

## **‘Clash of Civilizations’ Hypothesis and the Role of Imām Khomeinī in Initiating International Dialogue \***

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Since the publication of Samuel Huntington’s original paper in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, much has been written about his infamous ‘clash of civilizations’ hypothesis. It has become a cliché to refute the notion of a ‘clash of civilizations’, and few people still adhere to it wholeheartedly. Yet several points are often overlooked. For example, Huntington admits that one of the causes of tension in the modern world is that the West must speak for everyone, its voice having become the self-proclaimed “voice of the world community”, as in the war against Iraq. And although he expects conflict, Huntington also recommends some important policy alternatives to clashes. In some cases, he has even backed down on the seeming inevitability of a clash, as when challenged by Muslim intellectuals at an international conference in Nicosia.

Besides recommending that the US should strengthen ties with Russia and Japan, he suggests that the West curb the military strength of Confucian and Islamic states. He also advocates exploiting differences between Confucian and Islamic states, while supporting those elements within them that are “sympathetic to Western values and interests”. Huntington recommends that the West act to “strengthen international institutions that reflect legitimate Western interests and values and to promote the involvement of non-Western states in those institutions”. Finally, he stresses that “the West will increasingly have to accommodate those non-Western modern civilizations whose power approaches that of the West but whose

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values and interests differ significantly from those of the West,” and that this will involve identifying “elements of commonality” between civilizations.

Huntington seems to be advocating an uneasy co-existence with carefully selected kinds of difference that he deems worthy of recognition, while ignoring or eliminating elements which are not compatible with Western modernity. The result of the fuss about Huntington’s hypothesis is that the ‘Third World’, and the Islamic world in particular, has been reduced to begging the West for dialogue, denying that a clash exists or is inevitable. In short, Huntington’s ‘hypothesis’ can be seen as a clever way to intimidate and entice the non-Western world into dialogue and cooperation with the West.

The West has had a particular and consistent attitude toward dialogue for most of the modern history. In short, its position has been some variation of the dyad ‘dialogue or die’. Dialogue in this sense is a form of domestication, regarded in some cases as preferable to extermination. The Western challenge to other peoples to domesticate or be exterminated has historical phases, and the current phase is to promote domestication by way of dialogue and cooperation, but with the threat of extermination always implicit. Examples of this policy can be found throughout Western history in its encounters with the outside world.

Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt is a significant example. Napoleon arrived bearing a letter typeset in Arabic—on a printing press stolen from the Vatican—in which he insisted that “[I have come] for the purpose of restoring your rights from the hands of the oppressors and that I, more than the Mamluks, serve God—may he be praised and exalted—and revere his Prophet Muḥammad and the Glorious Qur’an.” He claimed that “the French are also faithful Muslims,” giving as evidence his recent destruction of the supposed enemies of Islam in the Vatican and among the Maltese Knights. The letter also offered an alternative to this offer of brotherly assistance, however: “Woe upon those who will unite with the Mamluks and assist them in the war against us, for they will not find the way of escape, and not a trace of them shall remain. . . Every village that shall rise against the French army shall be burnt down.”

Nor has this policy of ‘dialogue or die’ has been reserved for Muslims. Consider Commodore Perry, who sailed to Japan in the mid-19th century with warships to deliver a letter from the US president demanding that the Japanese open their ports to American trade, warning that “if this friendly letter of the President to the Emperor is not received and duly replied to, he

will consider his country insulted, and will not hold himself accountable for the consequences.”

The West’s drive for economic supremacy destroyed the Third World during the Cold War. This was what some refer to as the ‘Third World War’, in that it followed on the heels of the two Euro-American and trilateral world wars, but paradoxically it left those parties intact and resulted in the destruction of what has come to be called the Third World in Cold War parlance. Now, with the Second World civilizations thoroughly discredited, and the Cold War over, the West’s need is to mop up the third world war, and bring the Third World into the sway of the First World. In short, the ‘New World Order’ requires bringing the Third World around, and toward this very end the “dialogue or die” strategy will be employed.

We must understand two other points about this West that now demands dialogue: first, it is ferociously dichotomous, and has an irresistible drive to make intelligible that which is not—at all costs, and usually with great damage to the unintelligible. Most Western social science is really about understanding the other in terms that make sense to the researcher’s culture, not in terms of the culture being studied; indigenous knowledge must be explained in terms of Western knowledge, or else be ignored. Self-correction and self-reflection are not characteristics of the Western mentality. What the West really wants is a controlled monologue, tempered by a limited feedback.

