

## Leaders envision the future of the Islamic Ummah

by **Sohail Inayatullah**

MORE THAN 120 academics, business leaders, government officials and graduate students recently came together at a workshop in Malaysia to consider futures for the global Islamic community over the next generation.

Participants of the three-day workshop sought to identify the needs of 21st century studies concerning the futures of the Muslim world and to provide an Islamic perspective to the global challenges facing the larger world system.

Following a number of keynote speeches and discussions, the work-

shop culminated in a four-hour visioning and backcasting session led by **Ziauddin Sardar** and **Sohail Inayatullah**.

Initially confused and sceptical of the idea — hasn't Allah already planned the future? — and not familiar with creative imagination (since the Islamic tradition focuses on textual analysis), many of the participants faltered. But by the end of the four hours a consensus vision and backcast emerged. Consensus was reached on the following points:

- A borderless Ummah (community) where trade, ideas and labour travels without restrictions;

- An Electronic *Khilafa*, meaning a politically united Muslim community, electronically linked;
- Ecologically based communities instead of nations as the primary governing units;

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any position and to contest the election, the completed ballot papers will be returned to an auditor of WFSF who will issue the certified results to the Transition Committee.

## Call for nominations for Executive Board

Based on the above procedures, the Transition Committee now calls

for nominations for President, Secretary-general and nine other members of the Executive Board. The nominations will close on 31 January 1997. Ballot papers will be sent out to all members, who constitute the General Assembly, during February 1997. Members will have until 30 April 1997 to return the completed ballot papers.

There will be a formal call for nominations for all posts sent out

with the September issue of the Bulletin with details of where the nominations have to be sent.

The results of the elections will be announced in the June 1997 issue of *Futures Bulletin*. The New Executive Board members will take their responsibilities at the General Assembly to be held immediately before the WFSF XV World Conference in Brisbane, Australia. ■

## Initial list of WFSF Fellows

Abdel Rahman, Ibrahim  
Ahamed, Uvais  
Alonso-Concheiro, Antonio  
Anderson, Walter Truett  
Antoine, Serge  
Azam, Ikram  
Bäckstrand, Göran  
Bahm, Archie  
Bell, Wendell  
Bestuzhev-Lada, Igor  
Bezold, Clement  
Bishop, Peter  
Boulding, Elise  
Cleveland, Harlan  
Coates, Joseph  
Cole, Sam  
Crocombe, Ron  
Dahle, Kjell  
Dator, Jim  
Didsbury, Howard  
Ekuan, Kenji  
Elmandjra, Mahdi  
Falk, Richard  
Feather, Frank  
Galtung, Johan  
Garrett, Martha  
Giarini, Orio  
Gidai, Erzsébet  
Gillwald, Katrin  
Godet, Michel  
Goonatilake, Susantha  
Groff, Linda  
Hamm, Bernd

Henderson, Hazel  
Hicks, David  
Homann, Rolf  
Inayatullah, Sohail  
Jammal, Ibrahim  
Jones, Christopher  
Joshi, Nandini  
Jouvenel, Hugues de  
Judge, Tony  
Kalas Köszegi, Mária  
Kato, Hideotoshi  
Kim, Tae-chang  
Linstone, Harold  
Ljutic, Anton  
Lloyd, Bruce  
Lowe, Ian  
Malaska, Pentti  
Malitza, Mircea  
Mallman, Carlos  
Mannermaa, Mika  
Marien, Michael  
Markley, Oliver  
Martí, Fèlix  
Maruyama, Mogoroh  
Masini, Eleonora  
McHale, Magda  
Mendlovitz, Saul  
Mettler, Peter  
Milbrath, Lester  
Miles, Ian  
Mische, Patricia  
Moll, Peter  
Nakarada, Radmila

Nandy, Ashis  
Nováky, Erzsébet  
Paige, Glenn  
Qin, Lin-zheng  
Ristic, Dusan  
Robertson, James  
Rodgers, Sharon  
Rubin, Anita  
Rundall, Kathleen  
Saito-Fukunaga, Mitsuko  
Sandi, Ana Maria  
Sardar, Ziauddin  
Serra, Jordi  
Seth, Satish  
Shultz, Wendy  
Sicinski, Andrzej  
Slaughter, Rick  
Smoker, Paul  
Sogolo, Godwin  
Stevenson, Tony  
Toffler, Alvin  
Toffler, Heidi  
Tomita, Terushi  
Tomov, Alexander  
Tough, Allen  
van Hulst, Michel  
van Steenberg, Bart  
von Loebell, Helmut  
Villanueva, Cesar  
Wagar, Warren  
Yamaguchi, Kaoru

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- Leadership that embodies moral and technical knowledge;
- Full participation of women in all areas of life; and
- Tolerance as the guiding value of the Islamic world

To realise this vision, participants saw the necessity of developing a critical awareness at all educational levels; of increasing peoples' representation in the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC); of strengthening civil society; of the development of Muslim transnational entre-

preneurial organisations; and of the recovery of the dynamism, tolerance and inclusiveness that constituted historical Muslim societies.

