

GLOBALIZATION, GOVERNANCE AND ISLAM IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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In the new millennium, the world is faced with several challenges, the most important of which is globalization of the economy. This is occurring partly because of sharp declines in telecommunications and transport expenses. Deregulation, interacting with accelerating changes in communications and computer technology, has reinforced the movement towards an integrated global market.

Globalization has increased capital flows and trade worldwide. Some developing countries that opened their economies appropriately have been successful in achieving prosperity in less time. Since 1990, capital flows to developing countries have increased six-fold, according to the World Bank. This development has been linked with another important global change – a paradigm shift towards development of a global knowledge economy. The two coupled are perhaps the single most significant change of our times.

We are living in an era that is characterized by rapid change due to various technological, economic and social changes. Countries have jumped from poverty to world economic power in a single generation. Technological advances in telecommunication and computers proliferate in an ever-increasing stride. Great changes have come about as a massive transformation of the global economy is taking place right before eyes. History is being squeezed as never before, so to speak. The report of the commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* argues:¹

¹ See commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* available on the Internet.

The term 'global village' captured the impact of the electronic conquest of space. Technology, by telescoping distance and time, has made the world smaller. Photographs from space confirmed the insignificance of terrestrial frontiers. But much has happened since satellites first girdled the globe, and advances in transport and telecommunications are only one set of factors making neighbors of far-flung people.

Global developments are even shifting the meaning of traditional terms and rendering many of them less useful. There is no longer an East to be juxtaposed against the West. With the abandonment of communism, capitalism has become even more of an omnibus term that hides important distinctions between different ways of organizing market economies. Similarly, the North-South dichotomy is becoming less sharp. And the problems of Africa are now strikingly different from those of South-east Asia or South America. More and more, it is disparities within the nation and the regions, both North and south, no less than the disparities among nations and blocs that reveals injustice and cause insecurity.

Technological advances have made national frontiers more porous. States retain sovereignty, but governments have suffered erosion in their authority. They are less able, for example, to control the trans-border movement of money or information. They face the pressures of globalization at one level and of grassroots movements and, in some cases, demands for devolution if not secession at another. In the extreme case, public order may disintegrate and civil institutions collapse in the face of rampant violence, as in Liberia and Somalia.

There is an on-going debate about "globalization". Is it a good thing or a bad thing and whether to embrace it or resist it? However, every one agrees that international market forces have indeed emerged as powerful. Rapid development of telecommunications and global trade has created a global economy of truly staggering proportions. Globalization has created a global media, which has both good and bad points. The report of the

Commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* argues: ²

Innovations in communications technology, in addition to driving economic globalization, have also transformed the media world and the spread of information, with important consequences for national as well as global governance. This began with radio broadcasting in the 1940s and has since been extended through television and satellite transmission to give even those in remote places immediate access to sound and images from a wider world. In some countries, new communications systems have even brought people news of domestic events that is not available locally. Direct-dial international telephone and fax services have swelled the trans-border flow of news and other messages. Another important development has been the sharing of information through links between computers around the world.

Exposure through the media to foreign culture and life-styles can be both stimulating and destabilizing; it can inspire both appreciation and envy. Concern that the dominance of transnational media could result in cultural homogenization and could damage indigenous cultures is not limited to non- Western countries. Many people are worried that media images would strengthen the consumerist ethos in societies in the early stages of development. There are questions about distortion and imbalance as the world's news is filtered predominantly through Western prisms, and dissatisfactions that information flows from and within the developing world are inadequate. Apprehension about concentration in media ownership is linked to worries that this sector's power to shape the agenda of political action may not be matched by a sense of responsibility. These varied concerns have given rise to the suggestion that civil society itself should try to provide a measure of global public service broadcasting not linked to commercial interests.

The wider access to information has been healthy for democracy, which gains from a better informed citizenry, as well

² See commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* available on the Internet.

as beneficial for development, scientific and professional collaboration, and many other activities. The wide linkages now facilitated can also help pull the world's people closer together. Media images of human suffering have motivated people to express their concern and their solidarity with those in distant places by contributing to relief efforts and by demanding explanations and action from governments. The media's influence on the shaping of foreign policy is considerable in many countries.

