

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Diplomacy in Islam*<sup>55</sup>

Diplomacy is said to be the art of saying 'no' in such a way that it sounds, 'yes'. To be more blunt, it has become the art of deceiving others without offending them. As such, one might feel that there can hardly be a place for diplomacy in Islam. The book under review, however, shows that Islam has given its own concept of diplomacy and made it the art of negotiations and of tactful handling of international situations. If all this is done with due regard to moral principles, then it is Islamic Diplomacy.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the negotiations, the second with the political delegations and the third with the salient features of moral diplomacy. The author has kept himself restricted to the diplomacy of Muhammad (peace be on him). The major portion of the book gives a simple narration of those phases of the Prophet's life which could be regarded as exercises in interregional and international diplomacy. The reader expects some detailed analysis of the factors that led to a particular decision — its reasons, repercussions, advisability etc — but he is disappointed in this respect. The author has compiled the facts but has not taken the pains of explaining and analysing them. He fails to give the rationale behind the decisions of the Prophet, which in fact were masterpieces of diplomacy. One may, therefore, say that the subject has not really been tackled 'diplomatically'.

Leaving this aspect apart, the book is quite a success from the point of view of opening new avenues of research in this field. Keeping aside the Prophet's diplomacy — which still needs an exhaustive and objective study — the book can stimulate further studies in the diplomacy of the *Khulafae-a-Rashidin* and other Muslim rulers. It was in the later periods when the

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<sup>55</sup> By Afzal Iqbal, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, pp. 156, Price Rs. 10/-

boundaries of the first Islamic State, with headquarters at Madinah, widened, that it had to deal with the vexing problems of maintaining healthy relations with other powers. It was during these periods that the principles of Islamic Diplomacy were put to hard test. A study of this period would be most illuminating and may show a new path to the diplomats who are beset with a strife-ridden world.

The book has brought to light certain facts which deserve careful consideration.

I. It proves the baselessness of the claim of some narrow-minded Muslims who preach that Islam has nothing to do with the affairs of the State. 'Reform the individual and it would automatically result in a Islamic Society' is their slogan. The study of the Prophet's life tells an altogether different story. If the Prophet, after *Hijrah*, had not assumed full control over the situation and utilised it to his benefit by entering into treaties with different tribes, the Islamic State of Madinah — a tiny power as it was in the beginning — would have succumbed to the onslaughts of the Qurayish and the internal conspiracies of the Jews of Madinah. But the First Head of Islamic State — diplomat of the highest order as he was (peace be upon him) — did not let the opportunity go by and because of his insight into the situation got the best out of it. The treaty with the Jews which is rightly called 'constitution of Madinah' is remarkable from the point of view that it constitutionally accepts Mohammad (peace be on him) as the Head of the State to whom all disputes would be referred. The conduct of this phase, which was a great diplomatic success for the Prophet, clearly shows that Governmental powers should be taken in hand so that they are rightly used. To leave them for the evil-doers is against the intent and purpose of Islam.

2. There is no harm in conducting negotiations even with the opponents of Islam. The Muslims should not keep themselves aloof from other groups simply because they are non-believers. Negotiations should be carried — diplomatically of course — and agreements reached if possible, with the sole purpose of furthering the cause of Islam. The Prophet's treaties

with non-Muslim tribes and Jews ultimately proved to be for the good of the state.

3. Although the Prophet (peace be on him) was keen in signing treaties and expanding his state's influence and power and for that he negotiated and was out to accommodate the other party, it was never at the expense of any basic principle.

The demands of the delegation from Ta'if, which asked for concessions 'to practise adultery, maintain interest and drink liquor' were not accepted. Their plea that their economic system could not work without interest was not granted. Thus, it was clearly shown that whatever be the circumstances, there can be no compromise on fundamental principles.

Diplomacy consists not only in the proper handling of the foreign relations, but also in the tactful management of the internal affairs. The incidence relating to the fixation of the *Hajr-e-Aswad* in the pre-Islamic period, grant of general amnesty to all the Meccans after its conquest, distribution of wealth largely among the new-Muslims as against the Ansar and a host of other incidents which include dealing with the numerous attempts on the part of the Jews and the *munafiqueen* to create internal strifes among the Muslim, all are but an integral part of the history of Islamic diplomacy and prove beyond any shadow of doubt that Muhammad (peace be on him) the First Head of the Islamic State, was a diplomat *par excellence* and a statesman of the highest calibre.

