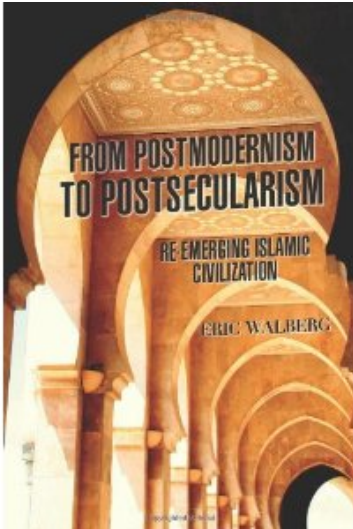


Just International review of "From Postmodernism to Postsecularism"

Written by Eric Walberg Эрик Вальберг/ Уолберг □□□□□ □□□□

Sunday, 16 February 2014 10:11



Thoughts on *From Postmodernism to Postsecularism*

Chandra Muzaffar in dialogue with Eric Walberg

Muzaffar: Eric Walberg's new book *From Postmodernism to Postsecularism: Re-emerging Islamic Civilization* <http://www.claritypress.com/WalbergII.html> is a stimulating and informative survey of both Islamic history and reformist thought, culminating in an analysis of the ongoing upheavals in WANA.

The book is an extensive exposition on Islamic Civilization itself. It covers the whole spectrum of dynasties, major episodes and personalities which is why the book should be an important reference for students of the civilization.

You are right, Eric, in arguing that for Islam the goal has always been "to nurture a morally sound community based on the Quran..." (p28). There have been endeavours in that direction in the past—some successes, many failures. In this regard, I am wondering why you did not mention specifically the moral indictment of Muawiyyah by Abu-Dharr Al-Giffari who some would view as the first major critic of the creeping injustices in early Muslim leadership?

Your central point of course is that we are witnessing the genesis of a re-emerging Islamic Civilization. I am not sure. While Judaism has been usurped by Zionism and Christianity has

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succumbed to secularism as you opine, Muslim societies, it seems to me, more than others, are trapped in the politics of identity.

In their reaction to Western hegemony, on the one hand, and domestic autocracies, on the other, they are articulating notions of state and society which reveal clearly that they have yet to resolve the question of what it is to be a Muslim, what it is to abide by one's faith, in the 21st century.

The politics of identity which in a sense exposes the similarities and the dissimilarities between Al-Qaeda and Ikhwan-ul-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) could well hobble Muslim attempts to create a viable civilization. If I may say this, you may not have given enough attention to this critical aspect of Muslim societies today.

I am more convinced now than ever before that if Muslims are to play a role at the global level in the midst of all the momentous changes taking place today, they should not remain obsessed with the idea of an identity-based civilization characterised by Islamic knowledge, Islamic finance, Islamic attire, and so on. Universal values and principles in Islam, most of which are also at the core of other religious and ethical philosophies, should be presented—and practised—as intrinsic and integral to a new, and yet ancient, global civilization that is “neither of the East nor of the West.”

Walberg: Many thanks for your thoughtful reflections on my book. I appreciate your concerns that the dogmatism of political Islamists can be a negative factor, a stumbling block to re-emerging Islamic civilization.

Your parallels between the identity crises of Judaism-Zionism, Christianity-secularism and Islam with its own identity crisis is arresting. You state, “Muslim societies, it seems to me, more than others, are trapped in the politics of identity.” How true. An excellent topic for a conference!

Re Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, yes he deserves more prominence today. I do mention him briefly in the context of post-independence Algeria and President Ben Bella:

“The new very secular President Ahmed Ben Bella (r. 1962–1965) tried to co-opt Islam, hammering home Islam's socialistic message, much like Nasser in Egypt. Muhammad's companion Abu Dharr was billed as the “father of socialism”, the revolution was the “revolution

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of the poor against the rich", but the state's overall message was secularism. In 1964, protests against an increasingly autocratic Ben Bella led to a military coup by Houari Boumedienne (r. 1965–1979), who continued the secular, state socialist policies of Ben Bella. Again, in 1970, Boumedienne, too, tried to co-opt the Islamists (as Ben Bella did before him, and Sadat was doing at the same time in Egypt), but land reforms provoked Islamist opposition similar to what had occurred in Iran in 1964. The new dictator came full circle to experience the isolation of Ben Bella, as there just wasn't a secular mass movement supporting socialism imposed by fiat. By the late 1970s, events elsewhere would overtake this secularist-led revolution that had run out of steam." (p136)

One of my purposes in writing my new book was to try to bridge the Islamic-secular, East-West divide which continues to cripple the popular movement to counter imperialism. The tragedy of Afghanistan and today Syria drives this home.

It is heartening to read a review by an American non-Muslim socialist, William Hathaway, who in "Forging a Socialist-Islamist Alliance" commends *From Postmodernism to Postsecularism: Re-emerging Islamic Civilization* for helping Westerners "understand our ongoing war on the Muslim world—from Libya to the Philippines, from growing beleaguered communities scattered across North America and Europe to South Africa and Australia—from the perspective of those on the receiving end of America's violence today. ... It is wake-up call to both sides of the anti-imperial equation, pulling together the many threads that can unite us, from Foucault's "political spirituality," to the Egyptian revolutionaries' solidarity with America's 99%, to the American Muslims' support for the peace and ecology movements."

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