities.

When speaking about globalisation there is a tendency – as we saw in some of the above definitions – to identify it with the process of economic globalisation while ignoring the political, cultural and social dimensions. In the cultural sphere, globalisation can be understood as the shift from territorially-based traditional and modern cultural identities to modern and post-modern identities with trans-territorial characteristics. The economic conditions in particular localities frequently (some would say always) depend on events taking place elsewhere in the global system.

Globalisation is the process of integration of the world community into a common economic or social system. The first phase of globalisation is the economic integration of the

majority of the peoples of the world. The ILO's definition of globalisation is economic too:

It is defined as a process of growing interdependence between all people of this planet. People are linked together economically and socially by trade, investments and governance. These links are spurred by market liberalisation and information, communication and transportation technologies.¹¹

Some experts view globalisation as a paradigm, involving shifts in values, lifestyles, tolerance for diversity – be it ethnic, cultural, or sexual – and individual choice. They argue that a cultural and social shift of sorts is already taking place. “The great religious and ideological meta-narratives”, Ronald Inglehart writes, “are losing their authority among the masses. The uniformity and hierarchy that shaped modernity are giving way to an increasing acceptance of diversity”. Similarly, the shift from instrumental rationality, which once characterized modernisation, to a greater emphasis on value rationality and quality of life concerns is another indicator of this major change.

Globalisation encompasses aspects of cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity. Those who maintain that the greatest effects on the world system are those of homogenisation emphasize the importance of economic globalisation, beginning with the activities of international companies and of the most important industrialized nations as the transmitters of messages relating to consumption and the market culture. Those who argue in favour of the differentiated and heterogeneous effects underline the dynamics of appropriation and modification of the message

¹¹ ILO (International Labour Organization), www.google.com.

and its symbols at national and sub-national levels.

However, globalisation puts into motion mechanisms that act in both directions, feeding into each other. A mutual cultural fertilisation has taken place from the very first historical contacts between civilisations, albeit usually asymmetric with respect to impact. What happens today, when compared to the past (at least in scale) exhibits certain important changes:

1. The dimension – now planetary – covered by interactions
2. The great speed of propagation and growing simultaneousness of the impacts
3. The broadening of the spectrum and influence of the flows of goods, messages and ideas that circulate and interact worldwide
4. Greater specialisation of the communication circuits, which contributes to segmenting societies into differentiated estates
5. Differences in the timing and content of responses (local, national, etc.)

I would propose, therefore, a view of globalisation as all the socio-cultural processes that contribute to making distance irrelevant. It has important economic, political and cultural dimensions, as well as equally important ethical implications. Truly global processes affect the conditions of people living in particular localities, creating new opportunities and new forms of vulnerability.

Without the cultural dimension it is very difficult to impart a

coherence to the interpretation of the contemporary world, in which nationalism, religion and inter-ethnic conflicts have as much influence as the international and secular aspects. The political economy and international relations models currently in use cannot alone explain, give meaning to, or recommend policies geared to solving the multidimensional problems we face today.

Globalisation and the Clash of Civilisations

In my book *Clash of Civilizations and Dialogue of Civilizations* I commented briefly on Samuel Huntington's theory.¹² According to him, conflict between civilisations will be the dominant though not the only factor on the international scene and will even supplant ideology. Thus the main hub of world politics will be the relationships among civilisations, particularly between the West and what the author calls the "rest" of the world (the Asian, Middle Eastern and African cultures).

Professor Huntington goes on to argue that some among these undemocratic nations will develop interests deeply contrary to those of the West. "The fault lines between civilizations", he warned, may soon replace "the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed". Among the most likely trouble spots on the horizon, Huntington advised, was the Muslim world. "Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years", he observed, and in the future this "*military interaction* between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline" (emphasis added). Other commentators have sounded equally dire warnings, hinting at a new Cold War in

¹² Seyed Sadegh Haghghat, *Clash of Civilizations and Dialogue of Civilizations*, Qom: Taha, 1999.

which a resurgent Islam might play the role earlier assumed by Leninism.¹³

While Huntington's theory incorporates elements and perspectives that have led many analysts to brand it simplistic and partial, there is a need to pose important questions rooted in reality.

- How does economic and political globalisation affect culture and vice versa?
- How will cultural globalisation affect politics and economics in future decades?
- How can he prove that culture is more effective on society than economics and politics?
- How can Huntington foresee that the western civilisation will be superior to others?

I differentiate between priority and effectiveness. For a Muslim, culture and religion are prior to other elements, but sometimes, in fact and in reality, economy might outweigh culture. The globalisation of the world economy has left governments less powerful and threatened cultures with homogenisation. Another example comprises the major global conflicts in the 20th century drawn along lines of ideology and worldview. The competition between the world visions of Wilson and Lenin and the rise of fascism in the interwar era are examples of this.

On the other hand, moves are being made towards a

¹³ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, webmaster@pupress.princeton.edu.

pluralistic dialogue of civilisations. Not a clash, but a deep dialogue involving ways of knowing, an understanding that we can no longer export our problems to others, be they weaker nations or the environment.¹⁴

Globalisation: Some Challenges

Globalisation appears to play a unique and deterministic role in the contemporary world. However, its progress is not unchallenged. For a variety of reasons, globalisation creates the conditions for *localisation*, that is, various attempts to create bounded entities – countries (nationalism or separatism), faith systems (religious revitalisation), cultures (linguistic or cultural movements) or interest groups (ethnicity). For this reason, a more apt term, coined by sociologist Roland Robertson, might be “glocalisation”. Identity politics always entails competition over scarce resources. Successful mobilisation on the basis of collective identities presupposes a widespread belief that resources are unequally distributed along group lines.

Modernisation and globalisation actualise differences and trigger conflict. On the other hand, similarity overrules equality and injustice ideologically.

In his book, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, Bassam Tibi¹⁵ argues that

¹⁴ Seyed Sadegh Haghigat, *Clash of Civilizations and Dialogue of Civilizations*, Qom: Taha, 1999.

¹⁵ Bassam Tibi, a practicing Muslim, is Professor of International Relations at the University of Göttingen, Germany.

...the major trend in current international politics is the simultaneity of structural globalisation and cultural fragmentation.

Tibi sees the unifying practices and products of globalisation, from the visible examples of commerce, to less obvious legal/political forms such as the international order of nation-states, as only a thin overlay on the world's peoples, one which has little interaction with their deep and persistent cultural codes.

Cultural fragmentation occurs as nation-state power weakens under the quick and easy flow of information and martial technology, both of which are made possible by globalisation. Where the nation-state is not supported by historically-evolved popular sovereignty, local ethno-religious conflict will supersede national aspiration. At the same time, the process of globalisation has a corrosive effect on the organisation and exercise of power. Nations have less importance as prime movers in the new world of international commerce. Our new technologies also empower trans- and supra-national world actors, whether currency traders or terrorists, cadres or super-empowered individuals.¹⁶

Globalisation is creating global problems, such as ozone depletion, climate instability and mass migration, while destroying the reservoir of goodwill and willingness to cooperate across this fragile Earth essential to addressing these problems. Globalism, the belief that the condition of our neighbour, no matter how far away, affects each of us and thus demands our attention and action, is the only way to combat this assault.

¹⁶ John Boak, *Cultural Fragmentation, Globalization and International Morality*, The Institute of Applied Cubism, Internet.

We face enough natural disasters on the fragile ecosystem, we call Earth to challenge our goodwill and our human abilities – we cannot afford to add the destructiveness of globalisation. Nor can we afford to allow globalisation to turn us away from loving, caring, cooperating and sharing. The fate of the planet now rests in the balance.¹⁷

Globalisation and Religion

At one level, Islam can be seen as a counter-globalisation in that globalisation – at least in its dominant form – is essentially about expanding the economic circle in our lives at the expense of the social, the spiritual and the cultural. It is the expansion of the world capitalist economy into every sphere of our lives. It is also the continuation of social Darwinism, the notion that the fittest – the most entrepreneurial – should lead the world. Finally, globalism continues the ideal of progress, of creating the perfect society, a positivist/scientific world, of forever removing religion and irrationality from human history. The latest technology that promises to deliver this future is genetic engineering, creating a world of flawless human beings.

In terms of discourse analysis, Islam is one of the counter-discourses to globalisation, to the expansion of economic space and the fulfilment of the dreams of the west. However, even as Islam attempts to create new possibilities for globalism, national politics doom it to a politics of reaction, of reducing diversity and innovation.

Globalisation can also be viewed as a new hegemonic system upheld by the world's major capitalist economies of the post-Cold War world to promote their own political and economic interests. This is what Muslims widely regard as a

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

menace to their cultural solidarity and authenticity. This is why much of the backlash against globalisation in the Muslim world takes cultural forms, though many criticisms are also couched in economic and ecological terms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) clearly presumes that individuals are the key unit of society; it also affirms these individuals' equality and ultimate worth. This document begins with the claim that the recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Yet Islam does not abandon the individual; it just provides different protections. Where human rights advocates seek to protect individuals by using "rights" as lines beyond which governments cannot go, Islam protects the person by emphasizing the collective need to maintain a just society. Both conceive of persons and think that they need protection, but only the former sees "rights" as the solution. In Jack Donnelly's words,

The [Islamic] right to justice proves instead a duty of rulers to establish justice, whereas the right to freedom is merely a duty not to enslave unjustly. In fact, economic rights turn out to be duties to earn a living and to help provide for the needy, whereas the right to freedom of expression actually is an obligation to speak the truth; i.e., the right is not an obligation of others but an obligation of the right's holder!¹⁸

Islam thus puts society above the individual, while still counting "justice" as a core value. Human rights ideals, on the contrary, presume the individual's ultimate worth. This

¹⁸ Jack Donnelly, 1982, p. 306.

difference underscores these ideals' theological particularism.