Muslim Sajjad

### *Islam and the World*<sup>56</sup>

The book under review is a beautiful translation of the Urdu book '*Insani Dunya per Musulmanon Ke-Uruij-o-Zawal Ka Asar*' by Maulana Abul-Hasan Ali Nadvi. Originally the book was written in Arabic in 1950 and its Urdu

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<sup>56</sup> By Abul Haan Ali Nadvi. Translated by: Mohammad Asaf Qidwai. Published by: The Academy of Islamic Research-Publication, 9-Railway Road, Lahore. p.p 194. Price Rs. 4/-

rendering appeared in 1954. Now Dr. Qidwai has done well to translate it into English.

It is a thoughtful and inspiring survey of the history of Muslims, not with a view to provide historical details but with the sole purpose of pinpointing the role and contribution of Muslims towards the advancement of mankind. The author has, in an admirable way, dealt with all the underlying currents and forces which have shaped the events and has tried to arouse in the Muslims of the present-day world the desire to fulfil the demands of their mission as a nation. The author has written the book with an unimpeachable faith in the supremacy of Islam as the only panacea for the ailments of the humanity which is suffering at the hands of a materialistic civilisation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that every word of the book is charged with this faith and spirit which steel into the heart of the reader.

The book begins with a detailed survey of political, economical and social conditions prevalent before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). This is followed by a survey of the era of Muslim glory and of Muslim decadence and the rise of the Western civilization. Evaluating the achievements and the failings of this civilization, he brings into limelight the fact that mankind has suffered real at the hands of the Western civilization. "The Western nations" the author says, "have received the worship of the perceptible, epicureanism, local patriotism and libertinism from the Greek and the bankruptcy of religious belief, racial pride, power-worship and imperialism from the Romans". The religion of this civilization is not Christianity, but materialism. Religion has been ostracised and secularized. The materialistic approach to life has given rise to a society of Godless, selfish and irresponsible individuals who have no standard of values except their own personel gain.

Muslims to-day are facing a challenge from this civilization. The West has made inroads in the Muslim Society and during the last centuries of

contact has considerably damaged the *supra-structure* of Muslim culture and civilization. As a matter of fact they are serving as devoted camp-followers of the West in many parts of the world. The modern Muslim has given up the role of leadership and has lost faith in himself.

But there is a ray of hope. In spite of all this survey of materialism, there are powerful and organised movements in the Muslim World which are facing this challenge boldly and which believe that Muslims, by living upto the real Islam, can even now dethrone the West from the leadership of the world.

The publication of this English translation is most commendable. At a time when there is no dearth of those intellectuals who are trying to modernise and reform Islam so that it could suit their own fancies, the publication of this work would help in wiping out the apologetic and defeatist mentality of the intelligentsia and of the rising generations of Muslims. The crying need of the hour is that all the traces of Western supremacy over the minds of the Muslim youth should be removed with the result that they may start taking pride in their own past, traditions and values for it is on this pride and faith that the future of the mankind hinges. The book successfully serves this purpose.

M. S.

## *Muslim Institutions*<sup>57</sup>

Islam is not a religion in the limited sense of the word—it is an all embracing Religio-Socio-political ideology guiding all facets of human life: individual and social, material and moral, national and international. It has its own outlook on life: it lays down the foundations on which man's relationship with God and his creation is to be established and it gives an exhaustive programme for the reconstruction of human life. Instead of renouncing or belittling this world Islam tries to reform it and remould it on moral formation. And herein lies the difference between Islam and other religions. It is because of its peculiarities as an ideology that Islam has been one of the most important culture-producing forces of human history. The revolution that Islam brought about in human life and society was a *total revolution* as against other revolutions of human history that have been *partial* ones. It transformed human life in all its manifestations, moral and material, mundane and spiritual, economic and social, political and juridical and national and international. And the sheet-anchor of this revolution were the new socio-political institutions which this ideology established. It was these institutions which moulded the pattern of the human life and made the Islamic ideology a living reality. They determined the new tone and temper of the society and enabled the unlettered Arabs to drink deep at the cultural wells of Islam, to communicate their culture to the following generations and thereby to become one of the most formidable forces of history.

