

O you who believe, respond to the call of Allah and His Messenger when He calls you to that which would give you life...

# Khilafah

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## TIME FOR REAL CHANGE

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## **MUBARAK FALLS AS THE DEMAND FOR ISLAM GROWS**

Amidst the massive celebrations marking the fall of a 30 year tyrant and dictator competing media outlets have been championing western liberal solutions and posing the question of where the underlying sentiments of the Egyptian people lie.

Headlines hailed the multi-million people demonstrations and “unified calls for democracy” and constitutional reform. Unsurprisingly western commentators have been loath to recognize the part Islam has to play in the hearts and minds of the demonstrators, but the western politicians and academics certainly are aware.

In survey and poll after poll, managed by Pew and US universities the demand for Islam is clear and growing. In the February 2009 Pew survey of the Muslim world, 70% of Egyptians support the establishment of a Caliphate throughout the Muslim world, and 81% support strict application of Sharia law. Those hailing the recent drive for change on the basis of secularism will be very disappointed that the most recent survey of the Egyptian people (in Dec 2010) felt that it was Good for Islam to play a large role in Politics (with only 2% feeling it bad).

## **CAMERON OPENLY ATTACKS POLITICAL ISLAM**

David Cameron chose a Munich conference of global leaders on the 5th of Feb to launch an attack on multiculturalism, the bedrock of UK interfaith and cultural tolerance. By linking beliefs and values which contradict with secular liberal values to “extremism”, violence and Islam - Cameron effectively is attempting to redefine Islam and isolate anyone daring to suggest that Islamic political thoughts can have validity. In other

statements the government has defined “extremism” to include desire to re-establish the Caliphate in the Muslim world, and calling for the defense against invasion of Muslim lands. Vikram Dodd in the Guardian highlighted the hypocrisy of ignoring the effect of illegal wars via an aggressive foreign policy in motivating violence. Cameron also appears to be setting up the Muslim community for continued attacks from the far right with greater publicity showered on an overtly anti-Islam march by the EDL on the same day as his speech.

The leader of France’s National Front Marine Le Pen praised David Cameron for what she says is an endorsement of her party’s far-right views on multiculturalism and immigration.

“It is exactly this type of statement that has barred us from public life [in France] for 30 years,” she told the Financial Times. “I sense an evolution at European level, even in classic governments. I can only congratulate him.” The future looks bleak under Cameron’s new “Muscular liberalism”.



## **LEAKS REVEAL DEEPER PALESTINIAN-ISRAEL SECURITY TIES**

Leaked documents published in January show extensive collaboration between Palestinian security forces and their Israeli counterparts, a relationship Israeli commanders say has been key to security gains in the West Bank. Among the most explosive revelations were minutes of a 2005 meeting in which Palestinian officials appear to be plotting with Israeli officials to assassinate a Palestinian accused of militancy in Gaza. The leaks aggravated unease in the Palestinian territories, following revelations showing the Palestinian leadership offering extensive compromises to Israel in peace talks. Qatar-based al-Jazeera satellite

channel released what they say are internal Palestinian negotiating-team papers dating from 1999 to 2010. Earlier leaks showed Palestinian negotiators offering concessions to Israel in private that went beyond the Palestinian leadership’s public expressions of defiance. The leaks brought a public outcry that forced Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to issue a public defense of his administration’s leadership of peace talks. Palestinian forces were deployed outside al-Jazeera’s office in Ramallah.



## **WIKILEAKS: EGYPTIAN ‘TORTURERS’ TRAINED BY FBI**

The US provided officers from the Egyptian secret police with training at the FBI, despite allegations that they routinely tortured detainees and suppressed political opposition. According to leaked diplomatic cables, the head of the Egyptian state security and investigative service (SSIS) thanked the US for “training opportunities” at the FBI academy in Quantico, Virginia. The SSIS was repeatedly accused of using violence and brutality to help prop up the regime of President Hosni Mubarak. In April, 2009, the US ambassador in Cairo stated that “Egypt’s police and domestic security services continue to be dogged by persistent, credible allegations of abuse of detainees.”

Omar Suleiman, head of security for Mubarak, and current public face of the post Mubarak military regime was instrumental in the agreement between Egypt and the US over “extraordinary rendition” enabling foreign torture of suspects outside of US jurisdiction. American calls for stability, democracy and human rights in the region look rather hollow against its very checkered history of support for tyranny over the past 40 years. The decline in acceptance of western solutions in the Muslim world mirrors the quickening decline of the US’s client regimes.



# Editorial

## A WIND OF CHANGE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

The recent events we have witnessed in the Middle East have been historic in nature, staggering in their speed and monumental in their consequences.

What began in the streets of Tunisia has spread to Egypt with effects now being seen as far wide as Algeria, Yemen, Jordan and Syria.

Political change has been seen from the dawn of time and has been the Sunnah of the Anbiyah. Ibrahim (as), in breaking the idols in the temple, was seeking a political change. Musa (as) in challenging Fir'awn in his own court was seeking political change. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (saw) having received the divine Message did not confine it to himself. In challenging first the Makkans, then the Byzantine and the Persian Empires, he was engaged in political change that would transform the world.

But even from what we see from recent history, political change can happen unexpectedly. Great Britain, the superpower of the nineteenth century became bankrupt by the middle of the twentieth century. We observed the

apartheid in South Africa fall quickly and Mandela rose from political prisoner to become head of state. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 heralded revolutions in Eastern Europe and confined the Soviet Union to the dustbin of history.

Until recently, many told us that political change was impossible in the Muslim world: that the regimes were too strong, that public opinion was too weak, and the west too powerful and that the army could not be turned.

To those critics, sceptics and naysayers: Mubarak and Ben Ali are your answer. What we observed in Egypt and Tunisia has not been a victory for secularism, but a celebration of people's desire for change.

In both Tunisia and Egypt, the regimes have not proven to be strong but weak. In Tunisia the arrest of Mohamed Bouazizi (the trigger for the uprising) in December 2010 led to President Ben Ali's downfall by January 2011 and President Mubarak's by February 2011

Popular opinion - motivated by decades of oppression, poverty and bankrupt foreign policy have used the modern tools of communication to bypass the regime's clumsy attempts to censor accountability. Far from being weak, public opinion has been vociferous, ferocious and relentless - just ask Ben Ali and Mubarak. Far from the west being powerful, governments in Washington, London and Paris have been scrambling to catch up. Having spent decades supporting these dictators, they have no 'Plan B'. Exhausted by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the west has lost its aura of power; after the excesses of the War on Terror it has lost its moral leadership and after the greatest financial crisis since the 1930's it has lost its legitimacy to lead.

Lastly and most importantly the army has shown it is not prepared to always support the regimes, a game changer when it comes to political change.

Contrary to what many western commentators believe, there is a very stale appetite for western secular solutions in the Muslim world. Surveys of the Muslim world consistently show strong levels of support for the establishment of a unified Caliphate and the implementation of an Islamic system. After Egypt and Tunisia, the domino effect is therefore on, and change in the Middle East will have geo-strategic implications that will not only impact the region but the entire world.

But we must realise for real change to happen in the Muslim world, it cannot involve just a change of personnel; it must involve a change of system. Real change involves replacing the political, economic and social systems from the bottom up with proven solutions emanating from the Islamic creed and not implementing some half baked cosmetic reforms originating from the west.

Political change is indeed difficult. However, staying silent over oppression is not so straightforward either.

Political change in the Muslim world cannot be to achieve glory, or to anger the west. It must be because our Creator has commanded us to implement a just system, the Khilafah - where the weak are strong, the leaders accountable and prosperity is enjoyed by all. The Khilafah is not concerned about the few who are rich but the many that are poor; not only concerned about maintaining the rights of women but also fixing the wrongs of men. It is not an extremist ideology and it is not ideology dominated by pure materialism.

Today the dictators in the Muslim world and their western backers are on the wrong side of history. Their time of reckoning is near, their position is weak and the winds of political change are blowing hard. The regimes are out of time, they are out of date and Insha'Allah very soon they will be out of power.

