

BETWEEN JIHAD AND SALAAM

PROFILE AND INTERVIEW

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PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



SENATOR, ISLAMIC ACTION FRONT, PAKISTAN

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PROFILE

KHURSHID AHMAD GREETED ME at his home in Islamabad with a warm smile and a weak handshake. That he took my hand at all was a sign of openness and moderation in the inner circle of committed Islamists. It was not a firm grasp, and I suspected he would have preferred not to touch me at all, but Islam teaches that Muslims sometimes must choose the lesser of two evils. For Khurshid Ahmad, it was a choice between potentially offending a guest in his home or mildly breaching the Islamist disapproval of shaking a woman's hand.

From his writings and our interview, it was clear that Ahmad was a devout but pragmatic Islamist, one who realized the necessity of compromise in an imperfect world. As a representative of the Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) in the Senate, Khurshid Ahmad was a minority voice in his country's political arena, one that was a distant third to the two powerful political dynasties—Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz al-Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML). Yet the PIF was the strongest and most organized Islamic party in the country, 'founded by the powerful Jamaat-i-Islami movement to work inside the political structure to establish a "true" Islamic Republic of Pakistan. As Khurshid Ahmad and his colleagues in the PIF saw it, neither of the two main parties were moving quickly enough in ensuring that Pakistan's laws fully conformed with Islamic law.

As vice president, or deputy ameer, of Jamaat-i-Islami, Ahmad was instrumental in helping to found the PIF in May 1993. Before deciding to launch its own political party, the Jamaat had worked with the Pakistan Muslim League, and Khurshid Ahmad had been a member of the cabinet of Zia al-Haq. Al-Haq seized power in 1977 from Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and wooed Islamists to secure his own power base. But by the time the Muslim League, led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, faced Benazir Bhutto's PPP in the 1993 elections, the Jamaat had lost all faith in both parties.

Resurgence, the jamaat's publication, described the PIF in its June 1993 issue as a "movement to end corruption and political exploitation by providing God fearing and Islam loving leadership to the nation." That was two months before national elections for the National Assembly in which the PIF won only 3 of the 201 seats reserved for Muslims. (Pakistan set aside 10 seats for non-Muslims.) Bhutto's PPP won 86 and Sharif's PML won 72. It was a bitter disappointment for the PIF, which had been confident that the Pakistani people wanted an alternative to what was widely seen as rampant corruption in both of the main parties.

"With the population having 75 percent illiteracy rate, it is difficult to change the traditional course of the politics but not impossible," the party officially stated in Resurgence following its defeat. But although the new PIF party campaigned heavily, it formed only two months before the election and in a country where "barons, feudal lords, rich and influential families and people still command authority over peasants and poor people living in rural areas." The PIF was forced to concede that Pakistan's poor, among whom it had expected to win a strong political base, was still very much allied to the two main parties. And it would take more than a few months of heavy campaigning to convince them there was a viable alternative. Ahmad was committed to helping the PIF strengthen its standing with Pakistan's 53 million registered voters. Yet he had another huge commitment as well, one that frequently forced him to leave Pakistan for Europe.

Ahmad was a Westward-looking Islamist. He had traveled widely in the United States and Europe; he even lived for ten years in Great Britain before returning to Pakistan in 1978 to accept the post in Zia al-Haq's cabinet. But Ahmad's attraction to the West was not based on admiration or imitation of Western culture. In fact, the opposite was true. Khurshid Ahmad saw the West as desperately in need of Islam's moral influence. But he also believed that world stability depended on good relations between East and West. As Maulana Maudoodi, one of the greatest Islamic thinkers of the modern world, wrote in the foreword to Ahmad's book *Islam and the West*: "The call of our times, is that, with a view to achieving world peace and international amity, mutual relationship among different nations be reconstructed . . . the need for the establishment of a relationship of the people of Europe and America with the Islamic fraternity, on new foundations of good will and good cheer, stands out as of paramount significance."

Ahmad believed the Islamic da'wa (propagation of the faith) should not be confined to the Middle East but should be spread throughout the world, even in the United States and Europe. Ahmad was associated with the Islamic Foundation based in Leicester, England; and from 1973 to 1978, he was its director general, charged with leading the organization's efforts to spread the Islamic message in Europe. When I spoke to him, Ahmad was president of the International Association for Islamic Economics, a branch of the Islamic Foundation. He was also on the academic advisory board of the Institute of Comparative, Political and Economic Systems at George-town University in Washington, D.C., and was associated with Islamic organizations in Africa and the Middle East. He considered Islam not only a religion but a code of life.