Although there has been a spectacular expansion in the reach of some communications media, serious imbalances remain in access to information and in the distribution of even the most basic technology. Two billion people – more than one in three individuals in the world – still lack electricity. In 1990, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Nigeria together have fewer telephone connections than Canada, which has only 27 million people. These disparities are repeated in the ownership of communications satellites, the key to media globalization.”

The *World Economic Survey* notes that the demand of economics shape both culture and politics. It says: ³

Perhaps the history of the nation state has come to a turning point after all. In the future, it might be argued, it is the need for mobility and communication” between economics, rather than within them, that would gain the upper hand. This demand would give rise to an increasingly homogenous global culture, just as its predecessor give rise to homogenous national ones. This in turn would not only promote economic integration but would also, however slowly, blur the political boundaries between nations.

Political scientists recognize that “information power” is becoming just as important in international affairs as a country's other strengths like military, economic, social and political. Meanwhile, corporations are going through a managerial revolution of their own as they apply new Information Technology to all stages of production and distribution. Some transform

“The World Economic Survey”, *The Economist*, 1997.

themselves into “virtual corporations” that are essentially networks rather than classical hierarchical organizations. Individuals and NGOs too are becoming “citizens” or a new information-based civil society that is finding ways to harness IT for more participatory, open democracy. However, the world is changing quickly and unexpectedly, its also changing events. The Information Age would mean an altered lifestyle; some say it would be – the Web lifestyle.

The transformations being brought by globalization is also bringing about a major change in the domain of ideas, starting with the Cold War and the collapse of communism. The wider access to information has been healthy for democracy, which gains from a better-informed citizenry as well as beneficial for development, scientific and professional collaboration, and many other activities. The wide linkages now facilitated can also help pull the world’s people to express their concern and their solidarity with those in distant places by contributing to relief efforts and by demanding explanations and action from governments. The media’s influence on the shaping of foreign policy is considerable in many countries.

New values of accountability, public participation, and openness have gained a high profile in the last decade or so. The rise of democracy is perhaps the single most important event of this century. The benefits of democratization are beyond doubt. Formal democratization is being deepened through more meaningful public participation in politics. Better accountability is commonly seen throughout the world as the key to better governance. The report of the Commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* argues.⁴

The information and communication revolutions are helping to diffuse power throughout society, often transferring it from hierarchical structures to small groups, and increasing the ability of dispersed groups to communicate. Indeed, computer-based networking capabilities are giving new form and strength to civil

⁴ See commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* available on the Internet.

society and facilitating partnerships with intergovernmental institutions...The spectacular changes of the few past decades have created a new value system, the participation of people in governance is now thought to be more critical than ever. Governments that do not have the support of their people can hardly survive. Democracy is more than just a matter of voting. It is a dynamic process, involving a commitment to democratic principles and institutions that meet the needs of citizens routinely and in times of crisis. Truly democratic institutions continuously engage people directly in a multiplicity of ways. The gap between governments and citizens needs to be narrowed. A viable democracy requires an active civil society. At its best, civil society is citizens acting in pursuit of a range of interests, many of which have implications for public policy. There is at the same time, a need to ensure democratic functioning in the many institutions of civil society. Their leaders should be held to the same standards of accountability as political leaders.

The process of creating a stable democracy in the developing is always a cumbersome and challenging task. As the most essential preconditions are gradually met the process takes hold. Whether an experiment in democracy is successful or not is dependent upon a complexity of variables. It is also a truism that a successful democracy requires a society dominated by an educated and enlightened middle class. A sustained effort is needed to strengthen democratic institutions in any developing country.

New approaches to accountability and development have gained a high profile in the last decade or so. They can be powerful, but they should not be regarded as the new panaceas. In truth, the history of development studies shows a recurrent tendency to put exaggerated faith in new approaches only for these to result in disappointment: national planning, administrative reform, basic needs, market-led development, and so on. We should avoid perpetuating this tendency. The lesson for us here is this: in development, there are no magic wands.

Development also means a process of social mobilization in whose course old economic, social and psychic links are destroyed. The developing world cannot be regarded as concocted or

homogeneous societies therefore the present cultural and political variety must be assessed individually. No two societies are the same. It is absolutely necessary that each country build its own future according to its own requirements. Each nation has to chart its own destiny. In short, a new model has to be invented.

