

## Problem and Prospects of Co-existence between Nations

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**A**nalysis of the concepts, means and points of convergence and diversion when discussing co-existence between nations and societies, particularly between the Islamic World and the West, is not new for academics, philosophers and political leaders. It is a result of the intellectual and cultural phenomena that have pervaded societies throughout human history where the latest influence has been globalization, which has brought together the old and the new through rapid scientific advancement and telecommunications technology in the developed world. The effects of globalization can be felt in political, social, economic, cultural and even moral circles. Globalization has influenced individual lifestyles and communities and also constitutes an inexhaustible intellectual source for thought, philosophy and vision in the academic and cultural arena. These discussions sometimes lead to agreement but usually become points of dispute, provoking controversy and skepticism over all what has been agreed upon when what is needed is translation into tangible results in society. Globalization has not stopped at cultural and scientific exchange but has also extended to the imposition of influence and hegemony, denial of privacy and impacting the social, intellectual and cultural stability on a society's foundations and its national and ideological identity.

Discussing the controversy over perception and reaction to problems of co-existence between Islam and the West requires additional effort to

decipher cultural, social and political symbols that indicate identity, vision, philosophy and contribution to human civilization. This study is a multi-angled presentation free from hard-line views and in compliance with academic accuracy and neutrality based on the actual facts of the Islamic World and its dealings with Western civilization as recognized by intellectuals and historians on both sides. This presentation is also a modest effort to highlight the role of civilization and the economic, cultural and social developments of the Islamic World in enhancing the principle of dialogue between civilizations through the emphasis of common ground and points of agreement between nations and society.

The Islamic World is also a crucial component of human society, which cannot be ignored or comprehended without understanding the Islamic message introduced in theory and practice. This understanding should not be based on certain social practices by Muslims that might not be necessarily consistent with Islamic principles. Such practices are a result of their particular environment upon which the West has based its negative perceptions about Islam and Muslims. The media, which has experienced huge technological developments in the West, has helped to spread these perceptions that often express a misguided ideology and lack accuracy and fairness. This might have come as a result of ignorance or animosity but it certainly does not express Western society's desires, views and aspirations for peace, progress and prosperity for the future of human civilization. Searching for common ground between civilizations to strengthen cooperation is extremely important. However, searching for the points of difference is equally important, not necessarily for their eradication but at least to minimize their impact. This search also aims to bridge the gap between Muslims and the West created by those who have negative or destructive objectives and agendas.

This study tries to answer various fundamental questions thrown up by the issue of dialogue between civilizations by asking the classic question centered on whether co-existence between nations and societies is part of the development of civilization, is simply inevitable regardless, or a reality imposed by specific living conditions. Questions asked are: where are its problems centered? How do they manifest themselves? What is the

correct way to encourage prospects for co-existence? What are the fundamentals required for co-existence between nations? What are the catalysts for creating and promoting co-existence? What are the crucial constraints? What is the role of the media in consolidating co-existence between nations and societies? This study also reviews the Islamic perspective on co-existence within a single society and between nations and examines the main features of Islamic civilization including its developments today. The reality of Islam and its contemporary approach in a changing society is explained as well as a brief look at the role of individuals, groups, regional and international organizations and civil institutions concerned with creating and enhancing co-existence between nations, for example the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). There follows a discussion on what the Islamic World should do to advance work on co-existence between it and the West and concluding with a vision of how to bridge the gap between the Islamic and Western worlds.

### *Co-existence: A Civilizational Approach?*

The emergence of Islamic civilization has neither been abrupt nor coincidental, nor was it the result of a collective human desire or of a specific people who wanted to lead and take the credit for its emergence. It has not originated from an ideology or a specific culture but as a result of interaction between individuals and groups over long periods of time. The term civilization refers to a shift in human existence that brings about changes in life organization (social, economic, cultural, political and even behavioral), resulting in a new stage that has its own unique character. It also implies that there was a preceding “uncivilized” stage. What was taking place within human society before it became a civilized society?

This subject had been fully discussed by many researchers and historians throughout the ages, all of whom have proposed how civilizations emerged according to their own philosophy and ranges from the works of Plato and Aristotle all the way to contemporary thinkers such

as Nietzsche, Sartre, Toynbee, Garaudy, Salama Mousa, Ali Al Wardi and others who unanimously agreed on the following:

Civilization began when Man evolved from a primitive existence using his intellect to meet life's needs in the ongoing struggle with a hostile environment. This struggle forms the basis of development in the opinion of many academics. Arnold Toynbee, for example, states that Man's need to use his intellect started by the end of the fourth Ice Age, when ice had receded toward the two poles and desertification began to spread in most of the Asian regions. Along with desertification, scarcity of food and water began to emerge and the need for survival led to the migration of primitive tribes to valleys where rivers were still running. Human migration to these valleys formed the beginnings of stable settlement when Man developed agriculture and animal husbandry and consequently an economic life began to appear as the first steps in human civilization. In his discussion of philosophers and intellectuals' views on the beginnings of human civilization, historian Ali Al Wardi agrees with Toynbee that creativity, innovation, comparison and contrast form the basis for differentiating between primitive and civilized societies. Consequently, these elements are considered to be the cause behind the emergence of the first human civilization. This is consistent with the view of the American writer, Will Durant, in his 14-part book *The Story of Civilization*, in which he said:

The earliest human being lived in caves and depended on hunting, and learned and acquired skills depending on his needs to survive in the face of nature and to control it. The advent of writing skills marked the entry of Man into the era of human civilization. Thus the emergence of the first human civilization came from environmental constraints, creative and innovative capabilities, struggle with nature to satisfy survival needs, and from the general diversity that prevailed in the environment.

Comparative study of civilizations, as a branch of modern science, is therefore closer to the study of social, cultural and intellectual transformation in homogenous societies over a specific period of time or during prolonged periods of history. However, civilizations share one

point—primitive societies are more numerous than civilized societies but as far as number of individuals in primitive societies are concerned, they are much less than the number of individuals in civilized societies. From here comes the flaw in the idea of civilizational unity as described by Toynbee. He says that there is only one civilization, which is the Western civilization; this idea is considered to be civilizational racism, so to speak.

### *Civilization as a Concept*

The definitions of “civilization” are numerous; they vary according to the school of thought used. However, the most comprehensive definition which expresses the general meaning of civilization is the one which views it as the expression of systems of beliefs, values and principles as well as the synthesis of human activities in science, literature and art. The term civilization has evolved over the ages. Ibn Khaldun defined civilization as a “sophistication in luxury and the mastery of crafts used for advancement in various aspects such as cooking, clothes, decoration, architecture and all social situations.” Each of these requires skills and crafts influenced by individual taste for pleasures, delights and an enjoyment of luxury that are determined by environment. Therefore, the cycle of civilization related to the monarchy is intertwined with the cycle of peasantry, since peasantry and monarchy are consubstantial. Ibn Khaldun argues that civilization is the “additional welfare” added to the basics of life for any human society. It varies depending on the degree of luxury and level of difference between nations in terms of abundance or scarcity of resources.

Ibn Khaldun also provides a more elaborate definition of civilization, holding that monarchy and statehood are the ultimate expression of rural life. Every human entity – be it the peasantry, a civilization, a monarchy or ordinary folk – has a limited lifetime. This is what confirms the theory of the rise and fall of civilizations which Ibn Khaldun had been the first to develop and well before the European philosophers. Only late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had the British historian Arnold Toynbee expounded and reformulated this theory as an axiom in the field of history philosophy.

Today, the meaning of the term civilization has evolved considerably. The American historian, Durant, in his publication *The story of Civilization*, which has been translated into many languages, states that civilization is a social system which allows man to increase his cultural production. Civilization is made up of four components: social resources, political systems, ethical standards and the pursuit of science and art. “It (civilization) begins where anguish and uncertainty end.” In this sense, civilization is more loaded with meaning and significance to express the spirit which animates a given society. It is, therefore, more comprehensive than simply culture, which has more to do with identity than with the appearance and the general character of human life in a social environment, as Toynbee puts it: “civilization contains but can never be contained.” Based on this concept civilization starts from the interaction between various cultures whose features are shaped by people of different origins. Those cultures merged together into one stream that constitutes civilization.

Civilization has no ethnic character and cannot be associated with a given race or a given people. When it is sometimes ascribed to a given nation or geographical region, this is only for the sake of definition. Conversely, culture is the symbol of identity, the reflection of subjectivity and the expression of the uniqueness of a particular nation or people. Civilization is a crucible of various cultures blended and cross-fertilized to shape the characteristics of civilization, reflecting the human spirit in its sublimity and expressing the general principles and values shared among them all. Every civilization is underpinned by general principles, which stem from religious creeds or philosophies. No matter how numerous these creeds and philosophies are, the distinctive characteristics of a civilization are determined by those dominant belief systems most established in the hearts and minds of people and the most influential in public life to the extent that civilization becomes associated with them. This association is all the more positive when these foundations are positive themselves, as is the case with the Islamic civilization.

The major civilizations in the history of humanity differ from one another by their stance on the material and spiritual life. There are, in fact,

civilizations where materialism is dominant, others which favor the spiritual life, and finally those which strike a balance between the materialistic and the spiritual elements. There is a succession of civilizations, each one giving way to the next, and a state of affairs that led many a thinker to go as far as to argue that there is a similarity between civilizations.