Ahmad had earned a reputation as a leading Islamic economic theorist, helping to develop an Islamic concept of business and finance in the modern world. As he wrote in the pamphlet "Economic Development in an Islamic Framework":

“The major contribution of Islam lies in making human life and effort purposive and value-oriented. The transformation it seeks to bring about in human attitudes and *pari pussa* in that of the social sciences is to move them from a stance of pseudo-value-neutrality towards open and manifest value-commitment and value-fulfillment. . . .

We must reject the archetype of capitalism and socialism.. Both these models of development are incompatible with our value system . . . both are exploitative and unjust and fail to treat man as man, as God's vicegerent on earth. Both have been unable to meet in their own realms the basic economic, social, political and moral challenges of our time and the real needs of a humane society and a just economy.

As he explained in the pamphlet, an Islamic-oriented economic system would make "human resource development" a top priority:

This would include inculcation of correct attitudes and aspirations, development of character and personality, education and training producing skills needed for different activities, promotion of knowledge and research, and evolution of mechanisms for responsible and creative participation by the common people in key developmental activities, in decision-making at all levels and finally in sharing the fruits of development.

Development in an Islamic system would not be profit oriented but people oriented, he believed. Production would be guided along the lines of what was best for society. That would mean that factories would be encouraged to produce abundant supplies of food and necessities for living, but "the production of those things whose use is forbidden in Islam would not be allowed; those whose use is discouraged, their production would be discouraged, and all that is essential and useful would be given priority and encouragement," according to Ahmad. Alcohol production would be prohibited, as most probably would be cigarette production. As Ahmad outlined them, priority production would entail:

- Abundant production and supply of food and basic items of necessity (including construction material for building houses and roads and basic raw materials) at reasonably cheap prices.
- Defense requirements of the Muslim world.
- Self sufficiency in the production of basic capital goods.

Islam prohibits usury and, thus, assessing interest payments on loans is against Islamic law. Ahmad was credited with encouraging the establishment of Islamic banks that did not charge

interest, and their number and rate of success seemed to be growing. But the basis of the Islamic concept of economy is justice, he argued, which encompasses redistribution of wealth when necessary through levying of taxes, zakat. And supposedly no one would be allowed to become rich by exploiting others. As Ahmad explained it, the concept of morality and duty to God as well as to society is very much at the heart of his concept of an Islamic economic system, and morality is what many Muslims find lacking in Western capitalism.

Ahmad had been formulating his theories of the ideal Islamic state and its economy ever since he joined the Islamic youth movement, the Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba, in 1949. His family had moved to the newly created state of Pakistan one year earlier, from their home in New Delhi, India, where Ahmad was born in 1932. His father, Aziz Ahmad, was a successful businessman who became active in the Muslim League. In New Delhi, Khurshid Ahmad participated in public demonstrations in support of Pakistan's independence. And when his father moved the family to Karachi in 1948, Ahmad was quick to become involved in the Islamic movement.

He soon met Maulana Maudoodi and was so impressed with his vision of Islam and society that he committed himself to Islamic study and activism. Khurshid Ahmad said his activism with the Jamaat's student movement shaped the course of his life. He spent three years as president of the organization, editing several of its publications, before he joined the Jamaat-i-Islami as a full member in 1956. Today Ahmad is one of the world's most respected Islamist leaders.

He lived in a pleasant, tree-lined section of Pakistan's modern capital, Islamabad. The whitewashed stone walls of his villa opened to a spacious courtyard. Inside the voices of children created a pleasant cacophony, and I was greeted at the door by one of his sons, a lanky, dark-haired boy of about 11. He escorted me into a modestly furnished living room that was large enough to hold several seating enclaves of stuffed sofas and upholstered chairs. I can remember no pictures on the walls and very little decoration at all. I interpreted the austerity as a sign that Ahmad agreed with Maulana Maudoodi's philosophy that art inevitably leads to idol worship. I imagined that Khurshid Ahmad's living room had been the setting for many meetings of the hierarchy of the Jamaat-i-Islami and its political arm, the Pakistan Islamic Front. Once again we were in the midst of a power blackout, but the morning sun flooded through several windows, as startling as the beams of a spotlight on a darkened stage. Ahmad burst into the room only moments after I was seated. He expressed surprise to see a Western reporter with her hair covered and dressed in a shalwar Khameez, the long tunic and loose pants worn by Pakistani women. He seemed pleased to hear me explain that although I was not a Muslim, wearing a form of Islamic dress in the presence of devout Muslims was, for me, a sign of respect.