For the past twenty years, information and communications technology have developed in a way unparalleled in history. The only certainty is that more change is over the horizon. In this century no aspect of human activity shall be able to escape the influence of the new global technologies. Humanity is caught in a new era that is characterized by a high rate of change. The world has never changed so fast before. To cope with this change is a daunting task.

The second global challenge is that of good governance, especially in the developing countries. Without it all other efforts at sustainable development shall surely fail. What is governance in the first place? The simplest meaning would be the ability to translate state policies into ground reality so that it makes a difference in the betterment of society. The term implies broadly issues of government effectiveness, accountability, transparency and adherence to the rule of law. The idea of governance is a broader than that of government. The primary characteristics of government include first of all the constitution, then the government itself, meaning the three basic wings which are legislature, executive and judiciary, while governance involves established connections between these formal institutions and the broader civil society. Good governance is also to be understood as having a normative connotation and includes the hopes, aspirations and predilections of the governed.

The concept of governance means the activities, manner and management through various modes of exercising the power of government. Simply put, the government is the authority and the governance is the process through which the policies of the government is executed and implemented. Thus, the term of government implies the exercise of authority in managing and

controlling the functions of the members of the body politic and directing the total affairs of the state for promoting the causes of common welfare. In any democratic country, elected representatives of the people are meant to reflect the wishes of the people in the governance of the country.

Governance is the ability to translate state policies into ground reality so that it makes a difference in the betterment of society. The term broadly implies issues of government effectiveness, accountability, transparency and adherence to the rule of law. The idea of governance is broader than that of government. The concept means the activities, manner and management through various modes of exercising the power of government. Governance rests on the existence of participatory processes and the acquiescence of those who are governed. Thus, good governance is also to be understood as having a normative connotation and includes the hopes, aspirations and predilections of the governed. The essential components of a good government are:

- ❖ Good governance, which is dependent upon the existence of a participatory process and the consent of the people.
- ❖ Accountability of the government for its actions, which is dependent upon the availability of information, transparency of decision-making and the presence of effective mechanisms to call individuals and institutions to account.
- ❖ Competence of the government, which is the capacity to formulate appropriate policies, make sound and timely decisions, and perhaps most importantly implement them effectively.
- ❖ Rule of law and respect for human rights. The government has to guarantee groups and individuals their security and their basic human rights. It has to provide an enabling framework for economic and social activity and

to permit and encourage all types of individual participation.

The essentials of good governance are well known: a well trained, properly remunerated civil service, the free flow of information, transparency, voice and a comment to fight corruption. Plus, ownership is always an important consideration. Governments must be in a position of leadership; the people must be consulted and involved. For sustainable development to occur public participation must be ensured. In an age of scarcity, good governance has become the issue of our times. Governance would imply issues of government effectiveness, accountability, transparency and adherence to the rule of law. Good governance is also to be understood as having a normative connotation and includes the hopes, aspirations and predilections of the governed. It is agreed that a state must achieve a high level of good governance because lack of capacity to carefully monitor and implement, otherwise good policy designs, would hamper and distort development.

Achieving objectives of good governance requires a long-term political commitment to make the system work. As administrative systems have become increasingly complex, procedures and structures have created red tape and inefficiency. Reinventing government is needed simply to keep up with the rapid change. Essentially, it involves a broad restructuring of public service systems. Organizational structures, purposes, incentive systems, accountability procedures, authority distribution patterns, even culture is changed in the process. To achieve efficiency and effective-ness, change undertaken must ensure that the development process remains unhampered by lapses and shortcomings in current structures. Thus, governance would be best in a society with an effective production and delivery of jobs and services in an efficient way and in legitimate conditions.

A major problem for administrations, especially in the developing countries, is the widening gap between governors and governed and between the administrators and administered.

Following the law of increasing entropy, governmental and administrative systems have become increasingly complex. Their procedures and structures have created red tape and inefficiency. More importantly, a distance between the rulers and ruled is being created. This has been partly solved by a traditional answer: decrease the level of complexity of society in general and of the public services in particular. Deregulation not only has a positive potential for flexibility and thus for inefficiency. It also intends to narrow some disparities of excess bureaucracy. This may cause an improvement in legitimacy of government services.⁵

Some countries have adapted to the requirements of the new age while others have not. Some are clearly behind the times, so to speak. The success of East-Asian economies poses a challenge to the rest of the developing countries. There is an active debate about the appropriate lessons to be learned from the experiences of these country. No doubt, good governance played a critical role in their success. Their emphasis on strategic planning, education and good governance practices is being studied to see that could be duplicated in other developing countries.