*Co-existence as the  
Basis of Civilization Building*

The aim of this study is not to examine human civilization from the point of view of its emergence and development, but rather to study the problem of co-existence over the course of human civilization and whether this is an inherent element in the emergence of civilization or an element imposed by societal conditions at a certain time and place. Will the problem of co-existence disappear with the demise of these conditions? Many researchers and philosophers in the East and West see the emergence of human civilization taking place when the following three phenomena were shaped:

1. **The Emergence of Cities and Development of Economic Relations:** Researchers assert that Man lived for long periods of time in a primitive, nomadic existence dependent upon hunting until agricultural villages began to emerge in river basins, including Mesopotamia and the Nile valley around 5000 BC. This was the nucleus for emergent agriculture settlements, which did not exceed three in number, and with a population of no more than 5,000 in each. These inhabitants were in need of protecting their settlements and cultivation from nomadic hunter/gatherers living in proximity and who had no concept of social contract or land ownership now found among the settled inhabitants. Settled living became a key factor in stability for food production, building and reconstruction and sparked the development of agricultural settlements into agricultural towns, urban cities, city states and eventually sovereign states.
2. **The Emergence of a Political and Social Pyramid:** After a settlement had become a socially and economically linked unit, the

emergence of what is called the “social pyramid” began to emerge and formed the first nucleus of the “political system”. This was the second basic foundation in the emergence of human civilization, the organization of society and the development of organized relations between communities where the concept of control, influence and expansion became a political concept.

3. **The Emergence of Religious Belief:** Humans instinctively questioned and searched for answers to the very nature of existence and one’s role in this life. Differences in explanation, and therefore belief, emerged and became a major cause of struggle.

Civilization in essence is the high capacity to participate in making the present and shaping the future; the civilized act refers to human efforts made by individuals and groups to achieve these two objectives. The conditions of this participation cannot be completed without cultural and civilizational co-existence between peoples and nations governed by humane values and regulated by rules agreed upon and abided by the international community. Based on this point, the principle of co-existence between individuals, communities and societies in the course of human civilization and its development to this day requires the following characteristics:

1. **An Interactive Approach:** Since no society can build a civilization where conflict (not competition) prevails among its individuals and communities.
2. **A Rational Approach:** Civilization cannot be built without minds that are capable of creativity, innovation, dialogue and a capability to understand and grasp the opportunities presented from competition and the exploitation of diversity between individuals in theory and practice.
3. **An Integrated Approach:** Society needs the individual and his mental and physical capabilities to be able to establish an advanced and civilized structure. This is exactly the same as the individual’s need for a safe and secure environment that provides him with the opportunities to use his capabilities. Integration is inevitable for

individual and group components of society who want to build a sophisticated civilization.

4. **An Evolutionary Approach:** Civilization is always developing, as witnessed by the massive developments experienced today. Many species existed on earth before Man but never evolved towards the development of civilization.

### *Importance of Co-existence in Human Civilization and its Definitions*

Co-existence, as defined by the Spanish encyclopedia *Otyano*, is defined as a state of “living” that cannot be achieved without others because Man is a social animal by nature. *Al Waseet* dictionary defines co-existence as “the ability to participate in life”; this means participation in shaping and developing life and participation in creating visions and policies for the future. Therefore, participation has the following four aspects:

1. Shaping life as desired by an individual who works to achieve it, which explains his existence.
2. Life experiences that promote the concept of a cultural and rational human being as the finest and most honored creation.
3. Participation in life experiences which assert the higher capabilities of Man.
4. Participation in shaping visions and strategies to guarantee future generations’ continuity in the processes of development.

Human society consists of individuals, communities and nations each of which has its own territory and boundaries. These components have a common connection, namely the innate human link regardless of the diversity of human origins, race, color, physiology, gender or approaches to life and intellectual beliefs. It is of prime importance to note that research into the concept of co-existence will lead to many meanings that will help to understand this subject, and can be classified into the following three levels:

1. A political and intellectual level with the aim of putting an end to struggles, alleviating differences, containing or controlling strife in order to open channels for communication and the necessities of civilian and military requirements.
2. An economic level where co-existence is linked to cooperative relations between governments and populations in legal, economic and commercial affairs.
3. A religious, cultural and civilizational level where followers of various divine messages and global societal members meet in order to achieve international peace and security.

### *Co-existence Fundamentals*

Although many researchers always prefer the third aforementioned level for its clear direction and effectiveness, a co-existence approach can include the following foundations:

1. Common free will where willingness for co-existence stems from the self and is not imposed by any external pressures or is subject to conditions.
2. Harmony of objectives so that co-existence is not bereft of any practical significance or short of securing benefits for the parties involved. Co-existence should aim to serve humanitarian higher objectives, secure social interests, establish global security, deter aggression and oppression, condemn policies and practices that confiscate peoples' and nations' rights and fighting all manifestations of racism and sexism under any pretext.
3. Joint cooperation in order to achieve goals agreed upon by the parties concerned.
4. Protection of co-existence by mutual respect and trust and one party's interests not to be favored over another, no matter what the motives or goals might be.

The term "peaceful co-existence" has been defined according to international policy as cooperation between world nations on the basis of understanding and exchange of commercial and economic interests,

particularly after World War II, which saw nuclear weapons used as tools of mass destruction and the emergence of a group of non-aligned countries reiterating their wish for co-existence as a way to coordinate international relations in the world, refrain from wars, brinkmanship and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Co-existence with this objective and these foundations constitutes an agreement between parties based on compatibility of interests or common objectives.

*Difference and Diversity  
as a Source of Co-existence*

The contentious relationship between the idea of unity, diversity and difference is based on overall cognitive fundamentals, which emerge from the inherent relationship between the concept of the oneness of God and the diversity of creation, which is also the source of variance in private behavior of individuals and societies. This private behavior is “a set of social and ethical behavioral systems created by certain people during their history and who have made them part of their national, or religious dimensions, but with stagnation and inability or unwillingness to develop, these have been absorbed into the collective consciousness of this people.” In other words, “it is the total product of thought, art, custom, practice and action acquired over history that creates a framework of national or religious sense.”

Accordingly, “private” has become one of the more frequently used terms as shown by the desires and wishes that prevail in contemporary societies and as used by political authorities, religious groups and intellectual, cultural, economic and social groups. This highlights the concept of “diversity” as a major condition for “co-existence” between the self and others, and based on this “diversity” rights and duties will have a specific meaning. These are two of the principles within the framework of co-existence. Highlighting privacy and its pursuance indicates a wish for co-existence, dialogue and cooperation more than insulation, narrow mindedness and isolation. This is due to the fact that “cultural and urban co-existence are two factors that pave the way for dialogue, which is

considered one of the life's necessities." Dialogue between cultures and civilizations, between individuals and groups, between peoples and governments, and between institutions and organizations is the sole means to achieve equilibrium (co-existence) in a human society characterized by diversity. This has been highlighted by the experience of international relations over recent decades and its interest in dialogue as the best way to achieve co-existence between all peoples, and an effective tool to achieve peace and security.

### *Approaches to the Prospects and Problems of Co-existence*

The basic approaches to the problems and prospects of co-existence can be placed within three overarching comprehensive frameworks that encompass all political, social, economic and cultural frameworks. These approaches are:

#### **Social Approaches**

Proceeding from the idea of the unity of origin of human existence, history has shown that most nations and civilizations that managed to progress and climb the ladder of civilization are those which were able to find a state of co-existence and understanding between their various nationalities, sects and religions, between the individual on one the hand and nations and peoples on the other. This case should also include those psychological, social and political aspects necessary for an existence free from war, killing and violence. The history of societies tells us how nations fell as a result of intolerance and rebellion. Life in such nations transformed into a living hell for their inability to understand and co-exist with others. A nation can achieve power and excellence depending on its ability to accommodate others in its march for comprehensive social harmony based on positive interaction and integration all of their parts.

A framework to move towards the future becomes complete when we realize the legality of the other, theoretically and practically. Human social life is based on achieving social integration through communication,

intellectual openness, mental and scientific interaction and commercial exchange and co-existence. In all situations, interacting with others does not depend on physical closeness or distance but stems basically from an individual's psychological and social behavior. Denial of the other; non-recognition of his potential and capabilities within his psychological, cultural and intellectual framework; considering his existence merely as marginal; and putting him in zones of conflict in order to eradicate him or impose hegemony and control over him do not count positively for individual or social development. Rational thinking based on objectivity and impartiality in the management of life cannot be achieved without the presence of the other physically, intellectually, psychologically or socially. The attempt to marginalize the other is nothing but an attempt to rebel against the law of life. By denying the other, society will cease its integration because of the lack of the spirit of diversity and interaction between its parts. The individual's basic needs in society are to know his own capability by knowing that of the other, and dealing and integrating with him so that he can learn more about himself and co-exist with others and create an inclusive society. Researchers confirm that, "what applies to an individual applies to the society as well, since it is composed of individuals who are different in conduct, thoughts, objectives and capabilities." Many factors are common in the inability to recognize the other. Among these are the following:

1. *Psychological Factors*: De Tocqueville sees individualism as a diluted version of selfishness, pushing members of society to isolate themselves from others.
2. *Cultural Levels*: Many researchers and intellectuals in the East and West have indicated that the basic construction of behavior of individuals and groups depends on the cultural level creating a suitable environment for mutual understanding. An individual who has acquired the culture of contempt and supremacy toward the other promotes bigotry and an inability to co-exist with others.
3. *Lack of Good Intentions*: The family, social influences, bad experiences and irrational thinking create an atmosphere of mutual

suspicion. When an individual or a society experiences injustice, oppression or exploitation, this transforms into a constant mental state of victimhood. History tells us that most conflicts and disputes erupt as a result of misunderstanding and inability to reach agreement with the other side along with constant suspicion of intentions.