Equally important was the process of visioning itself. Kuwaiti educationalist Dr Ibrahim Al-Khulaifi concluded the session by urging participants to continue the process of visioning in their own communities as it could facilitate Muslims to transform their dreams into new earthly realities. For a full report on the workshop see story page 17. ■

## Conference correction

Dates, telephone and fax details in the flyer for the XV WFSF world conference, distributed with the March 1996 issue of *Futures Bulletin* were unfortunately incorrect.

Correct conference dates are 28 September – 3 October 1997.

Fax and telephone numbers for the conference secretariat are:

Tel: (+61-7) 3864 2192  
Fax: (+61-7) 3864 1813  
Email: wfsf@qut.edu.au

## 21st century studies of the Muslim Ummah: 2025

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 6-8 Dhulqacdah 1416 (26-28 March 1996)

by *Sohail Inayatullah*

OVER 120 ACADEMICS, business leaders, government officials and graduate students spent three days in Kuala Lumpur (Subang Jaya) pondering the futures of the Islamic Ummah (global community) over the next generation.

Sponsored by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the International Islamic University in Malaysia, the conference sought to identify the status and needs of 21st century studies concerning the futures of the Muslim world and to provide an Islamic perspective on the global challenges facing the larger world system.

The conference was unique in that in addition to the traditional format of plenary speeches with discussants, it concluded with a visioning and backcasting workshop (See story page 1).

The opening keynotes were provided by official sponsors. The Rector of the International Islamic University, Dato Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, called on participants to go beyond obscurantism, to shed their apprehensions and actively participate in creating the future. For too long Muslim academics have been dominated by fear complexes, by imitation of the West. It was time to be bold, he said.

The Deputy Finance Minister of Malaysia, Dato Dr. Affifuddin Omar, told delegates that Malaysia could provide a model for the Islamic world as it had managed to blend a commitment to the Islamic worldview and modern technocratic economic growth. Dr Omer Zuhair Hafiz, representing the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the IDB, called on participants to not only creatively reflect on the future of the Ummah but also to help identify how Islamic institutions could learn from and support the emerging social science of futures studies.

### Islamic simulation models

In the first plenary session, Sohail Inayatullah reviewed Western computer forecasting models. He argued that Muslim nations needed to develop their own simulation models using Islamic rendering of concepts of population, ecology, social justice, unity and non linear approaches to understanding the future. To begin this task it was first necessary for the Ummah to rescue itself from limited nationalistic/dynastic discourses and from Western language frames.

Transformation was urgently required. Inayatullah offered three

scenarios of the future: A dynamic, inclusive, universal Ummah; a fragmented, declining Ummah where there were Muslims only in rhetoric; and, Islam as the difference, the force that could shape the next century.

### Distorted views

In the session on 'Increasing the understanding of Islam in the West: A strategy of the future', scholars Jamal Barzinji, Louay Munir Safi and Abdul Kazi argued that just as the West had a distorted imagination of Islam, Muslims had a distorted view of the West. Western prejudice is more well known because of unequal historical conditions. Muslims need to develop a critical awareness of their own mistakes, to begin to understand the West, to love the Other. It was compassion and forgiveness that were the best remedies in creating a new global future.

But creating this global future would not be easy, argued speakers in the sessions on education and information/multimedia revolution. There is no Islamic CNN that can remedy the lies continuously told in the Western press. Moreover, education of Muslim children remains rote based such that conspiracy critiques of the West dominate instead of more sensible analysis of civilisational/economic self interest and the social fabrication of historical ignorance. The new media offer Muslims a way out of this one-way communication but only if Muslims proactively develop the new information technologies: medium/message.

In a brilliant lecture, Azzman Dr Tengku Sheriffadeen, Director-General of the Malaysian Institute for Microelectronic Systems presented a vision of the larger Kuala Lumpur area as an integrated multimedia cyber corridor. He told delegates from other Muslim countries that Malaysia with or without their help would swiftly enter the postindustrial information era. They would create a economy that ex-

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systems, in the metaphysical and deterministic direction of future thinking from the perspective of complexity.

In harmony with the methodological criteria that determines all heuristic growth in the empirical sciences, futures studies can find new links with the science of complexity, through the use of systemic research technologies, especially scenario building.

