# FUTURE ISLAM

FORESIGHT AND CONNECTING THE DOTS: The politics of worldviews and disowned selves/collectivities

http://www.futureislam.com/20070301/insight/sohail/Foresight_And_Connecting_The_Dots.asp

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## FORESIGHT

For the foresight practitioner, what is most stunning about the war in Iraq, the recent war in Lebanon and the war on terror is the lack of capacity of Western governments to connect the dots.

While surveillance continues to heighten, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair appears to have forgotten part two of his formula, that is, tough on crime/terror and tough on the causes of crime/ terror. The links between recent foiled terror attacks in England and the war against Lebanon (or Hezbollah) are not noticed. While radio stations take calls by Muslims asking for a fairer more balanced – reasonable and rational – policy and strategy from England, Blair continues to tow the American line.

Taking the future into account, the American response appears neither reasonable nor rational. That is, we have seen that sanctions and wars do not isolate particular groups - Serbs have not become more democratic since they were bombed (the extreme right remains ever alive), and Iraq certainly is far from having become democratic; rather it is in a midst of a civil war and may have become a haven for terrorists –the exact opposite of USA strategy and planning goals. Bombing people into democracy does not appear to be a viable strategy; in fact, the violence becomes internalized, and is considered by those bombed as the rational strategy.

However, the memory of World War II remains – total destruction followed by rebuilding. Generals appear to continue to fight today's wars with the memory of previous wars. What made the German experience different was near total annihilation followed by a real hearts and minds rebuilding. The war in Lebanon has weakened if not destroyed any possibility of hearts and minds changing. Indeed, conspiracy theories, already the dominant currency in the Arab world, have become even more inflated.

Irrespective of one's views toward Al-Qaeda – their demand of withdrawal of western armies from the Arabian Peninsula appear reasonable. Earlier, they offered a ceasefire in Iraq, and yet, most reasonable and rational parties would look toward dialogue. Of course, the trauma of 9/11 in the USA – the pain of the families who lost loved ones along with the shock of an attack on the world's imperial power removes any chance of a dialogue.

Or is there some other worldview that is so forceful that rationality is lost, something deeper than trauma as well. We know that after the USA initial victory in Iraq, the entire Iraqi army was disbanded: 400,000 solders fired. Certainly a bit of foresight could see that unemployed, angry, dishonored men would provide a reserve army for outside recruiters. Iraq, once authoritarian and totalitarian, is now the Wild West - the site of the terrorism and Sunni-Shia fault lines. But it was not the rational that was victorious but a desire for revenge and the deep Orientalism of the victors, i.e. Iraqis are inferior. Subsequent rapes and prisoner abuse point this out. Orientalism creates the framework wherein others are reduced to sub-humanity. In short: war *others* all.

## OTHER DISCOURSES

What are other discourses that explain the irrationality of today's geo-politics?

First, as mentioned above is Orientalism – *they* are barbaric, evil, to be destroyed. A "new" form of this is extreme evangelism, the hope for a united Israel, leading to Armageddon – with two billion to die – followed by the return of Jesus, and heaven on Earth. It appears that the President of the USA, Bush supports this view. Secondly, the inverse holds true also. The extreme Islamic version of this appears to be supported by the President of Iran, who too waits for the 12th Imam to come back and save the world.

A third related discourse is that of the triumph of democracy – eventually a new middle east will emerge once Iraqis, Hezbollah, and others discover the joys of Westernism. In the Iranian case, however, it is the CIA disposal of the Iranian prime-minister Mohammad Mossadegh in1953 that is a more recent memory, not to the mention the Iranian's own desire for Empire.

At another level, this is merely the paradigm of good versus evil being played out in the body politic. American society lives out this drama and cannot rest unless this struggle is played on CNN nightly and now far more disturbingly on Fox News. That is, the USA needs an enemy to exist – with the fall of Russia; Islam has taken its place. Next will be China and East Asia in general. Islam, as part of the Judaeo-Christian- tradition (the three brothers), is also part of the good-evil field.