A primary business of government pertains to development, both societal and economic. The challenge is to translate sound development goals into effective plans and then implement them. We are talking of good governance here. The report *Our Global Neighborhood* argues:⁶

Development is increasingly seen as having a wider definition – more than simply the transition from poor to rich. Development means human dignity and political participation by segments of society previously excluded. The elimination of existing strong inequalities within society is central to a successful development process. Equality then is not meant equality in poverty, but above all equality of opportunity. In sum, with globalization the name of the game has changed. Transparency is now a universal value. All governments are expected to adhere to

⁵-Modern Governance: New Government - Society Interactions, ed. by Jan Kooiman (London: Sage, 1993), 146

⁶ Our Global Neighborhood, op. Cit.

these new international standards. Today, it is impossible to be successful without being clean, participatory, open and transparent.

The developing countries face a deepening financial crisis because of rising interest rates, adverse shift in trade and increasing national debts. Most developing countries find it necessary to negotiate with the international financial institutions for resources to keep their economies functioning. They are seeking economic stabilization loans from the IMF, and structural adjustment loans from the World Bank. These requests for international support coincided with the rise of neo-liberal thinking in the West. The World Bank and IMF heavily influenced by neo-liberal thought, made loans conditional on recipient governments agreeing to their economic targets. Central amongst such conditions are targets for lower levels of public expenditure, reduced government intervention in economic, industrial and financial policy and parasitical divestiture. The focus of this early structural adjustment programs is economic. Although the measures have profound implications for the public sector and social welfare, such second order effects are not given much attention. While many developing countries signed up such loans very few fulfilled all of the loan conditions. Wherever reductions in the size of public bureaucracy occurred, these are arbitrary or based on the award of "golden hand shakes" rather than a systematic review of priorities.⁷

Given the scarcity of multilateral and bilateral aid today and the fact that developing countries have substantial debts to service, it seems probable that future resource flows to developing countries would decline. Meanwhile, donors are insisting on more "conditionalities" being met in order to access funds. There is evidence to suggest that the setting of conditions, demanding certain policy changes, would remain a significant aspect of foreign aid in the coming years. Most common conditionalities include the observance of economic policy conditions like devaluation of currency, floating interest rates, and reducing public

⁷ Ibid., 224-225

expenditure. Other institutional requirements for change are commonly - public enterprise divestiture and opening of the banking system. Currently, some of this conditionality also includes political matters, such as election and media freedom and human rights. Western advocacy groups are also pushing conditions to be set in terms of an environmental management, cut in military expenditure and balance in gender opportunities.

The World Bank has become an important think tank for policy formulation and augmentation of institutional capacities in the developing countries for development. It is significant not simply in terms of the grant and loans, the bank disburses, but also in terms of the way its actions shape the behaviour of domestic policy makers and other donors. Many analysts blame the bank for development failures in the developing world. In response, the World Bank has begun to put emphasis on issues pertaining to poverty alleviation, good governance and environment conservation. Issues of good governance have considerable implications for public administration in the developing countries. Achieving the objectives of good governance requires a long-term political commitment to make the system work.

Generally, international donor's agencies have come to emphasize that governance is the essential issue in project aid. For example, USAID has noted "the finest planning and budgeting system in the world are of little use, if there are not quick and accurate means to track progress and to know the relationship between the planned events and actual events."⁸ James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, in a very recent address to the Bank's Board of Governors said:⁹

We need a new development framework. What might countries look for in such a development framework? First, the framework would outline the essentials of good governance - transparency, voice, the free flow of information, a commitment

⁸"The effectiveness of Aid to Pakistan" (Islamabad: Economic Affairs Division, GOP and UNDP, 1990) 1 A.9.

⁹The Nation, November 9, 1998.

to fight corruption, and a well-trained, properly remunerated civil service... Ownership matters. Countries and their governments must be in the driver's seat, and, in our experience, the people must be consulted and involved. Participation matters – not only as a means of improving developing effectiveness as we know from our recent studies, but as the key to long-term sustainability and to leverage.