4. *Weakness and Fear of Confrontation*: Very often, lack of confidence in one's self becomes chronic and creates a permanent sense of inferiority and defeatism. In such a situation a person becomes withdrawn into a siege mentality before an imagined or perceived enemy. Any association with the "other" is rejected, whether it is true or false, right or wrong, beneficial or not. The "other" becomes a permanent enemy and an axis of evil. This applies to societies and nations plagued with cultural deficiencies that reject the "other" because it highlights the weaknesses in their own society and therefore they avoid communication with the "other" out of fear that the "other" will pervade their societies and influence thinking.
5. *Isolation from the "Other"*: Isolation is considered one of the most important factors in causing communication to deteriorate. The causes of isolation can be psychological, cultural, geographical or economic. The isolationist finds it difficult to understand others because he lacks the language of dialogue and understanding, the consequences of which are evident in the following aspects:
  - i. **NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION**: An individual progresses and a society grows through positive communication. Advanced societies have benefitted from this positive communication, which indicates the presence of a conscious capability to understand the "other" through intellectual, scientific and cultural exchange. However, a lack of positive communication produces a negative language based on conflict and suspicion as is the case with Arab and Muslim nations. While we live in the age of information technology and globalization there are examples of negative dealings with the outside world due to a lack of positive communication. There are those who use violence as a basic

language; there are others who have chosen absolute isolation from influencing or being influenced; and there are those who have assimilated completely to the extent that they have lost their own values. This kind of misunderstanding and miscommunication makes us unable to understand the external world around us and is reflected in our mutual dealings with each other.

- ii. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENTS: The world consists of escalating changes in culture and civilization as a result of the technology and information revolution. The culture of suspicion and lack of communication with the “other” has added to the difficulty of adapting to these new changes and developments in the world. Isolation leads to political, economic and cultural illiteracy.
- iii. DEVIATION AND NEGATIVITY: The consequences of the present situation has proved that most of the doctrinal and moral deviations over the past years emerged in enclosed and despotic environments where a lack of continuous communication removes constructive dialogue in society. Thus, we see many isolated societies becoming a fertile ground for deviant ideologies after they have cut off communication with the outside world.
- iv. LIMITED CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVENESS: Civilizations flourish with competition, creativity and innovation when they face challenges and interact positively with others. Creativity provokes and stirs competition and no creative work can be achieved unless it is within the framework of understanding the creativity of others. Rejection of the “other” comes as a result of belligerence, isolation and inability to have any creative interaction. Belligerent cultures consume their own energy in defending themselves against foreign influences. Isolation will inevitably lead to the eradication of the individual and social decay. Absolute rejection of the “other” is a call to antagonize the other culture and rejecting its contributions. This approach leads to gradual cultural death.

- v. **INEVITABLE COLLAPSE:** The basic result of isolation is the death of creativity and interaction and the extinction of solitary groups. The extinct group is one that prohibited dialogue among its individuals, isolated itself absolutely from the outside world, and imagine that it possessed the absolute truth.
- vi. **RULE OF VIOLENCE:** When an individual is unable to establish an objective understanding and communication with others, he resorts to violence to impose his values. The use of unwarranted violence is indicative of weakness in dialogue, understanding and integration. Communication aims to establishing the fundamentals of dialogue and co-existence and putting an end to violence in on-going conflicts.
- vii. **AFFIRMATION OF INDIVIDUALISM AND ITS INFLEXIBILITY:** Social fact confirms the necessity for the integration of the individual within society while maintaining personal privacy within a general social framework based on dialogue, reciprocation and integration. Aristotle says “the individual who lives absolute self-sufficiency is either a beast or God.”

In order to communicate and achieve the principle of balanced co-existence the following has to be addressed:

1. Stressing those common factors which bring people and ideas together and rejection of that which hinders communication.
2. Creation of a spirit of cooperation and co-existence.
3. Acceptance of others’ opinions, which develops human intellectual and cultural experience.

### **Common Interests Approach**

Since the end of World War II humanity has realized the importance of working within the framework of a common destiny, participation in major issues and linking relationships in a manner that unifies concerns, aspirations and the importance of co-existence. This awareness deepened further at the intellectual level when publications started to appear in the West on the nature of international relations, particularly after the end of

the Cold War and after the attention given to Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* and Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*. While Fukuyama predicted the rule and domination of liberal democratic values and their transformation into one human destiny, Huntington predicted that conflict in the future would not be between nation states or ideologies but between civilizations, which form, according to him, "the broader cultural framework of societies." These cultural lines of demarcation were experienced in the bloody conflicts in places such as Bosnia, Somalia, Kosovo, Iraq and Palestine. Thus, the United Nations and various countries rushed to adopt the notion of inter-cultural dialogue and dedicated 2002 as the year of "dialogue of civilizations," resulting in a flood of literature on the subject in intellectual, political, religious and social circles. The issue has become even more important in light of globalization characterized by the unlimited use of American power, peacefully and militarily, to impose hegemony on the world according to strategic interests in the West.

There has been much talk about the dialogue of civilizations, cultures and religions as an important and basic step for co-existence to work. This indicates the awareness of the difficulties everybody is facing in the developed or developing world. However, much talk about dialogue between civilizations indicates the imbalances which current relations between nations are facing. In particular, it indicates the imbalances of Western culture and values, American ones especially, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. These imbalances, according to many studies, are attributed to two opposing lines of argument: the first is the logic of history ruling the orientation of humanity towards unity of destiny due to interrelated interests as a result of huge technological advances. The second is the logic of Western hegemony in the world and its attempts to impose its own vision, values and materialism on the world. This in turn leads to rejection by other cultures. These two lines of argument present an extremely important problem, based on two main issues:

1. The unity of human destiny imposes on all civilizations, peoples and nations a collective commitment to global or universal cooperation in

light of modern technological developments whereby every entity affects and becomes affected by events across the globe.

2. There is a marked difference in values, standards and cultures among various nations, which should have a fundamental say in these issues. Thus, precaution is required whether in theory or in practice to safeguard against cultural immersion.

### *Cultural Dimensions*

Do we consider contemporary Western civilization as the pinnacle of human achievement, and if so, do we look at it as an example that we have to accept as a dominant model to be followed? Do we have to leave all our cultural privacy? Is civilization today a historical accumulation of various peoples and cultures and consequently has no special characteristics nor is it a product of a certain nation? Or is the idea of civilization as a flexible and vibrant concept used by the conqueror to control the conquered? Is it something the strong use to take the last tool away from the weak to resist a distorted, deficient and limited model? Should cultural privacy be maintained and the principle of distinction and difference be consolidated? These options represent the most important avenues of discussion in political, cultural and scientific circles and which are used by researchers and experts concerned with civilizational matters. We can say that each of these approaches has its own positive and negative aspects. This is what drives a call for action in order to formulate a more comprehensive approach and study the issue through a strategy and methodology encapsulating three dimensions:

1. Understanding the historical context in which contemporary civilization originated. There is no doubt that it is the style of Western modernization that also produced a Western philosophical framework, intellectual reference and value system through which Western civilization developed and formulated its approach towards non-Western cultures.
2. Understanding the relation between the religious and the secular formulated by Western civilization and its impact on the formation of

political, social, cultural and professional institutions and groups in the West. In other words, we should understand the concept and position of religion in contemporary Western civilization.

3. Understanding the enormous technological development which characterizes contemporary Western civilization and its effect on value systems and the changing perception of Man.

People live in a world today connected through various communication channels that link societies and form relations between them. This development integrated the world system, which stabilized after World War II by establishing bodies such as the United Nations and the network of organizations, institutions and specialist agencies operating within its framework and supposedly free of any hegemony, control or influence. The global community has operated for more than five decades at the international level where relations in the areas of trade, economy, science and technology have come under a system of global interaction. However, the issue has taken a more sensitive direction that highlights how societies' and governments' interests cannot be achieved within the framework of a system that overrides matters of identity or abolishes cultural and civilization distinction.

Regardless of the reasons behind the nature of international relations there is a consensus among researchers and philosophers that these relations are "an endless struggle for power to achieve interests" using what is known as "interdependence," according to Joseph Nye Jr., who states that, "increase in the growth of networks of interdependence between nations and groups at the global level is characterized by networks of connections that span multi-continental distances." He stresses the cooperative dimension in human behavior and relations between nations. This model of "reciprocal dependence" is based on the influence of educational links, cultural interactions, economic development, international trade and technological progress. Thus, it enhances the potential for international peace, basic human dignity and freedom. It is a model that sees the world represented by a society of nations (international community) within which societies interact at a high

level of diplomatic, economic, cultural and social exchange, provided that it does not contradict with an individual society's national identity or substitute it. On the contrary, this exchange might be more effective in the context of "cultural diversity" and prosperity of peoples' national identities. The "dialogue between civilizations" could see the future of humanity as defined by accumulation of experience and a deepening of mutual respect for all as a basis for the establishment of a pluralistic humane society. This society is not characterized by stability alone but also by its respect of diversity which enriches it. If this human element is lost and this moral foundation disappears, the idea would become closer to totalitarianism.