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# The Aftermath of Revolution in Egypt



*"And mix not the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know the truth." [Al-Baqarah 2:42]*

The 'Winter Revolution' in Egypt leading to the humiliating descent of President Hosni Mubarak after 18 days, has sent shock waves amongst the rulers in the Arab world and amongst the principal backers of these regimes, America and Britain. People were unified upon removing Mubarak and wanting a change of system. But the

unanswered questions in the background - is how and what rule, do the people of Egypt want? There is 'official' talk of a transition of power to the army council, small amendments to the secular - 'Gamalist' constitution, and transition to democratic elections to put in place a civilian government that will be accountable to the people and help return Egypt back to 'normality'. This is simplistic talk from a regime that ultimately tried very hard to secure itself and yet there are some very

important points and lessons to take from these momentous events.

Firstly, what could not be clearer is that the power brokers in Egypt were the army. The mass protestors, fully aware of this, were wary not to criticize the army. Any real change requires changing the minds of these power brokers. Currently, the army leadership have openly said they favour the existing constitution, which means whatever other changes they make, the change of



system people called for is something not on the table.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that a revolution does not always result in independence or liberation. Middle East history is littered with examples of this. Egypt from the time of its independence from Britain is testimony to that. All too often the euphoria over the demise of a tyrant like Mubarak seems premature when people realise they are no more liberated than they were prior to the uprising.

In 1906 a dispute occurred between British military officers and locals in Egypt, known as the Denshawai Incident. Many neutral Egyptians joined the nationalist movement on the back of this, which linked to other incidents resulted in the 1919 revolution and eventually Egypt's independence from Britain in Feb 1922. But the resulting constitution introduced in 1923 based on the parliamentary system meant Egypt continued to suffer instability due to increasing British political involvement and interference. The 'second' revolution by the Free Officers in 1952 merely led to British influence being replaced by American influence, which has remained since then.

America and Britain, like vultures, are monitoring and seeking to direct the political events to maintain influence and control, whilst the Egyptian army seeking to maintain its control, lacks the anchor of Islam to keep it from straying into their shark-infested waters.

True independence arises when the system, institutions and rules are established upon the beliefs and values of its people; and the people of power primarily protect the society and state institutions based on these beliefs, repelling any foreign influence in the process. This is currently lacking in Egypt and therefore makes it an easy target for continued dependency under the guise of 'independence and democracy'.

Thirdly, comparisons with the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine (2004/05) have



been made. However, political corruption remained in Ukraine and did not wither under their new democracy. Hardly surprising when western governments, which are the ideological homelands of democracy have systemic political corruption at their heart; and regularly show they will compromise their core secular values for the sake of naked political interest. Many people in the west have lost confidence in the democratic political class and low voter turnout is now endemic. Even countries in the Muslim world that have embraced or have been forced to embrace democracy have not solved political corruption or the lack of direct accountability.

Fourthly, no democratic politician has said how democracy will resolve the social and economic issues that Egypt faces daily, caused by its blind embracement of the capitalist financial system and adoption of secular values. Western nations have growing social, moral and economic issues. Racism, religious intolerance and mockery, spiralling crime, individualism, materialism, social breakdown of the family unit and growing immorality have become hallmarks of western societies. Moreover, the financial crisis originating in the west is part of the cause of rising prices in Egypt and elsewhere.

The people of Egypt, indeed the entire Muslim world, need to go further than removing the dictator – a great and welcome achievement though that is. We need an entire system that is built upon the core beliefs of its people. This is Islam and the Islamic political system i.e. the Khilafah. It is only under the Khilafah, that the people of Egypt will be liberated and independent. Under the Khilafah, it is the people, who have the authority to appoint the leader and hold him and state institutions politically accountable. Likewise, under the Khilafah, the society will achieve social, economic and moral prosperity for its entire people, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Islamic political history is testament to this.

“You are the best nation brought unto mankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and believe in Allah.” [Al-Imran: 110]

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# The Sudan Referendum



The January 9th referendum on secession in southern Sudan was monumental in nature and devastating in its consequences. It sets a dangerous precedent and constitutes a fundamental breach in the status quo. This was for a number of reasons:

1. First the Muslim world requires more unity, not more secession. Divided over fifty states has led it to become weak, ineffective and powerless. Notwithstanding the clear Islamic texts on the criticality of political unity,

dividing Sudan into two weaker states makes no geopolitical sense in a growing dependent world. Sudan was part of Egypt once upon a time, now it will divide further and what's stopping future divisions occurring either in the north or in the south in what was Africa's largest country. Sudan is one of the largest countries in the world with the vast Nile river water basin, large oil and mineral reserves, luxuriant soils and enormous wild game herds. The south of Sudan is hardly homogenous and most of the civilians that have died over the

last two decades were as a result of fighting between warring southern tribes. In today's world, scale is critical which is why countries like China, Brazil and India have such huge potential, and what Sudan has become with secession is sub scale. While states today should be breaking down walls between them, secession just builds them up higher and higher. It makes no strategic sense to divide the country which as we know in places like India, Palestine, Cyprus and Ireland will only encourage future instability and wars further down the road.

2. Secondly the hypocrisy of the international community is breathtaking. Barack Obama who is an admirer of Abraham Lincoln cannot have failed to see the irony of a President he admires who took his nation to war to prevent his country from splitting into two. Yet today he and others supports another country's secession and calls it an historic step. If secession is so historic for Sudan, why did Lincoln fight a civil war at such cost in lives and treasure to maintain the United States of America? If secession in Sudan is so historic, why won't the United Kingdom allow it for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland? Why won't Spain allow it for the Basque





region or Canada for Quebec or India for Kashmir? Why is it in the Muslim world that people are encouraged to secede whether it is Bangladesh, East Timor or now southern Sudan, yet for East and West Germany political unity was good and eventual Korean unity is still considered a laudable political goal?

3. Independence for the south of Sudan is a charade. Many of the issues that

4. Supporting unity for Sudan does not mean acknowledging that people, whether they be in the south, or in Darfur or even outside the privileged class in the north, have not been oppressed. They have been oppressed, successive governments have let the whole of the people of Sudan down and terrible atrocities have taken place against Muslims and Christians. However the solution to this is not secession, as

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need to be addressed have not been resolved; such as how would the oil revenues be shared, or what happens to Sudan's \$35 billion debt or the future of oil rich Abyei. Outside the capital city Juba there is no development and if people believe that independence will give the southern rural areas much benefit, they will be hugely disappointed. 80% of services in the south (health, education, water and sanitation) are provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A state that cannot meet its people's basic needs isn't a viable one. A state that is dependent on foreign aid and organisations to function isn't a sovereign country. A state that has oil in its jurisdiction but which relies exclusively on northern pipelines, refineries and ports is hardly credible.

today's freedom fighter will simply become tomorrow's oppressor. The solution is not a new state in Juba but a change in governance and leadership for the whole country. A sincere leadership who can implement a system that will manage people's affairs justly regardless of their creed, tribe or colour. The south has not been oppressed because of too much Islamic law, but too little. The history of Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans have largely demonstrated with some aberrations that when Islamic rule was implemented properly, non Muslims were treated humanely as citizens and their rights were always protected.

What Sudan shows us is that there is no letup in the west's ongoing crusade against the Muslim world and propaganda against the return of the Islamic system. Not content with occupations in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, they continue to treat the Muslim world as their privately-owned chessboard. Egged on by the international community with reports of over 500 cheering news organisations being in the future capital of south Sudan Juba, it is clear that the west continues to promote division and fragmentation in the Muslim world. Whether it be in Sudan, in Palestine, in Iraq or Afghanistan it is clear that many would like further fragmentation and division. In Iraq the current US Vice President is on record in calling for the country to be divided into three. In Afghanistan the former US Ambassador to India amongst others is calling for division of the country. In Palestine the west continues to support Israeli occupation of Muslim land. Ever since the infamous Sykes-Picot agreement where Britain and France sought to dismember the Ottoman state, the major powers have sought to continue with their policy of divide and rule in the Muslim world. Sudan is just the latest litany of this corrosive foreign policy.

# THE AMANAH OF LANGUAGE IN THE POLITICS OF MUSLIMS

The use of language has played a pivotal role in the popular uprising in Egypt. Islamic groups and secular parties, western governments and their media outlets have all played a part. Unlike Wikileaks, the US government's statements about the sensitive future of Egypt and the growing number of politically unstable Muslim countries have become more like coded instructions.

