

Islam and the West*

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Prof. Atila Eralp: Today we have Professor Fred Halliday of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Professor Halliday has contributed immensely to the study of international affairs, primarily to the study of Middle Eastern affairs. He has focused on three major areas: international political theory, the international relations of the Middle East and the international dimensions of revolutions. He has published a major book on the Theory of International Relations: *Rethinking International Relations*. He has also published a book on Middle Eastern affairs titled *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*. This book was just recently translated into Turkish. It is called *İslam ve Çatışma Miti*, published by Sarmal Yayınevi. It is a pleasure to have Prof. Halliday with us today, we are delighted to have him, and he will speak for about an hour or so and we will have discussion afterwards.

Fred Halliday: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I thank Prof. Eralp for his very warm introduction and thank you all for being here. It is a great pleasure to be here at METU. It is the first time I have been at this university and it is the first time for 33 years that I have been in Ankara. I came here as a student, on the train back from Iran, at a time and in an age when to get a ticket on the boat from İstanbul to Trabzon (48 hours) cost ten TL, one UK pound in those days, and a very interesting trip it was too. I learnt a lot about the sociology and history of the area and I remember I was taught to count up to ten in “*Lazca*” which I have unfortunately forgotten. An old man who saw me studying Persian even brought me a Koran to read to him. It is a great pleasure to be back here.

The topic that I am lecturing on today is a very broad one, and like any great topic in social science or international relations, allows of no definitive resolution. This is an argument that everybody will come at from their own particular intellectual and personal background, and also inevitably, as we are speaking in Turkey, but it would be equally true in

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Iran or any Arab country or Indonesia but also true in Britain, you come with the perspective of the particular country in which this debate is posed.

I want to start by making a very general point. What I am talking about is a phenomenon in international relations, as well as domestic politics, concerning the relations between what is termed the West on the one hand and Islam on the other. I think one can say without undue simplification that over the last 10 or 15 years there has emerged in both East and West a discourse, an ideology, a language which argues that there is some fundamental conflict between Islam on the one hand and the West on the other. So, I am making two points: one is that this is common both to the Middle East and to other Muslim countries. You can hear it in Indonesia, you can hear it in Nigeria, you can hear it in Bangladesh. There is a rhetoric from Muslim countries about confrontation with the West, and there is a rhetoric in the West about the threat, the danger, the difficulties of dealing with something called Islam. In that sense, it is a rhetoric which is shared. In my view, it is equally false in both cases, but one has to take the rhetoric in its eastern and in its western variants and examine the themes, examine the causes. But, there is no doubt that by the very fact of it emerging from East and West and by the very fact that, if you like, Khomeini or Hizbullah on the one hand in the Middle East and Le Pen or right-wing strategists in the United States or Germany on the other, are saying the same thing, it makes much more difficult to critique and to assess this issue.

There is an American saying that if you are in the middle of the road, you get run over by both sides. This is true for anybody who tries to critique the myths of both East and West. But, of course, this myth about so-called 'Islam' and so-called the 'West' – as if they were unitary entities – relates to a broader theme which is also part of the intellectual climate of our times. It is to be found here in Turkey and in the Middle East, as well as in the West: this concerns the power and prominence of culture and value derived from ancient civilisation in the contemporary relations between peoples and states. In other words, there is an argument, quite a false one as well in my view, that we are witnessing a shift in the nature of conflict: relations between states were in the past defined by power or by economic interests or by territory, and now discourse, ideas, the media on the one hand or civilisational clashes on the other have a quite a new salience, a new power. This has come with the collapse of communism or with globalisation or with the rise of the internet or whatever your explanation is – whatever the cause, this is the case. Behind this specific but itself very prevalent idea of 'Islam' versus the 'West', there is another broader, social science thesis about the role of ideas, the role of culture, the role of civilisation. Now, of course, this has received a particularly clear polemical, and in my view utterly irresponsible formulation in the

writings of Prof. Samuel Huntington and his book, *The Clash of Civilizations*. Wherever you go in the Middle East or elsewhere and you ask “what do you fundamentalists think?”, they say: “We love Huntington”. It was in Saudi Arabia, they love him there, probably they love him in Japan as well. Who is ‘they’? It is the anti-modernists, particularists, nationalists or fundamentalists who love him because what he is saying is: “East and West are separate, we are all distinct, and there is going to be a conflict”, and so forth.

Prof. Huntington is a very intelligent man: he has written a simplistic but also a dangerous book. The point that I would stress about this issue is that we are discussing it here in the social science context and so we should. Because, it is only social scientists who are going to make sense of this issue. But, I do not have to stress in Turkey, and I would not have to stress in Britain, that ours is a small voice. Ours is a weaker voice not only because there are fewer of us, and of course we do not go around and threaten people, but also because our explanations are more complex. Those who have a simplified view, that there is for example an eternal Islam versus the West conflict, which has been going on since the 7th century, have an easy time with it just, as do any conspiracy theorists, or astrologists. I often say to students, if you want a perfect paradigm, a thing that defines the field of investigation which defines its concepts, which makes predictions, which even has its own concept of falsification, then astrology is the perfect example. The problem is astrology is nonsense. But, the fact is that we are offering something which is not believed in by most people.