The international legal system cannot serve humanity unless it is based on the rules of international law and derived from the spirit and values of humanity. The global system must be governed by the power of international law, which guarantees for individual states their full sovereign and human rights for their populations. This requires the application of international law and the charter of the United Nations, particularly Article 13 which provides for international cooperation in economic, social, cultural and educational fields and assisting in achieving and guaranteeing human rights and freedom for all. This is in addition to Article 73 which guarantees the right to participation in political, economic and educational affairs and an individual's right to fair treatment and protection from all kinds of abuse. All of this should go hand in hand with respect for individual cultures and the protection of "right to cultural diversity", which requires the development of international cooperation in the fields of education, sciences and culture under covenants and charters governing the work of international and regional organizations and institutions.

At the same time the practice of "right to cultural diversity" at the international level will not be accomplished unless cultural dialogue and co-existence recovers and leads to the consolidation of the values of harmony and cooperation in the world and a strengthening of international cooperation within the framework of existing international and regional organizations. In order to be meaningful, effective and structurally

interactive, co-existence and dialogue have to be based on mutual respect in a moral and peaceful sense. In other words, dialogue and co-existence have to be based on legal, moral and equitable rules. Therefore, it is possible to provide an historic opportunity for civilization and cultural interaction in addition to an effective element for establishing global and personal security and prosperity. The right to cultural diversity has become one of the basic rules of international law based on the charter of the United Nations (UN) and the covenants and agreements that govern and regulate cultural relations between nations. Ensuring this human right is an affirmation of cultural identity for all people in the world.

As stated in Article 1 of the UN's "Declaration of Principles on Cultural Cooperation," each culture has its own dignity and values which must be respected and maintained. Every people has the right to develop its culture as part of Mankind's heritage. There is nothing in the concept of cultural diversity that conflicts with achieving common interests between communities and nations within the framework of human cooperation based on mutual understanding and co-existence. However, diversity also feeds the human drive towards owning the means of progress and prosperity motivated by natural competition, which should be an opportunity for cultures and civilizations to communicate these means to serve humanity as a whole. Paragraph 3 of Article 1 indicates that achievements in the scientific, literature, material and moral fields should be for all Mankind and not merely a certain culture, nationality or country.

### *Arab and Islamic Civilization and Co-existence*

#### **The Concept of Islamic Civilization**

Islamic civilization is a product of the interaction of cultures which became Muslim after Islamic conquests of lands and brought the new religion as a gift to all peoples. Islamic civilization in a fully inclusive, deep and wide sense is a common heritage for all nations that participated in forging it. Islamic civilization is not one belonging to a specific race or

ethnicity, but it is a collective civilization for all nationalities and races which participated in its establishment and played a role in its prosperity, glory and expansion to various parts of the world at that time.

### **Islamic Civilization Characteristics**

For each civilization there is a “body” and “spirit” exactly like human beings. The “body” of civilization represents its tangible achievements while its “spirit” represents a set of beliefs, concepts, ethics and traditions embodied in the behavior of individuals and groups, their relations, vision toward religion, life, the universe, the individual and society. Islamic civilization characteristics are formed from these elements. Islamic civilization is unique in five characteristics that distinguish it from other successive civilizations. These characteristics are:

1. It is a civilization of faith that emerged from Islamic doctrine. It is a monotheistic civilization that started from belief in one god, creator of heavens and earth, of Man and all other creatures. It is a man-made civilization but it has perspectives of faith and a religious reference, and religion was the strongest motive for its establishment, creativity and prosperity.
2. It is a humanistic civilization, universal in its prospects and expansions, unlimited to a certain geographic region, race or historical stage, but absorbs all peoples and nations with its global influence. It is a civilization that infuses all peoples and everyone who turns to it will reap the fruits of his efforts. Islamic civilization was built on the basis of faith that Man is the most important creature; that all human activities will inevitably lead to his pleasure and welfare; and that any action Man takes for achieving this goal is considered an action for the sake of God; in other words a humanitarian action in the first instance.
3. It is a generous civilization that has taken from other human civilizations and cultures from the ancient world and generously provided the world with advances in science, knowledge and art. It has provided the values of goodness, justice, equality, virtue and beauty for the benefit of humanity with no distinction made between

an Arab or an Ajami, black or white, or even Muslim or non-Muslim, whether he is a follower of any of the other religions or he is an unbeliever living under the umbrella of the Islamic civilization.

4. It is a civilization that balances between the spiritual and physical in a moderate manner that characterizes Islamic thought. Moderation has also characterized Islamic civilization throughout the ages without excessiveness or negligence, unjust extravagance, temerity or recklessness.
5. It is an everlasting civilization on earth that derives its existence from Islam. Almighty God guaranteed the protection of the true religion (Islam). Therefore the Islamic civilization has its own special characteristics, neither aging nor become extinct since it is not a national culture, discriminatory or against human nature. While Muslims may weaken and their influence may decrease, Islam never weakens and its influence never recedes and hence it is a civilization with permanent presence.

These five characteristics acquire the nature of permanence and continuity from the principles of the true religion of Islam and do not change even if conditions alter or if Islamic societies experience strength or weakness or collapse. Islamic civilization led the march of science and knowledge in the Middle Ages, called the Dark Ages by Europeans, while we consider them the ages of enlightenment in the history of our nation. In this context it is important to note that George Sarton divided scientific activity in his book *Introduction to the History of Science* into historical periods each lasting half a century and mentions a name that is representative of the achievements made in that period. From the year 750 to 1100 (350 years), all scientists were from the Islamic world including Jabir Ibn Hayyan, Khwarizmi, Al Razi, Al Masoudi, Abu Al Wafa, Al Biruni and Omar Al Khayyam, and were Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Persians. These scientists excelled in chemistry, mathematics, medicine, geography, nature and astronomy. From the year 1100 onwards for 250 years Europeans scientists interacted with those from the Islamic world such as Ibn Rushd, Tusi and Ibn Al Nafis. During that period the

European Renaissance emerged and witnessed the translation of the sciences of the Islamic world and their study and development until the present day. This is an historical fact confirmed by the Muslim Arab scientist residing in Germany, Dr. Mohammad Mansour, who was chosen from among 2,000 international figures for having left their mark on the world during the past century following an initiative by Cambridge University.

If the concept of civilization in general is the result of everything a person does to improve his living conditions, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and whether the outcome is materialistic or moral, Islamic civilization is the fruits of the efforts of the whole Islamic World made throughout the ages to improve the existence of Mankind. If civilization is a reaction to human needs, Islamic civilization has responded to all these needs throughout the ages and was the world's unchallenged civilization for many decades. Thus the credit goes to the Islamic civilization in laying the foundation stone for contemporary European civilization by contributing to medicine, pharmacy, chemistry, mathematics and physics, which accelerated the Renaissance and a revival of the various sciences.

### **The Reality of the Islamic Civilization**

The reality of the Islamic civilization today does not reflect the status it should have. However, we have no reason to consider it to be collapsing and is far from accurate when describing its current situation. In addition, there is plenty of evidence to invalidate the theory any collapse of the Islamic civilization comes as a result of the decline of the Islamic nation's role in enriching contemporary human civilization.

The Egyptian intellectual Fuad Mohammad Shibel, who translated *A Study of History* by Arnold Toynbee, was one of the first shrewd thinkers to realize the meaning of civilizational collapse. He says that, "collapse does not exactly mean the end, as history does not indicate a possible life span of any society." Toynbee used the term "collapse" to denote this meaning and it will be seen, when this term is used in this sense, that the most productive, illuminating and famous works in the history of any

particular civilization came in the wake of collapse or indeed as a result of it. This is a profound and long-term vision of the nature of successive human civilizations through which we view the reality and impact of Islamic civilization today. Close examination of the reality of the contemporary Islamic world – bypassing temporary changes and superficial manifestations – will lead us to results which might seem inconsistent with the logic of events. However, if we assume that the fate of civilizations is not linked to historical facts during certain periods of time and that fate is not decided according to the results of crises that afflict communities, we can reach the conviction that the Islamic civilization at this historical stage is in a state of cultural readiness to resume a new round of civilization in the new millennium.

The general weakness manifest in the Islamic World is the decline in economic growth, but this is a temporary stage that will not last long because the roots of the Islamic civilization are still intact and their elements are still vital. Muslims are responsible today for the recovery of these roots and injecting new vitality in order to salvage Western civilization, which is suffering from a serious crisis that needs addressing. Mankind cannot avoid catastrophes without the participation of the Islamic civilization characterized by its spirit of faith, humanism and future vision.

### *Islamic Civilization Among Major Contemporary Civilizations*

Researchers in the field of cultural studies generally agree on the identification of major civilizations whether new or old. However, they mostly differ in the number of these civilizations. Through the examination of basic cultural elements that are used to define civilization, we can talk about six major contemporary civilizations, which include the Islamic, Western, Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Latin America civilizations. However, each of these civilizations has its own characteristics, making them unique in a variety of ways.

## Western Civilization

Contemporary Western civilization is founded on intellectual roots that go back to the Ancient Greek and Roman eras. Among the characteristics of Western thought are five as detailed by Dr. Yusuf Al Qaradawi:

1. Various interpretations of the divine; Western thought is not a pure vision that highly appreciates God but rather is a fractured vision.
2. Materialism alone explains the universe, knowledge and behavior and denies the role of metaphysics and the supernatural.
3. Secular trends – which are the outcome of the previous two – that separates religion and society.
4. It is a civilization built on conflict and knows neither peace nor satisfaction or love. It is a civilization based on conflict between men, and also a conflict between Man and God.
5. Superiority over others; a trend embedded in the minds of all Westerners who consider their civilization as the pinnacle of advancement and do not recognize other civilizations.