It has become obvious to all what President Obama's call for an 'orderly transition' has meant to the ongoing revision of US policy in the region. The US government is utilising every available moment to build a credible opposition party that will win any future elections and maintain the kind of 'stability' and serving of her interests they have enjoyed for the last 30 years of Mubarak's rule.

The media have helped 'oil the wheels' by broadcasting or at least throwing a disproportionate amount of limelight on the demonstrators' slogans calling for a 'secular, democratic government'. However, in reality the vast majority of protesters clearly showed Islamic sentiments and called for both the removal Mubarak and a change of system. Even secular liberal political commentators have warned that the call for 'democracy and freedom' does not necessarily connote the meaning most western governments would accept.

After years of establishing cordial relationships with these tyrannical regimes across the Middle East, to expect western governments and their media institutions to behave any differently would indeed be naive. Most are absorbed on creating a narrative for the reasons for the uprising and the political will of the people by reporting 'the facts' through their secular liberal lenses. For example, there have been many articles claiming that this was a 'secular' revolution in Egypt, because people were suffering due to 'the price of bread'. Only someone so blinded by their secular predisposition would overlook the fact that the price of bread is linked to the states economic policy i.e. the secular ruling regime, has only to do with the alternatives within the secular-capitalist model. This is at the expense of ignoring the people calling to remove Mubarak and his system with chants of 'Laa ilaha ilallah' and 'Allahu Akbar'.

It is not difficult for Muslims to see the link between ousting Mubarak and his regime -dependant on the US for US\$ 1.5 billion in foreign aid per year and lets its people go hungry - and replacing this decrepit regime with a government that follows Islamic rules of feeding, clothing and sheltering its citizens whilst not allowing itself to be dominated by external powers. Otherwise, it would make no sense that parties in Egypt base their 'trustworthiness' and 'morality' on

their Islamic credentials and not 'humanist values'. Religion has a large part to play in politics even if the western media try to twist the facts to their liking.

A similar 'treatment' has been given to reports that the Muslims in Egypt are calling for 'freedom'. If freedom means the removal of western backed dictators, that the authority to elect its leader is with the Ummah, and that sovereignty is to the law of Allah (swt), then we will not find a single Western government or their media outlets offering a warm embrace to this definition. Whatever is meant by the chants for 'freedom' it can be said for sure that it definitely means freedom from Mubarak's despotic rule and any other western backed leader, and a government free from western influence and control.

However, what is interesting is that the general feelings and thoughts of the people themselves and how this is reflected in their chants, slogans and banners and their behaviour towards the army and the security forces. Recent surveys indicate that Muslims want to change their current government to a more 'Islamic government'. Research conducted by the University of Maryland (WorldPublicOpinion.org) shows that 74% of the Egyptian people wanted a 'strict' Shari'ah law applied per their 2006 survey. Furthermore according to Pew Research Center's 'Global Attitudes Project' survey conducted in 2010 have presented similar results of 95% of the Egyptian people saying that it would be good if Islam played a large role in politics, indicating that public opinion has hardly changed leading up to the Egyptian uprising and contrary to western assertions.

However, the message the active political parties are giving to the people and to western governments are of particular interest as these different groups who are calling for the removal of Mubarak are offering to replace it with what they call 'Islamic Democracy' or 'Shura' and 'freedom'. It seems there is a clear need for Muslim groups in Egypt to outline exactly what the Islamic



system has to offer and how it would work and how it differs from the democracy and freedom the west have to offer. Sadly on this point, for some movements, the Daw'ah to Islam has become disjointed away from the question of how Muslims should liberate themselves from their western backed dictators, and what system of law to replace them with.

This has caused a grave misunderstanding in relation to whether the people want the democratic system that produces the likes of Mubarak or whether Islam has an alternative ruling system altogether. The responsibility for clarifying these matters and for spreading the clear message of Islam is the Amanah of the Islamic groups. It is important to note that the language used by these Muslim groups will have an effect on how people think and how a party will rule and brings into question whether the aims are even Islamic at all. It is clear that a democratic system, which gives rise to many parties who believe essentially in the same things,

calling for sovereignty for Allah (swt) or sovereignty with the people? These are important questions to ask as we are obligated by Allah (swt) to speak the truth with clarity and therefore we must use terms that are not alien to Islam. The point here is that even if certain terms are used with good intent, Allah (swt) has warned us not to say one thing and mean another. Allah (swt) has warned us that even if a term carries a positive meaning, if that term carries another meaning that is contrary to Islam, it is better not to use it. Allah (swt) commands: *"O you who believe! Say not (to the Messenger) Ra'ina but say Unzurna (make us understand) and bear. And for the disbelievers there is a painful torment). Neither those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) nor Al-Mushrikeen (the idolaters) like that there should be sent down unto you any good from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His mercy whom He wills. And Allah is the Owner of great bounty)"* [TMQ Surah Baqarah: 104-105]

Today, we have a situation where some Islamic groups and secular political parties alike call for social justice, human rights, 'being in accordance with UN resolutions' and 'democracy is Shura' instead of choosing more clearer words that express a meaning that is in agreement with Islam.

will obstruct this Ummah from realising its true Islamic political system (the Khilafah). The reality of democracy is not just a process of electing, it is a system found on principles that are a total anathema to the principles of the Khilafah system is built upon at its peak, where sovereignty is to man and not to Allah (swt).

Our Messenger of Allah said: **"The best struggle (Jihad) is the word of Justice in front of the oppressive Ruler"** [Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah]

In contrast to this Hadith, what was the language used to speak to Mubarak's government and his vice president, to the western governments and to the Egyptian people? Are they calling for implementation of Shari'ah, an Imam or Khaleefah as the head of state? Are they

According to the famous Mufassir Ibn Kathir and many other commentators, Allah (swt) commanded the believers to avoid the word Ra'ina when addressing their ruler and the Messenger of Allah (saw) because though it meant 'take care of us' or could be said in a way that could mean 'our shepherd', in a slight change of dialect or pronunciation it could also mean 'you impulsive fool' or 'a proud ignorant person' or other insults in the Hebrew language.

The people of Bani Israil in Madinah used to call out to the Messenger of Allah (saw) 'ya Muhammad Ra'ina' to insult him (saw), so Allah (swt) commanded the believers to abandon that word and use 'Unzurna' which means 'make us understand' instead. The



purpose of this was for the sake of clarity and to avoid ambiguity or giving the slightest chance to misinterpreting what was said. If Allah (swt) is warning the 'believers' that they should not even use a good word (Ra'ina) at the slightest risk of conveying the wrong message, then there is no doubt that all Muslim groups must take note of this as their statements shape the thoughts of this Ummah. Changing the thoughts of the Ummah is the role of the group and is the means to bring about change. Today, we have a situation where some Islamic groups and secular political parties alike call for social justice, human rights, 'being in accordance with UN resolutions' and 'democracy is Shura' instead of choosing more clearer words that express a meaning that is in agreement with Islam. The belief that terms like democracy and freedom carry an embedded meaning within them is in total contradiction to integral aspects of the Islamic Aqeedah. Allah (swt) is sovereign, the ruler of the Heavens and the Earth and He (swt) has commanded us to implement the book of Truth which is al-Qur'an. *"And who is better than Allah in judgement for a people who have certainty?"* [TMQ Surah Ma'idah: 50]

# World Food Hunger Disaster Beckons as Global Economic Crisis Deepens



Across the world, food prices have rocketed over the past few months, with the UN reporting they had surpassed the rises seen during the food crisis of 2008.

The issue came into sharper focus with the uprising in Tunisia, but also unrest in Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and Libya to name but a few, with even the much touted high growth economies of China and India being forced to introduce food subsidies.

The world economy is already at such a difficult juncture and now people are being forced to pay a lot more for their food, adding to the political fall out. The impact on poorer countries can be seen if we look at the price of staple crops, such as wheat, corn and sugar - which have

nearly doubled since July 2010. The price of meat has also increased, largely because corn is used in the feed for rearing farm animals.

*All of this leads to the obvious question of why?*

Some mainstream commentators have attempted to explain away these rises by attributing them to bad wheat harvests in Russia, Canada and Pakistan, due to extreme weather last year. Others still have attempted to give more nuanced arguments by claiming that rising economic prosperity in Asian countries such as China who are consuming more wheat, corn and meat products are causing the surge in food commodity pricing.

