

Middle East, Muslim Ummah and Robert Fisk

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The birthplace of the Prophets (A.S.) Middle East is fertile both in land and mind. The centre of spiritual and intellectual civilization, holds so many precious burials. The Middle East is and remained a central point of all the three major religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The mischievous ones created misunderstandings after the arrival of the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him). Power game remained over centuries. In 1896, Theoder Herzels designed the map, the Jewish state, that provided an idea to form a state of the Jews other than Europe and capture the economy of the world, destroying stronghold of the Arabs. This state emerged on the face of the earth on May 15, 1949, occurring clash and holocaust of the civilizations. Robert Fisk unveils the intrigues of the west. They got rid of the Jews, this cursed the peace, prosperity and philosophy of live and be lived. This paper is going to uncovered the core cause and solution of the problems so that the Muslims Ummah may awake from the deep sleep and arrange a strategy of collective sense. They have so many options, unity, self reliance, oil as dollar, inter-faith dialogue or jihad!

Introduction

An English writer, journalist, war reporter and analyst, Robert Fisk was born on July 12, 1946, in Maidstone, Kent, United Kingdom. He is regularly attached with the paper, "The Independent" from the last thirty five years. He is considered the most famous foreign correspondent in Britain¹. Presently, he is living in Bruit, Lebanon².

Fisk did his B.A in English literature at Lancaster University in 1968 and his Ph.D in political sciences from Trinity College Dublin in 1985 under the title of "A condition of limited warfare; Eire neutrality and the relationship between Dublin, Belfast and London, 1939-45". He won a lot of prizes as the Amnesty international award, the Orwell Prize, the David Watt Prize and the Martha Gallon Prize, by the dint of his devoted services³. As a reporter Robert Fisk reported in the Iranian rebirth, Northern Ireland troubles, the Portuguese situation in 1975, the Lebanese civil war, Afghan war with Soviet Union and with America, the Gulf War, the Kosovo War, the Algerian Civil War, the invasion in Iraq and many more places.

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He has a command over Arabic language and is excellent speaker in Arabic. He interviewed three times Osama Bin Laden between 1993 to 1997. Fisk is of the view that a journalist should be dare and courageous. He must have the knowledge to challenge the circumstances i.e. authority especially so when power and politicians take us to war. He seconds the Israeli journalist Amira Hass; who being Jew criticizes the atrocities of the Israel.

Robert Fisk says when one looks into the war, he traced out the origin or core cause of war, so it may not be repeated again. He concludes the Second World War was to divide the conquered areas; within the end of war the conquered were interested to divided the areas in a very hurry and they divided it without any justification.

Fisk writes in contemporary issues particularly for Middle East some of his books are as under;

1. The Great War for Civilization, the Conquest of the Middle East
2. Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War
3. The Age of the Warrior
4. The Point of No Return, the Strike which broke the British in Ulster
5. In Time of War, Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality

The United States think tank discovered the term “Fisking” originally it means, copying text from the Fiskee and then constructs a point by point criticism of the text. It is ridiculousness attacks on Fisk that he circuses Britain and American policies which are hostile to Muslim interests, the think-tank suggests he should favour them either they are right or wrong.

As Afghanistan was invaded by United States Robert Fisk transferred to Pakistan for the direct coverage. He was attacked and beaten by a group of Afghan refugees and saved by another Afghan group, later on found, it was the product of United States’s mind. Fisk says;

This is a double standard and ridiculous United States armed these Afghan, they fought against Russia, as the war ended, America turned the face, as economic titank was to be sunk out, there were again Afghans called upon, but now as enemies, terrorists, fundamentalists and Taliban⁴.

In this regard he has to bear criticism of his fellow journalists and columnists like Simon Hoggart Irish, and Senator Eoghan Harris*, both did not like Fisk's writings. Fisk criticized post war handling of sectarian violence in Iraq, it widen the gulf rather inflamed it and the groups openly attacked each other.

“The real question I ask to myself is that who are these people. Who are trying to provoke this civil war? Now the Americans will say it's only Al-Qaeda, it's the Sunni insurgence. It is merely the (Shia) death squads. Many of such death squads work for the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad? Who pays this Ministry of the Interior? Who pays the militia and who make up the death squads? Who do, the occupation authorities? We need to look into this story in a different way”⁵.

He interviewed Osama bin Laden three times December 6, 1993, July 10, 1996 and March 22, 1997, bin Laden desired Fisk to be a Muslim but Fisk avoided it and argued Osama that he tells the people truth and a person who does so is a truly server of humanity either Muslim or a non-Muslim. In the second interview bin Laden accused that Saudi Shah and his family is corrupt in every walk of life. In the third interview Osama seeks God's help to turn America into a shadow of itself⁶. He further explains the position;

Racism isn't the word for it. “This coalition killed thousands of Iraqi people, innocent children, women, old men and soldiers just for the sake of their racial lust. This adventure carry no fact of terror activity by these dead ones, merely a fake story of chemical weapons or destructions gasses. In spite of such a mass massacre French troops were given “Roll of honour”. So the French troops will stay in Mali for only ‘several weeks’. This is like as British armies appeared in Northern Ireland then spend decades over there. Israelis march into Lebanon in 1982 and remained there for eighteen years. As is with Afghanistan, no body convinced leaving it by 2014. Is there any credibility that Bernard Kouchner demanded British troops to come down to help the French to count down the Islamist terror⁷.

