

Clash of Civilisations: Myth or Reality?

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Delivered at the University of Auckland, 19 October 2004

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The end of the cold war and the events of September 11th have engendered an intense and ever-increasing focus from academics and observers about the heterogenic and conflictual relations between the West and Islam. At the same time the powerful Western media machine has produced selective coverage of the Muslim world that has emphasised only its negative aspects: absence of democracy, human rights abuses and terrorism, all manifestly defective in any nation yet all demonstrably legacies of the cold war and of post-colonial states that have failed to achieve development at all levels. Rather than enlightening their readers, sensationalist headlines and unbalanced commentaries in Western media are evidence of a systematic failure of critical thinking about how to deal with a large portion of the world's population, one that has over the centuries contributed in a positive way to the human and scientific development of Western civilisation itself.

A simple example can be seen in the notion of the “Islamic” nuclear threat, a concept that is now deeply anchored in the Western psyche, especially now that Pakistan has successfully tested a nuclear bomb in the context of a frenzied arms race with its neighbour, India.

I oppose these weapons of mass destruction, and do not regard it as praiseworthy for Muslims to possess nuclear weapons, which do not differentiate between belligerent combatants and children in playgrounds. Therefore it is more than enough for the Pakistani bomb to be called Pakistani and not Islamic, as it is enough for other Weapons of Mass Destruction to be called by the names of the nations that develop and hold them – American, British, French, Chinese – rather than by any religious label: Christian, Hindu or Jewish – or secular.

This paranoid condition – I think of it as a psychological disorder characterised by delusions of persecution or grandeur – has been further compounded during the recent campaign to invade Iraq, when the main reason invoked for the war was the alleged possession, by the Iraqis, of nuclear capabilities; an allegation that has not only proven false, but also unmasked the disgrace of reliance on “secret evidence”, and exposed the elaborate façade of lies and half truths emanating from the White House and 10 Downing Street.

At the heart of the matter is, as always, ‘the other’. Today a globally triumphant Western civilisation no longer characterises ‘the other’ in terms of skin colour; in Western culture nowadays that form of identification is relatively old-fashioned and clearly racist, with obvious and politically unacceptable links with Nazism and aligned doctrines. Instead ‘the other’ is now defined in terms of religion and a dissimilar way of life. Consequently a vicious cycle gets erected, in which absurd dualisms prevail: the West versus Islam; the West versus the rest; them and us; civilisation versus barbarism; “You’re either with us or against us.” It is one of the illogical ironies of current debates on geopolitical issues that those people who own intelligence, control the production of information and claim objectivity are the same ones who adhere to zealous and empty slogans that serve only the vested interest of arms conglomerates and other business predators. It is likewise illogical to place Islam, which is a monotheist religion, comparable to Christianity and Judaism, in opposition to the West, which is, by turns, a strategic region, an arbitrary geographical division of the earth’s surface, or a metaphorical expression of an ill-defined agglomeration of political and economic values.

In his 1990 Tanner lecture, *Europe and Islam*, Bernard Lewis talks of some of the difficulties presented by the two opposed terms in the title. Islam, he says, is not a geographic location; it is a religion. But for Muslims the very word *religion* connotes something different than it does for Christians. The word itself, common to the languages of nearly all Christians,

Eastern and Western, is derived from the Latin *religio* — a pre-Christian term for the cult and rituals of pagan Rome. The comparable Islamic term is *dīn*, a term originally Arabic, but which has been adopted in all the many languages of Islam and in common with its cognates in other Semitic languages, notably Hebrew and Aramaic, it means law.

So for Muslims, Islam is not simply a system of belief and worship, separated from other systems, which are the concern of nonreligious authorities administering nonreligious laws; it is the whole of life, and its rules include civil, criminal, and even what we would call constitutional law. Neither is it the monotheistic practice of standardised doctrine.

Of course we can argue that in some secular countries the religious creeds of their leaders are increasingly reintegrating the State with the Church, just as each of the great monotheistic religious traditions have an unattractive apex of fervent belief that thrives in certain environments. However, Islam, like Christianity, and indeed agnosticism, flourishes in a decentralised, tolerant, multiplicitous and democratic format.