These are the traits of Western civilization in the ancient and modern age. We should be fair and say that Western civilization has many positive aspects that are beneficial for humanity in addition to the positive effects that it shares with many bright aspects of the Islamic civilization. Western civilization has managed, through progress in the sciences and technology to provide Mankind with capabilities and potentials never seen before. Western civilization has shortened distances and saved time through modern communications technology to create the “global village”. The first industrial revolution spared Mankind much physical effort through the introduction of machines; the second industrial revolution (computers) spared Mankind much mental effort. It is this age of computers which can carry out massive and extremely complicated operations and has penetrated scientific Islamic life, Quranic sciences, Al Hadith sciences, languages and literature.

The advantage of this culture is that it is not inflexible but adapts to changes around it. It provided individuals with incentives to be innovative and productive and has created a conducive psychological environment

for advancement in addition to providing efficient management that rewards good performers and punishes the lazy and the inefficient. Western culture has also built a society where freedom, basic rights and sacredness of human life are protected from tyranny and that one's dignity, self-worth and freedom from fear and humiliation are the benefits of its society.

These are the positive aspects of Western civilization related to the physical and technological benefits enjoyed by Man. However, this is a double-edged sword which can be used for good and evil. Also the creation of the "global village" is not necessarily all positive and may entail negative aspects. Moreover, it is a civilization of ways and means and not one of goals and objectives. The negative aspects of Western civilization include inconsistency with religious and moral teachings, which constitute a threat to human civilization and lead to conflicts between nations. It also strengthens immoral desires in individuals and impacts the progress of science, knowledge, prosperity, literature and the arts and undermine the foundations of civilization.

### **Indian Civilization**

The ancient Indian civilization was not established on the banks of the rivers in northern India but grew out of the Sumerian civilization and migrated to India where it flourished and became one of the major civilizations of history. The original Indian civilization was established on the worship of an Indian divine pantheon and called for ethical principles close to those advocated by Buddhism and flourished between the years 375 and 475 AD. Indian civilization, or Al Jupta civilization, was destroyed by "Huns" tribes which swept across India, Central Asia and Europe. Indian civilization had been established on successive older civilizations as is the case with all major civilizations. All successive Indian civilizations had common theological themes of meditation and calm. In one way or another, Hinduism has always been an essential factor for the culture of the Indian subcontinent from 1500 BC until 400 AD. One can conclude that the ancient Indian civilization had been built on a

spirituality that tends towards asceticism in life. Al Biruni strongly criticized this tendency in his book about India entitled *Kitab fi tahqiq ma li'l-hind* (or simply, *Ta'riph al-hind*). Contemporary Indian civilization constitutes a steadily growing global power seeking to participate and strongly influence international policy-making.

### **Chinese Civilization**

Chinese civilization goes back to 2000 BC and became orderly and settled between 1786–1223 BC. The Chinese at that time, despite their different origins, saw themselves as the only people worthy of respect while all others were nothing but barbarians of no value. Chinese civilization is different from others in that it has not been affected by foreign civilizations. China did not come under any foreign control that could influence its cultural structure, apart from two occasions—first, when it was ruled by the Mongols and second, in the modern age. The Mongol invasion had left deep influences in the cultural structure of China but these influences faded with time. However, the Western invasion was so violent and severe to the extent that it destabilized the fundamentals on which Chinese traditional society was built. Confucianism is one of the basic components of Chinese civilization. Since China is a major country today, demographically and financially, it is qualified to occupy a privileged position in the international arena, which makes it a competitor for the major powers in influencing global policy making.

### **Japanese Civilization**

Although some researchers combine the Chinese and Japanese civilizations under the title “Civilization of the Far East” and consider them as one, many view Japanese civilization as unique and with distinctive characteristics despite the fact that it originated from Chinese culture. Japan has built a modern and advanced society in various aspects of life and at the same time maintained its language and identity and stands as a competitor to the West in science and industry.

### **Latin American Civilization**

Contemporary Latin American civilization is a mixture of ancient civilizations of the Andean, Inca, and Maya and Western civilization which integrated with the societies of Latin America and converted them to Roman Catholicism. This interaction appears clearly in the arts, music, literature, music, social customs and architecture. Many researchers see Latin America as a distinctive branch of Western civilization that does not match in many respects the pure Western orientation in North America and Europe. Thus, we see civilizations consisting of layers upon one another until the beginning of the history of civilization and which Ibn Khaldun was the first to record in his introduction.

One of the fallacies of many thinkers in the West is their labeling of Western civilization as “humanitarian” and ignoring all other civilizations. The fact is that Western civilization is part of human history which we are experiencing today. All of these other civilizations cannot be abolished or transcended in order to please the sense of superiority and domination of the ruling classes and thinkers in the West. The world has experienced many civilizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and also the Islamic civilization, which is unique and distinguishes itself from others. The decision taken by the UN General Assembly to make the year 2001 the year of “dialogue between civilizations” has put an end to the calls for the centrality of Western civilization. It has also invalidated the racial claims of superiority promoted by some Western thinkers; invalidates its sole leadership of the world which violates international law and contradicts the facts of history and geography. From this point the desire for dialogue between civilizations has come as a wise and intelligent call. The Islamic civilization is the most eligible today to carry the message of dialogue due to its distinctive faith and humanitarian characteristics that are not found in other civilizations.

### **Islamic Civilization and Dialogue for Co-existence Between Nations**

The characteristics of the Islamic civilization do not isolate it from the mainstream, but rather form elements of strength that stimulate dialogue

and push towards the notion of co-existence, which makes it attractive when interacting with other civilizations. This dialogue will lead to what we call cultural reform and I believe that the Islamic civilization has a message, responsibility and role in such reform. Islamic civilization is the only one that possesses today the vital elements required for this reform by providing the message of Allah for the whole of humanity at all times and all places until the end of time. The goal of all cultural efforts is to enlighten Man. What is the importance of materialistic progress in itself? Western civilization has not so far succeeded in achieving progress in faith and belief as provided by Allah, the creator of the universe, which brings peace of mind and tranquility and a sense of mental and emotional security. The Islamic civilization has been built on this vital element, making it a civilization of faith in its purposes and objectives. The Islamic civilization is the one that gives a religious dimension to the idea of progress, so progress is meant not only for advancement alone but also to promote goodness in Man. However, the Islamic civilization is not an ideal, a sectarian goal, or a project that has not been implemented or a vision not yet achieved. It is a reality of living in Islamic society where Muslims and non-Muslims live and form an integral part and participate in building this co-existence.

### **Co-existence in Islamic Thought**

Based on the philosophy of Islamic thought and Sharia, there is nothing more indicative and reassuring about the relation between Islam and the notion of co-existence than what is in the Koran and the Sunnah of his Prophet Mohammad. The common ground between Muslims and the people of the book (Christians and Jews) is wide. While Islam ordered Muslims to open their hearts for co-existence with all human beings, it called them also to open their hearts for co-existence among themselves. Co-existence in Islam begins from a base of faith and not a set of man-made concepts from which international law is derived. Islam confirms the approach to co-existence in various Koranic verses, which formulate relations between individuals and groups, nations and peoples starting with respect for the self and one's fellow man and ending with laws which

regulate relations between them all. This concise study has little room for a detailed examination, but mention must be made of the following verses as evidence of its comprehensive and great philosophy:

- O Mankind be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam) and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Hawwa [Eve]), and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through whom you demand your mutual rights, and do not cut the relations of the womb (kinship). Surely, Allah is ever All-Watching over you. *Surah An Nisa' (Women) Verse 1.*
- O people of the scripture (Jews and Christians), come to a word between us and you, that we worship none but Allah and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords beside Allah. Then if they turn away say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims." *Surah Ale Imran (The Family of Emran), verse 64.*
- Invite Mankind to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with divine inspiration) and the Koran and balanced preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the most aware of those who are guided. *Surah An-Nahl (The Bees), verse 125.*
- And indeed we have honored the children of Adam, and we have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with Al-Taiyibat (lawful good things) and have preferred them above many of those whom we have created with a marked preference. *Surah Al-Isra' verse 70.*
- And among His signs is this, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. Verily, in that there are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge. *Surah Ar-Rum (Rom) verse 22.*
- O Mankind, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is you (the believer) who has At-Taqwa ( i.e. one of the Muttaqin [pious]). Verily, Allah is all-knowing , all aware. *Surah Al Hujuraat (The Dwellings), verse 13.*

- There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Tagut and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. Allah is all hearer, all knower. *Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), verse 256.*

These are in addition to many Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammad the following: “The best people are those who others benefit from”; and “whoever hurts *dhimmi*, a free non-Muslim under Muslim rule, hurts me.” These are the orders of Islam as mentioned previously and in other texts. It directs people towards their humanity, honoring Mankind, guaranteeing human freedom, human intellectual and cultural diversity and prohibition of forced homogeneity. In other words, Islam corrects the perception of the self and others, respects diversity and expects co-existence, thereby downplaying any exaggeration of the self, denial of the ego, intolerance and all things that hinder communication with others. Islam is also rooted in freedom and rejects compulsive integration, which supports the perception of pluralism to ensure positive and constructive dealings. In all honesty, sincerity and confidence we can say that tolerance is one of the fundamentals of co-existence in its modern meaning and calls for acceptance of difference in religion or race. Islam does not only respect the privacy of others, but also permits others to implement their laws in their own environment and under the Islamic system. The coalitions and agreements held and implemented by the Prophet Mohammad since the emergence of the Islamic State on the first day of “Hijrah” from Mecca to Medina, began with the “Medina Document”, which aimed to regulate relations between Muslims and the people of the book in Medina.