Globalism and Religion

Globalism is linked with some kind of universalism. Universalism is defined as principles considered valid for everyone in the world, or a doctrine emphasizing the importance of such principles. It is commonly contrasted with, or criticized on the grounds of, particularism, i.e. values or practices valid only for a specific group in its own setting as the basis for a distinct identity, or any view emphasizing the importance thereof.

Yet human rights principles are seen as universal. They are claimed to apply to everyone, everywhere – and they champion one world, indivisible. Their enemies are the world's particularisms: the nationalisms, ethnic patriotisms, and limited visions that exalt one group or society above another. It was no accident that the first major human rights document was named “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. It promised to be the first set of universal ideals, towards which all governments and peoples could strive.

We can conclude that in this situation, two opposing universalisms can be considered: the world order of nation-states versus Islam in general concept.

According to Mark Federman's document “The Global Soul and the Global Village”, globalism is different from the globalisation of transnational enterprises. It is comforting to know that a global village is not anarchic but then one has to swallow its disturbing non-uniformity, non-tranquillity, discontinuity and division.

The “-ism” requires an action to be taken by the subject carrying that “-ism”. Some common “-isms” are “Buddhism,

communism, nationalism". "-ity" seems to be a quality formed and perceived from an outside perspective, such as nationality, which is given to you by the government or because you happen to be born in a certain geographical location.¹⁹

Some writers like Barber have used "globalism" for western civilisation, and "tribalism" for Islam and other religions.²⁰ Jean-Francois Revel has used anti-globalism and anti-Americanism to mean the same thing.²¹ Some talk of anti-terrorism versus anti-globalism.²²

According to the definition, we could use this term to mean neo-liberalism, however, I prefer to use "globalism" for religions like Islam and Judaism vs. western globalisation. The term "globalism" was used for the western countries in the title of an interview with Kevin Danaher in April 2000, but it can be used for religions in a broad sense. Globalism is the idea that events in one country cannot be separated from those in another and that a government should therefore consider the effects of its actions in other countries as well as its own. A globalist is someone who believes that a country should consider the effects of its actions on other countries. For example, we say: "He is a globalist, whereas we are nationalists who will put our country first".²³

The ILO uses globalisation and globalism as expressions of the same phenomenon, globalisation being the process and

¹⁹ John Ralston Saul, *The End of Globalism*, www.google.com.

²⁰ Benjamin R. Barber and Andrea Schulz, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World*.

²¹ Jean-Francois Revel, *Anti-Globalism = Anti-Americanism*, www.google.com

²² Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, World Social Forum, www.google.com.

²³ www.freesearch.co.uk/dictionary.

globalism the approach. Some authors prefer to differentiate between these concepts, usually with the implication that globalisation represents something bad, and globalism something good.²⁴ However, in this article they are used neutrally, neither positively nor negatively, but with different meanings.

Joe Nye outlines the fundamental differences between these two concepts. Globalism describes the reality of being interconnected, while globalisation captures the speed at which these connections increase or decrease.²⁵ I prefer his definition to that of the ILO. He does not think the two terms refer to the same phenomenon.

Ritchie defines globalisation as the process of corporations moving their money, factories and products around the planet ever more rapidly in search of cheaper labour and raw materials; it features governments willing to ignore or abandon consumer, labour and environmental protection laws. As an ideology, it is largely unfettered by ethical or moral considerations. In contrast, globalism is the belief that we share one fragile planet, the survival of which requires mutual respect and careful treatment of the earth and all its people. Globalism, like all values and ethical beliefs, requires active practice in our day-to-day lives. Communication to foster understanding, sharing of needed resources on the basis of equity and sustainability, and mutual aid in times of need are three central activities that undergird globalism.²⁶

²⁴ ILO (International Labour Organization), www.google.com.

²⁵ Joseph Nye, *Globalism Versus Globalization*, Monday, April 15, 2002, www.google.com.

²⁶ Mark Ritchie, *Globalization vs. Globalism*, International Forum on Globalization, www.google.com.

This distinction between globalism and globalisation would not be important except for two things. First, globalisation is causing so many problems that we cannot afford to be confused about it nor ignore it any longer. Second, true globalism is the only weapon we still have for tackling the level of economic, ecological, and social dislocation caused by unbridled globalisation and the resulting political violence of war and the personal violence related to crime, racism, and xenophobia. In this way, globalisation destroys the feelings of globalism, love and concern for neighbours around the planet, while creating the economic and ecological conditions that cry out for more, not less, globalism.

Similarities between Globalisation and Globalism

As mentioned, Islam can be seen as a counter-discourse to globalisation and to the expansion of its economic dreams. This is especially perilous as the next phase of globalisation promises to end historical notions of reality, truth, nature and sovereignty. In this dramatically changed world, Islam can join with other counter-discourses to create a moral vision of a planetary society, an alternative vision and reality of globalisation. Globalisation of the economy and of technology (its acceleration) also consists of: (1) the globalisation of awareness of the human condition (of hope and fear); (2) the globalisation of responses to market and state domination (the emergent global civil society of transnational organisations); (3) the globalisation of governance (both below and above). Finally, (4) globalisation is both the expansion of time (creating a discourse of the long term future) and its elimination (creating the immediacy of space).

Formal similarities between western globalisation and Imam Mahdi's globalism include:

1. *Flourishing of knowledge and technology.* In a globalised world, generally speaking, knowledge will flourish because of rapid development of technology, science and mass media. Scientists around the world will face no barriers in their endeavours. In Imam Mahdi's government all aspects of knowledge will be clarified. According to narrations, two letters of the whole alphabet, metaphorically speaking, will be discovered before Imam Mahdi's appearance and the rest will be discovered in his era. His appearance presumes globalised civilisation with the capacity for direct technical communication, which has clearly been present for several years.

2. *Development and establishment of an integrated and homogeneous economy.* As mentioned before, the core ideas of globalisation are economics and development. Advocates of this phenomenon *want* a society without poverty and injustice. As the next section shows, in Imam Mahdi's government, poverty will be eradicated too. According to hadith, one will find no poor people to accept one's charity, because everyone is rich and the society and economy are developed.

3. *Fading nation-state sovereignty.* One of the implications of globalisation is the fading and ultimate abolition of nation-state borders. Economics and trade on the one hand and culture and media on the other know no limitations.

The Islamic community, the Ummah, especially in Imam Mahdi's era, is based on belief. According to Islamic beliefs, all Muslims are brothers and there is no discrimination between them, whether they are white or black, from this country or that country.

4. *Establishing a hierarchical system and some kind of global citizenship.* In a globalised world and in Imam Mahdi's government, there will be global linkage and global

consciousness. Nation-state citizenship will fade.

5. *Trans-national affairs*. Trans-nationalism is a “global phenomenon”. It takes into account the context of globalisation and economic uncertainty that facilitates the construction of worldwide networks. Its institutionalisation requires a coordination of activities based most of the time on common references – objective or subjective – and common interest among members; a coordination of resources, information, technology and sites of social power across national borders for political, cultural and economic purposes. Increasing mobility and the development of communication have intensified such trans-border relations, leading to social and political mobilisations beyond boundaries.

Nation-states act according to their national interests. Globalisation transforms national interests into trans-national affairs. I have argued in my book, *Trans-national Responsibilities in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic State*, that the priority for an Islamic state is trans-national responsibility rather than national interest.²⁷ Western globalisation may pursue national interests in the name of trans-national responsibilities, reflecting the benefit-orientation of globalisation as opposed to the virtue-orientation of Islamic globalism.

Imam Mahdi’s Globalism vs. Western Globalisation

According to these reliable, authentic, and universally accepted narrations, Mahdi will:

- Be from among the family of the Prophet (p.b.u.h),

²⁷ Seyed Sadeq Haqiqat, *Transnational Responsibilities in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic State*, Tehran: Strategic Research Centre, 1998.

among the descendants of Fatima

- Have a broad forehead and pointed nose
- Appear one night
- Appear at the end of time, just before the Day of Judgment
- Have the same name as Muhammad
- Appear when Earth is filled with injustice and tyranny and believers are severely oppressed
- Appear when a severe earthquake occurs and green grass grows (presumably in Arabia)
- Fill the earth with justice and equity
- Escape from Madina to Makkah where people will pledge allegiance to him
- Receive pledge and help from the Iraqi people as well as Iranians
- Fight in battles
- Rule over people for seven years according to Sunnah
- Spread justice and equity on earth
- Eradicate tyranny and oppression
- Lead a prayer in Makkah which Jesus will follow in
- Not be the same individual as the Promised Messiah

(Jesus)

- Rule over the Muslim community, according to hadith (narrations), for seven or nine years
- Live and act with the qualities of the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.).

We have examined the similarities between western globalisation and Islamic (Imam Mahdi's) globalism. We can now deal with the points of departure between them.

1. *The relation between religion and politics.* Globalisation, like modernism, is based on secularism, however, in an Islamic state religion and politics are related. The perspective of globalisation often treats global social reality as a single global society. Secularisation must therefore be understood primarily within that society and not within a regional or cultural subunit. If we examine the secularisation of global society, crucially, we must consider the world as a whole as our empirical testing-ground; subunits are viewed only in the context of that whole. In addition, how a religious institution appears in any given region also has to be tested and understood in terms of non-regional, that is global, influences.

2. *Divine sovereignty (Welayat).* Legitimacy responds to the whys of sovereignty. Modern states are legitimate because of the consent of the people, according to the theory of the social contract. But the Imam's government is legitimate because of the divine welayat. It is clear that his sovereignty does not contradict the people's consent.

It has come in traditions that Mahdi will become the master of the earth from east to west.

In some of the traditions it is mentioned that his rule will envelop the superpowers. Imam Ali said: "when he from the progeny of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) emerges, Allah will gather for him the inhabitants of the east and west".