Muslims often complain that their religion is not respected in the West; in fact, this is one of the main reasons for what Ahmad described as growing animosity between the two worlds. As Maudoodi wrote in the foreword to Khurshid Ahmad's *Islam and the West*, Muslims "are pained to see the overall attitude of Western people towards Muslim history, religion and culture is not only unsympathetic but positively hostile. They often outstep the limits of academic criticism and in attempt to paint the Muslims black, resort to assertions, which it would be only too mild to call 'intolerant.'"

Ahmad wrote in the same book: "Islam has been misunderstood and misinterpreted in the West. It is one of the most queer facts of history that despite the annihilation of space and time, despite the West's stupendous strides in quest of knowledge and learning, despite the centuries of contact between the world of Islam and the West, Islam is perhaps the least known and the most misunderstood religion in the West."

Ahmad told me that while he had dedicated himself to trying to improve the relationship between the Islamic world and the West, he believed the West must change its attitude of superiority and dominance before there can be hope for any improvement. In an interview in June 1988, Ahmad explained: "If the only practical ground of cooperation is the assimilation of the Western culture and rejection of Islam as we understand it, then there is no ground for any meeting. But if the cooperation is to be achieved on equal footing, then it is most welcomed."

In the second chapter of *Islam and the West*, Khurshid Ahmad listed the following reasons for the hostility toward the West that had developed among Muslims: Western imperialism, economic exploitation by Western interests, forced Western education, cultural dominance, imposition of Christianity, and attacks on Islam.

In a 1993 article he wrote for the *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Ahmad strongly criticized the foreign policies of Western governments, led by the United States: "Muslims, while on their quest for self-assertion, have been amazed by the double standards demonstrated by some Western leaders. If the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was a crime, then of equal iniquity are the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Indian annexation of Kashmir and the Serbian 'ethnic cleansing' of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Ahmad chastised the United States and other Western powers for what he saw as their insensitivity to the desire of Muslims to develop their societies in keeping with their own culture and values. And he criticized the United States for supporting undemocratic secular regimes in the Middle East while castigating Islamic movements that are fighting for democracy:

The West must take a hard look at itself and realize that economic and cultural imperialism are no less destructive than political imperialism. The United States, in particular, as the sole superpower on the global stage, must become more sensitized to the fears of less developed states that see the U.S. embarking on a new imperial order. In so doing, the U.S. is willing to ignore the suppression of democracy when it seems that the opposition will not bend to its will.

Ahmad believed Islamic societies must be allowed to develop their own systems of governance, in keeping with guidance in the Qur'an and in the recorded writings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. This does not rule out plurality and democracy, although the ideal system would not be identical to those in Western countries, he had written of establishing a "theodemocracy" or "a democratic system inseparable from divine guidance":

This definition repudiates the concept of theocracy because such a government is restrictive in its scope, i.e., it confines the leadership to a particular religious class who reserve the right to interpret religious law and wield political power. A theo-democracy, however, establishes the basic rules of law, much like a constitution; and from these essential principles appropriate laws are implemented, similar to the amendments made to the U.S. constitution and the laws Congress ratifies within the framework of that constitution.

Ahmad's Islamic ideal would gradually eliminate nation-states and lead to unions based on Islamic ideology, "thus creating the framework of a commonwealth of Islamic regions." Many Islamic moderates expressed such a dream; they believed that such an ideal cannot be achieved overnight and should not be sought through violence.

Although Ahmad told me that he, like many Islamic leaders, abhorred violence, especially in the name of Islam, he said he understood its motivations, and even sympathized with those who resorted to violence to overthrow tyrannical regimes. He had written:

If Muslims engage in violent acts, it is mostly as a response to the subjugation imposed by secular tyrannies. Violence may occur in any society, particularly where the people's will is not sufficiently addressed. The riots in Los Angeles, unexpected by so many White Americans, was the direct result of ignoring the Black community's plight. When the Conservative party in England introduced the Poll Tax, riots broke out in central London, something virtually alien to that metropolitan city. Race, color, language, lifestyle, ideology, all of these elements lead to different variations of violence and fanaticism.