Thus we might reasonably speak of the West and the East, North and South, America and Asia, Europe and Africa. Or we might speak of Islam and Christendom, or of Islam and Buddhism. But what can we say about Islam and the West? There is no doubt in my mind that this artificial and often expressed duality is a result of deliberate deception and dishonesty, because the categorisation simply does not stand any close scrutiny.

Yet even if we were to accept such a partition between Islam and the West, Islam itself is not a monolithic construct. It means different things for different people. Islam is not a uniform expression; Islam cannot be constrained to one country or one group. No person or organisation holds exclusive rights for articulating or interpreting Islam, because there is simply no clergy in Islam. Islam has no councils or synods, no prelates or hierarchies, no canon laws or canon courts. The Church, as both an institution and a power, has no equivalent in Islam.

So what does the West, if it exists, understand by 'Islam'? Is it some regime backed by the West itself? Is it some petrodollar sheik supported by the West regardless of his human rights abuses and repression of minorities? Is it some violent group who previously received Western support to fight the Soviets? It is plain that the enemy, 'the other,' is ill-defined and hollow at heart.

Yet behind these generalisations and superficialities there is within Islamic peoples a richness of intellectual trends ranging from those who express a broad admiration of Western ideals and values, to those who reject everything that has its origins in the West. And the question

that needs to be addressed is this: what pushes Western decision makers to articulate theories based on the idea of a clash of civilisations?

The answer to this question is a complicated one, reflecting interlocking historical, geopolitical, philosophical and psycho-cultural factors. In terms of history, the West has a strong, if selective, memory and, by making Islam ‘the enemy,’ is able to retrieve long sequences of history, from the Crusades to the colonial wars, and frame them as parallels and sequels to contemporary events. As an example the Mediterranean Sea, despite being a place of exchange and concurrence between Islamic and Christian civilisations, was also a place where vicious wars were fought and peoples conquered and subjugated. As Fernand Braudel put it in his book *The Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean World*, Islam created and lived Jihad just as Christianity also created and lived the crusades.

Western civilisation, in at least one of its manifestations, aims at global domination. As proof we need look no further than the documents and policies emanating from the *Project for The New American Century*. This private organisation simply proposes that “American leadership is good both for America and for the world,” therefore right-thinkers will promote American global leadership, a “Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity” and strive “to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire”. It maintains that such leadership requires “military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle; and that too few political leaders today are making the case for global leadership.” The cast of fellows includes some familiar names: Messieurs Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Cheney, Quayle, Bush (Jeb, that is), and Steve Forbes. In order to reach that global goal the authors arrogantly do not accept any cultural obstacle slowing its progression. The result is an asymmetric, hegemonic confrontation that aims to subdue ‘the other’ and remove ‘the other’s’ cultural traits and differences, whatsoever those may be.

Another factor may be that, since the Roman era, the Western conscience vis-à-vis the rest of the world has been shaped and precisely characterized by the idea of confrontation with the other. It is a conscience built upon the idea of subduing the other, abrading the other’s differences and reducing the other to its own image rather than dialoguing with the other. With respect to strategic intent, it can be posited as a norm that Western strategy has an absolute and desperate need to find an enemy before tailoring an agenda. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Western decision makers were faced with a strategic void, an emptiness of otherness. They had to find a new enemy and Islam met the need, in a manner that, ironically reflects an old Arabic proverb, which says, “When a merchant goes bankrupt, he looks in his old registers.” It may be that the confrontational attitude epitomized in the notion of a clash

of civilisations is the result of the failure of the West to achieve total and universal acceptance of its ideals.

It is a paradox that religion is a factor in the development of humanity as the Algerian intellectual Malek Ben Nabi has demonstrated in his book *The Requirements of Renaissance*. Religion never intervened to change historical factors; rather it was one of the factors making civilisation. Maximilian Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* viewed the industrial revolution as a consequence of Protestantism. The corollary follows: will religion be a determining factor in the shaping of strategies and the form of international relations? Will we see Muslims inside Western countries paying the price for state failures or be the fuel for right wing hatred? Will Islam and Muslim immigrants be an unending source of fodder for sensationalist tabloid headlines and a convenient electoral instrument for populist politicians? It is interesting to see that the French psychiatrist Jean Meyson stated in his book *The Right Wing in the Psychology Chair* that all nations need a Jew as scapegoat. Will this civilisation that aspires to universality exchange the Jew for the Muslim? Will history repeat itself?