Now, it is fair just to ask very briefly where am I coming at from this, in looking at this question. But, also to stress what are some of the, not just from the intellectually autobiographical points or professionally relevant points, but also what are the underlying themes of my book. The first theme is very simple. I see my job, as an academic working on the Middle East or on any other region, as explaining, and analysing what goes on in particular countries or what goes on in the relations between those countries and others. In other words, the prime task is *explanation*. Now, there will never be complete agreement on explanation as on any great issue in social science – the industrial revolution or the information revolution or the origins of the First World War, or the origins of the Turkish Independence Revolution. There will never be complete agreement among social scientists, and it would be a very boring day if there were. But, we would share in common the view that we are trying to explain what is happening, and to look at the evidence. I say that, because if you take any major phenomenon in the Middle East today, you are faced with a challenge not of Islam or the West, but of rational explanation. In my book, I take certain examples: it could have been any example but I

take the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War of 1990-1991, and the issue of human rights in the way it is discussed. It is very important actually to look not just to what people say but also what people do. A central point that I am making for example, in the chapter on the Iranian Revolution is this: yes, there was a lot of talk of 'Islam', of *Allah-u akbar*, and the Koran, but what actually happened? How was it that, for example, eight million people were brought onto the streets? Why was it the largest opposition demonstrations in the human history? Why did an army of 400,000 collapse in 3 weeks? How did a group of clergy come to get control of a state? What did they do about the trade unions? What did they do about women? What did they do about ethnic minorities? After all, the largest minority in Iran are the Persians, do not forget. Most people in Iran are not Persians although they are part of Persian culture.

All these questions were, of course, phrased in an Islamic way by many people but actually the solutions were not ones which were taken from holy texts. So one has to look at what is actually happening: my argument is that if you do look at what happens, then yes, the discourse may be Islamic, it may be Marxist-Leninist, it may be modernist-authoritarian, it may be modernist-liberal, it may be astrological, it may be environmental. But, what people actually do is not determined by the ideology. Another obvious example: When Saddam invaded Kuwait, people said "this is Islam versus the West" and Saddam, of course, would quote Lenin one day and Mohammad the prophet, the next, saying "it is Jihad, Jihad". Then he said it is an anti-imperialist struggle. Why did Saddam invade Kuwait? He invaded it for a very simple reason: he was running out of money, so he decided to rob his neighbour. Analytically, there is no problem: people have done this throughout history, and will probably go on doing it. But there is nothing distinctly Iraqi, or Islamic or Marxist or un-Marxist or anything other than a perfectly straight-forward secular, rational act in this. He made a mistake, but Saddam was not stupid nor was he blinded by ideology. So, one has to look at what actually goes on. I like very much the work of the anthropologist Michael Gilsonan *Recognizing Islam*. He writes about what Muslims do in their societies, but he never quotes any of the holy books: this is because the books do not explain what the warlords or the political leaders or the Ulema or the Hizballahi or anybody else actually do. So, in a sense my real answer, to rhetoric about Islam versus the West, and to orientalist, culturalist or fundamentalist explanations of what people do, is not to go into the holy text and do interpretation or "*tafsir*". It is rather to see what they are doing, and try to explain it, to come out with an alternative explanation. That seems to me to be the primary responsibility that one has. Even if you are economists, and you are looking at why the Saudi Arabian economy is as it is, and the Afghan economy is as it is, or the Malaysian economy as it

is, you are not going to start with “*Iktisadi Islami*” or “*Iktisadi Tavhidi*” or “*Iktisadi Hadifi*” or anything else. You are going to start with people making money, people being employed or looking for jobs and all the rest.

Secondly, there are two additional points I would stress. One is that for all the movements of ideas across frontiers and the people across frontiers, and the money across frontiers and for all what is today called “globalisation”, which is a very loose term with some accuracy and some inaccuracy in it. For all of that, we still live in the modern world and have done so for all the period we are talking about, in a world in which *states* are central. I mean by states not juridical entities, but administrative bodies with armies, with ministries, with employment and so forth. Those states divide the world. There are 195 of them at the moment, and attached to states are values, particular values and particular histories, which we call nationalism. Now, my argument from an international relations point of view is, if we are looking at this discourse of Islam versus the West, one has to go beyond the words and ask “Well, what about the states involved?”. That means two things. It means, first of all, that there is no one ‘Islam’ and there is no ‘West’ as far as international relations are concerned. There are 54 Muslim countries. Well, 54 countries which are members of the Organization of Islamic Conference, which met in Tehran last December. There are many other countries, and one I know quite well, Ethiopia, where actually the majority of the population are Muslims but which are not so classed. There may be 60 Muslim countries in which Muslims are a significant factor: there are a lot of Muslims in Russia for example as well. All of these states have separate interests, they have separate definitions of their national tradition, they have a separate definition of their relation to Islamic tradition. They also have separate policies with regard to employment or political structures or the position of women or minorities or whatever it might be. In other words, we are dealing with distinct entities. I need hardly say, to anticipate a later argument, that if you look not at what they say - which may be *oumma*, *oumma*, *oumma* - and look at what they do and what they have done then their relation to ‘Islam’ is variable. They have interests which do sometimes lead them to espouse pan-Muslim causes: the Arabs support Palestine but do this in part to keep their own populations quiet. They do not *do* much for the Palestinians. Muslim states also fight *with each other*. The most important and bloody inter-state war of the 20th Century, except for the Japanese-Chinese War, the second longest inter-state war, was the war between Iran and Iraq of 1980-1988. We can talk of many other conflicts: Egypt and Sudan, Egypt and Libya, Morocco and Algeria and so on and so forth. In other words, states pursue state interests while espousing the universal discourse.

The same goes for the 'West': there *is* no one West. There is no one West in international relations terms, there is no one West in political terms, and most important of all, there is no one West in terms of political values. When people say that human rights or sovereignty are western concepts, those concepts were produced not as a result of some undifferentiated West. They are produced as a result of conflicts between individual countries involving movements for the rights of people to vote, for the rights of women or for the rights of trade unions, or whatever it may be. In other words, you have to disaggregate both so-called 'Islam' or the Muslim world and the 'West'. Look at what individual states and people within states have *done* rather than at discursive fields. So, an international relations perspective, while leading me, of course, to see the role of solidarity, the role of sentiment, the role of sense of community which is there, and in some ways it is getting stronger, also leads me to see that one has to differentiate.