Ali also stated that he asked the Prophet:

Is Mahdi going to be among our own family or from some other? He replied: He will be among us. God will conclude His religion through him, just as He began it with us. It will be through us that people will find refuge from sedition, just as it was through us that they were saved from polytheism. Moreover, it will be through us that God will bring their hearts together in brotherhood following the animosity sown by the sedition, just as they were brought together in brotherhood in their religion after the animosity sown by polytheism.²⁸

3. *Morality and salvation.* One of the differences between the modern state and the Islamic state is that the latter is morality-centred. The goal of Imam Mahdi's government is not merely welfare and security, but divine teachings and salvation. Imam Mahdi's appearance presumes the almost complete disappearance of past moral assumptions, the so-called "change of values" or, better, "collapse of values"; the dulling of the heart through the incessant flood of violent and immoral images, which no one can escape even if they reject this perversion. This is a result of the relatively economic basis of the western concept of globalisation vs. the relatively cultural basis of the Islamic concept of globalism.

4. *Social and economic justice.* From a realist view, this is

²⁸ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 84; *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 7, p. 191; `Ali b. Abi Bakr Haythami, *Majma` al-Zawa'id* (Cairo edition), vol. 7, p. 317.

impossible, as the interests of the powerful will always overwhelm those of the weak. Battles within religions, between strong and weak, are far more important than a dialogue of civilisations. Even if a new world system develops, it is likely to be Western-based, technocratic, and based on notions that only will only appear sensible to the West. The rich will take flight in their genetically created foolproof bodies, the rest will die tortuous deaths on a planet in environmental crisis.²⁹

The injustice and inequality of western globalisation involves widening gaps between rich and poor. According to Hurrell, immense and increasing disparities of wealth, power, and security are shaping the world in which we live. Elements of globalisation are increasing the inequalities of political power and influence as well as highlighting new dimensions of inequality.³⁰

To create a future based on the Ummah, equity and justice are prerequisites. This means a commitment to eradicating poverty. It means going beyond the development debate since development theory merely frames the issue in apolitical, acritical language.

Sunnis and Shias narrated from the Prophet (p.b.u.h) about Mahdi^(SAW):

Allah will bring out from concealment Mahdi from my family and just before the Day of Judgment; even if only one day were to remain in the life of the world, and he will spread on

²⁹ Sohail Inayatullah, *Islamic Civilization in Globalization: From Islamic Futures to a Post Western Civilization*, www. google.com.

³⁰ Andrew Hurrell and Ngaire Woods, *Inequality, Globalization and World Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 1-2.

this earth justice and equity and will eradicate tyranny and oppression.³¹

Abu Sa'id al-Khudari narrated that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said:

Our Mahdi will fill the earth with justice as it is filled with injustice and tyranny. He will rule for seven years.³² He will distribute wealth equally, will execute justice among people.

5. *Jihad*. The word "Jihad" has now entered international political and media discourse, along with other well-known concepts. "Jihad" can be loosely translated as "to struggle" or "to expend effort" towards a particular cause. The term was originally used to refer to one's personal struggle against one's own mortal failings and weaknesses, which would include battling against one's pride, fears, anxieties and prejudices. The Prophet Muhammad himself was reported to have described this personal existential struggle as the "Jihad Akbar" (Greater Jihad). Alongside this notion of the Jihad Akbar was the concept of "Jihad Asgar" or "Minor Jihad". This refers to the struggle for self-preservation and self-defence – which has always been regulated by a host of ethical sanctions and prerogatives.³³

Imam Musa al-Kazim (A.S.) said,

³¹ Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 99; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 75; *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 1, p. 9.

³² Abu Dawud, *Sahih*, vol. 2, p. 208; *Fusul al-Muhimma*, p. 275; See also: *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 66.

³³ Farish A. Noor, *The Evolution of 'Jihad' in Islamist Political Discourse: How a Plastic Concept Became Harder*, Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia.

Mahdi is the one who will purify the Earth of the enemies of Allah, the High and the Mighty. And he will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it is filled with injustice and tyranny. He is the fifth of my descendants. He will go into occultation due to the fear of his own (life).³⁴

In Imam Mahdi's era, Jihad will be against those unbelievers who fight against Muslims, not against secular states.

6. *Ummah*. It is the vision of an Ummah, a global community of believers and non-believers that defines this alternative globalism. At heart, Islam wishes to reintegrate the individual into the natural order. The Ummah is considered an interpretive community.

As a concept it means three things: (1) The Ummah is a dynamic concept, reinterpreting the past, meeting new challenges and (2) the Ummah must tackle global problems such as the environmental crisis. The Ummah as a community is required to acknowledge moral and practical responsibility for the Earth as a trust; its members are trustees answerable for the condition of the Earth. This makes ecological concerns a vital element in our thinking and action, a prime arena where we must actively engage in changing things. (3) The Ummah should be seen a critical tool, as the process of reasoning itself.

As Inayatullah says:

To create a future based on the Ummah equity and justice are prerequisites. This means a commitment to eradicating poverty. It means going beyond the development debate since development theory merely frames the issue in apolitical

³⁴ *Kamaaluddin*, vol. 2, p. 361 and *Kifayatul Asar*, pp. 265-266.

language. This means rethinking trade, developing south-south trade as well as new instruments of financial accounting and the financing of new routes and transportation infrastructure. But perhaps most significant is a commitment to literacy for all. We need to recover that historically the Ummah meant models of multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and pluralist societies. A true Ummah respects the rights of non-Muslims as with the original Medina state.³⁵

7. *Trans-national responsibilities.* We discussed the overlap between globalisation and Imam Mahdi's government as regards trans-nationalism. But trans-national responsibilities and duties are points of departure. The trans-national responsibilities of an Islamic state are based on divine revelations, but the trans-national affairs of modern nations, especially in the age of globalisation, are based on interests.

Trans-nationalism features a de-territorialized mode of action. The rhetoric of mobilisation recentralises, in a non-territorial way, identities that have become fragmented within the nation-state context. In this perspective, the national reference provides an ethnic background that brings out "cultural heterogeneity" as in minority nationalism and diaspora mobilisation. The rhetoric of *Ummah*, that is, a worldwide unified Muslim community, can be reinterpreted to reframe all national diversity as one imagined "political" community, thus shifting away from its religious definition. Trans-national nationalism creates new expressions of belonging and political engagement as well as a "de-

³⁵ Sohail Inayatullah, *Islamic Civilization in Globalization: From Islamic Futures to a Post Western Civilization*, www.google.com.

territorialized” understanding of “nation”.³⁶

Conclusion

Historically, globalisation is a process continuous with modernity, the capitalist world system and the world system of states. While continuous with modernity, globalisation breaks with the grand narratives and philosophies of history, undermines the hegemonic project of Western universalisation, and decentres the world system. Globalisation is surely continuous with the world capitalist system, but it frees capitalism from its territorial-judicial embeddedness in state and national economies, and therefore fosters its further development, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, unencumbered by extrinsic political, cultural, or moral principles. A contradictory and uneven process, it is linked to pluralistic as well as particularistic cultures and identities. According to James Rosenau, it is a powerful tendency, but so is localisation. It is almost as if the two dynamics are seen to cancel each other out.³⁷

These aspects lead us to what the western concept of globalisation and the Islamic concept of globalism have in common: flourishing of knowledge and technology, development and establishment of an integrated and homogeneous economy, fading nation-state sovereignty, establishing a hierarchical system and global citizenship, and trans-national affairs.

Islamic discourse, like any other political discourse, is full of

³⁶ Riva Kastoryano, *The Reach of Transnationalism*, Centre for International Studies and Research, Paris.

³⁷ James Rosenau, “Powerful Tendencies, Enduring Tensions and Glaring Contradictions: The UN in a Turbulent World” in *Between Sovereignty and Global Governance*, Albert J. Paolini (ed.), Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 1998, p. 260.

plastic concepts and ideas that are meant to serve political, social and economic purposes. Here, I do not want to deal with the differences between the approaches of Islamic modernists and traditionalists. Generally speaking, the main points of departure for the western concept of globalisation and the Islamic concept of globalism are: the relation between religion and politics, divine sovereignty (*welayat*), morality and salvation, social and economic justice, Jihad, Ummah and trans-national responsibilities.

One God, One Government and One Global Village

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This paper will first focus on the commonalities of the three Abrahamic faiths. We attempt to prove that the teachings of all three divine religions have taken into consideration the commonly accepted salient features of human life. In fact in view of man's needs as a human being, a collection of practicable individual and social laws have been delineated in all three religions on the basis of divine revelation, rationale and intellect, or a blending of two or three of the said elements for orderly functioning of human life. In all three religions a tendency towards forming a holy government linked with the divine world is observed.

Thus divine regulations and implementation of the spiritual and ethical culture need the authority of a divinely designated person to be crystallized in society. All human beings in general and the followers of these three religions in particular, are awaiting a heavenly Saviour, whose duties include the establishment of a unique global government, and whose gift to humanity will be implementation of justice. Accordingly, different schools of thought, as a result of the intellectual growth of mankind, have gathered around a common humanistic centre, however it would be administered by a single authority, preferably based on revelation and linked to God the Almighty.

1- God and Man in the Abrahamic Religions

Is a single God justifiable for the universe?

Innate and Logical Argumentation

Throughout history, by means of its strong and sensible reasoning, the absolute wisdom of the human being has

guided him towards understanding a superior, sensible and infinite power over the universe. In fact, Man originally found that his existence was new because he had not existed before, so he needed a capable existence.

It is clear to every honest human that the Almighty God exists and that our innate reasoning proves this. Observing and caring about the world, its natural phenomena and the complex relationship among various elements of the universe and appreciating its fair and wise order inevitably guides all human beings who possess theoretical understanding and intelligence towards the mystical threshold of Almighty God. However, it should be noted that perception and recognition of Almighty God precedes sympathetic intuition of God's elegance and glory. Therefore, every man who is able to understand the initial concepts, e.g. the difference between darkness and brightness or the impossibility of coming together contrariety, simply by observing himself and the world, discovers the compassionate and powerful Lord.