As we shared strong English tea and cakes, Ahmad said he was struggling to make the concerns of Muslim people easily understand-able to the West. To propagate Islam, he believed its leaders would have to be able to communicate with all kinds of people, across a variety of cultures. And for Islam to flourish in the modern world, he said, it would have to convince the West that it should not be blamed for the violence that sometimes was perpetrated in its name. While his arguments were convincing, it could also be argued that leaders such as Khurshid Ahmad have to be convinced to speak out more strongly against violence and not allow any excuses for attacks against innocents, whatever the motivation.

Interview with Khurshid Ahmad
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JD: You have a long history of involvement in politics in Pakistan, especially as an Islamist. Why did you opt to join an Islamic party, the Jamaat, instead of working through other parties?

KA: My background is that I come from a very important political family. My father was juror in Delhi and was an active delegate of the Muslim League. So, actually I inherited politics in a sense. During my college days, I realized that Pakistan was established not merely for the sake of independence but also to realize some social, political, economic, moral, ideological goals. And as a student, I was myself involved in the Pakistani movement.

But when I saw in Pakistan people [were] becoming immune to people's real needs . . . the leadership [was], I think . . . neglectful of ideology. The founding fathers died within the first three years, and with the result, the leadership was in the hands of those who were not in the forefront of the original struggle. So vested interests took over. I was faced with the question as a really active student leader . . . what should be our future? So I opted for Islami Jamiat Tulaba [Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba). That was a student organization, committed to Islamic idealism. So it was in that context that my future life and course of action was set.

JD: Do you feel that there is a developing problem, tension, in relations [with the West]? And, looking at the Islamic world in general, do you feel that there is a growing problem in relations between the two peoples?

ka: Thank you very much. i think this is the most important question. And I will attempt to answer it. As far as my appreciation is concerned, I feel that the problem is growing, and growing quickly. Both in relation to Pakistan and in relation to the Muslim world in general. However, I differentiate between the American government and the American people and the American system. These three I treat in their own light, differently, although there are some areas of convergence amongst all these three. Now, my feeling is that as far as the

American system is concerned, it has many achievements to its credit and it is also faced with many problems, at the moral, cultural and social levels in particular. And criticism and dissatisfaction with those aspects which relate to this critical aspect of the Western civilization and American culture is something which is a common concern of all humanity. It is not a question of decrying a system or condemning a system or revolting, nothing like that; it is common concern of humanity, and well-meaning human beings, men and women in America, in Europe, are equally concerned about social and moral problems. So, when Muslims express concern about those issues, it should not be taken as enmity.

As far as the American people are concerned, by and large, I am very sympathetic with them. I have found them open, frank, prepared to learn, yet the level of knowledge is terribly, terribly poor. And this is not merely in the case of Pakistan and Islam. I found out that somehow, the Monroe Doctrine was not confined to politics. It had its cultural and intellectual overtones. And Americans have been a rather inward-looking people. The bulk of them came from immigrants who were persecuted in their own homelands. So instead of being concerned with the countries from where they came, they were more concerned with the political haven they were trying to build, the freedom they were trying to achieve; [in accommodation with] the multicultural, multilinguistic dimensions which they were able to develop. So I think they were more concerned about their own selves.

It was under Woodrow Wilson that America came into the full glare of world politics and America did play a role. And I would remind you that on the question of the League of Nations trusteeship of Palestine, of Syria, of Lebanon, the people of the region requested [that] America ... be given the trusteeship, not the British or the French. Because they had suffered at the hands of British and French imperialism and they had the hope that America stands for democracy, for Bill of Rights. America has given freedom to people of the Philippines and not subjugated them in the manner Western European imperialism had their colonies. So, they thought that Americans would behave differently.

JD: But they were disappointed?

KA: They were disappointed. And that is, I think, the tragedy. And then I come to the third factor, that is, American leadership. Here again it would be unfair to condemn them whole hog. There have always been dissenting voices. But by and large it seems that effective political lobbies have firmly entrenched themselves, with the result that whether Democrats are in power or Republicans are in power, we find that, unfortunately, the American foreign policy is not as principled as it claims to be. It has not even been in the long-term interest of America itself. And that, too, because they do not really go deep into understanding the cultures, the history, the vital interests of other people and how there can be convergence of interests instead of national interests. For example, when it was Cold War phobia and that syndrome, all emphasis was on containing communism and, by hook and crook, raising walls

of resistance all around the communist world, whether they were despots, tyrants, democrats, criminals or general politicians, it became irrelevant. So much so that there had been American strategists who openly pleaded if there are pro-left dictatorships emerging in Africa and Asia, we should try to have pro-West dictatorships. This is how the military was used in a number of Muslim countries as well as other African countries.