And secondly, the West cannot accept “no” for an answer. Once approached for dialogue, the choices are simple: “dialogue or die”. The death may be slow, or it may be fast, it may be conceptual death in the form of propaganda and slander, or it may be physical death, but death it will be, because no third way is allowed. The threat of death is not always swift, as in the use of embargoes and other economic policies shows. In fact, the economic crisis that is wreaking havoc in the Third World is related to the larger project of domestication. Economic dialogues are simply ways to entangle Third World peoples into arrangements that will result in domestication. The end result of this game, upon which the West has built its grandiose self-image, is liquidation of the assets of the Third World, in terms of human labor, natural resources and selected sets of knowledge deemed useful to the Western outlook.

It is in this setting that I wish to discuss Imām Khomeinī. To illustrate how the Imām responded to calls for civilizational dialogue, we can look at some examples of dialogues that he engaged in. In line with the *Sīrah*, for example, the Imām wrote several letters to world leaders urging them to

abandon their false systems and study Islam as the only true salvation for themselves and their peoples. The Imām selected his recipients carefully; he did not write to leaders of many of the Western countries. But the most celebrated of his letters was the one to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989,<sup>1</sup> and he also engaged in an exchange of views with the Pope.

The Imām's famous letter to Gorbachev was delivered to the Soviet leader by envoys from the Islamic Republic, two men and a woman. After greeting the Soviet leader and lauding his efforts to reform the Union, the Imām warned Gorbachev that the Western world only seems more appealing compared to the crumbling communism of the East. The Imām declares: "If you wish to put an end to the economic woes of socialism and communism by simply resorting to the core of Eastern capitalism, you will not only not ease the pains prevalent in the Soviet society, but others must come after you to offset the mistakes you will have committed," for communism will be relegated to the "museums of the world's political history, since Marxism cannot meet any of the real needs of human beings." The Imām emphasizes that Gorbachev must beware to "not get trapped in the prison of the West and the Arch-Satan while pulling down the iron curtains of Marxist idealism". The Imām then offers to open a dialogue on the future of the Soviet people, urging Gorbachev to take his reforming efforts further, to rethink the Soviet policies on religion and state-mandated atheism, to free the churches and mosques, and to allow the calls to prayer to once again ring through the air.

Soon afterwards, the Imām received Eduard Shevardnadze at his home in Tehran, with the Soviet foreign minister sitting on the floor, and being quite taken aback, unable to remain still, out of his element, unexpectedly affected by the Imām's presence, according to several witnesses. The style and terms of the dialogue are telling: no round-table discussions, no gala banquets, not even tables and chairs, or sophisticated translation devices; just two leaders, with their associates and assistants, drinking tea and conversing face-to-face in the traditional Islamic way. The letter to Gorbachev and the meeting with Shevardnadze are important because the Imām sets the terms of the dialogue, without making demands as to the responses.

During the American 'hostage crisis', early in the Revolution, the Imām exchanged a number of letters with Pope John Paul. These are instructive for the way in which the Imām insisted on clarifying assumptions, and that a

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<sup>1</sup> See *A Call to Divine Unity: Letter of Imām Khomeinī, the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to Mikhail Gorbachev, Leader of the Soviet Union* (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, Winter 2003/4). [Trans.]

clear sense of right and wrong be maintained. In this sense, they are similar to the letter to Gorbachev, urging a leader to do right by his people and sticking to the *ḥaqq* [truth]. But the exchange with the Pope is instructive in other ways as well.

The Imām exchanged a series of letters with the Pope from 1980 to 1982, initiated by the Pope with a letter expressing concern for the ‘increase of tension’ between the United States and Iran, asking the Imām to use his ‘authoritative influence’ to bring about a solution. The Imām responded by pointing out that “our militant, noble nation took such cutting-off of relations as a good omen and celebrated it with rejoicings and illuminations” and that “the day will be dangerous for our people on which relations such as those existing during the former treacherous regime are re-established.”