When one examines each of these explanations, they do not stand the test of scrutiny. The world has seen countless failed harvests before, yet no price rises like these.

The argument about China's increased consumption has some truth. But China itself is one of the world's biggest agricultural producers. The huge Chinese population, like India's, did not appear overnight, certainly not in six months. So, if the global price of food was affected by China and others you would expect to see a steady and consistent rise in the price of food over several years to reflect this growing demand, not dramatic double digit percentage increases month after month over the last six months.

Moreover, after the 2007-2008 food crisis the price of wheat, corn and other commodities suddenly fell after previous rapid rises over several months.

*So what is going on?*

## **1. THE FOOD COMMODITIES MARKET**

The unpleasant truth which actually explains these price rises now and back in 2007/08 is linked to the implosion of the financial system that has overwhelmed the major Western economies. This together with the nature of the capitalist system that regulates trading in commodities such as corn and wheat that can be traded as futures contracts on the derivatives markets is central to this hyperinflation in food prices.

Another key issue is that only a few big



food commodities traders are active in the big financial markets. The American company Cargill, the world's biggest food commodity trader, enjoys huge control in food commodities trading; Cargill's profits have tripled year on year in the second quarter of their current fiscal year. It would be easy for such commodities traders to hoard their stocks, causing the price of commodities to rise. This is why South Korea has recently announced that it will form its own commodities trading house in order to cut costs.

The Financial Times in London reported in January 2011 that "South Korean government-backed think-tanks last year grumbled that Seoul was being forced to pay unduly high prices for grains because the market was dominated by big commodity dealers."

**It is ironic that the very (supposed) champions of free trade have actually monopolised the trade of food commodities and artificially helped to force prices up.**

## **2. THE DEVALUATION OF CURRENCY LEADING TO INCREASED PRICES**

Food trading is only part of the picture. To save their financial system from collapse, America, Britain and the Franco/German led Eurozone flooded their bankrupt banks with 'liquidity'. They did this by increasing their borrowing from the financial markets and bearing record budget deficits.

They then resorted to creating money out of nothing, which they deceptively term 'quantitative easing'. Billions and billions of dollars, pounds and euros, have been printed and poured into the Western financial system. America has had two rounds of quantitative easing, with \$1.7 trillion created in the first round in 2009 and \$600 billion in the second, known as QE2 in 2010, with expectations for billions more yet to come.

It is no coincidence that the price increases first occurred in 2007/08 when the American real estate market collapsed, the banks lost billions and then went on to receive bailouts whilst investors scrambled to find new areas to invest in.

## **3. THE FUTURES MARKET**

The inflation of food prices has been compounded by the ability to trade food

commodities such as wheat on the futures markets. This type of contract works with a buyer agreeing to buy a certain amount of wheat in the future from a trader/producer at a price agreed now. This has caused havoc with food commodity prices. This is because contracts such as these can be sold on to other buyers and sellers and leveraged in other deals, whereby the contract itself becomes of value. They are also used as the underlying asset to be traded on the derivatives markets i.e. where both the buyer and seller enter into a contract deliberately acquiring risk, effectively 'betting or hedging' on whether the underlying commodity price will either rise or fall and seeking to reap quick profits by simply buying or selling at the right time within pre-defined conditions, having no intention to take actual delivery

of the commodity itself.

At the height of the original financial collapse in 2008, speculators and investors observed that almost everything in the economy was contracting, due to spending being cut by consumers and business alike, because the credit had dried up. However, these speculators correctly hypothesised that demand for food commodities should still remain fairly consistent; the world maybe entering a financial crisis but people still needed to eat. They began to buy up wheat, corn and other food futures contracts as valuable instruments in anticipation of huge profits.

As more buyers purchased these futures contracts, the prices rose even higher over a short period of a few months. The result is not only are these prices fixed in advance, but fixed at far higher rates than normally would be the case within an ordinary supply and demand relationship. This type of speculative market has acted like a magnet for investors and speculators such as investment banks, who, flush with bailout funds and quantitative easing capital, invested in food commodities, helping to distort its underlying price.

## **4. THE WORLD ECONOMY LINKED TO THE DOLLAR**

What America does with its economy and more importantly to its currency, indeed matters to the rest of the world. Nearly all the major commodities traded on the world markets, including wheat, corn, sugar, oil, gas, and gold, are all denominated in dollars. This is why the dollar today is known as the reserve currency of the world. So when more dollars are created the value of the dollar will fall as the entire stock of dollars is diluted and the price of goods denominated in dollars will inevitably rise. This is why the price of oil and gold has surged, with gold reaching record highs as the dollar erodes in value.

Many countries around the world, particularly in the Muslim world such as Saudi Arabia, UAE and Malaysia, have their currency pegged to or closely tracking the dollar, so they are effectively importing American inflation every time America turns on its printing press.

## **CAPITALISM IS THE CAUSE THAT IS LITERALLY KILLING PEOPLE**

It is clear to see that central to the problems destabilising the world economy are the very mechanisms that form the core part of the capitalist economic system. In this case it is the fiat currency system that provides no real fixed value to the currency used for trading. Secondly by allowing the trading of essential commodities such as wheat and oil on the financial markets as futures and derivatives contracts without even having ownership of the underlying asset is the other major problem.

## **PRINTING MONEY MEANS THIEVING FROM OTHERS IN THE WORLD**

This manipulation of the dollar is nothing less than theft of real wealth from ordinary people; pilfering from the rest of the people, who see the value of the dollars in their pocket fall whilst the American government gets away with paying its debts with nothing but essentially paper.

Such behaviour in trade is explicitly prohibited by Islam. Allah (swt) commands in the magnificent Qur'an: *"Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a balance that is*



straight: that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.” [TMQ Surah Al-Isra:35]

In the Islamic economic system implemented by the Khilafah state the bimetallic gold and silver standard backing would be mandatory for any currency issued by the Islamic state, being fully convertible upon demand. The Shari’ah defines the Islamic currency as gold dinars and silver dirham’s along with their corresponding weights in gold or silver. This would end such blatant injustice with the people.

Ron Paul, congressman and the new chair of the American House’s subcommittee that will oversee the role of the Federal Reserve, was candid enough to admit this, commenting on Ben Bernanke’s role saying “There is something fishy about the head of the world’s most powerful government bureaucracy, one that is involved in a full-time counterfeiting operation to sustain monopolistic financial cartels, and the world’s most powerful central planner, who sets the price of money worldwide, proclaiming the glories of capitalism.”

#### A FAIR TRADE IN COMMODITIES

Islam prohibits price fixing and monopolies on commodities. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “Whoever monopolised is a wrongdoer.” I was narrated by Abu Hurayrah (ra) that, “A man came and said, O Messenger of Allah, fix prices. He (saw) said: “Rather Allah reduces and increases.” [Abu Dawud]

It is ironic that the very (supposed) champions of free trade have actually monopolised the trade of food commodities and artificially helped to force prices up. Their practice of providing subsidies to rich American and European farmers has helped to destroy farmers in poorer developing countries, ones who are then forced to buy from international markets, thus ensuring the world cannot produce food grains to its maximum potential capacity.

Another immense change under an Islamic system in the Khilafah state would be the ending of the trade of commodities without actually owning them. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “**It is not allowed to borrow and sell, nor of two conditions in one sale, nor a profit that is not secured nor the sale of what you do not have.**” [Abu Dawud] and “**Whoever buys foodstuff, he should not sell it until he receives it.**” [Bukhari]

Under Islam owning a commodity or service is required before being allowed to trade with it. This is unlike the Capitalist system where trading has become comparable to a grand casino by allowing the same commodity to be traded many times over under various financial instruments without even leaving the original owner.

#### THE WORLD’S HUNGRY PEOPLE NEED THE ISLAMIC ECONOMY

At a stroke by implementing the Shari’ah rules of Islam, the two biggest causes of the current food crisis would be resolved – currency manipulation and feverish speculation.

Yet the Khilafah state would also have further rules and policies to develop the agricultural sector. The Khilafah state would ensure that the Shari’ah rules pertaining to agriculture were enforced and that a sound agricultural policy was developed and implemented.

For example under Islam any landowner who does not cultivate the land for more than three years would have that land confiscated and given to the poor who would be free to use it.