Thirdly, studying Middle Eastern societies, sometimes with a sociological sub-interest as it were, one has to study ideologies. The first that I studied and continue to study, which is now a growth industry rather out of control in my view, is nationalism. Now as many of you know, there are enormous debates in nationalism, indeed a spectrum of debates. But, I just want to identify the two poles of this debate on nationalism: it explains a lot about the approach to the question of Islam versus the West. There is, at one end, the view which most nationalists have. That is, the view of 99.9% of humanity and quite a lot of social scientists, what is broadly termed it 'perennialism', or primordialism. It is that nations have existed for hundreds of thousands of years, that they have a distinct identity, that they have a distinct culture, that they always have a distinct language; nationalism is that movement, that ideology which fulfills the destiny of this nation. This is sometimes called the "sleeping beauty" theory of nationalism. So, the purpose of nationalism defined as such is to provide historical justification for their nations, to purify the language and to defend the nation against all sorts of encroachments.

At the other end, you have the 'modernist' approach: this argues that nationalism is in fact the product of the industrial and political revolutions of the last 200 years. Its historic derivation is deceptive: it reads back into the past current concerns, for example the need to define the ethnic group or to define the language or to define the territory, and of course it also constructs the history. Everybody has to have a history: let us look at Qatar, with no disrespect to the heroic people of Qatar, which is just a bit of sand on the coast of the Arabian peninsula. Today, Qatar has its own national history. They dug in the sand and they have found something. I do not know what but enough stones to make up something. You then have a national identity constructed for modern purposes. But the point about the

modernist approach is it denies history as an explanation. It is not history which determines the identity or the state or the community: it is current concerns which then runs to history for validation.

Secondly – and this is the central point for all religions – the past is not a set of prescriptions for the present. It is not a guide-book for running modern life. The past is a large range of options from which you select what you want in order to meet modern purposes: I sometimes compare it to a menu. A perennialist approach to the past, whether in nationalism or in religion, is to treat the past as a fixed menu: for the perennialists you have a set pack – you have soup, you have kebab, you have baklava or something like that. The *à la carte* approach is you have 50 or 100 choices, and you choose which one you want. If they have not got your speciality, you say garson “I want this, please bring it”, and then you put it into the nationalist boxes. The combination of invention-selection is always there. The most important thing is that whatever you have you must claim that it was always there. A very good example: In the last two years in Britain, I say two years not twenty years, people have begun to celebrate the Saints’ Day of St. George, which is April 23. Everybody knew St. George as the patron saint of England – he is also the patron saint of Greece. Nobody took any notice of it but in the last two years people started to wearing little lapels, referring to the patron saint of England St. George. You see it on flags, in pubs and in cars and so on. Not the British flags but the St. George flag which is the red cross in the middle. Why is this? You ask people. They would say, it is against Brussels, against the European Community conspiracy of Brussels which is trying to take over this country, against the autonomy of Scotland. You see this from the top to the bottom of the society. It is an assertion, a modernist reinvention of something for current political purposes yet disguised as a return to the past.

The same applies to the religion. Now, what I am going to say may be offensive to some of you but I say it because I believe, and this is not the case for any particular religion. Let me be clear: I am not concerned with the issue of faith. In Islam there are five rules of Islam: Believe in one God and prophet, Ramadan, zekat and so forth. Now, I am not talking about that which is a theological issue and also a matter of personal conviction. I am talking about in the political and social sphere and looking at what people are saying and doing. In all major religions of the world today, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, you have movements which are trying to interpret them for political purposes and for social purposes. What they are doing is taking this reserve of religion and constructing, just as nationalists do, a set of policies for the present. This too has a modernist explanation although as with nationalism, 99.9% of people would not accept it.

Let me illustrate this argument in two ways. First of all, if you look at any of the major areas of social and political activity for which religion is said to be relevant, one sees not one model but many. In other words, one sees not a fixed-menu but an *à la carte*. And, while this has always presented as the fixed-menu, as “the” answer, in fact, it is one of many answers. Take the question of political constitution or political form in the Arab world. If you look at the Muslim states today, there is an enormous variety of states which claim to be Muslim. There are military dictatorships, as in Libya or in Pakistan, which espouse Islamist politics. There is tribal monarchy, as in Saudi Arabia. There are other monarchies, two in fact, which claim direct descent from the prophet, in Jordan and Morocco. But the others do not. There is a clerical regime in Iran with the idea of the *fakih* being able to interpret the word of God: the *fakih* is not quite infallible, but is still the best you can get – and do not let anybody contradict it in Iran! You have of course a pluralist, democratic system in Turkey. So, which of these are Islamic or not Islamic. All of them can find their own quotes or elements in the tradition. If you take the question more broadly of socio-economic formation, there was in the 1960s a big debate in the Arab world: “Does Islam favour communism or capitalism?”. Well, it will not surprise you to know that those who wished to support communism found their quotes. There is a *hadis* which says “The people share in three things: water, grass and fire”. So, Marxists said: “Yes, water, grass and fire are the equivalent in Marxist theory of the means of production in the tribal society, and therefore by extension they can share in industry and land tenure and all the rest of it”. But the others came and said, ‘No, no, wait a minute. There is another *hadis*’ which says, ‘Whoever takes your house, kill him’. That is the defence of private property. But, that was not the end of the argument. Then the others have said, ‘Wait a minute! We look at the great Muslim empires, the Emevis, the Abbasids, the Ottomans. What was the main form of the socio-economic formation? It was not communism. It was not capitalism. It was feudalism. So, we should have feudalism.’ Then, a sheikh from Tunis came and said, ‘No, no, no, in the Koran there is slavery, let’s bring back slavery.’ That is it. Now, most Muslims would *not* agree with that. The point I am making is that in the search for an Islamic form of government you can find all four models if you want to and what you have found is what you looked for.