And we do find this increasing projection of Islam as a threat, as a menace and again in this context, not only ignorance, but I will be frank with you, certain lobbies, who are committed to project Islam and Muslims in the worst colors ... like the pro-Zionist lobbies. As far as Zionism is concerned, as far as Jews are concerned, as a Muslim, I regard them as my brethren in faith, as we call them A! Kitab, that is, believing in revealed books. And throughout Muslim history, when Jews were persecuted and hunted in the Christian world, the Muslim world was their refuge. They were given freedom, they were given protection, they were given every opportunity there. So, we have no quarrel with Jews or Judaism at all. Zionism is a secular, colonialistic philosophy. And their philosophy has been translated into reality. And the Zionist lobby has been one of the lobbies which has been spreading this scare against Islam and the Muslims.

JD: Why do you think they're spreading that scare?

KA: Well, because it's very simple, you see. They have taken our pound of flesh. They want to hold it. They were offered a place in Kenya. They were offered a place in Uganda. They were offered a place in Russia. They didn't take that. They said no, we'll go to Palestine. That is the reason. But anyway at the moment, my concern is that these lobbies are also trying to play it around. And also, unfortunately, some of the American strategists think they always need some enemy to really put forever and forever in their policies. If communism has gone down, then they need someone else. And I must also say that in the making of this [scenario], certain Muslim countries and individuals have also provided them with the opportunity. For example, Iran is a classic case.

JD: For the West, Islam is a scary case.

KA: Yes [LAUGHTER], I agree with you. Iran—we find—that America tried to build Iran as a surrogate. The point I was trying to make was that American policy is based on a very fragile base. And the information base, perception of the Iranian people, their real sources of strength and weakness. Shah, Shah's aspirations, Shah's roots, Shah's support, opposition to him, all these, despite all the American presence in Iran, the level of knowledge of the Iranians was very, very poor. And because of that their policy making was on very fragile grounds.

JD: And what you've just said is still the case?

KA: It's still the case. Yes . . . you see . . . once the revolution took place, Americans were off guard. And they did try to counter the revolution. It was in reaction to that that some of the students took Americans as hostage. In my view that was wrong, but it was a violent, childish reaction on the part of these students. But from then onwards, we find that Islam and Iran have been projected out of all proportion in the American media as well as with American policy makers as the devil incarnate. And I would also express my reservations about the way the Iranian government reacted by calling America a Satan, the great Satan. So that language on the part of both has embittered the relationships. Libya, for example, has again done some similar things. Yet I think the American reaction is out of all proportion, is unrealistic, is having the flavor of anti-Muslim or at least scared of Islam. While my view is that Islam does not pose any threat at all to America or to Europe. We have no territorial quarrel. No territorial dispute, no lingering political dispute with any of these countries. The whole Islamic resurgence, the whole Islamic revival, is simply about one thing and that is that Muslim people also want to order their own houses in accordance with their own values, their own aspirations, their own principles in the same way that Americans are doing, that Europeans are doing. We want the same right, nothing more and nothing less. We have no quarrel with America, we are not going for world leadership. We have no military potential, we have no technical potential to be a real threat. So, as far as Muslim people are concerned, as far as Islamic movements are concerned, if we are critical of the West, it is not in the sense of political rivalry or colonial encounters or clashes. It is at the level of civilization and culture, which is the common concern of mankind.

JD: But you don't think that there is inevitably a clash between Western culture and Islamic culture?

KA: Not at all. I totally disagree with Huntington's thesis and all the debate that has gone with it.

I believe that yes, there are differences of civilizations and competition between civilizations. There can be a lot of learning as well as a widening in this context. But it is totally incorrect that the political struggle, the political hot points, the clash points are conditioned by or motivated by cultural considerations. I see no justification in that. Instead I regard this kind of cultural competition as a very promising area for the entire mankind, to learn from each other's experiences. And it is my thesis that one of the greatest achievements of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries would be that wars that used to be fought for ideas, for ideologies, or for cultures, their days are over.

Why? Because, number one, military technology has reached a stage where war would mean destruction of all and not survival of any. So fighting for the supremacy of an idea would be

self-destruction. Secondly, ideas are now communicable all over the world without any hurdle. Formerly, sometimes, these wars had to take place because the opportunity of contact, of exchange, of dialogue, of discussion, of acceptance and rejection, were not there. The political boundaries were also barriers to that. Today, both because of the new international protocols, because of the movement of populations, because of the free flow of ideas and information, because of the information and technological revolution of our time, because of the close contact and movement of human beings from one place to another, we find that the possibility of dialogue and exchange of ideas is there without the need of any armed person. So with the result, as far as with this clash of civilization is concerned, this has reached a new plane, a new level. And that level is one of dialogue and not of arms.