There is nothing that makes me think otherwise: the same generalised rhetoric has been used in the past to oppress the Jew in Europe because he was living in the ghetto, because his religion was considered backward and because he was perceived as conspiring against established authority. The same rhetoric prevails today.

It is a paradox that the famous Dreyfus Affair, in which a Jewish French officer was unjustly accused of espionage and conspiracy for Germany against France, should have created, in Sartre's words "the idea of the intellectual." So will this symbolic and corporal oppression that ranges from Abu Gharib and Guantanamo Bay to the secret evidence laws (which bear an uncanny resemblance to McCarthyism's sinister rhetoric) engender a new intellectual spring in the West?

In fact there are many important and compelling questions that I want to discuss with leaders and intellectuals: When will this new clash cease? Who will prevail? Will the result be in favour of democracy and human rights? Will it bridge civilisations and help cultures flourish, as former Czech president and intellectual, Vaclav Havel, demands? Or will it start a troubled era of clashes and bloodshed between religions and civilisations?

There is no doubt that truth is the first casualty of this war. It is a war that targets not only Ben Laden and his few followers, but it will be a persistent pretext to muzzle opposition groups that choose a democratic path to express their projects. In my opinion the "war on

terror” is only another deal between the West and Arab dictators aiming to secure cheap oil in exchange for a continuing silence concerning human rights abuses as has happened – and happens still – in Algeria.

The late European MP Sir James Goldsmith once observed in his book *The Trap*, commenting on the situation in Algeria after the putsch during the 90’s, said:

Virtual silence has greeted the reversal of a democratic election in Algeria. The West cannot understand a democratic rejection of its ideas. For the West such a rejection is a sign of either dementia or evil.

Moreover Oliver Roy, the French expert in political Islam, addressed the hypocrisy of the West towards democracy in the Muslim world by saying:

When the West has to choose between democracy and secularism, as happened in Algeria and Turkey, it will always choose secularism and not democracy.

And indeed, even as we speak of the West it is important also to know which West we are talking about: is the West represented by NATO and its armies or is it represented by the well-known French anti-globalisation militant José Bové? Is it represented by the French officials who invented the “cultural exception” to rebel against U.S. leadership? Or is it represented by the United States who succeeded in building a worldwide coalition in the 1991 Gulf War while failing to do likewise in 2003 in Iraq? Is it the West as represented by the old Holy Roman Empire, now known as the European Union? And in future will that include or exclude Islamic Turkey? I understand that the admittance of Turkey to the EU will mean that in that most Western of institutions, Muslims would have a majority.

Frankly speaking, notions of both Islam and the West are subject to ambiguity and amalgamation, confusion and compression, yet it is Islam that remains the more elusive.

The difficulty we have in comprehending the everyday elements of another culture is rendered most poignantly by Argentinean author Jorge Luis Borges, in his story *Averroes’ Search*. Averroes, or Abu’l-Walid Ibn Rushd, was a physician, a master of philosophy and Islamic law, science, mathematics and medicine who lived in Cordoba in the 12th century – a renaissance man several centuries before the movement shook Italy – and who, through his commentaries, played a decisive role in Aristotle’s rehabilitation.

Borges describes how, while composing his monumental work on Aristotle, Averroes

struggled, without success, to understand two crucial terms within the *Poetics*: *tragedy* and *comedy*, terms without any reference point in his world. To appreciate the fruitlessness of this struggle, we must appreciate that there is no historical dramatic tradition in Islamic societies. Averroes and his contemporaries could not draw on the experience of attending the playhouse, of watching or acting, of being in an audience.

At evening, setting aside his puzzle, Averroes attends a dinner, where one of the guests describes a visit he made to a strange house of painted wood, a single room with rows of cabinets or balconies on top of one another. On a terrace some fifteen or twenty people prayed, sang and conversed:

They suffered prison, but no one could see the jail; they travelled on horseback, but no one could see the horse; they fought, but the swords were made of reed; they died and then stood up again.

The dinner guests consider the phenomenon, but are unable to satisfactorily account for it. On returning to his library Averroes revisits his commentary, and suddenly inspired, reaches a conclusion:

Aristu (Aristotle) gives the name of tragedy to panegyrics and that of comedy to satires and anathemas. Admirable tragedies and comedies abound in the pages of the *Koran* and in the *Mohalacas* of the sanctuary.