Islam has laid the foundation for all the requirements of co-existence, in addition to what nurtures and guarantees its sustainability such as justice, tolerance, support of rights, denial of injustice and correct thinking.

Allah says: Ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety, and fear Allah For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do. *Surah Al-Maeda verse 8.*

Throughout history, Islam as a religion and civilization has never constituted any obstacle in the way of human co-existence. On the contrary non-Muslims have their basic presence in the Islamic principles where much of the Islamic discourse focuses on positive dealing with others because Islam is a religion for the whole world and not restricted to an isolated and fanatic category.

Allah says: And We have sent you (O Mohammad) not but as a mercy for 'Alamin (Mankind, Jinns and all that exists), *Surah Al-Anbiya' verse 107*; And We have not sent you (O Mohammad) except as a giver of glad tidings and a warning to all Mankind, *Surah Saba', verse 28*.

The approach that adopts isolation and estrangement of the other does not represent Islam because Islam is a universal religion and contains vital principles that are inconsistent with confrontation and self-inflicted separation. The vision of Islam on this point can be understood through dealings with non-Muslims who enjoy Muslim protection, where many of the Prophet's Hadiths urge respect for non-Muslims and protecting their rights. The Prophet Mohammad said: "Who oppresses a signatory of a peace treaty, I will be his enemy". Toynbee in his book *Call to Islam* says: "Force was not a crucial factor in converting people to Islam. The Prophet Mohammad himself forged a pact with *dhimmi* (non-Muslims), and undertook to protect them and give them freedom in performing their religious rituals in addition to permitting them to enjoy their rights and influence." Adam Mitz states in his book *History of Islamic Civilization* that churches remained under the rule of the Islamic state but were beyond control of the governing authority and depended instead on signed agreements and the rights these agreement guaranteed for them. Jews and Christians lived beside Muslims—a fact that created an environment of tolerance which Europe did not experience in the Middle Ages. A Jew or a Christian was free to practice his religion under the rule of the Islamic state.

Allah says: And argue not with the people of scripture (Jews and Christians), unless it be in (a way) that is better (with good words

and good manner), *Sural Al-Ankabut (Spider)*, verse 46; For every nation We have ordained religious ceremonies (e.g. slaughtering of cattle during the three days at Mina [Mecca] during the *Hajj* [pilgrimage] which they must follow; so let them (pagans) not dispute with you on the matter (i.e. to eat of the cattle which you slaughter, and not to eat of cattle which Allah kills by its natural death), but invite them to your Lord. Verily! You (O Muhammad) indeed are on the (true) straight guidance. (i.e. the true religion of Islamic Monotheism), *Surah Al-Hajj*, verse 67.

### *Islam and International Relations*

What are the contributions of Islamic thought to regulating international relations in order to create a suitable environment in which all peoples and nations can co-exist? To answer this question we should discuss two basic and firm facts of Islamic doctrine: first, Islamic theory in international relations is a comprehensive one and second, Islamic theory is based on the rules of Islamic Sharia. The concept that governs international relations from the Islamic perspective stems in general from the framework governing the study of all existence and thought. It is the framework that defines human behavior to achieve the will of Almighty God. Allah had created Islam for all Mankind at all times and to be a point of reference for humanity to develop within its parameters. Consequently the Islamic constants are the ones that control humanity and do not lead astray as happened in Europe when it detached itself from religion. We can examine these constants through the following principles:

#### **Islamic Monotheism**

The Islamic perspective is unique in its perception of an absolute and pure monotheism that is different from all other concepts of belief. Monotheism is “the first constant” that Allah ordered in the first verses of the Koran so that it would be the starting point and cornerstone for any sound and practical action. Emphasizing this fact is the most important element of Islamic identity, which influences perceptions and behavior

inwardly and in its relations with others. Therefore, complete harmony will be achieved between thought and action aside from man-made philosophical perceptions, which is based primarily on human individualism and personal interest.

### **Validity of the Universal Order**

Monotheism necessarily entails that Man should attribute everything in this universe to Allah who created it with his absolute and direct will. Allah created this world with the highest degree of order and beauty and exposed it to certain fixed laws. Allah built the universe with astonishing perfection and beauty without any inconsistency, deficiency or defect. The Koran confirmed this repeatedly and drew the attention of worshippers to the wisdom behind the creation of the universe. Allah says in the Koran: "The best of everything He created and began the creation of man from clay." Thus the Islamic perception requires the protection of this universe and refrain from harming it. Therefore, all rules decided within its framework should comply with this Islamic dimension and the various rules and regulations controlling international relations should be defined accordingly.

### **Unity of Humanity**

This principle was decided according to the verses of the Koran. Allah says: "O Mankind be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam) and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women." *Surah Al Nisa', verse 1.*

Moreover, the Prophet Mohammad confirmed this principle in his farewell (before his death) speech. The Islamic system was based on this principle from the very beginning where Muslims have been keen to communicate constantly with other human beings in a manner that would safeguard the earth and secure peoples' common interests and guarantee human rights. The Prophet Mohammad was concerned from the beginning to communicate and passed messages to kings and princes and sent out preachers. The orthodox caliphs and true Muslim princes and rulers gave

the best examples in the realization of human unity when they addressed people with wisdom and good advice. Groups of non-Arabs converted to Islam and Muslims established distinctive relations with non-Muslims and provided humanity with all that they had achieved in the fields of science and literature. This is due to the fact that Islam was sent down from above as a mercy to the world. God says: “We sent thee but as mercy for the worlds.”

### **Principle of Equality**

Equality is one of the prominent pillars of the world order set by Islam for relations between the Islamic nations and other states. According to this principle Islam rejected the idea of discrimination and ordered equality between all individuals. There is no distinction between one sect and another or between one individual and another based on gender, color or race, and all that leads to dissent and discord. Thus, Islamic sources assert that differences beyond the will of humans should not be a reason for unfair discrimination which leads to disharmony, fighting or conflict. They call for using the aforementioned differences to achieve harmony between all people and cooperation in order to satisfy their mutual needs. One of the consequences of this principle is the need for refraining from discrimination based on origin or social status in the call to Islam.

### **The Principle of Justice**

Justice is a fundamental principle in regulating the relation of a Muslim with a non-Muslim, including international relations. It is sometimes expressed as establishing justice and balance. In the relationship of Muslims with others, justice must be taken into account in familiarizing non-Muslims with the call to Islam and a relationship with them would be then defined and should be fair under all circumstances. Verses from the Koran also call for justice in relations between Muslims.

### **Islamic Sovereignty**

Absolute sovereignty and authority in Islam is for Allah and if it is assigned to a group of people, it is only relative. This protects individuals

from tyrants and dictators. In the area of international relations, Islam aims to establish this fact and that Allah's words are supreme. Under this principle a Muslim is brought up only to ensure the sovereignty of Muslims on their decision and their own wealth and the prohibition of oppression, domination and tyranny in the international arena.

### **Commitments and Respect of Conventions**

This principle, within the scope of the Islamic state's foreign relations, constitutes a major anchor. The most important point for Muslims and non-Muslims is that these conventions should be respected even if they might be at the expense of Muslims, as happened to the Prophet Mohammad when he, according to the "Hudaybiyah Reconciliation", had to surrender some men who came to him as Muslims. On this basis and in order to meet the provisions of agreements made with non-Muslim countries, within certain conditions, Islam gives priority to such agreements over any appeal, demand for investment or call for help by Muslims living in these countries. This comes out of observance of the sanctity of these accords and treaties.

### **Loyalty and Repudiation**

Loyalty means allegiance to the believers and repudiation means abandonment of their enemies. This is considered one of the basic principles governing the Islamic nation's relation with other non-Muslim nations and groups. In this regard, it is worth noting that the principle of repudiation is closely linked to the movement of the call to Islam, which defines who should be abandoned. The reasons for rejection of non-Muslims then becomes stronger when non-Muslims refuse Islam and are determine to resist it. The principle of repudiation in this form does not contradict the principle of Islamic tolerance since Islam does not object to co-existence between religions. Consequently Islam orders Muslims to treat others well until they become convinced that their conversion to Islam and compliance with its rules would be for their own good.

*Islamic and Western Visions  
of International Relations*

This approach is not intended as a comprehensive comparison between the Islamic and Western visions of international relations, but rather to search for a rational explanation for current international dilemmas and proceed with creating cultural foundations for co-existence between nations, taking into account that Westernizing the international system's rules has better chances for practical application than Islamic international relations rules. Therefore, objective comparison between the two visions requires taking into account the different period of time when the system of relations between Muslims and other nations was formed in addition to the physical, geographical and moral difference in which both systems were established. The various sources which have enriched the principles of both systems and the cultural, intellectual, political, economic and social benefits should not be overlooked. These differences include:

- **Nature of Governing Rules**

International relations differ in nature according to Islamic and Western perspectives with the former's origin being divine while the latter's origin is man-made. This means that the source of the Western perspective is the changing human will and its realization of personal interests. In contrast we see the Islamic perspective capable of interacting with developments of life in every age and it is open to all human experiences in every culture but on the basis of fixed and comprehensive rules laid down by Allah. These rules govern life and religious affairs and their mandate and legitimacy is superior to any rule by Man, as well as being mandatory as far as the Koran and Sunnah rules are concerned.

- **Difference of Time and Environment**

During the historical period which witnessed the formation of international relations in the Islamic system, relations between non-Muslim countries were based on wars. There was no equality or recognition of others' rights until Islam came and defined objectives and rights of warriors and imposed a moral law governing war.