JD: Except I'm wondering if this increased communication between cultures and this increased propagation of ideas across boundaries, if that isn't part of the cause of the problem. Because the people who have the power to communicate, basically the West, is sending out its messages of its culture and its values into another world. That is causing a backlash in some cases. We went through a period where it affected the youth, and they were copying and wearing jeans and miniskirts. But aren't we now entering the phase of backlash, of rejection of this?

KA: This is a very important point, very important point. And I agree. It is the way it has been done. It is the possibility of who is doing these things ... the second is the way it is being done . . . the manner in which it is being done, it has cultural, imperialistic overtones. And that is creating disenchantment and disaffection amongst the people. But I'll give you an instance; this is a very superficial approach. What happened with Algeria . . . now, in Algeria, the French tried to impose their culture on the African people to an extent that Arabic language was almost eliminated. And when Algeria became free, the means of communication among the Algerian people was French and not Arabic.

When Abbas, the FLN leader, came to Pakistan, and I was a student leader in the '50s, we arranged a big reception for him, and I took with me an Arabic interpreter to talk with him, and when I talked to him, he said, I can't speak Arabic, I need an French interpreter, so this is the tragedy. But what is it now? You find the same youth who are exposed to French television, and the French television directed toward Algeria, is more sex oriented, more crime oriented than what is shown even in France; and yet the reaction is that now they are growing beards and becoming anti-French, anti this culture. So my view is that the manner in which it is being done is counterproductive. But the point I want to make is that the possibility of reaching each other . . . and there will not be backlog for long, I assure you. With the satellite communication, Muslims, Third World countries, they will also be able to reach the West soon. And also you see we will be able , to reach ourselves, our people. So, while CNN is here, we are also; trying to see that Pakistan television is seen in other countries.

I regard this to be basically a healthy development and a safety: Valve against wars for ideas or culture or religions or civilization. And against that the real competition would be in the field of knowledge,'. In the field of dialogue and discussion, and that is an area where the West is free to preach to us and we should be free to preach to them, i and wherever there is a higher moral principle, wherever there are values which will be able to sustain human society, I think that will be a blessing for all. They tell me in Britain, you find in Liverpool, two ten-year-olds killing a two-year-old boy. Forty injuries on the body. Three hours torturing. And what were they getting? Not any physical gain, not any monetary gain. Sheer sadism and sheer self-destruction. So a civilization that is prepared to produce these . . . and they are not isolated events, this is what is becoming, unfortunately, the order of the day. So this means that we are faced with certain common problems of civilization. And if Islamic respect for values, moral sense, commitment to religion, seriousness on moral issues, respect for family, if these things are the example of the experiences before the West, we are sure this will have an enriching contribution and not a negative contribution.

JD: Would you, for example, in your ideas, would you envision an Islamic state that would allow missionaries, Christian missionaries?

KA: Why not? Why not? There are Christian missionaries everywhere. And the first critique of Islam came from John of Syria in the year 90 of Hejira [Muhammad's flight from Mecca], which is the first century of Hejira. And it was never condemned or censured by Muslims. The first great critique from the Judaized came from Marmanots, and Marmanots was also the medical doctor to the Egyptian monarch. And before publishing his book, he showed it to the Muslim monarch and the Muslim monarch said as long as it is free of abuse, uses decent language, it has arguments, even if it criticizes me, my book, my religion, you have a right to say so.

JD: So that's the true spirit of Islam, to be very tolerant and open?

KA: Exactly. From that viewpoint, we have no problem at all. So what I say is that we do not have any territorial, any such conflict which should put Islam and the Western world enemies to each other. Then what is the issue? The issue is again that the West also has to realize that, consciously or unconsciously, they have a monolithic concept of their power. This is a hangover of the age of imperialism, where they thought that they arc the best settlers of the world, they are the teachers of civilization. They are going to others who are barbarians. And now, this new world order, where it is assumed that Russia has disintegrated, there is only one superpower and there should be a Pax Americana, which should set the tone all over the world. That in my view is the real threat to world peace and to America. Because America cannot overstretch itself to this position. America has seen that merely by military muscle and military power, they could not control Vietnam. The Gulf war they were able to win, but mainly because the contest was between America plus 28 other

countries. America mobilized 70 percent of its total technical air power and 40 percent of its total military power for fighting a little sparrow . . . Iraq. So they were able to do it. But along with that, they were also counting the coffins. And the strategists were thinking that if the number of dead exceeded that particular bottom line, the people would not be able to take it. Look to Somalia. When 18 people died there, their mood changed. And you may have the best army in the world, but if your people are not prepared to die for a cause, and if you have to provide a fighting army with cultural escape roots as were provided in the Gulf war . . . see I have very strong reservations about a country which could rule over the world with military power.

