

# Is democracy and Islam incompatible?

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I was traveling in a jam-packed town service bus the other day. To breathe well and keep my mind away from the jostling experience I was trying to read the wall graffiti through the open window. Of the many things, both riding the mass transport and reading the wall writings help me have a feel of the public pulse. Suddenly, I saw some bold wall writing on the Paltan walls - 'democracy, hartal, and TV not permissible by Islam' - Al Biyanat. A similar wall writing I glanced from the running bus by Al Hadees or some other name. Hardened by grenades, bombs, killings in our political circus I was not shocked, as by now, I am familiar with such provocative wall writings, demonstration and parades. Few months ago we had witnessed a parade of colorful placards and festoons on the battle of Badar, battle of Uhod and many other events of Islamic history; sadly missing were placards on the Liberation War which made this religious parade possible on the sovereign land. The world however has taken notice of fundamentalist activities in Bangladesh.

Many feel it is an unnecessary interference in our internal affairs and we need not bother. One wishes that reality was as simple a matter. In the interdependent world we are more dependent than others. Just about for every sector of our needs Bangladesh is a recipient. International cooperation and aid are not nature's free gift to us. Eroded from the spirit of the Liberation War, India is not in high esteem in the average eye these days. But when Ratan Tata came with a proposal of investing two billion dollars he received more attention than head of a state. Such are the economic compulsions of 140 million that are trying to make a living on the smallest per capita land on earth. If we want to be part of the sharing world we have little choice but to claw on the

speeding train of world economies rushing towards integrated global village. If we are riding the train there is no shame in reposing confidence in the engine. Talking otherwise is counter productive, may even go the harms way. Emotion cannot be an alternative to common sense. We are with the Americans and miles away from Bin Laden, but

**Palestinians are fighting for their homeland; Iraqis are doing theirs as Chechens are doing for their homeland. No doubt sympathies are with the oppressed but these are not religious wars- calling them jihad is undermining the cause and inviting a 'Trojan Horse'. We do not call the Americans as Christians, Japanese as Buddhist and they themselves are not keen. Why then Muslims must always go by their religious identity? To me it looks like a baited hook for Huntington's ugly hypothesis. As Vietnam War has proved it- a good cause does not need religion to sell well or fight well.**

not necessarily, with the GIs in Iraq.

If democracy were not compatible with Islam then our two elected prime ministers would not have been in the position that they were and are in. If Islam fails to accommodate, the Clash of Civilisation -Samuel Huntington's hypothesis will wage more wars in the Western minds. The Clash of Civilisation has already been sold out as Gospel and has done more damage to the Muslims - not as a hypothesis but as real possibility. As if this egoistic hypothesis was not enough, 9/11 did the rest to put the one-fifth of mankind in the dock. Centuries old bigotry of the failed Muslim leadership produced the straw, Huntington recited the mantra and 9/11 gave the spark to cast the die. What a tragedy; some of the religious leaders knowingly or unwittingly are adding fuel for greater combustibility of Muslim societies, while kings, dictators

and dull politicians are playing the pawns.

If we are talking of the quality of life- politically, economically and socially, Muslims are the worst 1.2 billion on earth and worst still, falling behind everyday by any matrix of juxtaposition. The way Charles Darwin saw the world from a sail ship more than a century ago- East or

pathies are with the oppressed but these are not religious wars- calling them jihad is undermining the cause and inviting a 'Trojan Horse'. We do not call the Americans as Christians, Japanese as Buddhist and they themselves are not keen. Why then the Muslims must always go by their religious identity? To me it looks like a baited hook for Huntington's ugly hypothesis. As Vietnam War has proved it- a good cause does not need religion to sell well or fight well.

The Muslims do not need Bin Laden but Nelson Mandela, the living legend of the world- sprung from apartheid South Africa. Mandela is a rare species of courage where gun fails to intimidate the bare hands. As a soldier I have learnt, one needs one-dimensional courage to fight and die for a cause. To be a visionary one needs to be an infinite reservoir of courage and tenacity to exhaust the ferocity of power. The oppressed and downtrodden need that kind of vision today where power feels hopelessly weak and succumbs to the will of the tormented. Giving up is as shameful as giving in to anger.