Although the interval between the formation of a system of international relations in Islam and the formation of an international relation system in the West is more than 1,200 years, the modern international system in the West does not match or even come close to the Islamic system. This is despite the massive developments and deep changes in human mentality and culture over these years. As for the formation of political groups and the overlap of relations between them, international political theory in the West is still unstable as far as the relations of Western countries with other nations are concerned.

### *Obstacles to Co-existence*

The 9/11 attacks in the United States and the collapse of the former Soviet Union have brought to prominence Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilizations." Scholars, researchers, media professionals and politicians alike circulated it in an attempt to find common channels for dialogue and co-existence between nations. This has led to an emphasis on the following matters:

1. The idea that Islam is a danger to Western society and a source of conflicts between various cultural groups has become entrenched, making the cultural axis a base for division. This position has been aggravated by a situation where the world is experiencing economic modernization and development while the Islamic countries suffer from division, weakness and lack of a strong and influential force capable of controlling extremist Islamic groups engaged in conflicts with other cultures. This has also led to the growth of extremist groups and movements in Western countries that are protected under the umbrella of the freedom of expression without limits or restrictions.
2. Dominance of the idea that Islam is the religion of confrontation and conflict based on misinterpretation of the Islamic civilization and its history, where it is accused of involvement in many examples of violence throughout human history. This has come as a result of certain parties whose interests can be served only through igniting

conflicts and wars between nations exploiting the Islamic civilization's weakness in achieving economic, political, scientific and social accomplishments. This is in addition to the slow development of the Islamic civilization compared to the West and the idea that most Islamic movements and powers tend towards further introversion and confrontation before the West, and enhances the idea of cooperation between members of a single civilization, particularly between the United States and Europe. This Western cooperation also calls for alleviating differences between them in order to face the coming risks from the Islamic World. While the world had fought two devastating world wars religion was not the major drive for these conflicts. The actions of the extremist movements in Islamic society have deliberately been attributed to Islamic ideology, which never endorse such actions. These powers ignore the tolerant nature of dialogue and co-existence in Islam and its civilization throughout history. Examples of this are many including what happened in the aftermath of the liberation of Jerusalem during Umar Ibn Al Khattab tenure and the conquest of Andalusia at the end of the Umayyad dynasty.

3. Deliberate confusion and ambiguity in relations between Islam and the West. Islamic conquests had never been aimed to control, oppress or steal the wealth of other people, but aimed to respect society in contrast with what is depicted by Orientalist studies. These assessments deliberately reflect a confused image about Islam in Western society, viewing it as a barbaric and vicious warrior. The Orientalist perception has come about from a lack of distinction between what is Islamic ideology and what comes as a result of the prevailing social, political and economic circumstances resulting from human practices. This narrow and corrupt understanding of Islam is apparent when it is placed within the circle of "Oriental despotism" and disseminates extremism and intolerance, cruelty, terrorism, irrationality and reflects the backwardness of Islamic culture as a whole.
4. Some Orientalists, under the influence of certain parties with specific agendas, forged historical facts in the absence of any Arab or Islamic

mass media presence, which has encouraged media circles in the West to depict Muslims as enemies of the West. Such parties have been determined to promote misconceptions about Islam, ignoring or lacking awareness of the flexibility of Islamic thought, its universality and comprehensiveness in solving global problems. This is in addition to their weakness in differentiating between thought and human practice (between Islamic doctrine and terrorists actions), despite the various statements by Western leaders who confirm their respect for Islam and that their war is not one against Islam. However, all this comes within the framework of official diplomatic courtesies.

5. Although many Muslim countries have friendly relations with the West and despite the political, social and economic problems which these countries experience, there are some parties in the West that exaggerate concerns and fears of Islam and conclude that every Muslim, wherever he lives, is extremist, militant and anti-Western.
6. Ignoring public opinion in Muslim countries by the West enhances hostility and escalates rhetoric about national identity to the point of extremism, which in turn aggravates tension between Muslims and the West.
7. Emergent political and intellectual discourse is explicitly hostile to Islam under the cover of freedom of speech, which equally influences decision-makers to adopt such antagonistic attitudes.
8. The West is attributed with economic, cultural and technological power and tries to curtail the power of Islamic countries and impedes attempts to build a distinct Muslim identity, viewing it as a departure from the values of dialogue, co-existence and tolerance and an incitement to violence. The West exercises considerable pressure on Arab and Islamic systems to exclude all those Islamic movements it considers as having radical and hostile programs against the West. Even moderate movements are not spared while Western right-wing extremist movements carry explicit destructive and racist programs and practices against other civilizations.
9. The West continues to dominate modern media and mass communications, which contributes to antagonizing other nations and

the Islamic World in particular. In addition, the West spends considerable effort promoting and consolidating Western concepts internationally such as “democracy”, “terror” and the culture of “globalization” etc.

10. Lack of equality in international agreements reflect the interests of the stronger sides, which have often been drafted during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when most of the Islamic countries were under the imperial rule of the West. These agreements have not been updated or amended since then. The continued implementation of these agreements in their old form controls the political, military and economic institutions responsible for formulation of international strategy such as the Arab-Israeli peace treaties.
11. Duplicity in Western discourse constitutes one of the largest impediments to finding common ground for co-existence between nations.

### *Role of the Media in Establishing Co-existence between Nations*

The orientation of media outlets is a serious hindrance to co-existence between Islam and the West. Modern means of communications have helped in overcoming the barriers of time and place and spreading various ideologies through satellite channels and the Internet. This technological development in international communications has contributed to restructuring world through the emergence of political and economic entities that have made achievements in cooperation and opened borders for trade including cultural and media exchange.

Western media has been giving much attention to Islam and Muslims since the emergence of Islamic movements that call for liberation from the influence of Western colonialism in their countries. Western media has blasted these movements and branded them as intolerant and call for the hatred of foreigners. Western media highlights a limited number of issues such as the relation of Islam with Western civilization, women’s rights, and the status of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic countries. The focus of

Western media on Islam and Muslim issues is not official government policy but tends to support the attitudes of Western governments keen on their capitalist interests. Western media is fighting on two fronts—communism and Islam. When communism fell, Western media found itself in a void and so filled it with an intensified hatred of Islam.

A publication issued by the Hartford Theological Institute includes an article by the Reverend Martson Speight, former coordinator and director of the Office on Christian–Muslim Relations, who claims that “the end of the Cold War between the capitalist and communist camps raises the question: ‘will Islam be the new bogeyman?’” Martson says that, “the power of the communist world does not pose a threat any more as a result of the spectacular events in eastern Europe. Thus the Americans who used to elaborate in talking about the supposed danger of communism found themselves all of a sudden deprived of their delightful subject.” He adds that:

The question is will the media, which takes the responsibility of warning the American people of risks, choose another group of people as a source of threat to the United States and the world? The bad image of Islam portrayed in the American media has drawn some of us to see Islam as the new bogeyman.

Martson supported his words with examples from the American press summarizing an article by the US writer Krauthammer Charles and raising the question: was the image of Islam good in the Western media before the end of the Cold War? There is no doubt that some moderate voices in the West tried to look at the relations between Islam and the West in an objective manner. Among these are university professors, intellectuals and politicians, but we should ask about the size of this current of moderation and the extent of its influence. The 9/11 attacks have been the strongest justification for complete bias in Western media against the Islamic World and especially the negative image portrayed of Islam and Muslims as weak, backward, terrorist-supporting and extremist—all things that do not match our history and civilization. This image is not based on concrete facts but is based on racism.

## **Inefficiency of Islamic Media**

Media and communication experts assert the inefficiency of the Islamic media when targeting the West and its lack of ability to address the West in its language and build a comprehensive image of Islamic culture that would correct negative stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. Although the Muslim World is full of Arabic and Islamic satellite channels, these are unable to address global public opinion in a language it understands. In addition, media professionals in the Muslim World have failed in improving the quantity and quality of their media content in face of the efforts made to improve the image of Arabs and Muslims in the Western societies. These minorities face increasing challenges, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the direct accusations that Muslims and Arabs not only support international terrorism but also provide fertile ground for terrorism to threaten Western interests.

### *Is There a Way Forward?*

#### *The Foundations of Islamic Media for Co-existence*

Media experts agree on the need for this plan to benefit the Islamic World in a way that would ensure an objective portrayal of Islam and Muslims and highlight the tolerant principles of Islam. The Islamic religion should be portrayed as supporting relations between humans and spreading the principles of justice, mercy and peace between nations. The following are mechanisms that can be implemented through this media plan:

1. Call for concerted efforts through academic institutions and bodies concerned with media affairs in the Islamic World to develop an integrated and long-term media strategy to correct the distorted image of Arabs and Muslims.
2. Call for the establishment of a global think tank that seeks to open channels of dialogue with scientists, experts and academics in the West to correct misconceptions and remove misunderstandings.

3. Promote initiatives from professionals and media experts who work with modern technology to use their skills in highlighting the true image of Arabs and Muslims and refute the lies constantly spread by the Zionist propaganda machine.
4. Invite the United Nations and its affiliated organizations to develop legislation that prohibits insulting religions and their doctrine and encourage respect for different communities without compromising their beliefs.
5. Establish an Islamic body for media research to monitor and analyze what is published about Islam and Muslims in Western media and prepare facts to respond to the distorted images or insults directed at Muslims, their culture and religion.
6. Establish an Islamic media body for the production of programs, films, news reports and other content that address the true image of Islam and Muslims and disseminate it to other nations through satellite channels and the Internet and in the relevant foreign languages.
7. Issue series of books, tapes and CDs to familiarize people with Islam and its value in various languages and distribute them widely through various official and civil channels.
8. Take advantage of modern communication technology in the fields of satellite channels and the Internet to establish Islamic channels that broadcast in Western languages, in addition to Islamic sites on the Internet to explain Islam and its principles to Westerners.
9. Organize a series of informational workshops on the influence of modern communication technology and its use in education and research. Media professionals from Islamic countries who are able to correct the image of Islam and Muslims can participate in these workshops.
10. Establish an Islamic network for information through which knowledge can be transferred in the Islamic world to help in the exchange of expertise, particularly in those areas connected with correcting the image of Islam and Muslims in Western societies.