A man who is enamoured of discovery, beauty, virtue, understanding, recognition and generosity perceives the Lord in such a way that he cannot but worship Him. In other words, a man can revive the innate sense of worship and obedience of mere beauty and knowledge just by a little caring about Almighty God.

In any case, the pious man innately knows himself as obedient to the Almighty Lord.

The One God and Abrahamic Religions

It is clear that all divine verses of the holy books are proven and referable for their followers. In other words, the origin of divine religion is based on the focal point of holy Book and prophet. As we perceive from the three holy books – the

glorious Quran, the Bible and the Old Testament – the divine verses as well as behaviours and sermons of the prophets are all proven and referable, when they are reliable from a logical and validity point of view. Since Man, with his innate piety, is the main audience of all divine religions, a glance over the holy books and divine verses reveals that all three Abrahamic religions share the belief in Almighty God. The holy books succeed time and again in proving the essence of the Lord and his uniqueness through logical argumentation and by referring Man to the universe. For instance, throughout the first chapter of the Old Testament the essence of the Lord is proven by reference to the sky, earth, moon, sun, dawn and dusk and many other examples, in such a way that we can justify the Lord on the basis of his various names in the Old Testament, e.g. “Jehovah” which means somebody who is self-existent and is the most famous name for God among Jews.

In the Bible – chapter one in the Juhana version – Man is guided to understand and recognise Almighty God and his superior characteristics through observation of Lord Impressions and His creatures.

In the fourfold Bibles, the Lord’s characteristics are presented in a special manner, such that the existence of the single God is justified by brief argumentation.

Some other examples are as follows:

Hearken! you the children of Israel that our God is the single yehova.¹

I am the first and the last and there is no other one but me.²

¹ Judaism, Duality, 4:6.

And the eternal life is that you understand the single God and the Christ.³

Those who believe in the Bible never doubt the uniqueness of God.⁴

And in the holy Quran, the uniqueness of Almighty God is stipulated in every part of the script. In fact, the glorious Quran in its various and many references to nature and the Lord's impressions invites Man to think about His creative power and to recognise the essence of God.

Man in the Abrahamic Religions

Innate and Logical Argumentation

If the human being looks at himself, he will find out that there are great differences between him and other creatures regarding growth, free will, ethics, justice, etc. In other words, the physical and external structure of mankind and potentials of his body in relation to his needs and objectives is more perfect than the physical and external structure of other creatures; however the creative power of all creatures is perfect from any point of view.

In fact, when Man looks at his spiritual, ethical and other qualities – positively or negatively – and compares himself with other creatures, he perceives that his spiritual creation is unique and this is a fact that all mankind, from primitive to contemporary modern people, justify it.

Through such perception, Man recognises his duties and objectives as superior to those of other creatures. Thus,

² Asheia, 6:44.

³ *The Bible*, Yuhana version, 3:17.

⁴ Yuhana Damascene, (A Thousand Essays on Orthodox Beliefs)

unlike the beasts whose main business is fulfilling their bodily needs, he pursues more than merely materialistic goals.

Man thus realises that he enjoys a sense of internal elevation. This innate need has been acknowledged and responded to by all divine religions in various ways.

Man in the Divine Religions

If we refer briefly to the divine verses of the three holy books – the Quran, the Bible and the Old Testament – we will perceive that the greatness and superiority of mankind, in all stages of creation, e.g. origination, evolution and mortality, is perfectly distinct from other creatures.

In fact, Almighty God has devised and clarified these stages for mankind in such a way that his succession to the Lord is easily recognised.

For instance, the origination story in chapter three of the Old Testament refers to the uninterrupted creation of mankind by the Lord and, in various chapters, stipulates his superiority over other creatures from any point of view. Even the Bible introduces Man as the successor and servant of Jehovah; based on his duties and related objectives, which the Lord has determined for him in the Bible, the divine and spiritual dignity of Man is clearly perceived.

The glorious Quran also stipulates clearly that Man is the only successor of the Lord on land and introduces the whole universe as occupied and conquered property for him.

Theoretically, the glorious Quran purifies Man and is revealed for and upon Man for his superiority and spiritual uplift.

In practical terms, the glorious Quran has introduced the

sacred presence of Prophet Mohammad Mustafa – Peace be upon him – as the perfect Man and implies that Man could attain such superior dignity.

2- The Concept of Authority and Jurisdiction in Civil Society

Historical and Social Approaches

Since the Lord has created mankind as an innately social creature and most of his potential and talents can be fostered within society, he inevitably requires a social life.

In reality, this leads Man to ascribe different roles and positions, vital to his social life, because he realises that some groups of people have an economic role and can solve the economic problems of society, while others have a cultural role and can meet cultural needs. It was at this stage that Man perceived that he must establish a state to direct all the affairs of society. This state will lead the society towards conventional and recognised goals and causes, help citizens play effective roles and pave the way for social and individual growth.

A survey of the opinions of social science experts such as Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Herbert Spenser, Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, Herbert Blutter, Hober Moss and others shows that the state is responsible for directing and preserving security within society. Even eastern philosophers like Sheikh Mofid, Mirza Naini, Eghbal Lahori, Seied Jamal -al-Din Assad Abadi and recently Imam Khomeini have justified the state and authority of religion in society because it impresses difl e.g. culture, economy, education, art, literature, etc, and greatly determines the direction of these arenas.

Approaches of the Divine Religions

Based both on states' profound effect on human growth as well as on the comprehensiveness of religious instructions for the guidance of mankind, not only have the sacred religions contributed to the state and policy but all three Abrahamic religions – Islam, Christianity, Judaism – have identified the messengers of God or the prophets as the ultimate governors and policy makers of the society. For example, the sovereignty of Moses over the Jews, and especially his campaigns against the Pharaoh, mentioned in the Old Testament, are indisputable facts.

The three divine books state unequivocally that the purpose of the state is to direct society and that the Lord's messenger is sovereign.

We can point to other clear examples of this:

It is referred to the state and leadership is by means of the pious servants.⁵

Directly points to the leadership of Christ.⁶

In fact, the existence and legitimacy of the state and the leadership of religious rulers were so indisputable in the Bible that the church officially knew itself as the custodian and administrator of society. Anyone claiming leadership had to acquire official permission from the bishop in order to govern over Christian society. However the severe neglect of basic rights led the church and its custodians to gradually dismiss their original right to authority over Christian society.

⁵ *The Old Testament*, 3:95 Psalm.

⁶ *The Bible* (New Testament)

The holy Quran however includes sections on monotheism, prophethood, resurrection day, and a pivotal discussion of the Imamate (leadership of an Imam) and justice – all of which lead society and the followers of Islam to be obedient to the religious laws, to the prophet and to the devoted servants of God in authority; the Quran invites the servants to worship God and avoid the company of evils and states that David – peace be upon him – is to rule over the people and judge them. We can thus see that the holy Quran justifies sovereignty and divine leadership of prophets as factual consequences of the Old Testament and invites Christians to establish a state among themselves based on divine orders; if they disobey, as the Bible stipulates, then the holy book will consider them lewd.

In Islam, the holy Quran orders the prophet to spread his sovereignty among the people.

To summarise, the issues mentioned above make it clear that the two key topics of the state and administration of divine rules by the prophets are essential to all three Abrahamic religions.

3- Divine Laws and their Implementation

The presence of law and the means of implementing it within society form a common international paradigm in all human societies. Thus there is no doubt about devising and writing complete and comprehensive laws which rule over all aspects of human life. In other words, this is a common feature of all societies and since divine religions pay special attention to this need, we find many verses in different parts and chapters of the three holy books that introduce various laws and orders to rule over society. For example, the topics of holy war and command and prohibition, the main principles of divine religions, demonstrate that Almighty God encourages believers to form a state and leave the

government of society to the Prophets and the messengers.

Saint Paul in his sermon to Romans says:

The world of mankind should follow divine laws and orders.

However in the holy Quran, compared with the other two holy books, there are further verses which include individual and social decrees. In any case, believers all emphasise implementation of the divine laws and formation of organisations and institutions based on these holy decrees within the society. All believe that ultimately a saviour will arrive on behalf of Almighty God and will resurrect and fill society with justice, equality and brotherhood.

If so, now we encounter three fundamental questions:

1. Is there an appropriate basis for this sacred belief within contemporary human societies?
2. Is this a project which should be pursued and performed?
3. Or is it a process which is occurring but should be accelerated?

4- The Global Village as the Basis for a Single State

Not so long ago, nobody could imagine a single state governing the world, but since the 1950s, the advance of information technology, along with other developments, has caused to arise common causes among nations which have gradually attracted public attention. In fact, the countries of the world felt that they needed to adopt a new spiritual and ethical approach in order to coexist and make better use of their materially advanced lives, in spite of the fact that such an attitude exists innately in public and superficially in powers. Therefore, most governments began to establish

regional and continental trading blocs, which in turn led them to institute effective international organisations.

Furthermore, international policy procedures demonstrate the public's inclination to take up common causes such as giving up wars and conflicts, respecting basic rights, carrying out a real and honest campaign against terror and terrorism, establishing a constructive dialogue among religions and civilisations as well as safeguarding national interests through international economic cooperation; these developments help move nations towards unity and concordance, as if the tendency towards unity and equality exists innately inside human beings.

Public awareness of current disputes in the international arena, as well as the evident cruelties of superpowers, e.g. the USA's brutal attack on Iraq and Afghanistan and international organisations' demand for an active role in resolving conflicts points to the existence of a single human spirit that pursues justice and equality. By forming political, cultural and economic alliances, all countries around the globe are moving towards finding further common causes. Indeed, the formation of the UN, the Non-aligned Movement, OPEC, the EU and similar examples prove emphatically that society is moving towards unity. Here it should be noted that in the same manner that unbelievers and pagans misconstrued the innate needs of human beings and employed evil fancies to govern over and exploit others, such deviation is also happening amid calls for unity. In other words, superpowers and infidels are trying to turn the process of globalisation and the global village into a private project in order to colonise the whole world by a new method, whereas by using this drive towards unity, which is a divine gift for all mankind, and adopting a logical approach with respect to human values as well as ethical and divine rules, we can lay the ground for peace, stability and the moral elevation of mankind throughout the world. The

formation of a single sovereignty in the world is thus not only conceivable but rests on a firm and innate foundation.