What is the most appropriate strategy of development for various countries given their particular historical legacy, culture and values system? How best to accelerate the democratization process? How and why does democracy strengthen democratic governance? Development and modernization also encompasses democratization in the sense that old structures, the ones inherited, are broken up. Clearly, effective organizational structural reforms have to be entrenched in order to improve performance of the state services. How can it be done? These governments in the developing world must realize that that they have to move quickly to overcome the most serious ailments in the delivery of public services. Good governance reforms have to be implemented on a priority basis. Some developing countries have embarked on the path of reform while others are left behind because of various reasons.

Everyone wants his or her country to develop. The issue is what does development really imply? An interesting debate current in social science circles pertains to calculating the real worth of nations taking into consideration new set of standards. A recent thought-provoking report by the World Bank has ranked nations by what is known as “greener” set of standards. Traditional measures such as GDP have been downgraded and new weightage is given to national resources, education, social flexibility, environmental protection, and other assets of a country, which have been undervalued but can be significant instruments of long-term growth. The system has challenged conventional comprehension of development by looking not only at income but a country's wealth also. Today the World Bank is trying to be more environmentally conscious and people-friendly. It recommends that the best way for

a country to develop and grow is to change attitudes towards the subject. Growth must not only be vigorous but sustainable also.

There is clear evidence to suggest that globalization does not benefit everyone. Many developing countries are caught in a debt trap, unable to maintain interest payments, let alone repay debt, public or private. Investment and imports are curtailed, exacerbating the difficulties of growing out of debt. Growth rates fell sharply, with average income per head actually falling on the two continents. Africa is today poorer than at the start of the 1970s. Everywhere, the poor suffered greatly from falling real incomes and rising unemployment. The report of the Commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* argues:¹³

The 'lost decade' of development – for some, actually a 'lost generation' – has roots both in domestic conditions and the international economic environment. Economic policies that are too inward – looking left countries unable to respond to external shocks, and proved unsustainable. Inadequate global economic governance both contributed to the crisis and, perhaps worse, postponed its resolution. Most countries have faced up to the crisis by introducing difficult and often painful structural adjustment programs. Some, but not all, have as a result reversed economic decline. With policies for macro-economic stability and a market-driven recovery, a number of middle-income countries are experiencing a revival in economic strength. The crisis, especially in terms of human development, are still far from over, but most countries have a better sense of what could lead to sustainable economic development.

What is extremely disturbing is the fact of persistent poverty in a world of increasing affluence. How do you justify this situation? The report of the commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* argues:¹⁴

¹³ See Commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* available on the Internet.

¹⁴ See Commission on Global Governance entitled *Our Global Neighborhood* available on the Internet.

The dazzling performance of several developing countries in Asia has tended to blur a less admirable aspect of the economic changes of the post-war world: the relentless growth in the number of the very poor. Though the global economy has expanded fivefold in the last four decades, it has not rooted out dire poverty or even reduced its prevalence. Even some otherwise successful countries have not managed to eliminate poverty.

The entrenchment of poverty is borne out by the fact that the number of people falling in the World Bank's category 'the absolute poor' has climbed to 1.3 billion in 1993. This level of poverty spells acute destitution; it is life at the edge of existence. For the absolute poor, for example, a nearby source of safe drinking water is a luxury; in several countries – Bhutan, Ethiopia, Laos, Mali, and Nigeria – less than half the population has even this. Geographical, gender, and age distributions of poverty also deserve attention. By the late 1980s, the chronically undernourished in Asia has fallen to 19 percent of the population, half the level of two decades earlier. But the same twenty years saw little change in Africa, where undernourishment continued to afflict about a third of a rapidly growing population. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia stand out as the poorest regions in the world today. In all, about 800 million people do not have sufficient and regular supplies of food.

Not everyone has benefited from globalization trend. Some are clearly worse off than before. Cook says:

Globalization would widen inequality, exacerbate poverty and increasingly lead to social 'exclusion'. These costs would mound even as globalization succeeds in its own terms, at a time when government's capacity to respond is draining away. Its failure to act would undermine the foundation of the democratic states, challenging its very legitimacy.¹⁵

¹⁵ Clive Crook.

