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Thought for the Month

The unbelievers will be
Led to Hell in groups:
Until, when they arrive there,
Its gates will be opened.
And its keepers will say,
“Did not messengers come
To you from among yourselves,
Rehearsing to you the Signs
Of your Lord, and warning you
Of the Meeting of this Day
Of yours?” The answer
Will be: “True: but
The Decree of Chastisement
Has been proved true
Against the unbelievers!”

Al-Quran- 39:71

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FOCUS

Seyyed Hossein Nasr and a number of his disciples offer another way of thinking about the implications of *al-tawhid* for the unity and integration of knowledge. Nasr agrees with other Muslim scholars on the importance of the principle of *al-tawhid*, the hierarchical ordering of the sciences, and the view of *al-tawhid* as the highest form of knowledge and the final goal of all the Muslim's intellectual strivings. By contrast, however, Nasr focuses primarily on the natural sciences; he also placed great importance on philosophy and traditional Islamic metaphysics, which he and other like-minded scholars view as the entry point for understanding the relationship between scientific and religious knowledge. Consequently, they use the same metaphysical terminology that was current among Muslim thinkers such as al-Razi, Ibn Sina, al-Shirazi, Ikhwan al-Safa, and others.

One of these terms is cosmology, or cosmological knowledge, which is employed as a point of entry to the study of nature. Cosmology is a branch of metaphysics in which the macrocosm, or the greater cosmos, is compared to the microcosm, or the lesser, human “cosmos”. Within the context of cosmology, to observe Nature is to observe the action of the Creator, and the legitimacy of the ongoing pursuit of the natural sciences depends on the degree to which these sciences reveal the overall unity, connection, interdependence, and complementarity that characterize the divine creation. Hence, scientific knowledge that conforms to the spirit of Islam is knowledge which derives its legitimacy from the fundamental doctrine of Islam, that is, *al-tawhid* in all its varying senses, and which strives ultimately to integrate particulars within a single comprehensive whole. There may be many different explanations, interpretations, and levels of thinking. However, what remains is the principle according to which the created world consists of the unity of unified entities, whereas God the Creator alone enjoys what Nasr terms “the unity of the Unique”.

The organic link between scientific knowledge and the knowledge of God's oneness means that scientific knowledge is encompassed and integrated within the knowledge of God's oneness, because the divine revelation is the source of metaphysical knowledge of the diverse world with which the sciences deal. However, the conceptual tools for integration need to be derived from cosmological knowledge. This cosmological knowledge is capable of providing tools for conceptual integration, because the aim of integration is to provide the kind of scientific knowledge that sets forth the complementarity of all things and the way in which the levels of the hierarchy or order in the universe are linked to each other and to the spiritual realm. Consequently, it provides knowledge that allows for the integration of multiple and varied entities into a single unit.

(From *Epistemological Integration* by Fathi Hasan Malkawi, pp. 18-19)

Activities of the IOS Headquarters

IOS organises Interactive Session with Nepalese Minister, Vishwendra Paswan

The Institute of Objective Studies organised an Interactive Session with the Minister of Science, Technology, Environment and Population, Republic of Nepal, Vishwendra Paswan at its Conference hall on January 19, 2016. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the minister said that while drafting the new Constitution of Nepal, care had been taken to include all sections of society in order to ensure social justice. Saying that the new constitution was secular and democratic, he insisted that if the reservation to the weaker sections of society was provided in the Constitution, it would prove to be one of the best in the world. He expressed his government's readiness to amend the Constitution adding that it required consensus among the other stakeholders as a two-third majority was needed to effect a change in the statute. The government was waiting for the response of other political parties, he said. Referring to the minorities, especially the Muslims, he said that their population was 45 lakh and the present Nepalese dispensation was eager to give reservation to them in proportion to their population.

Paswan observed that Nepal was endowed with natural resources in the form of sun which could be used to

produce energy, earth for extracting gas, and invited investors from friendly countries, including India, to invest in projects there. He said that industrialists, scientists and scholars from India were welcome to Nepal for benefiting the country with their experience and research. This would go a long way in accelerating the pace of Nepal's progress and cementing the bond of friendly relations. Admitting that there was some tension between the two countries due to misunderstanding, he said that the ice had started melting and now was the time to take the friendship to new heights. He wanted a positive response from India as a senior partner.