Also, Islam addresses the issue of

distribution because the noble Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “**The Son of Adam has no better right than that he would have a house wherein he may live, a piece of clothing whereby he may hide his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water**”. [Tirmidhi]

This means the ruler is obliged to guarantee housing, clothing and food for every single citizen of the Islamic state. This would be achieved by ensuring relatives of a person in need paid for the cost of such provision as this becomes an obligation under Islam upon them. Failing that or if a whole community was under a famine, the Khilafah state would be obliged to fulfil these basic needs from the state’s assets.

The American led western capitalist system is bankrupt today; both in terms of its wealth and its morals. They are imposing economic policies on the rest of the world that are literally killing people. Yet America is not alone in such ventures. The pound, the euro, the rouble and the Chinese renminbi are all fiat currencies having no fixed value. In fact there is no currency in the world today that is backed by the gold or silver standard.

Today the world faces a choice; the capitalist financial system can either continue with its devastating shocks and inequality, or the world can look for a new viable alternative in the Khilafah state once again. The Khilafah will revive fairness and put equity back into international trade, giving poorer countries their due right, instead of seeking to undermine, exploit and ultimately defraud them.

Allah (swt) instructs us in the Qur’an: “*But seek the abode of the Hereafter in that which Allah has given you and neglect not your portion of the world, and be kind even as Allah has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo! Allah loves not corrupters.*” [TMQ Surah Al Qasas:77]

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# THE WEST, STATE MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS FAILURE

In February 2011, David Cameron launched an incredible tirade against 30 years of multiculturalism in Britain. He warned that multiculturalism was incubating extremist ideology and directly contributing to home-grown Islamic terrorism. He said,

“We have failed to provide a vision of society [to young Muslims] to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. All this leaves some young Muslims feeling rootless. And the search for something to belong to and believe in can lead them to extremist ideology.”

Cameron is not alone in his rant against multiculturalism and its failure to accommodate Muslims. In October 2010, Angela Merkel the German Chancellor unequivocally declared:

“The approach of saying, ‘Well, let’s just go for a multicultural society, let’s coexist and enjoy each other’, this very approach has failed, absolutely failed”.

Merkel’s remarks came soon after Thilo Sarrazin’s diatribe against multiculturalism. In August 2010, the former executive board member of Germany’s central bank (Deutsche Bundesbank), condemned multiculturalism and claimed Germany’s intelligence was in decline because of Muslim immigrants. Elsewhere in Europe, boisterous voices are reverberating in the corridors of power warning about dangers of multiculturalism. And all too often Muslim adherences to Islamic values in Western societies are cited as demonstrative examples of the failure of multiculturalism.

The rallying cry against the concept of multicultural societies is not limited to

Europe. On September 28th 2010, Australia’s former Prime Minister John Howard said,

“This is a time not to apologise for our particular identity but rather to firmly and respectfully and robustly reassert it. I think one of the errors that some sections of the English-speaking world have made in the last few decades has been to confuse multiracialism and multiculturalism”.

He further added that some sections of society have gone too far in accommodating Muslim minorities. In America, the daily assault on multiculturalism by conservatives and other right wing politicians is polarising American communities and is accentuating tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims. The plan to build a Masjid close to ground-zero is just one manifestation of this struggle. Clearly then, multiculturalism as envisaged by its proponents has failed to deliver what it was supposed to do i.e. protect groups or communities against intolerance and discrimination perpetrated by society or dominant groups within society.

Concepts like multiculturalism and diversity signify that in liberal democracies coexistence can be fostered between different groups without the erosion of their respective identities or cultural norms. However, these concepts although widely employed in the lexicon of modern political philosophy are not new. Rather they are derived from one of the main pillars of Western liberal political thought – pluralism. Like other Western concepts, the origin of pluralism is firmly rooted in the birth of secularism. Back then a number of philosophers were incensed at the manner by which various Christian denominations were forced to assimilate and conform to the standards and virtues



mandated by the Papacy. They endeavoured to safeguard the religious practices of such groups by campaigning for greater tolerance and leniency to be shown to them by the rest of society and other dominant groups. Initially, this meant that such groups were spared physical punishment and financial penalties. However, they were barely tolerated, and were subject to torrents of racial abuse, extreme discrimination and forced exclusion from different facets of society. For instance, they were denied employment, precluded from educational institutions, and suffered from restrictions on travel movements. But as time passed, other thinkers sought to extend the boundaries of pluralism and pressed for weaker groups to be granted greater opportunities to express their religious and



housing, marriage, education, health care, welfare benefits and employment. Tensions frequently surfaced between the indigenous populations and the immigrants, as both competed for limited resources. During this period, several thinkers and a handful of politicians criticised the inability of Western governments to assimilate immigrants. They suggested alternative solutions to preserve social cohesion based on pluralism, and advocated cultural diversity under the guise of integration. In 1966, Roy Jenkins, a British politician, presented a new pluralistic vision for Britain. He said,

“I do not think we need in this country a ‘melting pot’ which will turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone’s misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman... I define integration therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, coupled with cultural

cultural identity in all aspects of societal life, besides the designated areas of worship. In some cases the thinkers managed to convince the state to extend protection against persecution of a group’s

Multiculturalism or pluralism is a whimsical idea that is conceptually flawed and unworkable in practice. This is because pluralism encourages groups to promote their cultural identity irrespective of their political influence or financial strength.

cultural identity and race, and remove impediments to employment previously barred. Hence over the centuries, the concept of pluralism underwent progressive elaboration by Western philosophers and thinkers, as well as selective application by Western States. Despite numerous revisions and reviews, divergent views over pluralism’s meaning, its applicability and value to society still persist. Some advocate that pluralism should be limited to a mere tolerance of a group’s cultural identity and nothing more. Others equate pluralism with the right for diverse groups to freely express and celebrate their cultural identity without fear and restrictions imposed by society or dominant groups.

Towards the middle of the last century, the labour crisis in Europe spurred an influx of immigrants to European shores. Attempts by Europe to absorb people from numerous diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds posed a number of challenges to the cohesiveness of their respective societies – chief amongst them were

diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance”.

This became known as Jenkins formula and was widely employed by policy makers to establish guidelines and laws for multiculturalism. In the next 40 years, pluralism or multiculturalism – as it came to be widely known – was introduced in almost every aspect of life, so much so, that indigenous populations perceived immigrants and other minority groups to enjoy greater benefits than themselves. Subsequently, relations between the host and immigrant communities rapidly deteriorated, many questioned the wisdom behind multiculturalism, and some even went as far as calling for its abolition. Therefore, even before the events of September 11, 2001, multiculturalism, which was coveted as a panacea for social cohesion, was an abject failure.

Multiculturalism or pluralism is a whimsical idea that is conceptually flawed and unworkable in practice. This is because pluralism encourages groups to promote

their cultural identity irrespective of their political influence or financial strength. Naturally the strongest group uses its political prowess and financial muscle to persuade politicians to define legislation, which vigorously defends and endorses their culture and values at the expense of other groups. Additionally, the most powerful group manipulates the media and the educational establishments to actively promote its culture, this leads to wide spread acceptance amongst the indigenous population. In this way, the strongest group’s culture becomes indistinguishable from the state’s culture. Weaker groups find themselves culturally squeezed, discriminated against and in conflict with the state. Such groups are coerced by both the state and society to dilute their cultural identity to fit in. Those groups that refuse to tamper with their cultural identity are ostracised and consigned to live in ghettos. In extreme cases they are expelled from the host nation as happened to the Roma gypsies in France.

Islam does not subscribe to the west’s notion of pluralism where the strongest group decides which culture is legally beyond reproach, and which group’s cultural identity is to be singled out and subject to unfettered criticism. Islam stipulates that life, honour, blood, property, belief, race and the mind are to be protected by the Islamic State. Islam does not distinguish between individuals or groups in such matters. All are treated as the citizens of the Caliphate and are guaranteed these rights, irrespective of their political influence, financial strength or whether they are Muslim or non-Muslims. Islam also protects the rights of non-Muslim groups to retain and assert their cultural identity within limits, and without any fear of retribution or vilification of their identity. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **“One who hurts a dhimmi (non-Muslim citizen of the Caliphate), he hurts me and the one who hurts me hurts Allah”**. Islamic history is unrivalled in its capacity to protect the rights of non-Muslim minorities and immigrants under the shade of the Caliphate.