Borges describes Averroes' search as a failure: "closed within the orb of Islam, [he] could never know the meaning of the terms *tragedy* and *comedy*," and recognises the absurdity of his "wanting to imagine what drama is without ever having suspected what a theatre is."

Indeed, he might easily have said that it is like trying to imagine what Islam is without ever visiting a mosque. Or, from the comfortable security of a liberal democracy, imagining what it might be like to live under a military regime.

For Borges, this is a story of otherness and alienation, of the paradox of a Spanish-born Arab who, exiled in Marrakesh, consoles himself with a pastoral image that reminds him of Cordoba.

You too! oh palm, are
Foreign to this soil...

Some scholars maintain Borges reveals the story as a symbol of defeat, a modernist expression of the folly of a man unfamiliar with the theatre trying to discover the meaning of tragedy and comedy. When Borges stops believing in Averroes, he simply disappears.

Yet more than anything it is about the difficulty we all have in forming a bridge between our own limited experience and our understanding of another culture. As T. S. Eliot says, “We have had the experience, but missed the meaning.”

So the matter before us now is how to grasp that meaning, convert it to understanding and disarm the threat of the inevitable clash between what we’re told is the West and Islam. Peace and our children’s future depend on restoring the common ground between the great religions.

Like everyone else, Averroes is now online, albeit 800 years after his death. The website and fund for free thought which bears his Arabic name is available at www.ibn-rushd.org. The Ibn-Rushd Fund for Freedom of Thought “recognizes the philosopher’s intellectual achievements, his independent interpretation of Islamic ideas, his tolerance of convictions and cultures differing from his own.”

Indeed, historical evidence shows that the Islamic world played a significant role in the renaissance of the West through contact, discovery and cultural exchange. For instance, in the Middle Ages Europeans often sent their pupils to learn in Spain and Sicily, both Islamic communities. Averroes strongly influenced the seeds of European philosophy from the Middle Ages till the 16th century. Even outside his resuscitating work on Aristotle, Averroes was considered a great philosopher. He had many followers in intellectual Paris. Thomas Aquinas was heavily influenced by both only Aristotelianism and Platonism and he attempted to fuse Averroes’ thoughts into his own system. This popularity soon irritated the Church and by 1270 Bishop Étienne Tempier of Paris condemned 13 propositions from Aristotle or Averroes as punishable by excommunication. At stake were the manner and extent of using Aristotle, “the philosopher” and the Arabian Averroes, “the commentator,” in explaining Christian theology. In 1277 Pope John XXI instructed the bishop to investigate the matter formally, and Averroes’ works, along with those of Thomas Aquinas and other thinkers who had synthesized problems in Christian theology and philosophy, were condemned as anti-Christian. The later 13th century was congested with sternly corrective literature, and Bishop Tempier became a cardinal.

Even Thomas Aquinas became displeased with his Aristotelian commentator and identified heretical elements in his ideas. However, Aquinas is generally agreed to have moved the

focus of Christian Scholastic philosophy from Plato to Aristotle, and so the commentator's influence endures. Indeed, in 14th century Italy, Averroes' adherents studied his writings over Aristotle. This trend continued until the 16th century Padova and put in place certain structures of modernism.

If you will permit me, I would like to indulge in a personal recollection as a means of demonstrating that the gulf may not be as wide as you may imagine.

I was born in 1960 in the village of Al-Idrissiya, in Algeria, where my grandfather was a Sufi preacher. I remember very clearly the year of 1967, when animosity between Israel and the Arab countries, under the leadership of Egypt, was at its height. The mood within the Arab countries was very tense, and Algeria was no exception, since the Algerian people used to follow the speeches of Nasser very attentively. At that time I was very young and I used to go to the only football pitch available in my home village. It may have been called Al-Idrissiya but its other name is Zenina, which local legend described as being either the surname of a Jewish woman, or of a Roman notable. There was a Jewish cemetery close to the football pitch, and sometimes the soccer ball would bounce into the cemetery. I and my fellow players took as much care as possible not to walk on any grave – out of respect for the dead, since Islamic traditions prohibit such acts, or any other kind of disrespect for any dead.