Laying stress on the promotion of



Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Chairman of the IOS felicitates to Mr. Vishwendra Paswan, Minister of Science, Technology, Environment and Population, Republic of Nepal

cycle programme in which connection he was in Delhi, Paswan said that about 65 percent people of his country used cycle as a mode of transport, but a large population was still without a cycle. He held that about 73 percent Indians used cycle and if the cycles were gifted to his country, the feeling of cooperation and friendship between the two countries would be further strengthened. He urged India to unitedly work for development. Making a demand for the introduction

of interest-free banking system in Nepal, he said that his country was impatiently waiting for it, and hoped that a favourable decision on the issue would be taken by the Government of India soon.

In his presidential remarks the Chairman of the IOS, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam, noted that if the Constitution promoted the spirit of equality and brotherhood, prevented discrimination and guaranteed justice, it would be a positive step towards social justice. Commenting on the system of interest-free banking, he said that as against the general perception that the system was impracticable, he said that the interest-free banking was based on equal sharing of profit and

loss. He pointed out that 86 countries of the world, including Russia, were practising interest-free banking and China had made a headway in that direction. He welcomed the guest with a bouquet and presented him with a shawl, a memento and a set of books published by the IOS.

While the Secretary General of the IOS, Prof. ZM Khan, briefly spoke of the activities of the Institute, senior journalist, AU Asif conducted the proceedings. The Vice-

Chairman of the IOS, Prof. Refaqt Ali Khan, proposed a vote of thanks. Earlier, the session began with the recitation of a Quranic verse by Hafiz Athar Nadwi. Those who attended the session included Arun Kumar Manjhi, advocate, Prof. Hasina Hashia, Nandlal, Syed Ashraf Rizvi, Safi Akhtar, Qasim Syed, Farhah Azad, Sandesh Yadav, Ashok Kumar, Hifzur Rahman, Ibrahim Alam and Sweta Yadav.

IOS Lecture on “Development of Islamic Economics and Finance in India”

The Institute of Objective Studies organised a lecture on “Development of Islamic Economics and Finance in India” on January 9, 2016 in its conference hall. Delivering the lecture on the subject, Prof. Javed Ahmad Khan, officiating director, Centre for West Asian Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, held that the concept of Islamic banking emerged after the growth of petro-dollars. This was a phenomenon that emerged some 50 years ago. He said that the central concept in interest-free banking and finance was justice, which was achieved mainly through the sharing of risk. Stakeholders were supposed to share profit and losses, and charging interest was prohibited. He noted that the risk could not be transferred from person to person or country to country. He said that one area that had not been adequately addressed was the role of interest-free banking in financial inclusion. Globally, interest-free banking had witnessed a significant increase, especially in the wake of the financial crisis a few years ago. According to Lagarde (2015), total Islamic finance assets were estimated at around US\$ 2 trillion, practically a ten-fold increase a decade, and outperforming the growth of conventional finance in many places, he observed.

Prof. Khan explained that thoughts on interest-free banking in India were not new. In tandem with its expansion elsewhere, interest-free banking had also expanded in the Asian continent.

Notwithstanding the growing footprint of interest-free finance elsewhere, it had witnessed a lukewarm response in India. He said that it was only as late as 2008 that the Committee on Financial Sector Reforms headed by Dr Raghuram Rajan opined in favour of a closer look at the issue. The evidence suggested that Muslims were less inclined to access formal finance in general, although they might be accessing long-term formal finance. He said that this could be happening presumably because they perceived long-term financing sources as being

conventional commercial banks in different financial jurisdiction were opening separate windows to cater to interest-free banking, he pointed out.

Prof. Khan remarked that an increasing number of commercial banks around the world were considering the possibility of offering interest-free financial products. In many countries, this reflected the banks’ desire to offer services to a growing population interested in such products, but in several instances it was also motivated by the wish to tap the growing pool of international

investors attracted to Shariah-compliant products. He said that an interest-free window was simply a window within a conventional bank through which customers could conduct business utilising only Shariah-compliant instruments. He observed that the mechanism of investment and profit sharing from the Islamic point of view was being still discussed.