Another example: there is at the moment a debate in both Israel and Palestine about the question of a compromise between Israel and the Palestinians. Let me start with the Jewish side because it is very fascinating. The question has been posed, ‘Can a Jewish state give away Jewish land?’ Now, again, for a modernist there are no surprises. If you are in favour of peace with the Palestinians, you can cite the case of King David who gave away land to the King of Tyre. However, if you do not

like peace with the Palestinians, you can find another quote which says, ‘not an inch of Jewish land should be given to these *Amalekites*. On the Palestinian side, can there be a compromise with Israel? Again, you can find a quote from the Koran which says, ‘you must fight the *kuffar* till the very end’, and so on and so forth. But, the others would come and say, ‘No, and Abu Ammar has come and said, ‘No’, and the prophet came to a “*hudra*”, a truce with the *kuffar*: the *kuffar* are the tribes who are not with Islam, and on that basis a compromise with Israel is possible. Again, the text does not decide the issue: you find what you want.

One further example can be the position of women. There are plenty of quotes from the holy text of Islam which would suggest and endorse the inferiority of women to men. They are found in the texts and traditions of every major religion – there is nothing specific to Islam in this. Then there are the quotes which say the opposite, to imply that women are equal in the eyes of God. There is also the very important saying in the Koran which is used by feminists, and used by many people including the human rights people, that no prescription of religion can be imposed: ‘*La ikrah fi al-din*’. So, on that basis you would have freedom and can interpret it to mean equality. You can interpret it to mean democracy. You can interpret it to mean the right even to leave your own religion. So, on the basis of ‘*La ikrah fi al-din*’ you can do a lot. But, again, there is always a reply. I had a debate with some fundamentalists in Britain recently, and I brought up this question. I said, “How can you adopt your fundamentalist position but at the same time, and I quoted it in the Koran which says, ‘if you do not believe, you will be sent to Hell’, and all the rest of it. And, then on the next page you have *la ikrah*. A hand went up from the back and he said, “Prof. Halliday, it is true that there is no compulsion in religion. What that means is you are free to go to Hell.” I said, “Thank you very much. I appreciate the compliment!”

So, one part of the modernist argument is that the past is variable. The interpretation is contemporary and contingent. The other point which has been well made by scholars, Sami Zubaida, Aziz al-Azmi and many others, is that the very language which fundamentalists use in all countries is not historic or traditional: it reflects modernist influence and modernist concerns. Let us take Khomeini. What was his main goal? “*Inkilab-i Islami*”, Islamic Revolution. Consider “*inkilab*”. I think the original word in Turkish was also the same word, “*inkilap*”, before “*devrim*” was brought in. The concept of *inkilab* is a modernist concept. It has nothing to do with the Koran. The *Cumhur-i Islamiye*, Islamic Republic, again, is a modernist concept. The whole language which Khomeini used about the oppressed, *mustafazin*, fighting the *mustakberin* is a transposition of the language of populism, as found in Latin America or in any other Third World country. The concept of imperialism, he called it *istekbar-i Jahani*,

“world arrogance”. This is not a bad phrase to describe some countries’ behaviour. But, this again, was a modern concept of imperialism, given Koranic form. The whole language which he used was one which replicated the themes of modern radical politics. Some of the ideas are taken directly from the communists, some from radical populists, some from dependency theory. The same would go if you read the texts of all the Algerian fundamentalists: their discourse is about imperialism, cultural domination, the need to defend the nation and so forth. In that second sense, the language of fundamentalism is itself modernist. It is a language which addresses modern concerns and, above all, it is a form of nationalism. When Mr. Erbakan says that the West is corrupting the “*ahlak*” of the Turks, this theme of cultural corruption is found in every nationalist and revolutionary context, from the Chinese revolution to the populism of Latin America. It may take a particular form, but it is the universal modernist argument. Similarly, and this will be my last example, the concept of corruption, ‘*fesad*’. Of course, when Khomeini talked about *fesad* he meant certainly certain things which are specific to Islam, as any religious leader would. But, the main thing he was talking about *fesad* was that ‘we earned all this money from oil and the Shah and his friends stole the money’. That is basically what he meant and that is a perfectly modernist term: it implies the state should be accountable and is not so.

Just to sum up, these three general points which I want to make are these. First, one would need to look at what people do rather than what they quote and what they invoke; secondly, the international relations (IR) perspective which looks at the differences of states, the East and West; and, thirdly, the need or the possibility for, at least, a non-essentialist, non-perennialist study of ideology, be it nationalism or religion.

Let me now look at the myth or the rhetoric of East versus West in two other contexts: first of all in the West, and secondly in the East. In the West, there is a lot of rhetoric in both Western Europe and in the United States about the ‘threat’ of Islam, and the need to confront it. This is also how it is found elsewhere. It is found increasingly in Israel, and it is found in the country that is not western but eastern, and regarded to be more eastern than Islam, which is India. In fact the country in the world with its most anti-Muslim rhetoric in public life is India. The new BJP government in India is a Hindu fundamentalist government. Hindu fundamentalists are anti-secularist and anti-Muslim. There is no doubt that we live in a world of mass communications and ideas spreading across frontiers: but that has, in some form, been going on for three thousand years – look at the spread of Islam or anti-Semitism or anything else. It is not CNN or the Internet which brought us this spreading of ideas – they have intensified it. In such a discursive context, a space is created in which people can find negative images: it is almost like a kind of prejudicial or

demagogic web-site which people from any country or culture visit to get bits of what they want for their own campaigns. So, for example, there is the argument that Muslims are all drug-runners or that Muslims are all terrorists or that Muslim immigrants are all trying to swamp our society. This can be picked up from one society to the other: there is a curious similarity in the language found in India and the language found in San Francisco or Oklahoma, or anywhere in between, about the threat which Muslims pose. As a political fact, as a student of ideology - what people say in newspapers and what people say in their running for election and what ministers of immigration say, and what certain European Union as well as NATO ministers say - there is no doubt this is a phenomenon which has acquired quite a great prevalence over the last ten or fifteen years. There is no doubt about it.