Looking back, it strikes me, wasn't that a beautiful example of tolerance? Despite the inflamed feelings against the state of Israel, the principles that my little buddies and I had been taught to hold dear never let us cross the line, or led us to act incorrectly against the symbols of another religion.

Now I am older and a lot wiser about the ways of the world – but the soccer games in Al-Idrissiya came back to me when I read what Edward Said wrote in his book, *Orientalism*. Sadly but forcefully, he made the point that Muslims – even when they were extremely angry – had never dared to insult the prophets of ancient Israel. We need to recall these things, now as many in the West see Islam as the enemy of civilisation and a byword for religious intolerance.

In an interview, 20 years after the first publication of *Orientalism* Said noted that the situation had, if anything, worsened:

The West's almost obsessive emphasis on terrorism and fanaticism in the Arab world is a form of exorcism. They see it in Islam so they won't have to recognize that the same elements exist in their own societies, and in alarming levels.

In fact, Islam's relative tolerance stands in stark contrast to the attitude of many writers in the Western canon. For almost a thousand years the *Chanson de Roland* has perpetuated the notion that chivalric Roland's enemies were Muslims, instead of the Basques whom he and his men actually fought at Roncesvalles. Dante reserved a place for the Prophet Muhammad alongside Satan in Hell. Melville, in *Moby Dick*, ridicules Queequeg's observance of Ramadan and attempts to equate his faith with paganism and cannibalism. Even the normally compassionate Dickens, speaking of the Mogul Empire in the Christmas 1857 edition of *Household Words*, says, "I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race ... proceeding, with all convenient dispatch and merciful swiftness of execution, to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the Earth."

Isolated and selective these examples may be, but they outweigh counter-examples of Islamic tolerance, forbearance and dignity.

Even the best-known literary figure born into the Islamic faith offers little relief to this catalogue of infamy and oppressive cruelty. Othello is a Moor living in Venetian, and therefore Catholic, society. While Shakespeare does not directly allude to the faith of the "old black ram," with his "thick lips," "sooty bosom" and "foul charms," it is probable that he was born a Muslim but was a forced convert to Catholicism as part of his acculturation into Venetian society. And then, delicious irony, he is sent to fight the Ottomans on behalf of his Christian paymasters.

Let's move from literary to cultural representation and symbolism. If we exclude the Oil Blockade of 1973, the Iranian revolution, and the 11th September events, the image of Islam and Muslims in the Western psyche comes from a legacy of animosity shaped by a history of conflicts from the era of the Crusades until the colonial wars. Moreover we should also acknowledge that there were academic obstacles which contributed in propagating stereotypes against Islam and Muslims, for instance the orientalist movement linked to the colonial movement. Furthermore there are other psychological aspects inside the Western consciousness shaped by historical events and popular culture which enflamed the imagination vis-à-vis the "heretical" Muslim and the "barbarian" Turk.

Famous examples can be found in the writings from Martin Luther, also an anti-Semitic. Another example occurred when the Austrians succeeded in defeating the Turks in a 17th century battle. An Austrian warlord who owned a bakery invented a cake with the shape of a crescent: the croissant, as a symbol of defeating Muslims through eating their supposed symbol. Still today symbols play a decisive role through employing the image and the media.

Like all important brands, Islam needed a colour. Red been previously assigned to communism, so somehow Islam is green, even though my knowledge of Islam and the history of Muslim civilisation and culture provides no evidence that green is a particularly Islamic colour. The problem is that nature abhors a vacuum so when Muslims are not represented, there is always somebody who will represent them and speak on their behalf.

In order to avoid unhelpful generalisation we must likewise underline that animosity was not always constant. The Dutch have a long history of cooperation with the Muslims, albeit against their common enemy, Spain. Moreover it is not surprising to find that the first countries acknowledging the independence of the United States of America were Morocco and Algeria.

So, if a thousand years of literature cannot help, where do we go to from here? The recent confrontations since September 11th tend to obscure the tentative steps we have made together. For truly, the beginning of the 20th century did witness the first, fledgling attempts to address a history of tragedies and confrontation between the monotheist religions – and this dialogue also included the representatives of Buddhism and Hinduism. In more recent times, the most encouraging stage of this process occurred in 1965, when the Catholic Church formally renounced the ancient “crime” held against the Jews for killing Jesus (peace be upon him).