Further, he writes, that western inquire when Mali is a weak state, having less Gross Domestic Product why, then, this attack is necessary “west pretends this situation may resemble with Afghanistan, if the Taliban come to this land it will become another ‘Afghanistan’. Fisk asks Mali is an artificial state, its

Northern people do not like to be ruled by blacks, merely some tribes desire to lead their lives according to Islam. In spite of it western crusade is necessary in Mali? This war cannot be won by the French⁸.

“The situation is made from bad to worse than to the worst, to interfere in Gulf States, puppets are exchanged with the help of their allies, but the most pitiable are masses of these states and more miserable the deprived ones areas like Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan and Pakistani Northern areas⁹. Bashar al Asad nor had chemical weapons, nor did he use against the rubles, though United States did use it against Iraqi people, so who may be declared terrorist either a body that uses gas against innocent people or who merely is blamed having gas and chemical weapons to show the people just highlighting the issue a mountain in the tea cup yes the bigger the lie, the better General Assembly first used gas against the Turks in Sinai in 1917¹⁰. These conflicts remain in the blood of the generations. It can be seen in 1838 and 1857. This heritage may dig out by any archaeologist in 17th to the 21st century also. May be in the coming centuries too¹¹.

Even this biased view can be seen in the policies of west that have been set to set the mindset against the religion ordinarily and against the Muslims particularly. This is due to the fear there might not get power and strength, the Muslims, i.e. west plans to encircle the Muslims. Eric Patterson writes;

The official French position today is that this separation of religion and state is the foundation of freedom for all citizens. The policy has come under fire recently as laicite's suspicion of religion has resulted in a ban on religious clothing (veil) and jewelry in public schools and other policies that are seen by many to prevent freedom of *religious expression*. Indeed in December 2008 the European Court of Human Rights upheld a ruling that a French school was able to expel two female Muslim students for wearing the hijab. Supporters of the policy say that keeping religious *paraphernalia* out of public schools protects the rights of all students by keeping religious influence separate from education.

In sum, from the founding of the American republic through much of its first two centuries, there as a social and legal expectation that the federal government would stay out of the

religious affairs of the nation, as well as an underlying assumption that the religious character of the citizenry would influence most aspects of life even how oaths were sworn for high office. It has only been in recent generations, largely since the 1950s, that litigation and judicial decisions have deliberately and systematically sought to exclude religious expression in the public square. Indeed, over the past half-century it has become clear that the rights of individuals and communities to express their faith and many historical and cultural representations of religion in American society have come under assault by the federal government. This has generally been through court cases or threats of lawsuit resulting in the reinterpretation of the Establishment clause to mean that any religious content from public prayers to Nativity scenes to Christmas carols to public meetings including religious figures somehow violate the Constitution. This reinterpretation, often a misunderstanding by local school boards and risk-averse junior bureaucrats, has coincided with court and to secularist approach in higher education have in an entire generation of college graduates and diplomats who have been instructed that religion has little place in the American public square, and that it is combustible material in international relations. In sum, it is the path toward laicity¹².

A secularist bias has become entrenched in most recent U.S. foreign policy. Princeton University Professor Robert Keohane writes;

The attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fuelled by religious fervor. The major philosophical assumptions undergirding the training and world-view of the current generation of foreign policy experts fail to appreciate the religious dynamics of foreign policy or disregard the religious dimension because of lack of tools, disinterest, fear, or antipathy. A major objective is to identify how to begin rethinking those assumptions so that U.S. foreign policy can be just and thoughtful with regard to religious factors as it is in many other areas. It is to demonstrate how and why a secularist bias has become entrenched in the practice of U.S. foreign policy, due largely to the assumptions of modernization

and secularization theory in the social sciences, the impact of domestic political contestation over “separation of church and state,” neglect of these issues in the training of diplomats and government officials, and the failure of dominant foreign policy “schools” to provide intellectual resources for engaging religious dynamics¹³. Erac concludes;

In the end, secularization theory’s definition of religion as irrational primitive, and soon to evolve into oblivion made it unworthy of major investigation for decades by other younger ranks of scholars or foreign policy experts. However, the reverse has proven true: religious factors have demonstrated a unique multidimensionality and remain deeply entrenched in identities and societies the world over. Perhaps the New York Times Magazine recently assessed the situation, suggesting that American thought, leaders still see political theology, particularly in its Islamic form “as an activism requiring psychological and sociological analysis but not serious intellectual engagement”¹⁴.