11. Establish an Islamic fund for the improvement of the image of Islam and possibly financed through support from Islamic governments and donations from Islamic institutions and figures.

*International and Regional Roles  
in Enhancing Co-existence and Dialogue between Nations*

International, regional and even local organizations play an important role in creating a suitable environment for co-existence between nations and communities by finding points of convergence, understanding and dialogue in order to frame an alliance between countries and societies. An “Alliance of Civilizations”, which represents an alliance between societal, political and civil powers that can unite in fighting terrorism, intolerance and extremism and those who seek isolation and division of cultures and societies. This alliance needs efforts from the international community at all levels (local, regional and international institutions and civil society) to bridge the gap and eliminate prejudice, misconceptions and polarization of views that pose a threat to world peace.

The tension in recent years between Muslim and Western societies depicts a lack of mutual understanding. Consequently, the work of international and regional organizations should focus on helping societies move towards this direction and the promotion of dialogue between civilizations in order to address concerns of humanity and finding relevant solutions. A dialogue between civilizations at all levels will be a means to prevent the deprivation of people’s rights as confirmed by international treaties and guaranteed by divine law and humanistic principles; instrumental in creating awareness of the importance of such issues and their role in the development of human civilization; and spread values of justice, equality and co-existence between all. This requires all Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to respect human dignity without discrimination; respect for nations whether big or small; and seek common ground between differing cultures in order to be able to confront international challenges. NGOs should accept to work together and seek understanding as a suitable mechanism for enhancing common international

principles and putting an end to global threats. Moreover, the efforts made by these organizations should be based on mutual tolerance and respect of the views and values of various cultures and civilizations, and the rights of all individuals to preserve their cultural heritage and reject the desecration of moral, religious and cultural values and the violation of holy places. Participation of all individuals and nations in the decision-making process and distribution of benefits locally and globally is essential alongside the adherence to the principles of justice, equity, peace and solidarity; the principles of law and the charter of the United Nations; the promotion and protection of women's rights and dignity; the preservation of the family; and the protection of the vulnerable in society including children, youths and the elderly.

*Efforts of ISESCO and its Vision for Dialogue and  
Co-existence Between Nations and Civilizations*

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) has focused on the issues of dialogue between cultures and civilization and the necessity for cooperation in accordance with Islamic doctrine as inspired by the Koran and Sunnah. It is the belief that dialogue is the best way forward for the development of co-existence between nations, removal of the causes of tension and misunderstanding, and confronting the attempts to distort the image of Arab and Islamic civilization and culture. Dialogue and co-existence are at the center of the programs launched by ISESCO and are based on three premises: mutual respect, equality and justice, and rejection of intolerance and hatred. The conditions necessary for this are the following:

1. Co-existence should be equally balanced and within the framework of equality and mutual good will. It should be multi-faceted in order to allow a comprehensive co-existence at societal and governmental levels.
2. Co-existence should aim to bring benefits to the parties involved and secure their interests linked to progress in the cultural, scientific, economic and social areas of life. It should also seek to fight injustice,

aggression on communities and nations and work to eliminate the causes of conflicts.

3. Dialogue and co-existence should be carried out in a civilized manner and free from topics and problems that constitute a permanent source of dispute.
4. Dialogue and co-existence should go hand-in-hand according to prepared programs to achieve their targeted objectives.

### *Future ISESCO Vision and Philosophy on Dialogue and Co-existence between Civilizations*

Out of its charter calling for dialogue to achieve co-existence and respect for the cultural identity of all individuals, ISESCO incorporated in its future plans an integrated program entitled “Effective and Interacting Islamic Culture.” This program has focused on the most important characteristics of Islamic civilization and its ability to interact positively with human cultural advancement due to its flexibility without any loss of principles. Islamic doctrine has produced an effective and humane civilization that has influenced the course of other civilizations despite moments of weakness felt historically and geographically. It has also faced significant challenges, particularly from colonialism, which tried to weaken Islamic civilization and its cultural identity. However, the Muslim World was able to recover, prompting calls for cooperation, co-existence and dialogue on the grounds that Islam’s message is a universal and humanitarian one.

The cultural strategy of the Islamic world endorsed by the ministers of culture and information in Muslim countries reiterates that no culture can at present live independently and that cultural diversity and interaction have become a reality. It also involves the need for the Islamic World to refrain from doctrinal differences in order not to be an obstacle to peaceful co-existence between civilizations and religions. ISESCO has set out an approach to further work within this framework in order to enhance co-existence and understanding within the Islamic World on one hand and other civilizations on the other.

*Mechanisms for Cooperation and Partnership  
with Institutions Concerned with Dialogue  
and Co-existence between Nations*

The work of ISESCO includes many projects and programs emanating from the organization's educational, scientific and cultural strategy, which aims to keep pace with global development in the areas of education, tolerance, dialogue, democracy, respect for human rights and the advancement of the sciences, technology, communications and information systems. ISESCO works in cooperation with international and regional Islamic and Arab institutions to promote the intellectual renaissance of the Muslim World that does not contradict with the teachings of Islam, its values and cultural heritage as follows:

1. ISESCO seeks to increase its participation in the meetings of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) including Islamic summit conferences and gatherings for matters involving ministers of foreign affairs, education, culture, information and planning, as well as the OIC General Secretariat regarding coordination of policies and programs.
2. ISESCO continues to work in parallel with international institutions and organizations to implement decisions taken at international conferences. It also seeks to establish new relations with other concerned institutions seeking to strengthen the influence of joint cooperation.
3. ISESCO continues to consult with international, regional and governmental organizations and regional banks such as the World Bank, UN Fund For Development, Islamic Development Bank and Arab Bank for Development in Africa, etc., in order to implement joint programs and activities for the benefit of Islamic countries.
4. ISESCO seeks to develop partnerships and diversify its cooperation with finance institutions and donors capable of supporting large-scale projects in Islamic countries in order to assist with comprehensive and sustainable development. ISESCO also aims to influence such institutions to respond more to the urgent educational, scientific and cultural needs of Islamic countries.

Finally, ISESCO believes the role of national, regional and international organizations should focus on:

1. Promotion of the principles of dialogue between civilizations and cultures and consolidation of the foundations of peaceful co-existence between nations. Dialogue is the choice of the wise and an effective way to resolve disputes and put an end to crises that contemporary societies face.
2. Confirmation of the concept of cooperation based on mutual respect to strengthen relations, cultural exchange and solidarity among nations, within the framework of respect for cultural, political and social values according to the principles of international law.
3. Search for appropriate means to further the objectives of the “dialogue between civilizations” within the framework of the requirements of the UN Charter, conventions, declarations and relevant international covenants.
4. Promote the “dialogue between nations” to become a legitimate tenet of international relations rather than a mere cultural choice that is non-binding on the international community.

### *Suggestions to Correct the Image of Islam and Muslims in Western Society*

Co-existence between nations requires each participant to have a thorough knowledge of the other with regard to ideological and intellectual affiliations in order to find common ground for co-existence. Among the ways to achieve this are the following:

1. Sincere attempts to introduce the values of tolerance, focusing on dialogue, co-existence and communication between nations and an avoidance of confrontation. The significant contributions of the Islamic World to global cultural and intellectual heritage should be highlighted through all media and customs exemptions for Arab and Islamic cultural and intellectual products that serve the aim of co-existence.

2. Review of extremist Arab and Islamic political and cultural material, which promotes suspicion of other nations and fear of cultural influence.
3. Active participation to improve the political, social, economic and cultural environment of Islamic countries to avoid the emergence of radical and extremist rhetoric.
4. Awareness that extremism is harmful to Islam and Muslims.
5. Belief in the principle of equality between civilizations and that all civilizations make up the collective human civilization in which every individual bears the responsibility for its advancement for the betterment of Mankind.
6. Focus on the points of convergence with other cultures instead of focusing on points of divergence and ensure balanced dialogue with educated elites in Western society.
7. Unification and conformity in any discourse with the West from the Muslim World, since diverse and contradictory arguments merely create confusion. Europeans have managed, within the framework of the European Union, to develop a united European political and cultural rhetoric despite ethnic and cultural differences, which has enhanced economic and financial integration and helped protect European cultural heritage.
8. The developed world should bear the responsibility of helping less developed nations to progress through the provision of suitable support and opportunities without influencing their sovereignty and culture.
9. Supervise the work of Arab and Islamic communities in the West to create awareness among them of appropriate Islamic conduct in order to gain the confidence and respect of Western society.
10. Promote and support common interests between Islamic countries and the West, promoting the notion that Western interests can be secured through friendly relations with Arabs and Muslims.
11. Western institutions should be encouraged to establish meaningful partnerships with Arabs and Muslims within a context of mutual

cultural exchange and cooperation based on recognition and respect for the principle of sovereignty.

12. Make all necessary efforts to promote and advance the fundamentals of dialogue and co-existence within Islamic society and work hard to improve the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in Islamic countries to ensure comprehensive and sustainable development.