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# Xenophobia and True National Identity

In October 2005 two teenagers, Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré, were electrocuted and a third, Muhittin Altun, sustained serious shock injuries whilst hiding in a power substation. These youths of a Paris ghetto were being chased by police. They had been wrongfully accused of a break-in. The level of police-brutality, and intimidation in these Parisian suburbs, at that time, was such that they ran from the police. They scaled the walls of the power station where they met their terrible fate. This incident was the spark. The siege atmosphere was the kindling. The combination gave rise to the conflagration of French suburbia in the autumn of that year. Around this period, the then interior minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, announced a crackdown on urban crime. He ordered specially trained police to tackle 25 neighbourhoods across France. Whilst visiting one such area Argenteuil, he described the inhabitants of the ghetto as "racaille"; scum. Many of the inhabitants of Argenteuil considered his terminology to be a deeply offensive attack on immigrant members of French suburban communities.

Many of Sarkozy's critics also saw it this way. However it could be argued that the phrase 'scum' was taken out of context. He was merely referring to the actual criminal minority that were blighting the lives of the generally law abiding citizens. Further it could be argued that he was mis-interpreted.

Racaille could mean rabble; an accurate attribution to such undesirables. It does seem that his language and policies are consistent with a general political philosophy towards those that he considers to be outsiders and foreigners. Years later, this time as President, Nicolas Sarkozy implemented another push for law and order. Similarly this was associated with rioting. Measures were introduced following a weekend of rioting in two cities, Grenoble and Saint-Aignan, in July 2010. The push was to round-up hundreds of Romany (gypsy) immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania and send them back to their home countries. The French government dismantled Romany camps. Sarkozy announced two other policies: the criminalisation of entire families, rather than just individuals, and the stripping of citizenship from immigrants with criminal convictions.

Similar to five years earlier his policy manifested a xenophobic and racist streak. This was clearly directed at Roma, travellers and other immigrants. France does not stand alone in its attack on the Roma. Sarkozy seems to have been taking lessons from Silvio Berlusconi, whose government has increasingly focused on Roma as targets of state violence and xenophobia. Similar things are happening in places ranging from Slovakia to Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. Even within the countries, Romania and Bulgaria, to which France has chosen to send the inhabitants of the cleared



camps, their plight is dire.

A common feature of the two sets of riots was that they were sparked by incidents involving male youths that were perceived as outsiders. The irony is that the individuals involved in the particular incidents (the Romany and second generation immigrants of North African origin) were all full French citizens. The French experience over the last decade raises question; who is French and who is foreign. Citizenship and nationality may have plain and precise legal definitions, but in reality these are nebulous notions. Does nationality begin and end with the possession of a passport or identity card? Do individuals belong to a nation once they have obtained nationality? Do those who are stateless have no identity or belonging? For those second and third generation descendants of migrants to Europe, particularly those that are not white, the answer to this is often clear. The feeling of belonging and national



There is a famous building on Brick Lane in East London; the cockney heartland. It was built by French Huguenots as a Protestant Church by refugees that fled from Catholic oppression to London in the 1740s. Later this became a Jewish synagogue (1897) following the influx of Jews into the area from Eastern Europe. Currently the building is the 'London Jamia Masjid' Mosque frequented largely by Muslims of Bangladeshi origin. So did the Huguenots, Jews and the Muslims ever become classed as cockneys? Did they, or do they ever become genuine cockneys? What is the definition of their

the wrong doings of the past and channel all of the negativity into a desire to build a nation better and stronger centred around equality for all under one banner without discrimination. To many this was not a pipe dream but a realisable modern nation state with no place for bigotry, prejudice and xenophobia. In 2008 riots across the country left scores dead. Tens of thousands were displaced and thousands left the county to neighbouring states that were in themselves in a state of chaos. This was the result of xenophobic attacks. People came from Zimbabwe,

A true community is bound together by the thoughts, ideas and concepts that they commonly possess and the political systems that influence their day-to-day lives.

identity is often just not there. Royal weddings have little meaning to these people. National disappointment at sports events similarly induces little umbrage. And 'successful' invasions of other countries by joint national armies produce no urge to participate in victory parades.

Within the context of the UK, it may be asked who are considered British sons of the soil? There is the famed sector of British society known as the cockneys. Their culture has been discussed and celebrated in art, literature both highbrow and lowbrow on a global scale. So who are the cockneys? Essentially they are the working-class inhabitants of East London. A more precise definition of a cockney is one who is born within earshot of the Bow bells (the bells of St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside). So, what if twins are born on the Bow Road that are not called Ronnie and Reggie, but rather they are called Rashid and Rashad; they are not white but brown skinned, born and raised as Muslims, are they cockneys? Would the white salt-of-the-earth community accept them as the paradigm of cockneyness? Xenophobes would consider them outsiders. At what point in time would they be considered to be cockneys?

status? This highlights the problem of identity being attributed to merely being born on a square mile of soil. Are an individual's character, behaviour thoughts and concepts defined by the road, street or avenue that he or she was born upon?

Modern European states have all had complex relationships with national identity. Whole nations have gone in and out of existence as kingdoms, principalities, dukedoms and republics. Centuries of wars, migration, sanctuary seeking and settlement have characterised the shifting sands of European national identities. It is difficult to analyse the centuries of historical baggage that have influenced modern Europe.

In contrast we may look to South Africa to find a state that, despite its complex and even bloody history, emerged with a clear vision of what it planned to recreate itself as. It was to have a defined starting point based, not on historical baggage, but on truth and reconciliation. The New South Africa was to become a model 'rainbow nation' where all colours of skin and all tongues were equal. The foundation of the state, born of a bloody past, was of soul-searching and deep contemplation of what it meant to be South African. What it meant to learn from history. What it meant to forgive

Malawi, Mozambique and Somalia to the South African Shangri-la to make better lives; having fled from war, oppression and biting poverty. They were met with murder and mindless violence. That was xenophobia in post apartheid South African style. These tensions have never really gone away and were swept aside largely to the euphoria associated with the hosting of the FIFA World Cup.

What is national identity? How can nations get their citizens to buy into their identity? The answer to this is with great difficulty. The notion that people are bound together automatically merely because they share the same piece of land is born of fuzzy logic. Similarly, the idea that members of a family, tribe or race are automatically unified in thought sentiment and deed is fanciful. A true community is bound together by the thoughts, ideas and concepts that they commonly possess and the political systems that influence their day-to-day lives. We are who we are because of the ideas we adopt, hold or develop. Our thoughts and our emotions reflect who we really are, not the place we were born and not to the tribe we were born into. People should be judged on their views and opinions, not on their skin colour or language.

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# RATIONALITY, RELIGION AND ATHEISM



Religious teaching, insofar as it seeks to influence the political sphere, should be subject to rational scrutiny, argues Russell Blackford.

For those of us cultured upon the understanding that all teachings must be subject to rational scrutiny this may not be a ground-breaking thesis. It is nevertheless an argument increasingly made by advocates of a 'new' atheism. Applying scrutiny to the argument itself however reveals that behind the innocent promotion of rationality lie many cobwebs that betray such an advocacy.

All truth-claims, religious or otherwise, should be subject to rational scrutiny. Rationality in its true broad sense and not the narrow self-serving sense all too common found in atheist circles.

The Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc, for example, defines atheism as:

“the acceptance that there is no credible scientific or factually reliable evidence for the existence of a god, gods or the supernatural.”

This definition makes the conflation, intentionally or ignorantly, between rational evidence and scientific evidence, such that the former is restricted to the



latter. In reality scientific (empirical) evidence is one type of rational evidence, but not the only type. Other types include the likes of logic, reports and conceptual analysis.

Logical syllogisms based on sound premises and a valid structure is entirely rational. The proposition that all men are mortal combined with the observation that Tom is a man establishes rationally and necessarily that Tom is mortal.

Numerous unrelated people informing Dick that they've been to Canada and that it's a wonderful place proves rationally even for him (who has never sensorially-perceived the existence of Canada) that it exists. Our acceptance of the concept that human beings are the product of a mother and father, allows us to establish, on analysis of this concept and its rational extension, that Harry had a great great grandfather.

None of these conclusions are scientific, for they do not involve the application of the scientific method. Yet all of them are rational.