Moving beyond merely responding to the Pope’s inquiry, the Imām then requests that the leader of the world’s Catholics uphold the truth and “warn the US government of the consequences of its tyrannies, imposition of force and plundering, and advise Mr. Carter, who is confronted with final defeat, to treat the nations which want absolute independence and do not want to be affiliated with any power in the world, according to humane criteria, to follow the teachings of Christ (may God’s blessings be on him) and not expose himself and the US government to further scandal.” The Pope ignored the Imām’s request to speak out against imperialism, but wrote again several months later, asking the Imām to assure him that Iran’s Christians would be treated well and continue to be able to gather freely in their churches and schools.

The Imām’s response to this second letter is instructive for his consistency. After noting that certain Christian schools in Iran were being used as a cover for espionage and intrigue—like the American nest of spies—the Imām discusses at length the legacy of the despised Shāh and his unflinching support from Carter, and asks a series of telling questions of the Pope, which are worth reproducing here in full:

“Does [the Pope] know we lost everything under 50 years of British and American domination? Does he know about our young people who are demanding justice and calling attention to the oppression of our nation? How can I tell my nation that Christian clergy are in the service of the superpowers? Why did the Pope make no comment when our young people were killed on the streets? Why does he show such discrimination? Does Christ teach discrimination? Does Christ act well toward the rich and badly toward the oppressed? Do you know what they did to our country? Did you hear the voice of our oppressed nation or do you only listen to the cries of

tyrants? Do you know about the behavior of the US police towards our young students, male and female? Are you aware that when some traitors in America were going to demonstrate against our oppressed nation, the US police protected them but when Muslim students were going to have a demonstration to complain about the oppression of our nation, what the US police did to them? Does the Pope know that our young boys and girls are chained, that they have broken ribs and some of them are unconscious? Is he concerned about these problems? Does he know about Christ's behavior toward people? Why does he not send a message to Carter? Why doesn't the Pope speak one word about the situation of these young girls and boys, who are imprisoned under torture? Why does he not ask these people who call themselves Christians and members of Churches, why they do such things? How can I reply to the oppressed people when they ask us why we defend these clergymen who don't say a word against the superpowers and oppression, even of the American people?"

The Imām concludes with a telling observation, that "I have never heard of the Pope defending oppressed people in Iran or America," and with a suggestion that he should "criticize America for its behavior toward human beings, and ask it not to oppress them," also requesting that the Pope "act according to his religious and Christian duties and stop these American executioners and police."

It is evident from these exchanges and others that the Imām is not willing to sacrifice truth in the name of dialogue, and that he took every opportunity to speak the truth, even if it risked offending men in high places. For the Imām, then, protest can be framed in terms of religious duties, and need not be limited to the liberal discourse of international relations and various human rights accords, all of which use the secular language of Western liberal discourse.

Holding a dialogue with the Pope, who himself is subject to the Western discourse, without voicing religious duties and obligations, would amount to validating the Western monologue and its pious frauds in defense of tyranny and oppression. The Imām saw through these charades, and minced no words in pointing them out. The Pope's letters continued to skirt the central issue of papal support or silence in the face of tyranny, but the Imām kept that issue at the forefront, as a condition for meaningful dialogue.

Notably, the letters to the Pope indicate that the Imām held the Pope to account not for Islamic values, but for the Christian values about which he was supposedly a spokesperson. This act of holding religious leaders to account is also evident in his letters to other Christians, worldwide and in

Iran, in which the Imām emphasizes brotherhood and asks for solidarity in the fight against imperialism. But he also asks Christians to “warn the heads of some Christian countries helping the tyrannical Shāh with their satanic powers and crushing a whole nation under oppression, and to acquaint them with the teachings of Jesus Christ,” and to expose ‘pretend Christians,’ such as Carter who “commits tyranny and cruelty in the world contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ”.