It is an irony that the Muslim historians of the recent past have not given to the study of the socio-political institutions the importance which they rightly deserve. The fact is that the real meaning and significance of Islamic history cannot be appreciated by a study of the ups and downs of the political forces alone; a correct appraisal of Islamic history can be made only

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<sup>57</sup> The Origins and Development of Muslim Institutions. By Dr. A.H. Siddiqi, Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi, Jamiyatul-Falah Publications 1962. Rs. 9/-

if the political history of Islam is 'studied alongwith its social and cultural history.

Dr. A. H. Siddiqi is a well-known writer on Islam and he has, in the book under review, made an attempt to present the origin and the growth of Muslim Institutions from the advent of Islam to the fall of the Abbasides. As the subject has been treated from a historical viewpoint, the book begins with a study of institutions during the glorious reign of the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him). This has been followed by a detailed study of the institutions during the rule of the pious Caliphs. The two periods put together constitute the ideal period of Islamic history. The following chapters have been devoted to a survey of the later developments under the Umayyads and the Abbasides. As such, the book is an attempt by a Muslim writer to explain the social conditions of the first phase of Islamic history. It is hoped that the Muslim intelligentsia will feel interested in this book.

K. A.

### ***Living Religions of the World*<sup>58</sup>**

The contemporary international conflict has once again brought to the limelight the need for religion. The realisation is dawning that religion can play a very decisive role in setting the house of humanity in order. Dozens of books, dealing with the great *religions* of the world, are appearing in the Western world. It is unfortunate that none of them honestly presents the viewpoint of the Muslims. Nay, even on point of facts and figures about the Muslim world they signally fail to do justice. Moreover, the approach of most of the writers on world religions is primarily theological, with the result that there is much more emphasis on their polemics than on their socio-political aspects. Mr. Abdullah Al-Masdoosi has tried to break new ground by making comparative study of the socio-political aspects of the world religions. This is

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<sup>58</sup> Living Religions of the World: A Socio-Political Study. By Ahmed Abdullah al Masdoosi, translated by Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Aisha Bawany Wakf, Karachi, p.p. 363, Price Rs. 15/-

the first book which surveys the panorama of world religions from the Muslim viewpoint in the light of actual facts and figures.

The book begins with a chapter on "what is religion" followed by the chapters dealing with the available contemporary data about the world population of Muslims. The reviewer has found these chapters most instructive and rewarding. In his opinion they constitute the most valuable parts of the book which contains many valuable pieces of original and painstaking research. The following nine chapters deal with other important living religions of the world viz Paganism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism and Judaism. The basic postulates and the economic-social strength of every religion and its political significance has been stated in very clear terms. This discussion is followed by three concluding chapters *viz* 'Islam and Christianity Points of concord and conflict', 'Rise and Fall of colonialism' and 'Statistical Survey'.

The entire book is informative, thoughtful and thought-provoking.

K. A.

### ***Muslimnews International*<sup>59</sup>**

We have been faced with a queer paradox: Muslims constitute one-fifth of the human race; and Muslims did not have a single international newsmagazine which could present their viewpoint before the world. The appearance of the *Muslimnews International* from London has fulfilled this long-felt need. The standard of the journal (four issues have appeared so far) has been as high as that of any other international journal and this kindles high hopes for the future. The objectives of the journal are:-

1. Providing its readers with authentic information about the events

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<sup>59</sup> Muslimnews International, monthly, Excel House, Whitecomb Street, Pall Mall, London, W.C. 2; Karachi Office: 4th Floor, Bank House No. 1, Habib Bank Square, Bunder Road, Karachi. Price 2s. (Rs. 1.50) Annual subscription 20s (Rs. 15.00)



- and trends in the Muslim world;
2. Attempting to portray Islam in all its pristine purity and simplicity, and in a language which is widely understood ;
  3. Trying to eradicate the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims which persist in many quarters;
  4. Fostering closer and better understanding among Muslim peoples themselves and placing before them viwes and ideas which will help the Muslim world to play its rightful role in saving humanity from the perils it is facing today.

We welcome the emergence of the *Muslimnews International* and wish it a long life and a distinguished caree .

K. A.