Now, there are two questions which follow. First of all, "Is it true?" and secondly, "Why is it?". To repeat, the most obvious point is that it is simply not the case that in the contemporary world or in any period of the modern history of the last five hundred years, there has been a unified confrontation between the Islamic world and the West. To make a small but I think not irrelevant historical point of view: if you just look at the diplomatic relations of the Ottoman Empire, sometimes Istanbul clashes with western countries sometimes they are allied with them. The whole history of the Ottoman Empire from the 17th century onwards was one of variable involvement in the balance of power politics, the alliances, the shifting alliances of the Western politics leading up to the First World War when Turkey allied with Germany and Austria against all other countries. How can you talk about a timeless conflict between Islam and the West from Kaiser Wilhelm's perspective when he regarded himself as the Kaiser of all the Muslims. Maybe the Muslims did not like it but that is what he thought he was doing. If we look at the last ten or fifteen years, Muslim countries have conflicted with each other more than they have conflicted with the West. An extreme example of course is what has been happening in the Persian Gulf. It is an ironic fact that in the first war that in effect NATO ever fought, it did not call itself NATO; yet it was a NATO operation from start to finish in command structure, in the logistics, and in the tactics used. It was a war to defend a Muslim country, to defend Kuwait. The second war that NATO fought was also to defend a Muslim country, to defend Bosnia. In my view, they should have done it three years earlier, but they did it nonetheless in the end. So, if you look at the facts of international relations this hardly accords with the picture of Islam versus the West.

These are obvious comparable points if you look at it from the other side. Look at the foreign relations of Iran. The most apparently revolutionary Islamic country, Iran, fought an eight-year war with Iraq.

Iran does not support Shi'ite Azerbaijan against Orthodox Christian Armenia: it supports Armenia against Azerbaijan and has good trading relations, and some say, I do not know, good military relations with Armenia. Iran said nothing about Chechnya where 40,000 Muslims were killed by Boris Yeltsin who is much loved in the West in spite of human rights violations - which are "n" times more than many other people criticized on human rights violations. Iran does not support Kashmir. There was no Iranian protest about Kashmir because of Tehran's good relations with India, and because the Pakistanis have a bomb and the Iranians deeply suspect them. I could go on.

There are many many other examples where Muslim solidarity does not operate, and one of the examples is particularly about Turkey. Did the Muslim world support Turkey over Cyprus? No, it did not. In the Non-Aligned Movement and elsewhere it supported Greece for many years. So, it is simply not the case either historically nor contemporaneously that international relations are dominated or defined in cultural terms. Huntington, in what is the most irresponsible sentence in the very irresponsible book said, "Islam has bloody frontiers". Now, what is all that about? First of all, you have this simplistic, reified concept of Islam reinforced by something which - I am sorry to be tough with him but I am as if marking his essay - demonstrates that he does not know anything about these countries. He says all Muslims look at the world in terms of two categories: The world of Islam, *the Dar-el Islam*, and then, the enemy world, *the Dar-el Harb*, the world of war. But, this has not been the case since the armies of Tarik conquered Spain in the 8th century. Most Muslims, most Turks, most Iranians, most anybody do not look at the world in terms of *Dar-el Harb* and *Dar-el Islam*, and nor do the newspapers, nor do the political leaders. Yet in Huntington there is a hypostatized Islam plus a generalisation about the contemporary world.

On the other hand, there are cases where Muslims *are* behaving aggressively towards non-Muslims. I can think of Indonesia at the moment where the slogan in the mosques is, "Death to the president, death to the IMF, death to the Chinese!". They mean the Chinese traders. It is a very clear case. But, who was responsible in Bosnia? It was not the Muslims. Who shelled Sarajevo for 390 days or 690 days, and killed 20-30,000 people? In Palestine, who is responsible for the impasse in the peace process? Now, it is not the Palestinians: they are being reasonable to an extreme. Israel wants 70% of historic Palestine, plus. Who is responsible in India? It is not the Muslims. It is the Hindu fundamentalists. The slogan of the Hindu fundamentalists is self-revealing: "There are two places for Muslims, Pakistan or *Kabristan*" - the graveyard. Then, they say "Pakistan should be abolished, should not exist. That was the imperialist partition which divided our country and

Pakistan should be reintegrated with India.” So, there is only one place to go for Muslims, *Kabristan*, the graveyard! I made this point just to underlie just how false Huntington’s generalisation is.

If we therefore assess this idea of a Muslim threat it simply is, as a generalisation, invalid. Moreover, if there is a threat to the dominance of western powers, like the OECD powers, the developed, industrialized western states today in the world, a long-term threat does not come from Muslim countries. It comes from those which were or still are, to some extent, threatening it economically, that is the economies of the Far East. Those are countries which can produce modern goods at competitive prices with much lower labour costs and all the rest of it. They have taken a downturn in recent months, but they will be back, probably slimmed down and with even lower wages. After all, Singapore with a population of 3 or 4 million produces half of all the computer hard-disks in the world, and thirty years ago, they were worse off than Turkey or Iran in terms of economic performance. That is an amazing achievement. It is done, may I say here in METU, by one thing above all, which is through education and education directed strongly by a state. There is therefore a potential threat to the dominant position of the economies of western Europe and the United States but it does not come from the Muslim world whose economic performance in general is very dismal (you only have to look at the World Bank annual reports or look at the world distribution of foreign investment to see that). This is for reasons that have nothing to do with religion but with the kind of leadership which has taken place and the states they have created. There are some exceptions. Turkey and Malaya are two exceptions, but in general nobody is investing in the Islamic world. There is no coherent economic threat from them.