Drawing personal matter like religion in political and international arena is self-defeating. If the world gets divided on the basis of religion, the Muslim-states will provide easy hunting ground for more powerful ones. It is wise for the Muslims that religion is left to the image of individuals rather than dragging it to self-defeating national and international perspective. Since the disintegration of the Ottomans, nearly a century ago, religion has been thoroughly abused to the detriment of the Muslims. Whatever is the shade of religion there is but only one perceived supernatural authority and His ability of diversity is also infinite. For all believers God must be in the heart- not on the sword. And for Bangladesh it is the only course of survival.

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## A KASHMIRI PERSPECTIVE

# What would be acceptable in Jammu and Kashmir?

ARJIMAND HUSSAIN TALIB

THE latest statement of the Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, proposing a way for solving the Kashmir problem, has predictably sparked public and private debates in Kashmir about his unilateral offer. There is both disquiet and amusement among the pro-independence, pro-India and pro-Pakistan organizations, who interpret the general's statement in their own ways.

For Syed Ali Shah Geelani-led Hurriyat Conference it has been a rude shock, because it attacks the very core of their ideology, the ideology which carved out the separate Muslim State of Pakistan and would like to see Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. Although, Geelani Hurriyat's key constituents like the Peoples League and National Front led by Sheikh Abdul Aziz and Nayeem Ahmed Khan, are skeptical about the General's ideas, they have made it known privately that they would throw their weight behind the idea of de-militarisation and independence, if New Delhi reciprocates positively to the offer. Sources in the Jamat-i-Islami, Geelani's parent organisation, say that although there is unease with Musharraf's public statement, there is a general feeling that India and Pakistan cannot impose their decision on Kashmiris.

But there are people on the other side of the separatist fence, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference headed by Moulvi Omar Farooq, which is upbeat that Pakistan has accepted the independence of Kashmir as a possible solution to the problem. The JKLF led by Yasin Malik and Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) led by Shabir Shah are likely to throw their weight behind these new ideas of demilitarization and independence, but have chosen to mute their public reactions. There is unanimity of thought in that it was bad diplomacy for General Musharraf to concede so much to New Delhi.

The United Jihad Council has expressed resentment about what



it terms "Musharraf's volte face" on Pakistan's principled stand on Kashmir. It has stressed that Kashmir is not a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan and that any decisions by Islamabad on behalf of the Kashmiris would be unacceptable to the militant groups.

On the other hand, Jehadi groups like the Jamiat ul Mujahideen are bewildered about Musharraf's statement. For the Jehadi groups there is no alternative to Jihad for liberating Kashmir. Perceptions among the common people reflect the same pattern as in the political and militant groups. They are generally happy that Musharraf's suggestion includes de-militarisation of Kashmir by both India and Pakistan. For the vast majority, this solution is practical and feasible. Independence or UN control for some time has many takers in Kashmir, but joint control by India and Pakistan is altogether ruled out.

What provides credibility to this new development is the widespread speculation in the print media in Srinagar that it was the

US, which has been supporting this project behind the scenes. It is public knowledge in Kashmir now that Wajahat Habibullah, a former bureaucrat from the State, has been working with some US think-tanks on the issue.

What, perhaps, is of greatest significance is the perceived political and ideological transition that is taking roots in the State's oldest political organization, National Conference, coinciding with the latest developments. The assassination of the party's senior leader Safdar Ali Baig and the attack on party president, Omar Abdullah, in which he narrowly escaped the bomb blast in Anantnag town last week, have drifted the party away from mainstream politics for too long. The town and the district is the political home turf of Mufti Muhammad Syed as well as his daughter Mehbooba Mufti.