So why do atheists persist in wanting scientific evidence for theist assertions? It seems the convenience of a straw man is appealing. Theists, by and large, readily

admit that science cannot prove the existence of God. Not because it requires 'faith' (unless you're an adherent of fideism, an untenable position in our view) but because of the limitations of the scientific method itself.

As for rational evidence for the existence of God, that has been furnished, debated, refined and presented centuries ago. Arguments based on logic and conceptual analysis go as far back as Aristotle and Plato, through the Muslim scholastic theologians such as al-Ghazali and al-Razi, and to Western Christian thinkers of medieval Europe such as Aquinas and Bonaventure as well as Enlightenment thinkers such as Leibniz and Clarke.

The Kalam Cosmological argument for example - the strongest proof in our estimation - was developed by Muslim scholars as early as the 11th Century CE.

The argument is profound yet simple: the material world we sense around us comprises of temporal phenomena that depend for their existence on other temporal phenomena and so forth. Such a series cannot continue to infinity, for if it did no one thing would satisfy its dependence and nothing would exist. The fact that things do exist necessarily

implies a finite series and, in turn, the existence of a being who determined both the existence of this series and the specific attributes or properties that define it.

By rational extension, this being must be eternal and without beginning, otherwise it is temporal and forms part of the series. It must also be sentient for a timeless cause producing a temporal effect requires an independent will. Finally, effecting so grand a creation as the universe and all that it contains necessitates knowledge and power.

Thus, by use of reason alone - no reference to scripture, 'leaps of faith' or assumptions - we deduce the existence of an eternal, necessary and transcendent being attributed with knowledge, power and sentience, otherwise known in the English language as 'God'.

There are of course various objections to arguments like the above. Interested parties can navigate the hundred pages in the recently published Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology devoted to the presentation of a simplified variation of the Kalam Cosmological Argument together with all objections, responses and counter-arguments.



It is not the intent of this piece to assess any of these, but merely to show that rational arguments do exist, have existed for a long time, and are the subject of serious scholarly debate and discussion.

Is the universe eternal? Can an infinite regress of temporal causes actually exist? Where does that leave the bulk of modern astrophysical evidence which point to a beginning of the universe?

should have no influence in society.

Devoid of a rational argument for secularism (compromise solutions are never strictly rational), advocates resort to a rather romanticised view of it as a neutral system which allows for a pluralist society where everyone is free to practice their individual beliefs. Yet secularism is built on a specific worldview and is no more neutral than any other ideology. It disallows those parts of other worldviews which contradict with it, just as they would.

### ...the atheist approach fails to apply the rational scrutiny it calls for upon its own assertions.

The problem with the atheist approach is that it refuses to recognise that rational arguments exist in the first instance. When presented, the mere raising of some objections or doubt is assumed sufficient to somehow negate the argument.

If the universe is not eternal and had a beginning, this implies that something came from nothing. Can something come from nothing? An absurd proposition, surely?

We then also have assertions such as the espousal of human reason as a basis for morality. But how can the human mind determine good and evil? It will surely lead to a subjective morality? How is an objective morality and, in turn, moral obligation to be established? What is the ontological basis of morality?

Such a search for certainty in the proofs of opponents coming from the heralds of science has a touch, a good dose rather, of irony about it. Perhaps they don't know that science at its essence employs inductive reasoning and more often than not substantiates its conclusions in terms of probability and confidence.

Furthermore, if the case is simply one of science not having yet answered the key questions about the origins of the universe, then is not a reasonable explanation (if not certain in the atheist view) better than no explanation? Are scientific explanations ever certain in the first place?

These are just some of the core questions that need definitive answers for atheism and its associated ideologies to substantiate themselves. Mere criticism of opposing views, as aggressive as it may be, will not cover for holes in reason, or be a substitute for rigorous validation.

Deeper epistemological considerations such as the varying strengths of different types of proofs, deductive v inductive reasoning, the structure, sources and limits of different types of knowledge are certainly missing from the populist atheist characterisation of 'science vs. religion'. A characterisation fit for a children's comic, but not for serious and sincere public discourse.

Further, the denial of God leaves atheists with little room but to subscribe to secular humanism, leading to more assertions that need substantiation.

Why should church be separate from state? Why should religion be singled out for exclusion from influencing public affairs? Religion is after all one worldview from amongst many.

Perhaps when atheists start applying rational scrutiny to their own beliefs they'll realise that 'new atheism' is little more than a novel product of modern and post-modern thought, and a manifestation of all their deficiencies, inclusive of bells and whistles.

The result, at any rate, is a posturing that is anything but rational. The militant atheist bandwagon - driven by Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris and Dennett - continues to paint their theist opposition as irrational simpletons who favour superstition and myth over reason and science.

The reality is that secularism is taken for granted to be the best way whilst it is at its core irrational. It is the result of a compromise solution for a geographically, historically, and contextually specific problem, that of pre-enlightenment Europe. The centuries-old oppression of the Church was sought to be repelled by advocating the separation of religion from state. But this represents a classical flaw of jumping from a particular case to a universal conclusion.

In any case, our response to the call for rational scrutiny of religious teaching is, quite simply, bring it on.

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Worse still, the atheist approach fails to apply the rational scrutiny it calls for upon its own assertions. Even as a negating proposition, atheism makes numerous assertions, implicit if not explicit, that needs to be substantiated.

An analogous case would be our arguing that because George Bush's capitalist, liberal regime in America was oppressive, capitalism and liberalism

# Egypt's Copts Need the Caliphate



Prior to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, the world's attention has focussed on Egypt's Coptic Christians after a bomb exploded outside a church in Alexandria killing 21 people and injuring 70 more. The attack sparked clashes between Egyptian police and Copts protesting against government inaction in protecting their community and places of worship. "Now it's

between Christians and the government, not between Muslims and Christians," shrieked one Christian woman as several hundred young men clashed with helmeted riot police in the street outside the targeted church hours after the blast.

This attack follows discussions about the situation of Christians in Iraq and in Pakistan; both secular and unstable states, riddled with insecurity.

At a protest in Shubra, downtown Cairo, some 500 Muslim and Coptic activists, politicians and other civil society leaders shouted the slogan, "Not a police state, not a religious state, we want Egypt to be a secular state."

Egypt is a secular state where religious political parties are banned and those calling for the implementation of Islamic law (Shari'ah) in society (Islamists) are

heavily persecuted. Copts in Egypt do face oppression but so do Muslims and the cause is not Shari'ah but the absence of Shari'ah in Egyptian society. In the absence of any religious restrictions on the conduct of ministers, politicians, judges and police, ordinary Egyptians - both Muslim and Christian - must suffer at the hands of policies which further the interests of the ruling party, their families and supporters. This is why Egypt is a police state, ruled under a state of emergency since 1967 apart from 18 months between 1980 and 1981. The law of emergency is used to restrict any non-governmental political activity: street demonstrations, non-approved political organisations, and unregistered financial donations are formally banned. Some 17,000 people are detained under the law, and estimates of political prisoners run as high as 30,000.



In one horrific example of police abuse, Imad Kabir, a Muslim, was filmed being tortured and sexually assaulted by police officers. Instead of the police officers being punished the victim Imad was subsequently jailed for three months on the charge of 'resisting authority.'

The law of emergency is applied under the excuse of fighting terrorism which means clamping down on the Islamist opposition, who are the only threat to the brutal Egyptian regime. However, as Dr. Abdullah al-Ashaal, professor at the American University in Cairo said,

"I think the terrorism is from the government for neglecting the needs of the people and not serving the national interests. This intensifies the tensions in Egypt... And if any terrorism arises, it is because of the government policies – raising prices, the detention of people and the injustices which are prevailing everywhere.

In regards to some of the issues blamed for inflaming tensions between Muslims and Copts in recent years such as killings, kidnappings and forced conversions, those with a wider political agenda use them as evidence to claim Muslims are oppressing Christians and Islam should be further removed from societal affairs, i.e. more secularism. French President Sarkozy's comment, that

"We cannot accept and thereby facilitate what looks more and more like a particularly wicked program of cleansing in the Middle East, religious cleansing,"

shows how the issue is being inflamed by the west to justify meddling in the affairs of the Muslim world. The hypocrisy of Sarkozy's statement is clear when we look at France and other western countries silence and inaction over the Rwandan genocide where 800,000 Christians were actually cleansed from the country.