5- One God, One State, One Global Village

It is an experience common to all human beings that the instructions, recommendations and testimonies of all prophets and trustworthy reformers ultimately prove correct; people rapidly embrace the trustworthiness of the prophets. This is also evident from current attitudes: many individuals around the world are looking into ethics, spirituality and faith. Those who attempt to deny this new attitude, even the US-controlled mass media, have failed to do so.

Another fact of this age is that intellectuals, especially cultural ideologists, have paid great attention to the effectiveness and constructiveness of ethics and religion within all societies.

In an interview with Bin Yuzil Pan Turkism, on 18 May 1997, John Keen, a British scientist, stated that the

Western system of government has become insolvent and secularism can no longer satisfy the eager soul of Man.

Benjamin Rush, founder and father of psychiatry in the USA, analyses the effects of religion on human life in the following terms:

Religion is as important for fostering and bringing up the human soul as is fresh air for breath.

Professor Wolf Garnic, German scientist, stated in an interview with the Iranian Keyhan Farhangi newspaper:

Proper fostering of teenagers' personality fructifies only in an integrated religious system.

Kofi Anan, UN secretary general, summarised the findings of a survey conducted by around 1000 Harvard university scientists in a single sentence:

Our civilisation will not endure to the end of the new century unless spiritual and ethical values dominate modern politics, security and economic life.

The BBC has reported that most medical universities are convinced that medical instruction is impossible if one fails to include religious values and principles.

Herbert Armstrong, in his book *Today and future world* states:

New sciences are absolutely unable to show the appropriate goals of life and cannot provide a valuable meaning for life.

All these statements show that a new wave has risen against western value models.

Arnold Twain Lee, the famous British thinker, writes:

Western civilisation bores me, not because it is western but because it has imprisoned me under its roller wheels.

In *The third Wave*, Alvin Tofler states:

Western civilisation will inevitably reach a deadlock.

To liberate humans from the deadlock of poverty, inequality and corruption, even politicians have stressed the necessity of respecting religion and spirituality.

Richard Nixon, former US president, stated:

For renovation of America we need to renovate spirituality and without strengthening the basis of the family and religious instructions, reviving spirituality is impossible.

Ultimately, the disappointment felt around the world about a civilisation which claims to be responsive to the basic needs of human beings and is unrivalled, demonstrates that people have once again appropriately acknowledged the utterances of holy books and prophets and that all of them, with any tendencies, are waiting for a divine saviour, who will bring justice and security for all and, by establishing a single divine state, will take control of the global village and govern it based on wise orders and the laws of a single God.

اللهم إنا نرغب إليك في دولة كريمة
تعز بها الإسلام وأهله، وتذل بها النفاق وأهله
وتجعلنا فيها من الدعوة إلى طاعتك، والقادة إلى سبيلك
وترزقنا بها كرامة الدنيا والآخرة.

O' Allah,

We earnestly desire that during his kind, just and fair period (rule) You should reinforce (the religion of) Islam and stimulate its adherents

and humiliate the impostors and hypocrites

and enlist us among those who invite people towards Your service and lead them to Your prescribed path

and grant us the good of this world and the world hereafter.⁷

⁷ *Mafatih ul-Jenan*, Iftetah Supplication.

Mahdi, Materialism and the End of Time

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Is globalisation inimical to religion, and in particular Islam? It certainly looked like that during the heyday of colonialism and European expansion into the Islamic world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More lately, though, the chief danger to Islam appears to be an insidious form of globalisation, a creeping materialism that gains force through the spread of modern technology and Western values.

One of the important theses of the three Abrahamic religions is that a messianic age will one day take place. That time will only occur globally, that is, the whole of humanity has to be translated into an entirely new and improved form of existence. Ironically, the present forces of globalisation can be seen to stand in the way of a religious form of globalisation. In the Abrahamic religions there is often a lively debate as to whether the messianic age will be brought about by us or directly by God. An examination of some relevant Qur'anic passages and *ahadith* suggest that a plausible interpretation of the Islamic view is that Imam Mahdi will only come when we are prepared to receive him.

Many religions have a doctrine of the coming of a leader to bring the world to a state of perfect peace and justice. They also provide an account of the specific material and spiritual diseases of a world that needs to be transformed. Islam is no exception here, and there is a particularly interesting discussion of the precise nature of the Mahdi and what will precede him.

A common theme in the work of many important contemporary Islamic thinkers is that the problem of globalisation comes from within the Islamic community itself and not from without. Local Muslim intellectuals become distrustful of their culture and turn to the West. They may come to feel that Islam is out of date and unable to compete in the market for ideas with the sorts of views emanating from the West. Perhaps to be modern people in a

modern world in a modern country in a modern century implies demoting religion from any kind of leading position. This does not mean specifically rejecting religion, but just rejecting it as a grounding principle in personal and political life¹.

What replaces faith is a form of globalisation - a general scientific attitude to the world, the idea that the world is entirely scientifically explicable so that God does not play a significant part in the workings of the world. What is important here is not so much the rejection of religion theoretically, but its rejection in practice. It is possible for people to continue to be religious in the sense of carrying out their formal religious tasks while at the same time rejecting religion as personally of any great significance to their lives, perhaps a variant of what the Qur'an calls "hypocrisy"². Religion becomes like the language that is used, and as we know the language we use varies according to where we live. The danger of globalisation is that it encourages people to think about the world in terms of atheism and materialism.

Globalisation as it has taken place over the last century or so is largely the imposition of materialist ideas on cultures which at least nominally were religious. They established within themselves a serious role for God, and within Islam that is illustrated by the lives of Muslims, their practices and beliefs. After globalisation the practices and beliefs continue, and yet within a thoroughly changed context, one in which those beliefs and practices no longer have significant impact on the lives of the believers. It is not that people deny that God exists, nor that they abandon their

¹ Oliver Leaman 'Nursi's place in the Ihya' tradition', *The Muslim World*, 1999, pp. LXXXIX, 314-24.

² There is of course a sura devoted to the issue of hypocrites (*munafiqun*), and it is a term that frequently appears throughout the text and the *ahadith*.

religious affiliation. It is just that they no longer find much of a role for God in their lives, so he is dismissed to a minor and superfluous role in their lives.

Why has globalisation brought about this attitude? After all, the leading engine of the process is the United States, which in many ways is a deeply religious society. Western culture does not present itself as openly irreligious, were it to do it would be less dangerous. It presents a picture of the world in which God is absent. As Nietzsche explained when he used the expression "God is dead", this does not mean that people no longer speak about him. It is just that they no longer expect God to do anything.

Walter Benjamin claimed that religion persists despite the existence of mass production because the fragmentation brought about by late capitalism produces in society a desire for sources of transcendence to counter modern industry's secularising impulses. This transcendence may be channelled into entertainment and the mass media, something which has become omnipresent at the start of the twenty first century. In a West which has lost its faith the only way in which people can find a reason to live and have confidence in society is through the ubiquity of short-lived pleasure through the entertainment industry and also, more grimly, through force. After all, if society is seen as a state of natural conflict, then only force and authority can stop people attacking each other. There is no overwhelming power to which most people give adherence any more, this was the case when Europe was properly Christian, but in the twentieth century modernity was characterized far more by blunt economic and military power than it was by spirituality. Hence the identification by some Islamic thinkers of modernity of the wrong i.e. materialist kind with the Dajjal, the Anti-Christ, with his one eye. He is one-dimensional in his concerns, and the materialist state is only interested in matter, in what utilitarian pleasures it can

acquire and pains avoid.

Islam has managed to combine the ability to be global with becoming local. Like all successful religions it has become different to a degree in different places, and this reflects the very different cultures that exist in different parts of the world. Although diversity can be very annoying when one is trying to get everyone to agree to something, it is helpful in presenting a version of religion that appeals to a variety of people. One of the features of the style of the Qur'an that we frequently note is that it addresses different constituencies in different ways, and so appeals to the widest possible audience. When we look at the internet today we can observe a rich variety of ways of approaching *dawa*, so that a medium of communication that is often seen as largely corrupt, or at the best suspect, can be employed in encouraging users to embrace Islam.

Yet is not the internet also a source of pornography and in itself a celebration of materialism? It is indeed and it may well tempt users to investigate sites that have a spiritually damaging content. Yet if God wanted us to avoid such conflicts he would not have sent us to earth as his *khilafa*. When the angels are told to bow down to Adam they predict that if human beings are sent to earth and allowed to do as they wish, they will cause all sorts of problems and hardly serve as good representatives of the divine. Yet it is clear from the *surat al-baqara* (30-39) that God intends human beings to take charge not only of themselves but also of the world as a whole. The angels quite correctly pointed out that if human beings are allowed to be free this will result in corruption and bloodshed. Yet God still puts humanity in charge since he knew that we can manage our affairs appropriately. He provided guidance to human beings, which they required even more when they were consigned to this world, and their ability to sin became even greater, since in this world they were partially at least under the influence of

Satan. We are free but we need to restrain ourselves, and if we do not then evil can easily result. In fact, Satan refers to enmity as being something which is going to characterize life in this world. The interesting question which arises is how one can reduce this conflict which seems to arise naturally from life in this world and what it involves. Of course, as we know the angels were right, but God still sent us to earth, taught Adam the names of everything which exists there and sent guidance to humanity so that we might live in the right sort of way. It is our responsibility to act correctly but this responsibility can only be carried out freely if we also have the ability to act incorrectly.