But how credible are such feelings? The open accusation of the Abdullahs is that the Mufti's PDP was responsible for the attacks on the NC leadership which is an open war declaration. Omar's "ultimatum" to New Delhi

to come clean on the issue makes its role clear on the party's political role in Kashmir, which is being viewed as a serious and unprecedented political development.

Pakistan's condemnation of the blast has been significant but also unprecedented. There are unconfirmed reports that Pakistan is trying to reach out to the National Conference for a realignment of political forces and wean away from pro-Indian politics. Should the National Conference throw its weight behind Musharraf's latest suggestions, pro-Indian politics in Kashmir would be wholly dependent on Mufti's People's Democratic Party (PDP). And that is what both Farooq Abdullah and Omar are said to have conveyed to Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh and Home Minister, Shiv Raj Patil, when the father and son met them in New Delhi after the series of attacks on them.

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## MASKHADOV'S ASSASSINATION

# Will it solve the Chechen problem?

DR. MUHAMMAD RAFIQUIL ISLAM RIAD

ANY moderate politicians in the Russian Federation will not accept Aslan Maskhadov's brutal assassination by the Russian troops on March 8 easily, although Russia is a military super power even in the post-Cold War era. After President Yeltsin, many Russian politicians, writers and scientists backed President Vladimir Putin to reestablish a strong Russia. Today Vladimir Putin has become successful in regaining Russia's past glory in many spheres. But what Vladimir Putin needs to reconsider is the long historical problem of Chechnya.

Only application of force to retaliate against the Chechen fighters is not the best solution (a normal solution) for Vladimir Putin. Particularly, it was not very wise for him to pay heed to only the FSB (former KGB) prescription to neutralise the Chechen fighters. Some young Chechens became bound to take up arms. They were under tremendous pressure from the different warlords to join the fight against Russia after 1997.

From 1994 to 96 Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov led a 20 month long first Chechen War. This was a 'different period'. President Boris Yeltsin signed a Peace Treaty with Aslan Maskhadov, Chechnya became de facto independent and thus the first war of Chechnya came to an end. In 1997 Aslan Maskhadov became the President of Chechnya by a 'free and fair' election participated by almost all Chechens. The international community recognised that election. Aslan Maskhadov was then trying his heart and soul to establish a democratic Chechnya in line with politics of moderate Russian politicians like Anatoly Sobchak of St. Petersburg (Vladimir Putin's Leader), Gregori Yavlinski of party Yabloko, Boris Nemtsov Anatoly Chubais and Irina

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PHOTO AFP

**Demonstrators hold pictures of Chechen separatist leaders, from left, Djokhar Dudayev, Selim-chan Jandarbajew and Aslan Maskhadov, who were all killed by Russian troops, during a demonstration in the center of Warsaw 12 March 2005.**

Khakamada of party of the Union of Right Forces and others. In real sense, President Boris Yeltsin himself backed Present Aslan Maskhadov to be a moderate Chechen leader. It was perhaps not so wise to term Aslan Maskhadov a terrorist in the post- Yeltsin time. After 1998 terrorist Shamil Basaev did not carry out the orders of the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. In fact, terrorists like Basaev, Khattab, Shamil Beno and others very often bypassed Aslan Maskhadov.

Other mini Chechen commanders with the backing of these terrorists created a state of anarchy inside Chechnya. So, the FSB propaganda against Aslan Maskhadov increased. As the President of all the Russians including the Chechens, Vladimir Putin was surely misguided by the FSB after 1999. After Russia's victory in the second Chechen war in 2000. Aslan Maskhadov was not associated with any of the terrorist attacks against Russia. On the other hand, he himself was in great trouble

with his people. Then President of Ingushetia, Ruslan Aushev helped the suffering Chechens to survive day to day for his cordial request. At the same time, Aslan Maskhadov once again sent green signals to Moscow that he wanted to negotiate with Vladimir Putin on his people's future and also the status and future of Chechnya even within the constitution of the Russian Federation. After 9/11 President Vladimir Putin expressed his strong support to George W. Bush's worldwide fight

against terrorism and it became easier for FSB to term Aslan Maskhadov as a terrorist. Russia announced a 10 billion-dollar bounty on his head when it was in deep economic turmoil! However, unfortunately Muslim countries failed to back Aslan Maskhadov (Turkey helped the Chechen refugees). However, Denmark, particularly, tried to find out a way for Aslan Maskhadov who sent his moderate negotiator Akhmed Zakaev (2002) to Denmark which caused the Russia-Denmark diplomatic relations to suffer badly as Denmark refused to extradite Akhmed Zakaev to Russia in compliance with Russia's request. However, after a tough legal battle Akhmed Zakaev got political asylum in Denmark.