JD: I think you've hit a very important point. This is what many Westerners fear about this new Islamic revival. We're confronted with a force that is not totally accepting of the West; a different force, with people who are prepared to die.

KA: Fair enough. And this is our strength. This is our arsenal. We may not have the atom bomb, but we have this courage to stand for our honor. And that is what would pave the way for real peace in the world. Because in that case if you can have a vision of a pluralistic world, where America and Europe have a right to live according to their values, their standards, but Muslims should also be given the right to set their own house [in order] according to their own values. And we should not be accepted as deviants, as rebels to civilization. But as a different civilization, a different culture. And there is interaction at the intellectual level, at the cultural level, at the level of movement of capital, movement of human beings. And learning from each other's experiences. And that would make the world a far better place to live in. And this is our vision.

JD: But would I be wrong if I put you in with moderates?

KA: Well, all these are very relative terms. What is moderate from the viewpoint of X may really be revolutionary from the viewpoint of Y . . . and you really cannot draw these lines. But I find myself in very comfortable company with persons like Hassan al-Turabi. I would not hesitate to say that I want to change the world, first of all my own. And I have vision of a new world order. But not one that would be imposed on others by force or violence.

JD: In that regard, you sound to me similar to Rachid al-Ghannouchi, whom I interviewed in Loudon. Though he very much believes that things are not right with Tunisia, he has resisted calling his people to violence.

KA: That's right. I do not believe in violence. And I believe that violence is justified only if you are really put to the wall and you have no other option in self-defense but to react.

JD: Do you think that's the case in places like Algeria?

KA: In Algeria, unfortunately. In Kashmir. But this is something I regret. Because even one single human soul, innocent person killed, is a loss for the entire humanity. I believe in the Qur'an, which says that killing one person, an innocent person, without a justification, legal justification, is like killing the entire human race. And saving one innocent person is like saving the life of the entire humanity. So this is what I believe.

JD: Tell me, how has Pakistan been able ... I see Pakistan as a model of plurality in the Islamic world, allowing all voices, as long as they are within legal restrictions.

KA: That's right . . .

JD: How has it been able to develop this and yet places like Egypt and Algeria have not?

KA: I think there are a number of reasons. First, I must say that the British rule in the subcontinent had been oppressive, had been colonial, yet they respect the institution of the judiciary, political procedures, and even when they had to commit a crime against the people, they would observe certain formalities. Now that tradition in my view is one factor. Second, I believe in Pakistan, the temperament of the people also counts. Like Malaysia. There are people, you seek, who are temperamentally pluralistic. There are people who have not those traditions, of pluralism. In Egypt, for example, I find that the traditions of violence on all sides, relatively, have been much more than in the subcontinent. Muslims ruled the subcontinent for over a thousand years. There are no instances of Hindu-Muslim riots. Never. Courts have always been in oppression. Yes, monarchs did transgress, they exceeded limits, Muslim or otherwise. Yet there were some rules which were respected. And this is also, you see, what grieves us. That on one hand, the West has been expressing concern for human rights for human values; on the other hand, the oppression released by Nasser, for example, on Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was never taken note of. Forty thousand young men rotting in prisons. And prisons becoming torture houses. No law. The result is they are now resorting to violence because they are desperate. They are saying if we have to be annihilated and liquidated, okay, let us then strike back.

So in my view, the use of violence from [the] state is the greatest crime; and use of violence on the side of the people, where they are not forced, is truly unjustifiable.

And finally, I believe that there should be possibility of trade relationship, of flow of resources from one part of the world to the other part. Flow of goods. And I believe that economists—first I am an economist. I believe that mobility of capital, of goods, of human beings would be a blessing.

JD: Yes, but isn't there a basic difference, or a conflict, between the Islamic economic philosophy and the Western economic philosophy?