Besides proclaiming the *ḥaqq* to world leaders of his time, Imām Khomeinī also followed the *Sīrah* and the Islamic method in other ways. He was a strong proponent of the *barā’ah min al-mushrikīn* rallies that are held during *ḥajj*, and was clear about who should be the targets of such rallies. Imām Khomeinī considered the present-day *mushrikīn* to be the Americans and the Zionists in particular, and the Western powers in general. In a sense, these targets are not worthy of dialogue, those with whom dialogue would be useless. The Imām regularly highlighted America as the single greatest problem facing the Muslims, and outlined America’s cooptation of Islam through the influence of the Saudis, which resulted in what he called ‘American Islam’. For the Imām, followers of American Islam on the one hand propagate the Islam of aristocrats, the Islam of Abū Sufyān,<sup>1</sup> the Islam of filthy court *mullās*, the Islam of the silly pseudo-divines of theological centers and universities, the Islam of disgrace and wretchedness, the Islam of money and power, the Islam of deception, compromise and captivity, the Islam of the sovereignty of capital and the capitalists over the oppressed and the barefoot, and . . . on the other hand, prostrate before the altar of their lord, the US, the world-devourer. (Khomeinī 1988, p. 89.)

Against this he upheld the pure Muḥammadan Islam.

Also to be found in the Imām’s writings are recommendations for relations with other Muslims, especially some of the Persian Gulf States. This suggests that intra-Muslim dialogues ought to precede others, to help find solutions to problems that address Muslim concerns and assumptions. In his last testament and counsel, the Imām warned against what he called Third World ‘occidentosis’ [*gharbzadegī*] and ‘orientosis’ [*sharqzadegī*]. The Imām urged Muslims to conduct dialogue among themselves first, and to form alliances with ‘Third World’ nations. This was evident even before the revolution. For example, in his message to the *ḥujjāj* [pilgrims] in 1971, he urged intra-Muslim dialogue to solve problems, especially those of Zionism

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<sup>1</sup> Abū Sufyān: father of Mu’āwiyah, head of the Quraysh tribe of Mecca and the staunchest enemy of the Holy Prophet of Islam. He was at the head of the non-believers and idol worshiping groups who opposed Islam and persecuted Muslims.

and imperialism. This was consistent in his post-revolutionary messages, too, such as on the anniversary of the Saudi's massacre of *ḥujjāj* in Mecca, where he elaborated on the revolutionary slogan "neither East nor West":

"Some persons of dubious motives accuse us of pursuing a policy of hostility and disdain in international forums. With their pretended sympathies and childish objections they contend that the Islamic Republic has incited enmities and lost prestige in the eyes of the East and the West. They should be asked, 'At what time did the Third World nations and Muslims, especially the nation of Iran, enjoy any esteem and credit with the East or the West so that they should lose them now?' Of course, if the Iranian people should set aside all Islamic and revolutionary principles and norms, and demolish with their own hands the house of the honor and credibility of the Prophet (*ṣ*) and the pure Imāms (*'a*), then it is possible that the world-devourers may accord to them official recognition as a weak and poor nation devoid of culture. But that too will be up to a certain level, at the level that they remain superpowers and lords and we mean servants, they guardians and masters and we their henchmen and base hirelings. That will not be an Iran with an Islamic identity, but an Iran whose identification card has been issued by the US or the USSR. Today all the grief and lamentations of the US and USSR, of the East and the West are for this reason that Iran has not only gone out of their patronage but invites others to escape from the domination of tyrants."

Several times the Imām exposed requests for dialogue as imperialist ploys. For instance, during last two weeks of January 1979, after the Shāh fled Iran and before the Imām returned, Shāpūr Bakhtiyār was installed to lead the Iranian government in what the Shāh's backers thought to be a logical compromise. Bakhtiyār immediately requested a dialogue with Imām Khomeinī. The Imām agreed, on one condition: that Bakhtiyār first resign as prime minister of Iran. The dialogue ended; the Imām returned to Iran; Bakhtiyār unleashed a last gasp of murderous oppression, and his government collapsed on February 10-11, 1979, when the Islamic Republic was born.

The Imām wrote several *fatwās* that are relevant to our discussion of dialogue. He insisted that the '*ulamā*' proclaim the truth and denounce falsehood, but that given the silence of the '*ulamā*' on such issues the people must take it into their own hands. The Imām also wrote about the need for '*ulamā*' to maintain credibility. Dialogue reflects credibility, and conversely also reflects upon the validity of those whom one engages in dialogue. To do so with Bakhtiyār, for instance, would have validated his position.