Perhaps far saner discourses are the feminist and the environmentalist. War itself is the problem – it is inequitable, killing the most vulnerable on each side. War is not an equal opportunity killer, as we have seen in Lebanon and in Israel. The environment too suffers – mountains are destroyed, and now with the Oil spill in Lebanon, water too is destroyed. Nature is the victim of patriarchy. Democracies do not attack democracies because they are busy attacking 'lesser forms of governance', 'more vulnerable humans,' and 'nature herself,' as Ivana Milojevic has argued (www.metafuture.org)

Equally valuable is the work of Hal and Sidra Stone (http://www.enotalone.com/authors.php?aid=14) [1] with their focus on disowned selves. The self disowned is the problem; it is seen as 'out there', objective and in need of colonization, conversion or destruction. However, this objective external reality is created by the evolution of the dominant self – thus extreme Islam is the disowned self of the West.

Less internal is classic political-economy. We know that who gains from conflict are the arms merchants underwritten by the usual suspects: USA, Britain, Israel, China and France.

These discourses help explain the irrationality – why the USA would support a war that will only create more terrorism, i.e. dysfunctionality will be met by more dysfunctionality. With a youth boom predicted to continue for the next 20 years in the Arabian Peninsula, we can see that more rather than less war is likely.

Solving Israel-Palestine on terms of dignity for the Palestinians remains the issue. It is absolutely stunning that there are still refugee camps in Lebanon – these are now permanent camps. Generations of pathology have been created and will continue to be created. The neural pathways of Palestinians and Israelis remain focused on fear and war – that is what is now normal. They may not even be able to find a solution themselves – it may require a super-ordinate power, i.e. no more funding to either group until they find systemic solutions. We know that worldview/cultural solutions will take much longer – i.e. creating identities not based on fear and revenge but on forgiveness.

**GLOBAL LEVEL – MOVING FORWARD**

While there are certainly excellent ways forward, as for example developed by Johan Galtung through his Transcend conflict resolution method (www.transcend.org)[2], at the global level, I believe we cannot move forward in our human evolution until this problem is solved. Hoping that a massive war will solve it forgets that war creates more memories, more stories of revenge and hate – healing does not occur. For Israel to succeed, or for the Israeli haters to succeed, every last person must die. Who has the stomach for that, not to mention morality? Yet, without transformation we face more irrational bleeding, fighting with no solutions in sight, only temporary winners and losers. Arab populations remain lost in conspiracy theories, on the problem of Israel, or when that is solved (on the problem of the Kurd, or Shia, or…)

Most leaders cannot see this – their worldview does not allow it. Perhaps this is just our evolutionary stage – we remain locked in vicious lock-ins – but if we are to survive, certainly more robust global governance is needed, as well as ways to move past our worldviews of co-dependency, of good and evil, and Armageddon. Until then, our disowned selves keep coming back to kill. Can we listen and change?

If not, perhaps this poem by Patricia Kelly will remind us why we must!

Bomblet meditation
The let of the past was a dainty diminutive.
Anklets jingled on chubby legs
Circlets of flowers crowned gods and brides
Ringlets flounced on moppets' heads.
'Bomblets' are a lethal present.
Metal shards shatter
anklets and circlets
ringlets and moppets
brides and gods
and language alike.

[1] Essential here is the work of Hal and Sidra Stone. They focus on the disowned selves – selves that we push away as we focus on particular identities. For academics, in the search for the purity of truth, the business self is pushed away. Classically for the corporate world, the ethical self is pushed away in the drive for profits. Integrating these various selves may be the most important challenge for academics. See http://www.enotalone.com/authors.php?aid=14

[2] See Johan Galtung, The Middle East: Building Blocks for Peace. Journal of Futures Studies. Vol 11, No2, November 2006.