In this connection, he referred to the Delhi School of Economics economist, Prof. Badal Mukherjee, whose book *Distribution of Money through Zakat* was an important work on the subject. He also spoke of the contribution made by the former professor, Centre for Research in Islamic Economics, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Mohammad Nejatullah Siddiqui to Islamic banking theory. He said that several scholars of the West believed that lending and borrowing should be shared. This view was also shared by a scholar from Princeton University. According to a Pakistani scholar, Muslims could not express themselves as carriers of a rich



L-R: Prof. Javed Ahmad Khan, Dr Waquar Anwar, Prof Naushad Ali Azad and Prof. ZM Khan

more Shariah-compliant. He said that in interest-free banking, the bank accepting deposits of money from the public was not engaged in lending as a purely financial activity but undertook operations on the basis of profit and loss sharing (PLS) by engaging in equity financing and trade financing. It had been argued by experts on interest-free finance that the nature of Profit Sharing Investment Account (PSIA) could vary from being deposit-like products (in the conventional sense) to pure investments. Lease (*ijarah*) and cost-plus sale (*murabahah*) were simple and relatively easy to monitor

legacy, including economic theory during the British Raj. He said that the concept of Islamic banking had attracted the attention of Indian academics who were working on the subject in international context. He especially referred to the work done by the Institute of Objective Studies over the last 30 years. Similarly, Jamat-i-Islami Hind had also undertaken the study of the subject, he added.

Explaining Islamic banking, Financial Advisor, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Dr Waqar Anwar said that it was a part of Islamic economics. He noted that the real issue was the Islamic economy, but the debate centered around Islamic banking. Stressing the need for a discussion on *riba* (interest), he said that the status of interest prevalent in the market must be taken into account.

Emphasising the need for highlighting the evils of interest, he said we must list the benefits of Islamic banking. One of the evils of the present economic system based on interest was that the needs of people were rising but growth was declining. That was the reason why the economy of the corporate sector was adversely affecting the country's economy, he said. The fact of the matter was that the profit accruing to the corporate sector exceeded the government revenue. He opined that the interest-free economy could still be sustained because India was a manufacture-based economy, but there were several countries which were not manufacture-based, yet they experimented with it.

Secretary General of IOS, Prof. ZM Khan informed that the Institute had done fairly good work in the field. An international seminar was also

organised by it in this connection. While laying stress on the need for looking at the issue in totality and not in parts, he said that Islam also called upon humanity to totally submit to it.

In his presidential speech, former Dean, faculty of social sciences, Jamia Millia Islamia, Prof Naushad Ali Azad said that Islam called for a banking system based on honesty and good intentions. He said that Islam was against exploitation, and the profit gained through interest was exploitative. Interest was the mainstay of the capitalist economy, while Islamic banking was based on Shariah. He said that Islamic banking must not be confined to Muslims, and should be extended to the entire society and all should benefit from it.

Earlier, the programme began with

Rehan Husain, Aqdas Sami, Zafar Sadiq, Sabir Akhtar and Iqbal Husain.

Condolence Meeting

The Institute of Objective Studies and All India Milli Council organized a condolence meeting on 14 January 2016 in the Conference Hall of the IOS to mourn the sad demise of Mohd. Aburrahim Quraishi, Asst. Secretary General, All India Muslim Personal Board and respectable leader of the Muslim community. Maulana Mufti Ateeq Ahmad Bastavi, who teaches Tafseer at Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, presided over the meeting. Written condolence messages of Maulana Abdullah Mugheesi and Dr. Mohd. Manzoor Alam, President and Secretary General of Milli Council respectively, were read out. In his message Maulana Mugheesi wrote that

the demise of Mr. Quraishi was a great loss to the Muslim community. Remembering Mr. Quraishi's services to the community he prayed to Allah for his salvation, Maghfirat. The IOS Chairman and Secretary General of Milli Council Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam recalled how Mr. Quraishi had played a positive role in the formation of All

India Milli Council. He also wrote in his condolence message that Mr. Quraishi was a broad-minded and large-hearted personality and participated in the activities of the Council with all his intellectual and legal abilities. Remembering his services to the Millat, the Muslim community, he prayed to Allah to grant him Maghfirat and give a high place in the paradise.