The current dialogue fad has some interesting characteristics. Initiating a dialogue with the West is a politically clever thing to do, gaining some credence in the United Nations, and challenging the West to live up to some of its own proclamations. But it also demonstrates the degree to which Muslims are committed to Western methodologies. Nevertheless, there is a strong momentum in the current wave of dialogue, and it will be difficult to resist in the near future. But it is not too late to ask some critical questions about the form and structure of dialogue, and about its goals and intentions, and especially the key issue of who can enter into dialogue, and with whom.

Dialogue with whom? This question cuts to the heart of dialogue as an essentially political activity that sifts and sorts different parties by validating or discrediting them in terms of approved voices in a dialogue. The West is ferociously dichotomous, tending to only see two sides to any issue. But the world is not that easily divided into black and white, good and bad, rich and poor, north and south, east and west, or any other of a number of partners in the Western dialectic. The power of the dialectic is disarming conceptually, and leads to marginalizing other voices while maintaining the illusion that 'both sides' are represented. Take again, for example, the ongoing protests around the World Trade Organization meetings, first in Seattle in the US and soon thereafter in Davos, Switzerland. While US President Bill Clinton spoke of coopting the opposition, and environmental and labor groups decried the organization's secrecy, no one questioned the underlying assumptions of the discourse of world trade, all of which are rooted in the myths of modernity, including the myths of progress, objectivity and rationalism.

Larger questions also loom about the clashes and dialogues of civilizations. 'Civilization' is just a word, made up by modernist philologists and social scientists as shorthand for complex social, political, cultural, philosophical and economic phenomena. But what counts as a civilization? What doesn't count? Who decides? How many civilizations are there? How have these changed, disappeared, or appeared over time? Who gets to speak on behalf of a given civilization? In an age characterized by a postmodern veneer over retrenched modernity, that some people are calling 'hyper-modernity', one major innovation stands out: image presides over reality. Deception, of self and of others, is a major feature of hypermodernity and its surrogate, the much-touted 'information age', so it is all the more necessary to look beneath and beyond the surface values. Who in the world is now seeking truth in these ways? Truths beyond those colonized by modernity? Truths beyond those reducible to television and computer images? Truths

beyond those sanctioned by Western science and its surrogates in the global political scene and transnational capital? Not scientists, who are doing as the Imām once said, reducing knowledge to a thick veil. How about journalists? But many are obsessed with image and style, and about self-promotion in media driven by corporate advertising tastes and trends. Who are the truth-seekers outside the Western limitations of science, outside the narrow focus of Western journalism? By all means enter into dialogue with them if the goal of the dialogue is to speak the truth, to find the truth, to implement the truth. Even most religious dialogue falls outside this scheme, since Western assumptions pervade, such as “difference equals death”, with talking only to avoid death, to avoid killing each other. But why is this the presumed outcome of difference? It should be clear that “difference equals death” is another of the pathologies of the *ṭāghūtī* civilization and its *istikbārī* culture. Why can't difference just be different?

What about ‘dialogue for common interests’? But defined how? Common with whom? Nowadays, these common interests usually mean common economic interests, about seeking the *dunyā* [material world], in a lopsided relationship with the rest of cosmological existence, as a feature of the Western pathological civilization. There are many such areas where dialogues on commonality obscure complexity. Television is an example. Discussions of television are often reduced to interminable debates on issues of free speech and censorship, while people who talk about things like the physiological effects of television, how television promotes individualism, consumerism, and the other myths of modernity, are not part of the dialogue on content. Common interests also raise the question, “common with whom?” For instance, the Muslim world is more a part of the ‘Third World’ than of the West, and given the Imām’s preference for working within the framework of the Islamic world and the Third World rather than the West, the commonalities between the Islamic and the Third Worlds ought to be studied. These might include the imposition of structural adjustment programs by transnational financial bodies, along with privatization and neo-liberalism in economics, or the renewal of indigenous knowledges with respect to food-production and other sustainable necessities, or diagnosing the pathology of consumerism and the social ills of hypermodernism and unrestrained capitalism, and perhaps most importantly, how to keep the West at bay on all these fronts.