Furthermore, globalization has been very selective in offering its benefits. While foreign capital flows to the Third World has increased substantially, only a small set of countries has been recipients, and these are all middle-income countries except for China. Globalization's beneficial effects on trade have also bypassed many developing countries, whose trade as a proportion of their GDP has indeed shrunk... Higher growth is necessary in poor countries and as many as 1.6 billion people are poorer than they are 15 years earlier, and people in 19 countries poorer than 35 years earlier... But if raising total world consumption means running down the world's ecological capital, the poor can have a large slice of the pie only if the rich accept a different share out and adjust to a smaller share for themselves ... The present crisis of the world economy strengthens the case for a representative world forum to address such issues as the adverse effects of globalization, and renews the call made by the commission on Global Governance for an Economic Security Council. Such a Council would not be able to offer quick remedies but "would ensure not only that important economic issues and trends, including those associated with globalization, received attention but also that they are considered not just from the perspective of rich countries but by a representative body that can bring all perspectives to bear and respond to the widest global interest."

A painful finding of the *World Bank Development Report 1999-2000: Entering the New Millennium* is that the number of people living below the poverty line will continue to rise, reaching 1.5 billion by the start of the next century. It is indeed tragic that poverty persists despite a half century of sustained development efforts. The lesson learnt from the past practice, according to the World Bank, is that "a comprehensive approach is needed and sustained development must be socially inclusive".¹⁶

The gap between the rich and poor has reached "grotesque proportions" says that UNDP Development Report 1999.¹⁷ In

¹⁶ The News, Sept. 21, 1999.

¹⁷ Financial Post, September 21, 1999.

1960, the countries with the wealthiest fifth of the world's people had per capita income 30 times that of the poorest fifth. By 1990, the ratio had doubled to 60 to 1, and by 1995 it stood at 74 to 1. Globalization has taken a merciless price in the developing countries. According to the UNDP Report, in developing countries nearly 1.3 billion people do not have access to clean water, one in seven children of primary school age is out of school, 840 million people are malnourished, and an estimated 1.3 billion people live on income of less than \$1 a day.¹⁸

More than 80 countries still have per capita incomes lower than they were a decade or more ago. And some of the countries that are worst off are those that are most integrated into the global economy. Within nations, the income gap has been growing as well. One major source for the growing inequality and the global suffering is the spread off the markets.¹⁹ Clearly something is wrong here!

ISLAMIC NOTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT – THE PARADIGM SHIFT

It is required that the world undergoes an urgent paradigm shift towards the Islamic notion of development. Islam calls for a world order beneficial to all not just a few. The future must be good to each and every one of us. We have the capability and we can do it, provided we make the resolve. There is no better than this to turn things around. Islam is the future. The cardinal values of Islam most relevant to our age are its emphasis on peace, equality, community, social justice, tolerance, fairness and service to humanity. Social justice would imply equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities to all and the removal of global scourge of poverty. Today, in a world of plenty poverty is morally wrong and completely unjustifiable.

The Islamic notion of development benefits from all that is good and useful in human achievement. The strategy calls for

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

simultaneous growth and distribution. The Quran assigns a high priority to a fair and equitable distribution of a community's income and wealth. The Islamic State is to raise the poor and the needy to a reasonable standard of living and a wide sharing of material benefits of life. Islam calls for moderation in all what we do, including consumption. Therefore, wasteful consumerism (*al-israf*) has been regarded as a satanic activity. Since, complete sovereignty over the world belongs to Allah alone; therefore, the interest of the community surpasses that of the individual. Islam calls for tolerance and peace between nations. The root word of the Arabic word Islam is "Salam" meaning peace. God abhors killing and commands Muslims to seek peace everywhere.

God is the Sustainer of the Universe and orders the rich to be kind to the poor all and share with them from what he has gifted them. Thus there is a strident call to take care of the needy and the weak. The Quran is emphatic about it. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: ¹⁰

He who endeavors to mitigate the needs of the poor, the desolate, is one who endeavors in the service of God, is one who stands up to pray all night, and does not relax and rest (while in prayer), and who fasts and does not break it.

At another time, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that:¹¹ "God is kind, and loves kindness". He often commanded his companions to feed the hungry and visit the sick. He himself set the example that was lovingly followed by the early rulers of Islam. Later on, the Islamic caliphate throughout the centuries established "poor houses" and shelters for the needy in the tradition. Although it was a state responsibility now forsaken, but even today the community fulfills the responsibility of feeding the hungry in the Muslim world. This is in the grand tradition of Islam.