So, hostile western rhetoric about an Islamic threat is false. Then, one has to ask the question why it recurs. There is one argument from the cultural theorists who, I feel, have got a little bit off the reservation if I can put it that way. They are trying to explain more than they can really explain, and they love to come up with the claim that there is a history of discursive, epistemological, semantic, verbal abuse of Muslims in the West and that it is still going on. So, if they go back to Dante, and they go back to all sorts of other portrayals of the “terrible Turk”, and things that Lloyd George said and so forth, they can say, ‘look the West has always disliked Muslims.’ You can find plenty of evidence for this. But, on closer examination, this is *not* an explanation. The first point that any sociologist of culture or sociologist of power will tell you, is you can not assume that what existed in the past exists now; if it does, it must be because it was reproduced. In other words, people were taught it. Parents taught it to their children. School teachers, states, generals said, ‘This is what you are going to believe.’ People are not born with prejudices about Muslims any more

than they are taught knowing about international relations, or the theory of inflation. Therefore, one has to say that the past only explains the present if you can explain its continuation by demonstrating the mechanisms of the reproduction. So, one asks why were X and Y prejudices reproduced? Why was another forgotten?

If you look at Muslim stereotypes in the West, they are very mixed. They are an *à la carte* rather than a fixed menu. An extraordinary example is Auschwitz. The weaker people, the people who gave up the right to fight and to live were known as Muslims. Why was that? Because Muslim was associated with someone who was weak, not someone who is aggressive, shouting “*Allah-u akbar*”, “*jihad*” and so on. A Muslim was somebody who is weak, somebody who gave way, somebody who is submissive. It was not a term of abuse but a term implying that people were not assertive. In that case, you have another stereotype, one which is completely different from the one that we have today. So, the past cannot explain the present. One rather has to ask, “Why in today’s politics has it arisen?” Then people would say, “Ah, but we all know why it is. Because of the end of the Cold War.” This is one of the most misleading ideas that you will find today in international relations. It is not half-true or partially true: it is complete nonsense from start to finish. But it is very widespread. You will find it in the press, in books. It sounds very smart. What is it trying to say? It is trying to say that the West had an enemy in Communism and Communism collapsed. Now, they have got to have another one, and the other one is going to be Islam.

There are a number of things which are wrong with this. First of all, the communist threat, however exaggerated, however rhetorically abused, *was* a real threat. Communism set out to conquer the world. That is what Lenin and Stalin wanted to do. Their successors built 45,000 nuclear weapons and built up a large army in order to do that. Communism did not succeed but it was a serious challenge to the West. It was not invented by the West. It was a real one. Of course, things were invented in McCarthyism or in emergency laws in Turkey but Communism existed and that was the goal, global victory. So, the argument runs, if you have not one threat you will get another. People often say, “Yes, that has got to be true: it is challenge and response. Arnold Toynbee and a bit of socio-biology are thrown in”. But let us look at it closely. Is it historically the case that all societies have needed threats? A very good counter-example is the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards and the Europeans: this was not against any rival. There was not any threat there. They went out there basically to make money, and to develop plantations and to settle people in order to alleviate their own population problems and so forth. They did not go out there because of a threat. Is there something in the contemporary West (assuming this reified concept) which means it wants

a threat? What do the people in the West want? People in the West want to make money. That is what globalisation is about. It is about turning the whole world into a huge shopping arcade and an industrial production plant: that is what it is about. It is not about producing a threat. I like, in this context of cultural conflict and reification, the saying of Voltaire. He said 'In the marketplace, there is no Mohammedan, no Christian and no Jew. The only infidel is the bankrupt.' That is the logic of globalisation which we see today. So what sounds like a very sensible and brilliant projection of the West needing an enemy simply is not true.

What is the explanation for the myth? The argument that I make in my book is that one has to look at the politics of individual countries. One has to look both in particular, national political context, and also one has to look in a modernist sense at how an 'anti-Muslim' rhetoric has developed. I say anti-Muslim rather than 'anti-Islamic' because people are not publishing books saying Mohammad was not a prophet or that the Sheri'a is oppressive or whatever. You do not find books saying that. You can find books saying Muslims, people who are Muslims, Turks in Germany or Pakistanis in England or Algerians in France are a threat, or 'black' Caucasians, as the Russians like to call them, are a threat in Moscow or whatever. The rhetoric is against people not religion. Why is that rhetoric regularly coming up? It is coming up for a number of different reasons. In the case of Serbia, which is, I think is the gold-winner for anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe, it is to do with the crisis of communist ideology and the need for the authoritarian Serbian government and rulers to find a way of mobilising people. Serbian nationalists are great ones for conspiracy theories. Some assert that there is an underground bunker in Vienna which is the site of – wait for it – a 'Jannissary-Vatican-CIA' conspiracy against Serbia. Now, you may say, "Wait a minute, this cannot be true!" But it is! If you read the Serbian press, you see what some of their leaders are saying. Now, this is an invention. It is explained by the needs of the post-socialist, authoritarian, nationalist regime and their competitors in Serbia to mobilise people.

So, anti-Muslim prejudice is contingent on what has happened in the 1980s and the 1990s. In Israel you have this right-wing religious movement which has become anti-Muslim. Until recently, it was not the case. The classic rhetoric of right-wing Zionism was that everyone was a Hitler or a Nazi. In other words, it took negative images from that context. You now have this anti-Muslim rhetoric as a result of the conflicts in Lebanon with Hizbullah, and also the rise of HAMAS among the Palestinians. This is giving Israelis the occasion to phrase their militancy in these terms. You get things like the Rabbi at the funeral of Baruch Goldstein, the murderer of 29 Palestinians, who said the fingernail of one Jew is worth more than the lives of 1000 Arabs, and much else besides.