Another unnoticed aspect of the rush towards dialogue is the hidden role of power. Imām Khomeinī always spoke out on behalf of the downtrodden and oppressed over the arrogant and repressive. So would it be better to

attempt dialogue with powerful transnational corporations, or with grassroots consumer movements? Do the eager promoters of dialogues even know of such grassroots movements, or are they so blinded by their drive to appease the *istikbārī* and *tāghūtī* powers that they think these powers speak on behalf of the world's oppressed? Why? Who is in and who is out, and who decides? Perhaps employing the concept of 'polylogue' is better, admitting many voices and not only resolving false dichotomies, since these in one way or another benefit the West. Again, who in the world today is seeking and proclaiming the truth? If we must have a dialogue, then perhaps it would be better framed not in terms of civilizations, which are at best reified concepts anyway, but in terms of truth-seekers, and the oppressed, the weak and the powerless.

Proclaiming the truth does not have to mean violence yet. Imām proclaimed the truth to Gorbachev, and yet still affirmed bilateral relations at the end of his letter, not feeling the need to destroy difference, and able to coexist with certain forms, letting the truth speak for itself and letting Allah be the ultimate judge. In Western dialogues, truth is often the first casualty, negotiated out of the picture in the name of cordial relations or a limited sense of mutual respect, in the interest of not hurting anyone's feelings. But why is denying the truth or avoiding the truth necessary for cordial relations and a sense of mutual respect?

The story of *mubāhilah* in the Qur'an is an example of a dialogue in search of the truth, which is taken very seriously and with dire consequences for the liars, those who cover or deny the truth.<sup>1</sup> The Islamic way, as exemplified by Imām Khomeinī, is to proclaim the truth, let Allah do the rest, or let others back out, as in *mubāhilah*. Dialogue requires suspending proclamations of truth for the sake of cordial relations, protocols and relativistic understandings, all of which are current concerns in the liberal and modernist Western worldview. What takes precedence in such a dialogue is the process of dialogue; and given the West's ferocious tendency to dichotomize, the only perceived way for them is to not proclaim any truth, to simply talk away the truths and falsehoods as if they didn't exist, to focus on expediting presumed commonalities. The whole enterprise is riddled with guilt, another stubborn Western pathology permeating the dialogue/conflict dyad. Dialogue is a form of domestication, which is at times held within the Western dichotomy to be preferable to extermination. Any real consideration of the implications of dialogue needs to keep in mind the core assumptions of

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<sup>1</sup> See commentary of *Sūrah Āli 'Imrān* 3:61, <http://www.al-Islam.org/quran>. [Trans.]

the West: that dialogue is compulsory, that the absence of dialogue equals death, and that dialogue by definition makes things better: simply talking about things will make them go away. At the same time, that which cannot be understood in such a limited framework must be adjusted or destroyed. So, in the end, dialogue is a form of control, a way to openly monitor dissent and deviation, in order to plan behind closed doors an agenda of domestication or extermination. All dialogues about democracy in Islam seem to serve this purpose.

Inasmuch as Muslims are part of the 'Third World', this majority world bloc offers a third way out of the self-destructive dichotomies of Western civilization. What the West fears most is 'Third World' autonomy in any shape or form, that a 'third way' is possible and viable. Seeing the world in this way is a direct repercussion of colonization. Once a colonial system is established, colonized peoples generally have three choices with respect to the Western system of thought and action. Some will become good subjects of the Western colonial system, adopting its set of norms and allegiances and playing by them. Others may become bad subjects of the colonial system, also adopting the norms and allegiances of the colonial system but using them against the colonizers, in a sense demanding no more than a bigger slice of the colonial pie. This category includes most nationalist movements, especially those that adopt one or another of the Western ideologies, such as liberalism or socialism. A third group, the non-subjects of the West, exemplars of our third way, will operate entirely outside the colonial system, thinking and acting in ways that are unintelligible to the West, and operating by their own set of norms and allegiances. The third way is fraught with uncertainty, about indigenous knowledge and action, which itself is a result of the colonized mentality, but which the West fears the most, no matter how ineffective it may be.

The Islamic movement currently has members in all three groups, although the non-subjects are not well organized and therefore virtually invisible in the current nation-state system. In many ways, Imām Khomeinī was trying to develop such a third way, outside Western dichotomies and choices, and this is shown for example by the slogan of the revolution, "neither East nor West". But slogans remain only words until people turn them into action. It is only when the colonized have a strong sense of themselves, and have developed a coherent third way, that they can really engage in a meaningful dialogue on an equal footing. Until then, dialogues may be shortsighted and may perpetuate the legacy of colonization.