¹⁰ Reported in *Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

¹¹ Reported in *Muslim*.

The most crucial goals of an Islamic state are:

1. Security of the person and his or her property.
2. Eradicating of poverty by mandatory giving to the poor and needy.
3. Attaining social justice, in the sense of a wider meaning that includes equality both social and economic.
4. Limits on conspicuous consumption. It is here that Islam departs from capitalist consumption.
5. Distinction between permissible (halal) and forbidden (haram). For example, gambling, intoxicants, what goes by the name of "rock", "metal", "hard" music or any drugs of any kind, prostitution, pornography, etc.
6. Banning extravagance and compelling a moderate standard of living or lifestyle.
7. Building the sense of community, as espoused in the ideal of the Ummah-i-Islam.
8. Justice for all.
9. The rule of law.
10. Fair display and honesty.
11. State guarantee that economic disparity between various classes of society must not grow. The methodology to ensure this is that of the Baitul mal, sadaqa, khairat, ushr, other charity and alms.

These values of Islam are by no means exclusive. Some other religions, even some secular thinkers have long espoused them. Today, James Wolfensohn, President World Bank, was echoing the Islamic desire of social justice when he said in the *World Bank Development Report 1999-2000: Entering the New Millennium that*: "What matters most is, moving beyond traditional concepts of economic growth, to putting people first – their health, welfare, education, opportunity and inclusion – to the heart of the agenda of the 21st century".¹²

¹² *The News*, Sep. 21, 1999.

It is Islamically reprehensible and intolerable that we have poverty admits plenty in the world today. This is against the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphs who created just and equitable societies where poverty was banished by state interventions. History is witness to the glory of the early period of Islam. The values still beckon Muslims worldwide.

The gap between the rich and poor within nations and between them must be narrowed. Islam requires the establishment of an egalitarian society and moderation in the use of wealth. It is Islamically required; that the world pays more emphasis on human development is the need of the hour. The governments should increase resources for social sector development. Islamic scholars feel that a fundamental change of direction is needed. The social sector is to be emphasized along with that of national security. Hunger, poor health and illiteracy posed an internal threat to the security of all nations. People matter over everything else. Islam would require a shift towards a philosophy of humane development. Political participation by segments of society previously excluded is a central element of democratization. Development is increasingly seen as having a wider definition – more than simply the transition from poor to rich. According to Islam, development also meant human dignity, safety, and justice of equality. The elimination of existing strong inequalities within the society is central to successful development processes starting. Equality is the value, which is considered as very important to successful modernization. Equality then is not meant equality in poverty, but above all equality of opportunity.

Since the developing world – for the most part – has been left behind in the field of sustainable humane development, therefore, a firm resolve be made to rectify past failures and turn things around for the better. For this to happen a new global agenda has to be pursued. From the Islamic point of view this is an imperative.

Islam and the Global Agenda for Governance

The Islamic paradigm would call for the following actions:

1. International efforts to eliminate corruption and reinforce concepts of accountability and transparency, especially in the third world.
2. International agencies, especially the UN, to help developing countries to deal with thorny problems of governance and corruption. Outside help and commitment is needed to make a real difference. Give the situation in many developing countries where powerful vested interests are firmly entrenched, the fight against corruption needs to go global. Without massive outside assistance, little actual difference can be made. That is the grim reality. Such is the tragic state of affairs in most developing countries.
3. External cooperating agencies (UN, and others) need to compile and disseminate information on good practices in improving governance and combating corruption. Often governments do not know how to actually go about their plans in the area. They do not know how to plan, execute or even sequence actions or interventions that may make a crucial difference in the crusade.
4. The UN should undertake a monitoring role of the whole process. It should encourage and develop further existing initiatives, especially by the UNDP and World Bank.

The Islamic world must learn to stand on its own two feet. With assistance from the UN and other agencies that is indeed possible. The inertia must be broken. It is a requirement of Islam that Muslims first get their act together and then seek outside help. After all, God only helps those who help themselves. This generation of Muslims owes it to their children to do their best. They have to make their contribution in bettering the world. Hard

work and striving to make this world a better, more secure and peaceful world is incumbent upon the Muslims. They have to create the knowledge base that will realize their collective dreams. For this they have to emphasis education and research. The Muslim world has been left behind already. There is no more time to waste.

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