He sees the Islamic threat here and there, and everywhere. It is a recent thing. It was not a theme in classical Zionism, and it was not a theme in Zionism even in the 1960s. There was nationalism, there was anti-Nazi sentiment and they used to say the Arabs are like the Nazis: but the Islamic issue has only come up more recently. Look at France. It is obvious what it is. It is a rhetoric against immigration and the problems of unemployment. In Britain, curiously, anti-Muslimism is less prevalent. The British Empire had less conflict, not for reasons of virtue but just of accident, with Muslims than it did with almost anybody else compared to Irish Catholic terrorists or Hindu terrorists or Greek terrorists in Cyprus. The British Empire actually had very little problem with Muslims, and with no disrespect to the Ottoman Empire, I might point out that the British Empire had the largest number of Muslims in history: there were more Muslims in the British Empire than there were Christians and than there had been in any other Muslim empire. Despite this past, however, a new anti-Muslim rhetoric has begun to grow in Britain.

There *is* a rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric now in Europe related to immigration and to other issues. But again, if you take the question of terrorism, which is one of the stereotypes of this issue, most terrorists in the Middle East, have not been fundamentalists. They had secular ideologies: I do not have to mention the most obvious cases for the Turkish audience – be they of left or right. But it is also the case, if you look at the Palestinians. Most of the terrorist acts in the 1960s and 1970s, and the hijackings were carried out by Marxist-Leninist groups. As far as Western Europe is concerned, the main terrorist problem comes not from the Muslim world: it is from Irish, Basque or Corsican terrorists, each with their own nationalistic agenda.

To finish on this point: if you say, ‘Why has this rhetoric arisen in a variety of Western countries?’ - and we could talk about America as well - it is for contingent, very often specific reasons. Then of course, it all appears to be part of this broader anti-Muslim rhetoric. The most common theme of all, which is related of course to the symbol of Islam, which is also on your flag, is that the Muslims are encircling people in a strategic crescent. Somehow, the Indians are talking about this, the Europeans are talking about it with regard to Algeria. Of course, it is demagogic, nonsense.

Let me now look at the other side of the story, the rhetoric of anti-Western militancy in the Middle East. Now, this is a theme, that has long been present. When did Islamic fundamentalism start? Did it start with the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1928, or did it start with the Wahhabis in Arabia in the 18th century? If we are talking about contemporary politics, it

is a significant phenomenon of the last 25 years. We are talking about the 1970s through the Iranian Revolution and on.

To generalise across a wide range of movements and contexts, what are the themes which are raised here? The first is that the West has been dominating the Muslim world, either formally through colonialism, or informally. When not dominating, it has been intervening: it is intervening in the Gulf, in Northern Iraq, in Algeria. There is a general sense of Western domination or Western intervention, which explains all or most of what happens in the region. A second theme, which is very common and found in many many countries, not just in Turkey, is that the West is trying to divide the Muslim world. In the Arab world, the most potent negative words are “*taksim*” and “*enfesal*”. *Taksim* is partition, what the imperialists did after the First World War when the Arabs wanted to be one. *Enfesal* is secession. It is the breaking away of the country. Above all, the Syrians splitting from the United Arab Republic with Egypt in 1961. Arab nationalist sentiment remains very concerned on this matter: of course, Northern Iraq, as far as it is concerned, is both *taksim* and *enfesal*. Thirdly, there is the argument that the West is indifferent to the oppression of the Muslims. They go on talking about human rights but what about Palestine, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir and so on. Nobody I know ever talks about the horrendous oppression of the Muslims of Burma, with half a million human beings thrown out of Burma in recent years. The West will not say much about what is going to happen or is already happening in India.

Then, there is the theme of double standards with regard to Israel. Clearly, the sentiments felt in the Muslim countries throughout the world about the West are not solely a result of the creation of Israel, and the denial of the Palestinians’ right to have their own state. But this has been a major source of concern, and all the more so in recent years because of the failure of the Oslo peace process to be honoured in the spirit as well as in the letter. As somebody who has been following and involved in the Palestinian question for 30 years, I supported, and support, the Oslo agreement. It is a reasonable, certainly not ideal, compromise. Any people in the world who lost 70% of their national territory in the space of two generations, have a reason to feel pretty aggrieved. The Palestinians should recognise Israel and are pretty reasonable to accept only 30% of the national territory; but I have to say, that is the best they can get. That they are now only being offered half of that 30% is an insult and an outrage. At the same time all this talk of going back to the *intifada* and the armed struggle, or reviving the historic anti-Israeli rhetoric, is both illegitimate and impracticable. But, there is no doubt that these sense of double-standards over Israel is a further fact.

Then there is the theme I mentioned before; the theme of corruption, of “*fesad*”, or the corruption of the “*ahlak*” of the Muslims through the media, tourism, through CNN, McDonald’s etc. Again, this is a theme which is very widely heard in some countries including Turkey, and even which takes the form of thinking ‘you would be better off without tourists.’ The solution that the Tunisian fundamentalists have come up with on tourism is a very neat if preposterous one. They have said, “stay out of the mainland, put them all in an island”, which is fine except that all the main tourists beaches and historic sites inside happen to be on the mainland.