KA: Of course there is. Of course there is. But what I say is that at least this is common between us. So, merely America's interest to directly control the primary resources, to me this is an imperialistic approach. Instead America is prepared to have an understanding of free flow of resources. You need oil, we can't drink oil. So it's our common need to share it. So it should be shared through normal trade, through agreement, through negotiation, through historically organized economic modes of cooperation. So that would reduce conflict, and the flashpoints that are there presently can be controlled and managed. That's how we look upon it.

JD: Do you consider Pakistan a true Islamic state? Are there any in the world today? And what do you see as some of the biggest challenges facing Islamic leaders?

KA: Well, Pakistan is a Muslim state.

JD: What's the difference?

KA: Yes, I'm coming to that. Pakistan is a Muslim state. Pakistan wants to become an Islamic state. We are in a process of a transition from Muslim to Islamic. The difference is that we become Muslim merely by committing ourselves to a vision, to an ideology, to a set of values. But you become Islamic when you really translate that vision into reality. And from that viewpoint, we are still far, far, far away from the Islamic model. Why? Again, because we are stepping out of 500 years of colonial rule. We are coming out of our own domestic degeneration and weakness. We don't paper that, we don't hide that. We are coming out of an age of ignorance. We have not been masters of our own situation. The world was made for us. We had no part in that. So it will take time to have that.

But I think Pakistan is unique in the sense that we were the first people almost in the contemporary Muslim world to emphasize that for a political future, ideological identity is important. And it is the ideological identity that will also ensure our future growth as a polity, as a society as an economy. We have also disappointed ourselves, almost 50 years. We have not been able to turn the corner, both for domestic and international reasons. Yet the nation has this aspiration, this commitment. And from that viewpoint I am quite hopeful that, in the future, we will be able to develop that more. And to me most of the Muslim world countries are exactly in the same struggle at different points.

JD: I have assumed throughout our conversation that, because I've read something about you, you have liberal ideas with regard to the place of women in Islamic societies... that they should have equal rights ...

KA: Again, I don't say that it is liberal. I say this is Islam. Because, you see, Islam has treated women and men as equal beings. Islam never said that there was an original sin, that woman was responsible for that. That men and women were sent into the world as a punishment because of that sin. We do not believe in that mythology. In the Qur'an it is very clear that the criteria of success for a Muslim man and a Muslim woman are the same ... in the moral and the ideological area. Similarly in law, in economical dealings, even in political dealings, but certainly, there are also certain restraints and we are not shy about that. We say that men and women are equal, but equality does not mean that each one must be forced to do the same job, the same work. We ought to see, because of their nature, because of their role in society, where they can contribute best. We believe in an optimal division of labor. Not saying that every woman, if women have not been able to become good soldiers, then they are bad humans. No. If they excel in a particular field, they make their contribution there. If men can excel somewhere else, fair enough.

JD: But what I'm hearing is, you are not saying that, for example, if your daughter wanted to become an engineer, that she shouldn't be able to become it.

KA: Why not? Why not? My daughter is actually studying in London now and she's in the university. And she is doing her course in business administration and psychology. This is what she liked. She is studying law. Islam does not constrain these things. My wife owns property. My daughter owns property. If they want to become entrepreneurs, they are free to do that. There is no problem at all about that.

JD: Well, the last question is, what do you feel is the challenge facing Muslims around the world?

KA: Well, as far as I am concerned in my own mind, the greatest challenge is from within. I believe that the greatest problem that man faces today is neglect of the inner dimension of life. While there is a lot of lip service to the individual and individualism, and individualism is the basis of Western imperialism, my problem is that [the] individual has really lost his moorings, which are moral, which are spiritual, which represent integration of the physical and the spiritual dimensions of life. So from my viewpoint, the greatest challenge is this for all, including Muslims.

But definitely, I would also say that the modern civilization is also universal, a universal civilization. It has reached everywhere. It has brought many blessings and many conveniences and amenities for mankind. Yet unfortunately the dualist standards which are being pursued at all levels . . . relationship between husband and wife . . . between parents and children . . . between the state and the people . . . the whole question of human rights, the whole question of democracy, the whole question of economic justice. So in my view,

the real problem is moral clashes of mankind. And I believe that Islam has something to offer. Not merely by preaching but by demonstrating. It's not the word of mouth or the printed word, it's the example. That is the most important. And in my view, the real challenge lies in presenting before the world a living example of a good Muslim individual and a good Muslim society. And I am devoting my life toward the creation of that individual and that society. That is the real challenge.

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