Dr. Sayyid Qasim Rasool Ilyas spoke in the condolence meeting and



A view of the audience

the recitation of a verse from the holy Quran by Hafiz Athar Husain Nadwi. The proceedings were conducted by Dr. Nakhat Husain Nadwi. Those who attended the lecture included Vice-Chairman, IOS, Prof. Refaat Ali Khan, Assistant Secretary General, IOS, Prof. M Afzal Wani, Prof. Eqbal Husain, Abdul Qadir Khan, Mohammad Kazim Sher, Arshad Siraj Makki, Mohammad Anwarul Haque, Dr. Mohammad Anzar Alam, Unus Rana, Fasih Ahmad, Arshad Sheikh, Mushtaq Ahmad Wani, Mohammad

said that Mr. Quraishi was a self leader of our community. Recalling his services to the Muslim community, Dr. Ilyas, who is president of Welfare Party of India, said that his death was a great loss and it would indeed be difficult to find his suitable replacement. He was not just an office bearer of the All India Muslim Personal Board, but also served on its several committees. He had a great legal mind, had deep insight in Quran and Sunnah and therefore he was well-placed to look after the cases that the Personal Law Board was compelled to fight in the courts of law. He used to study all cases, examine them critically and legally and prepared petitions or replied to petitions filed against the Board. His personality was multi-dimensional and he served the community in many ways for which may God reward him, observed Dr. Ilyas.

Maulana Ateeq Ahmad Bastawi, Secretary, Islamic Fiqh Academy said the passing away of Quraishi Sahib was a great loss to the Muslim community. He was a man of many talents and served the Muslim community in many ways. He specially served the Muslim Personal Law Board, prepared its petitions and fought cases in the court. Maulana Bastawi further said that instead of being disappointed by his sad demise, we should be inspired by him and serve our community to the best of our abilities.

Maulana Abdullah Tariq also spoke and mourned Mr. Quraishi's sad demise. Mufti Nadir Ahmad said his death was a great loss. The programme was conducted by Mr. Khalid Nadwi. The programme ended with dua.

Book Review

The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past by Michael Laffan, Princeton and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2011, 320 pages.

This rich, nuanced historical study effectively encourages (demands, perhaps) a rereading of much of what has been written about Islam in Indonesia by western observers. Focusing on a period during which the Indonesian nation itself was being made – Dutch colonial times (c. 1800-1942) – Michael Laffan sets out to investigate what makes Indonesian Islam and who has participated in the processes by and through which it has been made (p. xi). Dipping also into earlier times, he argues that the makings of Indonesian Islam lie in interactions spanning centuries involving Southeast Asian Muslims, Muslims from other places, and the Dutch (p. xi). He draws on a wealth of archival and scholarly sources (especially Dutch material) to explore the role that Dutch Orientalist advisors played in the history of Indonesian Islam and in its (mis) representation in western writings (pp xi-xii). Complicating understandings of Sufism in the region, he also focuses on “disputes about the place of *tariqa* praxis – the rituals of mystical reflection organized under the guidance of a preceptor known as a *shaykh* – which represents but one aspect of Sufism as a field of Islamic knowledge” (p. xii). With its exploration of the makings of Indonesian Islam on multiple levels, this book would be of particular interest to specialists (especially historians) of Indonesia, Southeast Asia more broadly, Islam, and colonialism.

Laffan methodically, convincingly, and clearly develops his argument through a preface, four parts – each of which has three chapters – and a brief conclusion. After providing an outline of his argument and the structure of the book in the preface, he delves into the arrival and spread of Islam in the Indonesian islands in part 1, “Inspiration, Remembrance, Reform”. The first three chapters, “Remembering Islamization, 1300-1750”, “Embracing a New Curriculum, 1750-1800”, and “Reform and the Widening Muslim Sphere, 1800-1890”, establish Islamization in the region as a complex, global process involving the interactions of Southeast Asians, Indians, Persians, Arabs, and Chinese along trade routes (pp. 4, 6, 7).