In this way, some of the specific characteristics of complexity can be used to look at futures, for example, the commutation of hypotheses on hierarchical system interpretation (and the ideas linked to the multiverse of realities), the redefinition of the diachronic level of the actors and processes involved — but without ignoring the vital components that have allowed futures studies to consolidate its two typical foundations: conditionality and normativity.

Lo Presti encourages empirical futures-oriented analysis from the complexity perspective, in order to develop the processes of evaluation, monitoring and control of complexity theories within the context of logically consistent future study methodologies. A debate among WFSF members is welcomed on the above thesis. ■

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celled at agricultural, manufacturing and knowledge value added services.

To do this, as speakers in the session on alternative economics argued, Islamic principles of economics must be recovered.

Dr Mohammed Ali Elgari argued that Muslims need to remember that they were traders, exporting and importing goods, services and ideas. An open society was essential in re-creating the Muslim Ummah. He also argued that as capitalism continued to flounder, it was Islam that could develop a moral world economy based on equity (widely held shares of companies) not colossal debt (usury).

### Islamic common market

In the final session on the future of technology transfer, participants argued that Muslim nations had to develop their own technologies and then market them to the outside world. To do this more trade within the Ummah was needed.

An Islamic common market had to be created wherein technological developments in one Muslim nation could lead to benefits for other nations. To do this, the Malaysian example of placing funds (10 percent of GNP) into education and science and technology research was essential.

But where had all the petrodollars of the 1970s and 1980s gone, one speaker asked rhetorically? Not to south-south investment but to conspicuous consumption and into North banks, he answered.

Syed Imtiaz Ahmed argued that along with new technologies, peopleware and environmentware was needed. A strong civil society was essential in recreating the Ummah. However, it would have to be a vision of a society based on Quranic principles such as *ilm* (knowledge), *ibadah* (worship), *istislah* (public interest), and *tawheed* (unity of discourse).

One speaker argued that Muslim nations could: do nothing; follow the Western development model; or create a new model based on Islamic guidelines.

Delegates believed that they had been given a treasure but had not used it. Now was the time to create

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# World brain: H G Wells on the future of world education

London: Adamantine Press, 1994

Reviewed by Paul Wildman

HG HAS THE VIEW that the apparatus of modern intellectual ability is not being put to good use and that collective views on how we should proceed is sadly lacking in modern humanity, even more so as time passes.

He asks poignantly: Why are our universities floating above the general disorder of humankind like a beautiful sunset over a battlefield (p.10)?

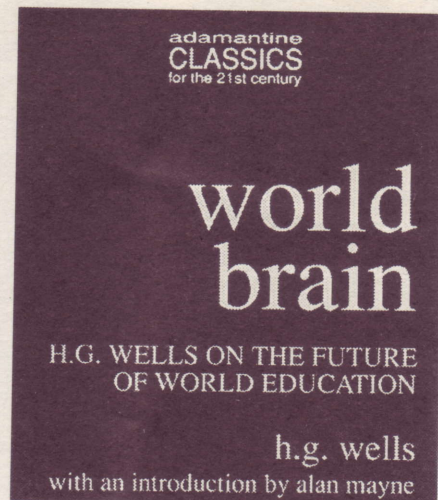
Indeed since the war, universities have done little more than give credence to the status quo. Universities are little more than knowledge control vehicles for the dominant orthodoxy. Even worse, the world seems ever more chaotic and less and less organised, even to the point of the great watch dog, the UN, being reduced to a welfare apologist for the recent civil unrest in Eastern Europe. How are we going to deliver our world to our children's children's children? How can we coordinate our universities' activities and discoveries?

The book is a collection of mainly radio talks given in the mid 1930s. These are put in context by an extensive critical introduction (70 pages) by Alan Mayne and this works quite well. The three principal aspects of HG's thesis are:

- World brain (later he used 'mind');
- Distilling the knowledge thus generated into a world encyclopaedia; and
- Filtering this down into general education.

HG really does put a firm case out for future university, that is a distributed encyclopaedia that codifies the world's knowledges. I consider this a worthy aim, respecting of course the diversity inherent in world cultures.

I wonder how much the World Wide Web can contribute to this and if not how can a world brain ever emerge. Written in the mid 1930s and although 'Empirish' the book does show a remarkable perspicacity and cultural eclecticism. I got the distinct impression that HG was



proposing harmonising our cultural diversity, not centralising western conformity.

The challenge remains for us in our postmodern today with the metanarratives of empire now thoroughly occluded — how can we take HG's challenge and carry it through into a modern even postmodern way. How can we help the multiplicity of ways of knowing in the world, survive and flourish? With over 90 percent of the earth's cultures being oral, how? Or does everything get drowned under masses of hyper text — like I am writing now?