This step underlined the fact that the Catholic Church had inaugurated a new era, in which dogmatism and history were no longer a barrier to dialogue between the sons of Abraham. Later on, various European countries such as Belgium and Scandinavian countries have recognized Islam as a national religion, a very important development.

Such recognition however was not unanimous. France, in contrast, is still caught up in its colonial legacy, as exemplified by its decision to place Islamic Affairs under the authority of the interior ministry in blatant contradiction of its secular principles. To Muslims, the practice seems to be the continuation of the colonial practices in Algeria, when the French authorities used to control mosques, name muftis and administer the Islamic properties until the independence of Algeria in 1962.

Historically, Islam pioneered the reciprocal recognition of the monotheist religions, Judaism and Christianity. It is a matter of record that the Holy Koran called for constructive dialogue with the people of the book, which is itself a respectable designation for Islamists, Jews and Christians. For centuries, the Arabic and Eastern churches were involved in discussion and building bridges with Muslims. So it should come as no surprise that today there are more than 10 million Arab Christians living side by side with their fellow Muslim countrymen.

We forget this common heritage at our peril, after September 11th. Yet there are numerous verses in the Koran that not only contain the names of the prophets of the Old Testament, but express praise for them, and for their actions. Furthermore the Holy Koran contains more than 120 verses about Jesus and the Virgin Mary, including details of the birth and early childhood of Jesus that do not appear in the Holy Bible but can be traced to a number of Christian apocryphal writings. These intertwined narratives of the people of the book include the palm tree which provides for the anguish of Mary after Jesus' birth (sura 19:22-26); the account of the infant Jesus creating birds from clay (sura 3:49) and the story of the baby Jesus talking (sura 19:29-33).

Even in Algeria, the country of my birth, interconnections like these define our history, even as modern conflicts seek to bury any sense of our common heritage. Yet we share the same impulses to worship, our prophets walked the same lands in the Middle East. We are all children of the book. It is a matter of fact that the Jewish and Christian presence in North Africa – to be precise, in Morocco and Algeria – precedes the Islamic presence, while numerous Berber tribes were converted to Judaism, of which the Algerian Queen Kahena is a notable example.

In much the same way, Christianity has had a visible presence in Algeria since the third century AD. In 2002 there was a scholarly conference about St Augustine - yes, a Christian saint, but also the Algerian saint who once lived in the Algerian city of Bon, or what is called Annaba today.

Near where I grew up was the Trappist Monastery of Tibherine, where monks of Our Lady of Atlas had lived in respect, peace and honour for centuries. Alas, in 1996 seven of these monks were kidnapped, used as bargaining tokens and beheaded by the GIA, a crime that has an unhappy familiarity today. The international community condemned the barbaric criminals, as did the villagers for whom the monks, like the statue of the Virgin Mary that overlooked our village, had simply always been part of our community. But the prior of the martyr-monks did not condemn, instead commending their “friends of the final moment” to “God whose face I see in yours”...“the God of both of us.”

Unfortunately, these bonds between us are all but forgotten, as politics interferes in the dialogue between religions. This is especially so since the Cold War ended, a finalé that gave birth to many ethnic unrests and fundamentalisms – which, to be fair, are an understandable enough response. They represent the attempt to preserve national identities that are being threatened by the bulldozer of globalisation.

We need to be on guard that this quest to defend our identity does not become the justification for pre-emptive action against others. The risk only underlines the fact that dialogue is more important than ever, especially now that Islam has a visible presence in the West, and Muslims display sometimes a different way of life that can obstruct their integration or assimilation into Western societies.

The value of dialogue is easy to under-rate. It seems slow, and its achievements so much less dramatic than the deadly outbursts of conflict. As a religious practice, it consists of the patient building of bridges, to peaceful co-existence between peoples and religions, linking experience and meaning, dissolving otherness – and constructing an understanding based on common interests and a shared history.

As a Muslim I have always believed in dialogue with anyone and everyone who shares a readiness for dialogue and peaceful co-existence. In my view, the essence of Islam resides in the verse: “O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)” (sura 49:13).

We have to persevere. We have to show tolerance. And we must be prepared to set aside any resentment we may feel at treatment that seems unjust.

Salaam. Peace.

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