Given the ubiquity of the forces of globalisation, do we even have the power to resist it? There are a variety of ways in which someone committed to traditional beliefs could respond to modernity. He could just reject it and ignore it. He could accept it and come to question the traditional beliefs. Or he could examine the principles of modernity and show that his traditional beliefs are unaffected by them. This is very much the strategy of thinkers like Said Nursi, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad `Abduh, Fazlur Rahman, `Ali Shariati and many others. They had no difficulty in accepting that Muslims should learn about modern ideas in science and philosophy, and they clearly had a good grasp of many of those ideas. Had they felt that the ideas were evil and objectionable in themselves they would not have spent so long studying them and thinking about them. In more recent times Mutahhari follows precisely the same approach, although of course the targets of his attacks often were specific targets that had relevance in the cultural context of Iran³.

³ M. Mutahhari, *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought*, R. Campbell (tran.), Berkeley: Mizan, 1985; M. Mutahhari, *Social and Historical Change*, R.

There is one general target that almost all the Islamic philosophers, whether sunni or shi'i, shared and that was materialism. Modern philosophy from the West often appeared to be materialist, and certainly did not operate explicitly from religious or spiritual assumptions. Quite the contrary, it seemed in one way or another to challenge those assumptions and operated in isolation from them. This is the challenge of science to the religious believer. If the world and its workings can be explained without incorporating any religious principles, as it surely can for most physicists and chemists and so on, then don't those principles begin to look superfluous? That is not to say that most scientists are atheists, but if they restrict their religious beliefs to their private lives, does this not suggest that those beliefs are not of universal significance? One aspect of modernity that is quite clear is that in most countries, although the United States seems to be an exception, the growth of science has been matched by a decline in religious belief. That is not because science has any explicitly anti-religious agenda, but is rather due to the fact that a commitment to finding material explanations to what takes place in the world has a tendency to crowd out other sorts of explanation.

Thinkers who are going to defend the compatibility of science with religion have to argue that materialism does not serve as the complete explanation of what takes place in the world. The materialist pull of modernity is the suggestion that one needs only material principles to explain the world. A lively issue at the time Mutahhari was working was also dialectical materialism, the metaphysics on which Marxism was based, and this also suggested that the basic line of explanation that needs to be used about anything is material. The Qur'an itself addresses materialism when it reports the

unbelievers questioning the status of beliefs in an afterlife, and there is a stress on the significance of the afterlife throughout the text. One thing worth noting about the reaction of the materialists is that it is eminently reasonable. There is no evidence that we consist of anything that is not material and so the whole religious impulse is far less obvious than its opposite. That perhaps is why the formulation of materialism is so brief, and its rebuttal is so lengthy and complex.

One of the interesting comments that Mutahhari makes is that materialists regard the religious point of view as something to be explained, but perhaps it would be better to regard the materialist attitude as unnatural and in need of explanation. Materialists often are rather aggressive in their defence of their theory, but they should not be so confident since 'they follow only surmise, merely conjecturing. (6.116). If they looked at the world in the right sort of way they would appreciate that nature is really an *aya* of the presence of God. The materialists are like the blind people who touch a part of an elephant and are unable to interpret their experience correctly. Now, those who feel part of an elephant and argue that all there is, is what they feel are wrong, they should listen to the other people and between them construct an idea of what is really there. The Qur'an is seen as the broader and more genuine guide to how to interpret the world, and in just the same way that we have to listen to other people in trying to understand the material world, so we need to listen to those who understand the Qur'an if we are to grasp what the world is really all about.

How far is this reaction to modernity plausible? Well, Mutahhari is quite correct that it is quite possible for modernity to see the world in a religious way. The reason why it does not, he suggests, is because the Judeo-Christian attitude to science is so unconvincing. The story of the Garden of Eden in the Jewish Bible implies that God is

worried about human beings finding out how the world works, and so religion sets itself up against science right from the start. The history of Christianity is an extended period of intolerance towards science, and so it is hardly surprising that advocates of science see religion as problematic. Islam, by contrast, describes how God teaches Adam the names of the animals and emphasizes throughout the importance of knowledge and empirical investigation. So there is no reason why Muslims should feel at all threatened by science and technology, nor any reason why imported science and technology need import Western ideas about its dangers.

There is a lot of truth in the way in which Mutahhari characterizes God's role in European thought since the Renaissance. The idea that God becomes like an employee in an office in which he was initially given an important post, but with the recruitment of more competent individuals his responsibilities were gradually whittled away, and eventually there is nothing left for him to do. In the end the office manager thanks him for his past work and tells him that his services are no longer required! This captures nicely the idea that the role for God progressively diminishes as the explanations of science become more comprehensive. Mutahhari sees this as not a problem for Islam, since Islam sees God as behind everything and so he is behind scientific explanation. He will never be relegated to the back office, and made redundant.

It is not really accurate to say that Islam and Christianity have different versions of divine participation in the world. Christians also believe that God is behind everything that happens, and religious Jews also constantly refer to God when they describe the passage of events. What has happened to the People of the Book in general, though, is that the growth of science and technology has made their faith much more unconnected with the rest of their lives, so

that the practice of that faith takes up only a part of their existence and is not its dominating feature. There is of course a huge literature on secularism, and it may well be that Muslim communities that live in modern societies will rapidly secularise also. There is nothing in the religion of Islam itself to oppose this, nothing that does not exist in similar form in the other Abrahamic faiths.

Mutahhari's characterization of materialism is not that historically useful. He is certainly correct in castigating the Church for its negative attitude on occasion to diversity of religion and opinion. It has to be said, though, that similar attitudes are not exactly unknown in the Islamic world either. Mutahhari argues on the assumption that there is an essence to religion, and that we can compare religions by comparing their essences. This is a perfectly reasonable idea, after all religions have creeds and we can examine those creeds and derive from them those principles of religion with which the religion would not be the religion it is. On closer examination this is harder to do than it looks. Even small religions contain immense variety of belief and practice, and it is very difficult to lay out a precise number of qualities that a particular religion must have if it is to be the religion it is. The converse of this is that it may well be possible to be religious and yet not follow any particular religious rituals nor be an acknowledged member of any particular religion. After all, in Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* there is no doubt that the hero Hayy is religious, but not an adherent of a particular religion⁴. In fact, when he goes to the city and observes the way in which the inhabitants practice religion he quickly returns in horror to his island, where he can live an authentic life again albeit without the trappings of traditional faith.

⁴ Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, L. Goodman (tran.), New York: Twayne, 1972.

We need to examine the structure of the argument that Mutahhari produces here to defend the Qur'an and to attack materialism. It is very much what the *falasifa* would have called a theological or dialectical argument as compared to a demonstrative one.⁵ His intended audience consists of Muslims who may wonder why the Qur'an should be given such a unique status, and also Muslims who may think that a scientific point of view makes religion vacuous. Although Mutahhari does discuss philosophers and their theories as though he is examining the material from a philosophical perspective, in fact he is always trying to find a premise that both sides will accept, a premise that he can use to show that religion remains significant even in a scientific age. When discussing materialism he suggests that religion is a sign of health, and materialism ignores or denies this. A materialist who thinks that this world is all that there is possesses an unfortunate mentality, since he is hiding from himself the fact that the world has a meaning that lies outside the world, and that our lives are much more significant than we may think, because they play a part in God's plan.

The argument he produces really would not work to defeat a materialist unless the materialist accepted Mutahhari's religious premises, and that is unlikely. There is in fact an interesting resemblance between the argument that the Qur'an is miraculous and the argument that the world does not have an ultimate material explanation. After all, if the world is not subject to a material explanation it is created miraculously, and when we examine it we may observe its miraculous character. As with the Qur'an, we may say that it could not have come about through any ordinary material

⁵ Oliver Leaman, *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford: Polity, 1999; Oliver Leaman, *Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

process. We could say this, but we need not, and this is where the argument really does not reach the level of demonstration in the hierarchy of argumentative power. A good example of the dialectical form of the argument is where Mutahhari refers to something that Einstein said about the poverty of materialism and then concludes that since a great scientist does not agree with materialism, materialism is false as a scientific doctrine. But the fact that scientists may not agree with some general metaphysical principle does not show it is false. Scientists are variously atheists, agnostics, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and so on but the fact that they see their faith, or lack of faith, replicated in the world of science, if they do see this, is irrelevant as a demonstrative argument.

The conclusion is not that we should dismiss Mutahhari's argument, only that we should accept that it is not demonstrative. The argument is perfectly valid if it is trying to persuade, and that in fact is what it is trying to do. It is directed against those in the Muslim community who are attracted to materialism in either its dialectical or scientific form. They need not accept these varieties of materialism in order to be modern, he suggests. It is perfectly possible to be a scientist or interested in the progress of the people without being a materialist or a Marxist. There are the resources within Islamic theory to cope with modernity, and Mutahhari in many of his works shows what these are. Showing that someone can be modern and Muslim does not show that someone who is modern must be Muslim, though. That sort of argument would be much stronger than the one Mutahhari actually produces, and its ambitions lie far beyond what he sought to establish.

Does this mean that Mutahhari's attacks on materialism fail? Not at all. Modernity is often held to be antagonistic to religion because an emphasis on science and technology implies that the world operates exclusively on material

principles. Since one can observe those material principles to operate without direct divine intervention, God gets pushed into the background. But what is worth noting here is that he is not pushed into the background by anything directly in science and technology. As we know, many scientists are themselves highly religious and have no difficulty in reconciling science and religion. Materialism is an attitude that goes along with modernity, and is not an essential part of it. Other attitudes are also possible, and that is the strategy that Mutahhari follows. He points out that materialism is not the only game in town, so that being modern is not equivalent to being materialist.