The challenges I suggest we get from this volume relate to its immediacy and relevance of its topic to today in the era of the Web. I am forced to ask:

- Are universities any better today?
- Does WFSF have plans for some sort of Internet equivalent of the world mind?
- How can we dream of world governance without the disasters of the UN or artificial bureaucratic European constructs?
- How can each of us harmonise our bit with the bigger pictures?

All in all well worth the read if only to get one's bearings from the past so that through insight on hindsight we may be better able to get foresight.

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## New members

- **Gender**  
Present universities are almost 'battle zones on some gender issues'. An emerging issue is human relations that transcend gender lines. How would you describe gender relations in the future?
- **Industrial relations**  
Presently universities in Australia are subject to national industrial awards. The trend in Australia is towards enterprise bargaining. What is the future of faculty/management relations?
- **The end of jobs**  
Universities have tended to educate for education's sake. Now the pressure is on for them to be vocationally relevant, especially smaller ones like SCU. Yet the trend is for the disappearance of many jobs in the economy through corporations moving offshore or technological change. How can small unis such as SCU cope in a jobless future?
- **Small private networked niche universities**  
Larger traditional universities are ponderous and essentially give credence to the status quo without facilitating social change. Increasingly smaller universities (often private) are emerging to fill the niches left out by the mainstream. What are some ideas for niches for SCU into next century?

The workshop closed with a quote from David Tacey's new book on Australia *The Edge of the Sacred*:

*We owe it to the future to ensure that culture moves forward in an authentic manner, and that the 'solutions' discovered for our spiritual crisis are not spurious or false.* ■

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and commit to a new vision for the future of the Ummah.

The final session was led by **Ziauddin Sardar** (who many years earlier had been instrumental in convincing the IDB to enter the futures field). Sardar reminded participants that Islam was the paradigm of hope, of vision. He asserted that futures studies was an emerging field in need of dynamic concepts. Unlike other fields in which the West dominated, Sardar argued that Muslim scientists

**Svetlana Aristova** is President of the Club-Congress Cultural Organisation in Denmark. In 1994 and 1995 she participated in summer schools for young futurologists in Petergoff. Planned projects include research of sustainability in the development of small communities and ethics as a tool for policy making. Her other interests include theologo-holistic approaches to futures research and political philosophy.

**Desley Brough** is a guidance officer in training with the Department of Education, Brisbane. She is currently researching a project 'Counselling for students' futures' — what are futures issues for students and how can counsellors address these. Special education (autism); personality types and personal development; control theory and peace studies are other fields of interest.

**Marcus Bussey** works for Pine Community School, a small parent run school in the suburbs of Brisbane and has spent the last eight years working in alternative education with a commitment to searching for better ways to help young people learn. The most fascinating and challenging aspect of this journey is the realisation that it is not the consciousness of children that is central to this process. Adult consciousness, and first and foremost his own, create the forms, set the parameters, frame the agendas in which learning takes place. As a result of this most alternative schools are less alternative, more conservative, than many working in them realize. He is currently enrolled in Masters of Education

and social scientists could make a great contribution to futures studies.

With the help of Sohail Inayatullah, Sardar led selected participants through a four-hour visioning and backcasting exercise. The result of the exercise are discussed in the lead article in this issue of *Futures Bulletin*.

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research and is attempting to begin to unravel some of the factors that are maintaining and shaping the perceptions, priorities and values of the 'rank and file' who have committed themselves and/or their children to something called alternative education.

**Riane Eisler** is the author of *The Chalice and The Blade: Our History, Our Future* (1987), a fundamental re-examination of Western culture. Her recent book *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body* (1995) provides a blueprint for a society where pain, domination, and violence can be overcome by pleasure as the central theme of our lives. Born in Vienna, with a youth spent in Cuba, Riane moved to the United States and has worked extensively for human rights. She is co-founder of the Center for Partnership Studies. Planned research projects include the future of economics focusing on alternative economic models and how these relate to changes in values, technologies, gender relations, family structures and the environment.

**Xavier Anthony Gomez** was head of special projects at the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, Malaysia and dealt with projects such as Environmental Education, Population Education, Pre-School Education, Values and Thinking Across the Curriculum, and Self-Access Centre for the teaching of English. He works within the Ministry of Education and has written papers for national and international conferences on Teaching English in the 21st century, Malaysia's Vision 2020 and Values Education in an age of change.

**Jyh-hong Lin** is a Professor in the Division of Futures Studies, Educational Development Center at Tamkang University in Taiwan. He has experience in theories and research methodology in futures studies. He is involved in the research project 'Relations across the straits under the influence of 1996 presidential election in Taiwan — open systems futures research model'. Planned projects include 'Futuristic thinking for creative problem solving' and 'Taiwan 2000'.