He highlights strong influences from the Middle East through people from the Middle East who traveled to Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian scholars who went to the Middle East and either returned to Southeast Asia or wrote for audiences in Southeast Asia, and Middle Eastern (including Egyptian) written works (pp. 17, 18, 24). Through networks that made Southeast Asia part of a larger Muslim world, diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas about Islam circulated in the islands, including different ideas about Sufism, mystical fraternities (*tariqa*), and their places in the societies of the archipelago.

Part 2, “Power in Quest of Knowledge”, turns to the coming of the Dutch and the expansion of Dutch power in the islands, demonstrating that Dutch missionaries who resided in the region as well as Dutch scholars in Europe misunderstood and thus misrepresented Islam as lived and practiced in the archipelago (p. 123). Through the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, “Foundational Visions of Indies Islam, 1600-1800”, “New Regimes of Knowledge, 1800-1865”, and “Seeking the Counterweight Church, 1837-1889”, Laffan attributes such misunderstandings in part to the Dutchmen's own Protestant religion. For example, the emphasis on understanding religion through texts in Protestantism was a factor leading the Dutch to conclude that the discrepancies between Islamic texts and the practice of Islam in the islands meant that “Javanese and Malays were not proper Muslims” (p. 123). As Laffan shows, Dutch writings nonetheless do provide information about Islam in the region – “tangential and certainly unintended evidence of an active engagement with new modes of thinking, with printing, and with Sufi practices imported from the Middle East” that contributed to ongoing tensions among Indonesians about diverse approaches to Islam (p. 121).

Further investigating the representation of Indonesian Islam in part 3, “Orientalism Engaged”, Laffan focuses on the work of the influential Dutch Orientalist Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936). Laffan documents his career in Holland, Arabia,

and the Indies as a scholar and colonial advisor in chapter 7, "Distant Musings on a Crucial Colony, 1882-1888", chapter 8, "Collaborative Encounters, 1889-1892", and chapter 9, "Shadow Muftis, Christian Modern, 1892-1906", showing that Snouck sought to understand Islam as lived and experienced by its adherents through fieldwork, rather than relying exclusively on texts (p. 137).

Snouck, however, although working to better understand the religion in the region so that the colonial state could better control its subjects (pp. 146, 148), also contributed to the misrepresentation of Indonesian Islam. Arguably influenced by his elite Muslim allies in the Indies who shared a concern about the threat that populist mystical orders posed to their own power and influence (p. 235), Snouck argued that "Islam... needed to be modernized" (p. 161). He agreed with his Muslim allies that "the tariqas were the leftovers of a bygone age of Indi-inspired ignorance" (p. 235) and portrayed the *tariqas* as such. To modernize Islam, in Snouck's view, "Muslims had to be weened from their faith in jihad and from the mystical teachers" (p. 161). As Laffan has led us to understand, portraying the *tariqas* as remnants of an Indic past erases the complex place that Sufism and mystical fraternities have occupied in the history of Indonesian Islam as well as Sufi influences that came to Indonesia from the Middle East. Moves to disempower mystical teachers, however, served the security interests of the colonial state as well as those of the Muslim elite.

The fourth and final part of the book, "Sufi Pasts, Modern Futures" – consisting of chapter 10, "From Sufism to Salafism, 1905-1911", chapter 11, "Advisors to Indonesia, 1906-1919", and chapter 12, "Hardenings and Partings, 1919-1942" – take the reader through the last decades of colonial rule. As Laffan traces in this part and reiterates in the conclusion, Snouck's ideas about Islam's history in the islands were passed on to his Dutch and Indonesian followers (p. 235). Both Dutch scholars and Muslim reformers believed "that a new Islam was coming into being in the Indies, and

that this new form would supplant the region's assumedly ancient tradition of 'Indic' mysticism" (p. xiv). The historical conclusions of Snouck and his followers were little questioned as Indonesia moved into nationhood and have persisted into the present (p. 235).