A closer examination of these crimes against Copts shows the motivation is not necessarily religious. In Egypt, as in



any other country, criminals exist. Some of these criminals are Muslim and some are Copts. Murders take place, and a Muslim may murder a Copt or a Copt may murder a Muslim. This is crime and cannot be viewed solely through a Muslim vs. Christian lens.

On the allegations of kidnappings and forced conversions of Christians, Yousef Sidhoum, the editor of a well-respected Christian newspaper, says the allegations are always difficult to prove. Often, he says, they are love stories that have gone wrong. Very often they are not kidnapping or forced conversions, but relationships between Christian girls and Muslim boys. Sometimes it is their parents who say they have been kidnapped in order to hide their shame, when in fact the girl has married a Muslim of her own choice. "They tend to exaggerate the cases," he said. "We have investigated lots of cases, again and again. This is an important issue to us and we go wherever the cases are." "But I don't recall since 1997 more than three definite cases where we had clear evidence that there was kidnap and forced conversion."

So what is the way forward for Copts and Muslims in Egypt? Is the problem a growing 'Islamisation' of Egyptian society as those with a wider political agenda to

secularise Egypt and reshape Islam are claiming?

In answer to this we need to examine the Shari'ah laws relating to Christian and other non-Muslim citizens living in an Islamic State and look at some historical examples of when these Shari'ah laws were applied on the Copts of Egypt.

Non-Muslims citizens living in a Caliphate have an honourable status and are referred to as dhimmi (people of contract). Their places of worship, lives and property are protected and they are not persecuted for their beliefs.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **"He who hurts a dhimmi hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys Allah."**

He (saw) wrote to the people of Yemen: **"Whoever is adamant upon Judaism or Christianity will not be tormented for it."**

The classical scholars of Islam also detailed the rights of the Muslims towards the dhimmi. The famous Maliki jurist, Shaha al-Deen al-Qarafi said:

"The covenant of protection imposes upon us certain obligations toward the ahl al-dhimmah. They are our neighbours, under our shelter and protection upon



the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (saw), and the religion of Islam. Whoever violates these obligations against any one of them by so much as an abusive word, by slandering his reputation, or by doing him some injury or assisting in it, has breached the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (saw), and the religion of Islam”.

Dhimmi are not forced to become Muslim or leave their beliefs, values and worships. They are permitted to drink alcohol, eat pork, marry and divorce according to their religions. In all other areas of society they are viewed and treated in the same way as Muslims unless belief in Islam is a pre-requisite for the action.

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur’an: *“There is no compulsion in religion”* [TMQ Surah Baqarah:256]

Christianity and other religions do not

have detailed rules and systems governing societal affairs such as government, foreign affairs and economy. Christianity for example adopts the principle: “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s”

Therefore dhimmi in their societal transactions will obey the law of the land which in the Caliphate happens to be Shari’ah (Islamic law). This will not be a source of conflict since these laws do not contradict any religious rulings. A good example of this is the spread of Islamic finance based on Shari’ah throughout the western world. Even in a country such as France, which is staunchly secular and anti-Islamic, it still passed laws last year aimed at making France a hub for Islamic finance. This is not because France has any love for Shari’ah but because of the economic benefit derived from the transactions.

The general atmosphere in an Islamic society towards its non-Muslim minority is shaped by the above Islamic evidences and does not lead to a hostile atmosphere of persecution. However, the Caliphate is not a utopia and crime will exist and a dhimmi might be attacked and murdered by a criminal as happens in all societies.

An accusation brought by Copts in Egypt is that Muslims are not punished for crimes against their communities or given lesser punishment. In a Caliphate Muslims and dhimmi have equal status when it comes to crimes such as assault, rape and murder. An Islamic judiciary judging by Shari’ah will not apply disparate punishments as found in secular Egypt.

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur’an: *“You who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to Allah and bear witness impartially; do not let hatred of others*



*lead you away from justice, but adhere to justice, for that is closer to awareness of Allah. Be mindful of Allah: Allah is well aware of all that you do.”*  
[TMQ Surah Maidah:8]

The dhimmi is allowed to be a witness in an Islamic court against a Muslim and their evidence is acceptable. The conditions of being a witness apply equally to Muslims and dhimmi. The conditions of a witness are: sane, mature and 'Adl (trustworthy).

the Caliphate did not adopt a policy of religious cleansing like Europe did.

Thomas Arnold mentions this point:

“But of any organised attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the Caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or

### When Islam came to Egypt, all conditions changed dramatically and Copts witnessed an age of freedom that they had not known before.

Punishments for crimes are applied equally to both Muslims and dhimmi with no distinction. The only distinction is that dhimmi will not be punished for those actions which are permitted for them such as drinking alcohol, whereas a Muslim would be.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **“The diyyah (blood money) of the Jews and Christians is like the Muslim’s diyyah.”**

It is narrated in a Hadith that the Messenger of Allah (saw) killed a Muslim for a mu’ahid (citizen of a foreign state with which the Caliphate has a treaty) and said, **“I am the most noble of those who fulfil their dhimmah.”**

This Hadith clearly indicates that if a Muslim kills a mu’ahid he is punished with death. This applies to the dhimmi who has more rights than a mu’ahid since the dhimmi is a full citizen of the Islamic State.

If we look to the history of Copts in Egypt when they lived under the Caliphate we can see these Shari’ah rules detailed above being implemented in practice. Whilst there were times during the Caliphate when dhimmi did suffer some persecution at the hands of tyrant rulers we cannot generalise and paint the entire 1300 year history as one of persecuting non-Muslims. The fact that Coptic Christians and their places of worship exist today is proof enough that

Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years.”

Nabil Luqa Bebawy, a Coptic, religious author compares the conditions of Copts before and after Islamic rule. He said that Orthodox Christians were brutally tortured at the hands of Byzantines. The number of Copts who were killed during the rule of the Roman emperor Diocletian [284-305 AD] is estimated up to one million Coptic Egyptians. This is why the Orthodox Coptic Church called that age the age of martyrs and the Coptic calendar starts at this age.

When Islam came to Egypt, all conditions changed dramatically and Copts witnessed an age of freedom that they had not known before. About the Jizyah imposed on non-Muslims, Bebawy says that they were part of the “security pact” made between Muslims and Copts. Jizyah was a tax paid in exchange for exempting Copts from joining the Islamic army.

Finally, Bebawy stresses that the ill practices of some Muslims rulers in dealing with Copts are individual behaviours that have nothing to do with Islamic teachings.

Hani Shukrallah, a Coptic Christian and a former editor of the newspaper Al-

Ahram writes:

“It is not easy to empty Egypt of its Christians; they’ve been here for as long as there has been Christianity in the world. Close to a millennium and half of Muslim rule did not eradicate the nation’s Christian community; rather it maintained it sufficiently strong and sufficiently vigorous so as to play a crucial role in shaping the national, political and cultural identity of modern Egypt. Yet now, two centuries after the birth of the modern Egyptian nation state, and as we embark on the second decade of the 21st Century, the previously unheard of seems no longer beyond imagining: a Christian-free Egypt, one where the cross will have slipped out of the crescent’s embrace, and off the flag symbolizing our modern national identity...”

Even during the Crusades when western Christians invaded and occupied parts of the Islamic State, the Copts of Egypt defended the Caliphate under the rule of Salahuddin Ayyubi who was the governor of Egypt during the Abbasid Khilafah.

Carole Hillenbrand, in ‘The Crusades: Islamic perspectives’ says:

“...Saladin had a private secretary, ibn Sharafi, who was a Copt and Saladin’s brother al-Adil put a Copt named ibn al-Muqat in charge of the army ministry (Diwan al-Jaysh). The appointment of a Christian to a position of such power in war-time and in an area that was military so sensitive tells its own story. Indeed, the loyalties of the Copts in the Ayyubid period seem often to have lain more with the Muslims and with their own local interests than with the Crusaders. This was demonstrated in the Crusade of Damietta in 1218 when the Copts helped to defend the city, and as a consequence suffered greatly at the hands of the Crusaders.”  
These are some of the reasons why Egypt’s Copts need the Caliphate, and in fact all the non-Muslims of the Muslim world need the Caliphate.

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