The Strasbourg based European Human rights commission chief Lord Frank Jud of France (2002) and its Human rights commissioner Alvaro Gil Robel (he visited Moscow in February 18, 2003) had tried to press Vladimir Putin to resolve the Chechnya problem. Once a vocal critic of Chechnya President Jacques Chirac of France also changed his attitude towards Chechnya. Even the Amnesty International failed to press Russia towards a satisfactory solution because of its mild criticism of Russia's Chechnya policy and despite the Moscow visit by its Secretary General.

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Terrorism is a special form of political violence. It is not a philosophy or a political movement. Terrorism is a weapon or method, which has been used throughout history by both states and sub-state organisations for a whole variety of political causes or purposes. This special form of political violence has five major characteristics:

- λ it is premeditated and aims to create a climate of extreme fear or terror;
- λ it is directed at a wider audience or target than the immediate victims of the violence;
- λ it inherently involves attacks on random and symbolic targets, including civilians;
- λ the acts of violence committed are seen by the society .in which they occur as extra-normal, in the literal sense that they breach the social norms, thus causing a sense of outrage;
- λ and terrorism is generally used to try to influence political behaviour in some way: for example to force opponents into conceding some or all of the perpetrators demands, to provoke an over-reaction, to serve as a catalyst for a more general conflict or to publicise a political or religious cause, to inspire followers to emulate violent attacks, to give vent to deep hatred and the thirst for revenge, and to help undermine governments and institutions designated as enemies by the terrorists.

Terrorism is a very broad concept. The role of typology is to sub-divide the field into categories, which are more manageable for research and analysis. One basic distinction is between state and factional terror. There is of course a very considerable historical and social science literature on aspects of state terror. In view of the sheer scale of crimes

against humanity, war crimes, and mass terror that have been and are being committed by regimes, this is a more severe and intractable problem for humanity than the containment and reduction of factional terror by often very tiny groups. And it is important to observe that historically state terror has often been an antecedent to, and, to varying degrees, a contributory cause of, campaigns of sub-state terrorism. And once regimes come to assume that their ends justify the means they tend to get locked into a spiral of terror and counter-terror against their adversaries.

Another important distinction

governments and political movements as well as from their own Diaspora.

A particularly useful way of mapping the different types of sub-state terrorist groups active in the contemporary international system is to classify them according to their underlying political motivation or ideological orientation. No broad categorization can do full justice to the variety and complexity of the modern phenomena of terrorism. But a comprehensive review of the social science literature on terrorism reveals abundant evidence of currently active groups involved in terrorist activity motivated by one or

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is between international terrorism, involving the citizens of two or more states, and domestic or internal terrorism which confines it's activities within the borders of a specific state or province. Terrorism analysis based entirely on international incident statics cannot provide an accurate picture of world trends in terrorism because it excludes well over ninety percent of terrorist activity around the globe. A further complication is that almost all prolonged domestic terrorist campaigns have an 'international dimension. In most cases their leaders expend considerable effort seeking external sources of political support, cash, weapons, safe haven, and other useful assets, from friendly

more of the following: nationalism, separatism, racism, vigilantism, ultra-left ideology, religious fundamentalism, millennialism, and single-issue campaigns (eg. animal rights, anti-abortion).

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Terrorism researchers and analysts and counter terrorism policy makers need to be able to understand the much broader trends in terrorism, their possible strategic implications ,impact on the society and for the international community.

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