The Makings of Indonesian Islam is an impressive and important scholarly contribution that provides a wealth of information and critical perspective to scholars and students alike. A glossary, index, and eleven figures (including maps and photographs) enrich the text and are helpful resources for the reader. As an ethnomusicologist with research interests in Javanese arts and culture, I very much look forward to using this book in my own research projects and rereading this book with students in advanced seminars to further explore the diverse ways Muslim approach and experience Islam in Java as well as to further explore issues surrounding the representation of Islam in Java (particularly as these issues relate to my own interests in music, dance and theater). To these ends, it would be productive to read *The Making of Indonesian Islam* together with Clifford Geertz's *The religion of Java* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1960), Mark R. Woodward's *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989), Judith Becker's *Gamelan Stories: Tantrism, Islam, and Aesthetics in Central Java* (Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1993), Laurie J. Sears' *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), and Timothy Daniels' *Islamic Spectrum in Java* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), among other studies. Laffan's book also provides an instructive framework for the investigation of the "making" of Islam in other places, and through its attention to the career, work, and positionality of Christian Snouck Hurgronje, encourages critical self-reflection on our own positionality, and the ways we as students, scholars, editors, administrators, etc. working within

particular structures of power and knowledge represent Islam in our own work.

Reviewed by Christina Sunardi

Celebrating Saudi Women

Saudi Women: A Celebration of Success is an unusual book in many ways. Not just its appearance is eye-catching, its contents are also interesting to read. Mona Al-Munajjed deserves appreciation for bringing into focus a subject which otherwise might have remained obscure forever. Normally the outside world has a negative opinion about Saudi Women as being an oppressed lot who are condemned to lead a joyless life within four high walls of a house. The book under review has shattered many myths about Saudi Women and enlightens us about their numerous achievements. A thorough reading of the book still reveals that most women whose achievements have been celebrated in the volume under review, had to face problems, even difficulties while pursuing higher education or trying to build their careers in fields normally reserved for men folk in the Saudi Kingdom.

Dr. Mona Salahuddin al-Munajjed is a prominent Saudi sociologist from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She has Masters in Sociology from New York University and Ph.D from Georgetown University, Washington. She has written extensively on women in the Gulf countries. Her book, Saudi Women, is based on her personal interviews with some 40 prominent women of Saudi Arabia who have achieved success in various fields. Some questions she asked almost every prominent Saudi Women are interesting and inspiring. For instance she has sought to know that how far the family, particularly parents were helpful in building their career and personalities. She has also tried to find out the problems and challenges they faced in their lives. She has also raised such questions as equality of men and women in Islam or how can they compete and succeed in a male-dominated society.

Reading the book has indeed been rewarding. You come to know about the fields Saudi Women are working in; they are involved in philanthropy, they have built cancer hospitals, they are business persons, they hold high positions in banks, they manage brokerage firms, they are in broadcasting and journalism, they are in art and painting, they are professional photographers, they are in mountaineering and what not.

Every women's life and achievements as recorded in the book are inspiring. After reading the book you are not just compelled to change your ill-informed opinion about the Saudi Women, but you are also impressed and inspired by their sheer will and determination that they had to employ to do the wonderful things they have done in life. God has gifted all humans including Saudi Women with qualities that can be used to serve the society you belong or the country you live in. Mona's work is a celebration in itself and she indeed deserves to be congratulated for writing and publishing such a remarkable book.

(Book published by author herself and reviewed by Ishtiyaque Danish)

Contd. from page-8

Yes there was farcical democracy but the country was not witness to the kind of chaos and disorder that we see today. Why Libya is in turmoil? Because one day France and Britain joined hands to bomb Libya in order to support the 'public protest', which they themselves had engineered. The intense aerial bombing brought down the Qazzafir regime and also succeeded in replacing it with chaos and disorder. The result is that no one is safe in today's Libya.

In Syria the theatre is more complex. Due to Russia's strong support to the Asad regime the West refrained from direct bombing of the country. However, they created several opposition armies and armed them to attack the forces of the Syrian regime. The West found opportunity to directly bomb the country

when ISIS occupied two largely undefended or poorly defended Syrian provinces bordering Iraq. But the West did not bomb ISIS where it was achieving success against the Syrian army; they bombed it only when they saw that it was threatening the anti-government forces which they were supporting. As a result the Asad government was about to fall when the Russians sent their war planes which bombed targets of both, the ISIS and the Nasra Front. But what is the use of all these bombings? More than half of Syrian population is living as refugees from Jordan-Turkey to Germany and the rest are living in the war zone.