I have argued that the leading principle of globalisation during much of the present period is materialism, and various Islamic thinkers have concentrated on this as an insidious and persuasive doctrine that stands in opposition to religion. When talking about the future the accounts of the Mahdi are suggestive here. Do they represent a miraculous intervention by God in human history, bringing that history to an end? Or do they represent a prediction about what human beings themselves will bring about through their own efforts (divinely guided, of course) and so represent a less dramatic change in history? This is not just an issue for Muslims but for Christians and Jews as well, for whom this has also been a lively theological issue. The discussion of materialism is highly relevant since it brings out the responsibility of the believer to arrive at certain conclusions in his analysis of the world. The onus is on the individual, and indeed the community, to acquire an appropriate attitude to their world and their lives, a non-materialist attitude, and this responsibility is embodied neatly in the concept of the Mahdi.

The main accounts of the role of the Mahdi, his links with Jesus and opposition to the Dajjal are to be found in the *ahadith*, not the Qur'an itself. The other *kitab*i religions

maintain not dissimilar concepts, even for the Christians there will be a second coming of the Messiah. The role of such beliefs is clearly important since it explains, for example, why the ubiquitous presence of disasters is not to be taken as evidence of the inaccuracy of one's faith. The disasters can be taken to prefigure the arrival of a time in which the righteous will triumph, and in fact the worse the disasters, the closer the time of redemption, on many views. This idea of a final struggle between good and evil, where good triumphs, is highly potent in many religions, and it raises the interesting question as to whether this final triumph comes about from an external or an internal cause.

It is worth noting something from the debate with materialism, and that is that it is very much a debate about how Muslims should and can adopt valid attitudes to their world and themselves. So the arrival of the Mahdi will not transform their lives in this respect, they need to acquire the right attitude themselves. We need to take up a subtle approach to the concept of the 'oppressed'. This can mean those who are physically at the mercy of those who are evil and who seek to exploit them. In many parts of the world people are in this position, and yet are they supposed to wait for the Mahdi to relieve them of their oppression? The evidence suggests otherwise, they are supposed to do what they can to fight against the oppressors, not passively endure the bad treatment. But a more subtle and indeed pervasive form of oppression occurs when our ideas and aspirations become co-opted by a hegemonic ideology that obliges us to think along with it despite ourselves. And yet here again, as we have seen from the discussion of the Islamic opposition to materialism, it is incumbent on us to resist this sort of oppression, guided as we are by books like the Qur'an. The Mahdi will not be sent to wean us away from materialism and atheism, it is for us to learn from the prophets and the Prophet in particular to form our own strategies to acquire the appropriate mental attitudes to how we are to live and

what we are to believe.

Or so one understanding of the Mahdi principle goes. There is another way of reading these texts, though, and that is for the Mahdi to arrive and in partnership with Jesus to bring about the triumph of Islam over the other religions. In opposition to the globalisation of materialism, we would have the globalisation of Islam. Peace and harmony would then exist everywhere and the oppressed would finally triumph. Why is this reading implausible? It is not really the case that societies with a huge Muslim majority, or almost totally Muslim populations, are characterized by peace and harmony. But it will be said that that is because they have to resist hostility from without, or because they are not properly Islamic. There is something in these responses, of course, but they do not entirely satisfy us, since we know that peace and harmony are to a degree under our control if we arrange our affairs appropriately. That is what is problematic about the idea of the Mahdi as an external force bringing about the perfect society. Would he be effective if he tried to impose his ideas on society from the top down, even if he was an Arab from the Banu Hashim tribe, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima, and of Husayn, son of Fatima and `Ali, and appears in Mecca, and is joined by Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God on earth? Or would he be more effective if he came when people were ready for him, after they had changed in particular ways to make themselves responsible for establishing the Kingdom of God on earth? This would be a polity established from the bottom up, where the Mahdi comes to make material those sorts of changes that the community had already made in its heart.

It certainly is true that a lot of the language about the Mahdi and Jesus, and their collaboration against the Dajjal, seems to suggest that this is more on the lines of a miraculous intervention by God than anything else. On the other hand, it

is an interesting fact that the Dajjal does not himself figure in the Qur'an, and one might ask the question why. The Dajjal is perhaps referred to in the aya:

... The day that certain of the signs of your Lord occur, no good will it do to anyone to believe in them then, if it was not believed before and if righteousness was not earned through faith...⁶

The participation of Jesus is hinted at in:

They said, 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of Allah', but they did not kill him or crucify him, but it was made to appear to them like that, and those who argue about it are full of doubts, with no knowledge, but only conjecture, for they certainly did not kill him.

No, God raised him up to himself; and God is exalted in power, wise.

The People of the Book must believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Judgment he will witness against them.⁷

The expression "before his death" (*qabla mawtihi*) refers to Jesus, i.e., he will descend and the People of the Book who differed concerning him will believe in him. The Christians claimed that he was divine, while the Jews had tried to kill him, and said he was the result of an adulterous relationship. When Jesus descends before the Day of Judgment, he will correct all these differences and lies. But unless the people had grasped that at the time, they will be in a difficult position. It is not of much use believing in something when

⁶ *Quran*, 6:158.

⁷ *Quran*, 4:157-9.

it is obviously the case, what is of value is using one's faith to interpret experience in accordance with that faith. So the materialists are quite right to say that there is no evidence of an afterlife, where they go wrong is refusing to accept the existence of the afterlife when they have been told by God about it.

The Dajjal is not directly mentioned in the Qur'an, perhaps because he is only a human being and is beneath contempt. But Pharaoh and his false claims, such as "I am your Lord, Most High" (79.24) and "O Chiefs! No god do I know for you but myself ..." (28.38) are quoted in the Qur'an, and he is hardly someone to be admired. The important difference is that Pharaoh and his misdeeds are in the past, while the Dajjal is in the future, and God is confident that true Muslims would have learned enough from the past and from their faith not to be misled by the Dajjal. The interesting feature of the Dajjal account is that the various *ahadith* are written in such a way as to make acceptance of the Dajjal in a positive light by the *umma* very plausible. The Dajjal is successful, he revives the dead, he is very powerful, he leads a huge army, and so his claim to be the representative of the divine has some strength to it. Rather like the evidence of the world around us, since we are material beings we can expect from our experience that when we die we just disintegrate physically and that is the end of us. Rather like the apparent crucifixion of Jesus, the evidence suggests to someone who does not know otherwise that he was killed. But why is the implication that if one believed this, and came to change one's belief when Jesus eventually appeared in the company of the Mahdi, one would not really earn merit for such a change of mind? Because whatever the evidence of Jesus' death, perhaps one should have concluded that God would never allow one of his prophets to die in that way, despite the apparent evidence, and so that evidence has to be disregarded. Similarly with belief in the afterlife, if we came to such a belief only when we experience it, then we

have rejected all the teachings of the prophets and the Qur'an. Similarly with the arrival of the Dajjal, he provides evidence of his divine role and some superficial success in his mission, and certainly a globalising aim in mind, and yet it is incumbent on the Muslim to see the evidence in a different way, as a test. He knows this firstly because of the warnings about the Dajjal in the *ahadith* but more importantly because what the Dajjal does is clearly against Islam. The arrival of Jesus to fight and indeed pray with the Mahdi clinches the argument. Note here that it is up to the individual believer to adopt the appropriate intellectual and moral strategy, this is not something that miraculously descends on him from heaven. To be sure, he has the support of the Qur'an and the other Islamic texts and authorities, but it is for the believer to make his own decisions on how he understands those texts and how he is prepared to live. For taking the right decision he will be rewarded, and vice versa, but the onus is on the individual to get it right, and not to follow what appears to be the evidence before his eyes. After all, if all we needed to do was follow the evidence that is everywhere around us there would be no need for a guide. So the Mahdi and the Dajjal bring out very graphically some of the main presuppositions of Islam itself.

Globalisation in the Holy Qur'an: Simplification and Perfectisation

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There is no doubt about it, 'Globalisation' is the buzzword of the decade. Academics, Business Executives, Politicians, Media and many others are using the word to signify that something profound is happening; the world is changing, the world is becoming one city.

Yet the term "Globalisation" is used in so many different contexts, by so many different people, for so many different purposes.

In this article firstly trying to find the definition of the term "Globalisation" and whether it is a new theory and first-time phenomenon or it has been formed or claimed in the past. Then we will concentrate on "Globalisation" in Islam particularly in the Quran covering these areas:

- Does Islam believe in "Globalisation"? (Quranic View)
- What definition for "Globalisation" can be found in the Quran?
- Principal drivers of "Globalisation"
- Positive aspects and negative consequences associated with "Globalisation"
- The "Globalisation" Model (role model)

Before we start contemplating any discussion on the issue of globalisation from the Qur'anic point of view and as to whether there are any references about globalisation in the Holy Qur'an, we need to firstly understand how it is understood and used in our society and what are its implications. Only then should we start searching the verses of the Holy Qur'an and looking at the implications of globalisation from the Qur'anic point of view.

While trying to understand the meaning of globalisation through various writings, books, explanations, and definitions we come across extremely contradictory points of view, such as follows:

- It consists of processes that lead to global

interdependence and the increasing rapidity of exchange.

- Globalisation is a process by which, capital, goods, services and sometimes labour cross national borders and acquire a transnational character.
- Globalisation is an undeniably capitalist process. It has taken off as a concept in the wake of the collapse of communism.
- In sum, globalisation can be thought of as the widening, intensifying, speeding up, and growing impact of worldwide interconnectedness.
- It is a phenomenon involving the increasing interaction, or integration, of national economic systems through the growth in international trade, investment and capital flows.
- The sociologist, Anthony Giddens, defines globalisation as a decoupling of space and time,
- A Dutch academic who maintains a good website on globalisation, <http://globalize.kub.nl/> Ruud Lubbers, defines it as a process in which geographic distance becomes a factor of diminishing importance in the establishment and maintenance of cross border economic, political and socio-cultural relations.
- Some define the word quite differently, presenting it as a worldwide drive towards a globalised economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments.