Then finally, there is the argument that the West is anti-Muslim because it is maintaining dictatorial regimes in the Muslim world. That is not a theme which concerns you here, but it is a theme which you hear in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt. It is a theme that increasingly you are hearing from dissident Palestinians who do not like the kind of 1950- style dictatorship that Arafat is creating. So, in summarising Islamist grievances against the West, I am generalising across a range of countries: but I am sure those of you who are familiar with Turkey and other countries would recognise the familiar themes; the themes of domination, partition, cultural corruption and indifference, the oppression of Muslims.

Well, what do we make of all this? First of all, to what extent are these themes specific to Muslims? Are they particularly Muslim themes? The theme of foreign domination or foreign partition is not specific to the Muslim world. The Hindus also feel it, in regard to what happened in India when India was partitioned. You hear the theme of foreign domination in China at the level of economics, politics and at the level of interference in human rights issues and cultural corruption. The Chinese like to talk about the ‘sugar-coated bullets’ of capitalism, and the corruption of the West through McDonald’s and pop music and all the rest of it. Nothing to do with Islam! The same can be heard in Christian countries about the corruption of the world market, corruption of the youth through consumerism and TV and all the rest of it. You hear much of the same in Latin America. These themes of imperialism, domination, cultural corruption may be phrased in a particularly Muslim way: they are not actually specific to the Muslim world. If you look at the pattern of Western domination with its colonialism or military intervention, or whatever it is, over the last 50 or 100 years, there is nothing that I can see specifically Islamic or anti-Islamic about Western policies. It is a policy of hegemony, domination, imperialism. It is not an inequality, it is not something that is, in any sense, part of a conflict between the Islam and the West. It is, rather, a product of the economic and political inequality at a *global* level inherent in the modern international system.

This goes also, if I may say so, for the much abused concept of, or critique of, orientalism. The idea that somehow western writing on the Arab world, or the Muslim world had a particular agenda or a particular level of distortion, or particular level of misrepresentation. I simply do not think it is true. The same issues arise in the study of Latin America, Africa, India, China, Japan, and of course, as with Western writing on the Middle East, so, elsewhere, these are replicated in writings by nationalists, fundamentalists within these countries. Nobody is more essentialist about Japan than Japanese nationalists. So, just to sum up on this point, the rhetoric of Islam versus the West as found in the East, I think, has very little to do with religion, even as it is phrased in a religious form.

What do I conclude from all this? I repeat that, as academics and as intellectuals, we have a responsibility not to let this rhetoric go unchallenged. I do not imagine we will ever win the argument. I do not think that, since the most intelligent press in the West still has headlines like "Islam and the Modern City", "Islam and War", "Islam and Sport" as if this reified concept explains anything. But one has to go on, making the argument, and not let either the Khomeinis or the Huntingtons of this world monopolise the argument. Of course, we all know that ideas and words have effects: this is the downside of my book - a myth once it is up and running does have its effect. If people believe in such a thing, then they may well make it true. If you tell inhabitants of Sarajevo that they are all Hizbullahis and Wahhabis, and you shell them for some 600 days, they may become Hizbullahis or Wahhabis because the latter are the only people who give them money and a sense of identity. The same goes for other cases as well. If you oppress people and drive them into the ground, because you say that they are all terrorists - as it is happening to the Albanians in Kosovo - that they will not be unbelievably restrained. They will start taking up guns. You must expect that. The myth becomes a reality. It is not, therefore, really a question of academic debate.

Secondly, again and again, one has to do this boring but necessary academic task of disaggregating. As social scientists we like to compare, generalise, look for laws, and so on. But we must nevertheless, also disaggregate. Is this generalisation true of all Muslims or most Muslims, and conversely is it true only for a Muslim? In the argument about terrorism, most Muslims are not terrorists and not all the terrorists are Muslims. So, where does the generalisation get you? Not very far.

Thirdly, I do believe that the modernist approach in the sense of anti-essentialist, anti-perennialist approach to these things is important. To give one other example: today, everybody says that in Islam there is no separation between religion and politics. They would quote the supposedly classical phrase, "*al Islam din vu devlet*", "Islam is a religion and a state".

Yet this is a phrase invented in the early 20th century by one of the *salafin*. If you look at the history of any Muslim country, at the history of the Ottoman Empire, there was a division: there was the Sultan and there was the *Sheyh-ul Islam*. There were two centers of authority. In the titles of Suleyman the Magnificent, the word “Caliphate” did not appear: he regarded this irrelevant to his authority. So, the essentialists would say “*Islam din vu devlet*”. But if you look at what really happened, what people have said, you will discover this idea is a modern invention. It does not mean that people do not invoke religion to legitimate political power, but the two sources of authority remain distinct. So, one has to challenge the assumption of continuity and, if I can put it that way, demonstrate the effects of modernity. Finally, we should remember the oldest of all social scientific prescriptions, one which the very non-idealistic, non-fundamentalist Machiavelli recommended to all of us: ‘do not confuse your wishes with reality’. Look at what the people are actually doing. What they are doing is what they are doing everywhere. They are trying to get power, they are trying to control their daughters and sons, they are trying to get control of the state, they are trying to get good university degrees, they are trying to make money and make their country the most wonderful in the world. That is life and there is lots of conflict and inequality in it: but it is not ‘Islam’ versus the ‘West’. Thank you.

Atilla Eralp: Thank you professor Halliday, for your colourful presentation and much needed intervention. Your book and also your presentation are, I think, a major contribution to our understanding of the Middle East.

Fred Halliday: Well, I talked for too long and that reminded me of what happened to the King of Afghanistan in 1929. The King of Afghanistan, Ameanullah, was a great admirer of Atatürk. He visited Turkey in the 1920s and he heard that Atatürk had spoken in the *Büyük Nutuk* for 36 hours to the National Assembly. Ameanullah went back to Afghanistan and said: “I will do better and I will speak for two weeks”. But after ten days the tribes revolted and threw him out of power. That was the end of his regime, and the beginning of the troubles of modern Afghanistan.