A cursory look at the long history of aerial bombing of Middle East by the West, reveals beyond doubt that it has solved no problems but has rather succeeded in complicating them. The problems, even conflicts in West Asia continue unabated mainly because the West has been unjust to the Arabs. The West indeed has never sought a just resolution of conflicts but has preferred to believe in and practise the ridiculous principle of conflict management. The net result is that their success is always temporary. That their aerial bombings succeed in suppressing rebellious people temporarily and as soon as they go home, another rebellion is ready to erupt.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is a deep-rooted problem, not just a military menace or terrorism. No one should any doubts that bombing against ISIS will ultimately achieve only temporary success. That it will suppress the ISIS but will not solve the problem of the Middle East which will continue to bother the world even after ISIS disappears from the scene. So the only way to solve the Middle East problem is that the West must become an honest broker and avoid partisanship in favour of Israel; otherwise wars and conflict would continue to devour the region.

Calendar 2016

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OPINION

**Bombing is no Solution
by Ishtiyaque Danish**

The views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the Newsletter (editor)

Having joined hands with Germany after the outbreak of World War-I in 1914, Turkey attacked Britain and Russia on three fronts. It partially succeeded in Iraq where a British garrison was forced to surrender. It may have succeeded to re-occupy Egypt but failed owing partly to poor strategic planning and partly because of the Arab revolt. In 1916 Turkey, along with Germany, was defeated; it lost Hijaz, Syria (including Palestine, Israel and Jordan) and Iraq to the British forces.

During the war the British had made contradictory promises to the Arabs, the Jews and the French. First, in 1915-16 they promised to create an Arab Kingdom under Hussein, the Sherif of Makkah provided he rebelled against the Turks and thus helped in the war efforts of Britain. This Arab Kingdom was to consist of Hijaz, Syria, Palestine (including Israel and Jordan) and Iraq.

Thereafter the British, forgetting their promise to Hussein, promised to create a Jewish home in Palestine for the Jews. They betrayed the Arabs further when they promised to give Syria to the French. It must be noted that the British promises/agreements with the Jews and the French were not known to the Arabs when they rebelled

against the Turks in order to create an Arab Kingdom consisting of Hijaz, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine (including Israel).

After victory over Germany and Turkey, Britain and its allies held a so called Peace Conference in Paris in which the Arabs and the Jews also participated. The Arabs, being the weakest party, were ignored as Britain decided to keep and implement the promises it had made to the French and the Jews.

Britain had promised to create an Arab Kingdom but it decided to establish several nation-states. So Hussein was offered to rule in Hijaz and his two sons were 'appointed' 'Kings' of Jordan and Iraq.

The British and the French were the two Super Powers of the time and they joined hands to defeat the forces in the League of Nations which were advocating the Arabs' right to self determination. As a result the League of Nations gave them the mandate to rule over the Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire. The purpose of the mandate was to prepare the Arabs for self rule. In addition Britain was to facilitate Jewish immigration into Palestine.

It was ironical that Britain and France, who could create an empire in

18th and 19th centuries, thought of teaching the Arabs the art of governance who had previously ruled the world for several hundred years. Naturally, the Arabs rose in rebellion everywhere. As they were weak, so their rebellion in Syria, Iraq and Palestine was crushed with tanks and fighter planes. They first bombed the unarmed Iraqi protesters in Iraq and temporarily succeeded in suppressing the revolt. And since then the West is bombing the Middle East in order to maintain a pliant status quo which they had created or fashioned out after World War-I.

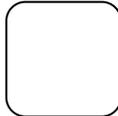
Nearly a century after the first bombing of Iraq, the West is again bombing the Arab world to keep it under control. First they created 'trouble' in Libya, then ruled by Muammar Qaddafi with a heavy hand. There is no denying the fact that Qaddafi was not an ideal ruler. But it can also be not denied that he had maintained peace in the country for several decades. No one can also deny that he had used the oil money to develop Libya as a modern country.

Contd. on page-7

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RNI NO. 59369/94

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