It is then said that the "transfer of taste" such as shoes, drinks, dresses ...etc. the "transfer of values" such as

cartoons, comics, language, videos, music, plays... etc. are evident today through the process of globalisation.

From the aforesaid definitions we can derive a few points:

1. The majority of definitions only concentrate on the issue of globalisation partially and only relate its implications to some aspects of globalisation.
2. Some of the definitions and explanations of globalisation concentrate mainly on the results achieved from one or several kinds of globalisation, which can only show the result of its impact when brought in action.
3. The emphasis placed on economical globalisation in the majority of the definitions of globalisation, gives the impression that globalisation can only be defined from the economical point of view.
4. The West, due to its economical and technological ability, has also been considered as an active and impressive player in globalisation; hence many of the definitions have defined globalisation from the West's point of view i.e. the forceful implication of Western values through globalisation. Some have used this as an excuse of confrontation while others have used it to support it.

As a result to what has been said, absolute and pure globalisation can be defined as: "An intensifying possible movement of thought and action throughout the whole world with no geographical, territorial, cultural restrictions."

In short, we can say, globalisation is the process of making economy, culture, education, general laws and politics, universal and standardized the world over.

This is the meaning that exists unanimously in all of the definitions and in practice can be used both positively and negatively.

In other words, globalisation can be used negatively by an oppressive power to impose its values and political planning on the oppressed nations of the world or it can be utilized to take and achieve positive and fruitful results.

Now that we have analysed the definition of globalisation we need to discern whether this concept exists in the Holy Qur'an or not.

When contemplating upon and analysing the verses of Holy Qur'an, we can conclude that one of the undeniable missions of the Messenger of Islam and the revelation of the Holy Qur'an was to globalise the Islamic message and Qur'anic values. The religion of Islam places great emphasis on global development from the beginning to the end.

Not only has the Qur'an placed emphasis on globalisation, it has itself already started to move towards it, since its revelation.

In this regard I would like to cite some verses from the Holy Qur'an:

1- People, in the Holy Qur'an have been addressed without consideration or importance being given to their race, language, country or background. The human being has been addressed as human no matter where he lives in this world.

يا ايها الناس - يا ايها الانسان - ان الانسان

“Oh people...” “Oh you human...” “Surely the human is....”

2-

قل يا أهل الكتاب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألا نعبد إلا الله ولا نشرك به شيئا ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضا أربابا من دون الله... (آل عمران ٦٤)

Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah'. (3:64)

In this verse, Allah (s.w.t.) has not addressed the People of the Book as Arabs or non-Arabs; rather this verse is an invitation to all to cooperate in one intellectual, ideological and practical way of life globally. Hence this is globalisation.

3-

وما هو إلا ذكر للعالمين. (القلم ٥٢)

But it is nothing less than a Message or reminder to all the worlds or nations. (68:52)

إن هو إلا ذكر للعالمين. (ص ٨٧)

It is nothing but a reminder to the worlds and nations. (38:87)

What could the Qur'an mean regarding it being a guide and a reminder by its teachings to the world and all nations, other than globalisation.

4-

وأوحى إلي هذا القرآن لأنذركم به ومن بلغ. (الانعام ١٩)

And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warn you and all whom it reaches. (6:19)

Not only does the Qur'an guide all people to the right path, it also warns humans worldwide concerning serious dangers and calamities.

5-

واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا ولا تفرقوا. (آل عمران ١٠٣)

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you). (3:103)

In this verse all the people in the world are invited to build and form a single united nation under one umbrella, one path and one goal. This is globalisation.

6-

ونزلنا عليك الكتاب تبيانا لكل شيء وهدى ورحمة وبشرى للمسلمين. (النحل ٨٩)

And we have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything. (16:89)

This verse provides further evidence that the Holy Qur'an contains instruction for all matters regardless of time, place or any limits.

The possibility of globalisation is the question that needs to be answered.

The reply is a positive one and that is due to the fact that Allah (s.w.t.) would never invite us to do a thing, which is impossible to achieve by human beings.

The other question that arises is whether or not this Qur'anic globalisation has already taken place or whether it is going to take place?

The reply to this question is that it has taken place and it will take place.

As for globalisation already having taken place, the Holy Qur'an indicates it clearly in two verses:

1-

كان الناس أمة واحدة فبعث الله النبيين مبشرين ومنذرين وأنزل معهم الكتاب بالحق ليحكم بين الناس فيما اختلفوا فيه وما اختلف فيه إلا الذين أوتوه من بعد ما جاءتهم البينات بغيا بينهم فهدى الله الذين آمنوا لما اختلفوا فيه من الحق بإذنه والله يهدي من يشاء إلى صراط مستقيم.

Mankind were one community or single nation, and Allah sent (unto them) prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed with them the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed. But the people who were given it differed about it after clear signs and proofs had come to them, revolting among themselves. (2:213)

The word community (*Ummah*) is not placed upon any particular group of people, but is rather placed upon a nation that has one goal and one faith. The word "Nation" can only be used for a group of people who are unanimous in a certain way of life, goal and ideology. It is this unanimity that unites them and entitles them to be termed as a nation.

The Qur'an thus says that mankind was one globalised united nation in their faith and belief.

It may be argued that if the people were as one nation, how could this unity become the reason for sending messengers

and revealing holy books (as claimed in the Qur'anic verse)?

The renown and learned commentator of the Holy Qur'an Allamah Tabatabaei, has a comprehensive explanation for this verse. He says that two kinds of differences were mentioned in this verse:

a) Differences before the sending of prophets and their messages. These can be found in the matters of daily life. Such differences could lead to the oppressor and the oppressed, the claimer and the defendant resulting in the appearance of forms of injustice. God thus sent messengers with guidance and laws in order to solve the different religious legislations, as well as warn against misdeeds and inform about good tidings. There is no contradiction or confliction between this type of difference and mankind being as one nation and one community.

b) Differences following the sending of prophets and their messages. Differences in this regard were due to the religion itself, its teachings and principles. This difference arose only among the learned people, having known the facts and the correct dictates of faith, they changed it in order to gain power and satisfy their own selfish interests.

As a result of this type of difference, ideological deviation and intellectual diversion have taken place, causing people to break into groups and thus different nations were formed.

There are some other verses reflecting this type of difference:

وما تفرقوا إلا من بعد ما جاءهم العلم بغيا بينهم. (الشورى ١٤)

And they were not divided until after the knowledge came to them out of envy among themselves. (42:14)

فما اختلفوا إلا من بعد ما جاءهم العلم بغيا بينهم. (الجاثية ١٧)

They did not differ until after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves. (45:17)

2-

وما كان الناس إلا أمة واحدة فاختلفوا. (يونس ١٩)

People were but one community and one nation; then they differed. (10:19)

As for globalisation to take place in the future, there are various verses that clearly elucidate this point:

1-

هو الذي أرسل رسوله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون. (التوبة ٣٣)

It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest. (9:33)

This verse indicates that the aim behind sending the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s.) accompanied by the Book of Guidance was so that this religion becomes victorious and triumphant over all other faiths and beliefs throughout the world. This form of globalisation, which is a promise from God has not yet occurred but nevertheless will take place.

2-

ولقد كتبنا في الزبور من بعد الذكر أن الأرض يرثها عبادي الصالحون.
(الانبياء ١٠٥)

Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth.
(21:105)

The righteous who shall inherit the earth are also mentioned in the scriptures revealed to the prophets preceding the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). This promise has also not yet taken place.

3-

وعد الله الذين آمنوا منكم وعملوا الصالحات ليستخلفنهم في الأرض كما استخلف الذين من قبلهم وليمكنن لهم دينهم الذي ارتضى لهم وليبدلنهم من بعد خوفهم أمنا يعبدونني لا يشركون بي شيئا ومن كفر بعد ذلك فأولئك هم الفاسقون. (النور ٥٥)

Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me; and whoever is ungrateful after this, these it is who are the Transgressors. (24:55)

This is another promise of God; to make the good believers rulers throughout the earth, armed with the power of faith and security. This is the Qur'anic globalisation which has not taken place yet.

The difference between the globalisation that has already

happened as opposed to that which is happening (both mentioned in the Qur'an) is that the first one was modest, humble, simple and in accordance to the nature of that time, while the second is more developed and sophisticated. The first was simplisation and the coming one is perfectisation.

From the details pertaining to globalisation mentioned in the Qur'an and commentaries, the characteristics and qualities of the promised Qur'anic globalisation can be understood and then compared to contemporary Western globalisation, which the West aims to achieve and assumes to have taken place.

Here is a comparison between these two globalisations:

1. Qur'anic globalisation is a true globalisation, which encompasses the entire universe comprehensively unlike Western globalisation.
2. The social and practical base and principle of Qur'anic globalisation is justice in all aspects of the life, while the bases for Western globalisation is economy and capitalism, which follows their own interests and excludes the third world and developing countries.
3. The ideological principle of Qur'anic globalisation is monotheism and pure beliefs and teachings, which are compatible to the nature of the human being as taught by the Holy Qur'an. This is contrary to Western globalisation that relies on personal interests and deceit.
4. In Qur'anic globalisation, poverty will be deleted from the entire world so that no poor person could be found on earth. Wealth and fortune will be distributed between the people with justice. To the contrary, Western globalisation is causing the poor to become poorer and the rich richer.

5. Qur'anic globalisation is a means to eradicate all serious and dangerous diseases that kill numerous people. Western globalisation by opening the borders of some countries without specified controls and restrictions has enabled and allowed the spread and transmission of deadly diseases.
6. In globalisation according to Qur'an, all nations and cities will unite causing overall safety and security in all societies. In Western globalisation today, we witness the eradication of safety and security everyday, which effects the West itself.
7. In Qur'anic globalisation there is no room for ethical and sexual indecency instead it is fulfilled by truth, trustworthiness, good character and the purity of one's heart and one's soul.



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