The first, realism, focuses primarily on the interactions of governments as they compete for security, power, prestige, and material interests. Realists like Henry Kissinger see international affairs as anarchic; competitive, and driven by the national interest. Such a worldview generally dismisses religion as irrelevant, be it non state entities or the soft, but real, power of transnational actors such as Pope Benedict XVI and domestic heavyweights like Nigeria’s Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinola. Thus it is not surprising that Kissinger’s 900 pages magnum opus entitled *Diplomacy* does not even have an entry for “religion” in its index; for *Diplomacy* it seems that religion’s meaningful engagement with politics ended with Cardinal Richelieu in the 1600s. Still the situation is going from bad to worse in Ghaza strip, where till August 19, 2014, the Palestinians martyrs were more than 2000 including innocent children, women and old aged people. Eric criticizes that foreign policy practitioners are not trained to deal with religious phenomenon.

“Distinct from individual interests in matters of faith or university education in world religions is the issue of professional know-how: a government representative may or may not be personally religious but could work to develop professional understanding of faith and culture relevant to their posting. This is

just as true about elements of religion and culture as it is regarding language, geography, history, or any of the areas a diplomat must delve into to prepare for a new foreign assignment. However, the U.S. government does little to prepare its diplomats or religious phenomena abroad. The secondary education of most of our diplomatic corps is law school or graduate study in international relations, steeped in the theories of realism and liberal internationalism discussed above. Many learn about economics, politics, and governance structures but unless they independently seek out specific courses in religion, they are not educated in religious contexts, the intertwining of faith and culture, religion as a collective action frame, or transnational, religiously inspired movements. Until recently “religion and politics” courses were not a significant topic in university education, and what little there is tends to still focus on sociological analyses of the so-called Christian Right” or “fundamentalism.” Eric suggests as;

What should be clear is that there is much that even an expansive view of the Establishment Clause does not curtail. Establishment Clause concerns do not limit U.S. foreign policy experts from training on global trends in religion as well as targeted, comprehensive religion, culture, and language preparation prior to an overseas deployment. It does not limit U.S. government officials from building enduring relationships with religious communities in foreign settings, it does not limit dialogue and respectful disagreement with people of faith in foreign policies, it does not keep us from promoting religious freedom and interreligious dialogue, nor should it clear us in any way from thoughtfully evaluating religious phenomena that affect U.S. foreign policy. In the end he concludes;

What is needed is an investment in religious literacy, in religious expertise and engagement of America’s unique religious capital. However a major reason why that is not happening is due to the self imposed limitations in the theoretical constructs upon which most U.S. foreign policy is based, and in which the vast majority of U.S. foreign policy experts are schooled; the perspectives of realism and liberal internationalism the next chapter examines these Western perspectives on international relations theory and foreign policy, demonstrating that in general they neglect religious factors in global affairs, but both schools

have the internal resources to widen their analyses to include religious actors, themes, and phenomena¹⁵.

To sum, Tuheed Ahmad, the ex-Ambassador of Pakistan to Italy writes, west has an Islamic phobia. "Clash of civilizations theory has been manipulated, he suggested both the civilizations will have to cooperate each other for their existence. He blames the ignorance which warms the atmosphere from both the sides. The agitators and material gain slogans prepare such as atmosphere which inflames the situation and result is accidental struck of civilization"¹⁶.

Tuheed quotes Veto Saleerno (1935-2013) Italian diplomatic, researcher, Professor and writer on the philosophy of Iqbal, did his best to reduce the enmity between these wrestlers who seek even a double to get inflamed for the fight Veto, studies orientalism from a different point of view and that is a positive point of thinking that how, they should sit over a table and have a dialogue, the dialogue that can bring them closer. The friendly atmosphere where both, particularly masses can be prosperous and a pleasant mind full of fragrance can make the grim and complicated situation into an amicable atmosphere. Veto is of the view that west do not realize the dignity of the Islamic civilization. It is totally unaware the concept, ideology and glorious past of the Muslims. He used the term razor, by it we can utilize many folded utilities good or bad, positive or negative. West should study Muslim civilization with positive mentality and meditate over the fact that followers of Islam have a glorious traditions¹⁷.

To summarize Fisk is of the view that west should re-study Islam and the Muslim culture, past and present. It can create the space for dialogue, this may lead to bury the misunderstandings¹⁸. This is the only solution that can minimize the gulf that is being widen by the yellow journalism. The peace loving intellectuals and positive Orientalists by their dedicated papers can reduce the inflamed situation. Particularly, the gulf and more centrely Palestine era is a chook where the light is red for the Muslims they cannot pass the passage to lead a peaceful life, but the western supported vehicles have automatic system, i.e. they turn the light green by their force and fatal weapons.

If by civilization we mean living in a civic atmosphere, where are the civilized principles, the democratic approach, merely a show piece double standards and elephant's teeth.

This noble practice was practiced only the The Holy Prophet (Countless peace and blessings of Allah the Almighty may be Upon Him) and his followers, conquer of Mecca, Jerusalem, Spain, and many more bright examples. On the other hand crusades, First and Second World Wars, War of Independence, Gulf War 1991, 2001 and new attacks on Ghaza Strip are horrible examples of western civilizations.

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- * British Parliamentarian (Senator)