Editorial
Globalization: Centralization not Globalism

The term *globalization* often is used to describe the global nature of capital and the emergence of a single global economy in the contemporary era. The term also suggests certain homogenizing tendencies in the social as well as political realms. These homogenizing tendencies may refer to something as banal as the ubiquitous acceptance of denim jeans or to something as profound as the globalization of the democratic processes. In this brief discussion, we shall limit our comments to the realm of normative values. However, this does not mean that culture and the globalization of cultural practices is not important. Culture is important, but the basic normative values that underpin culture, as well as the political and social arenas, are more profound, and it is these upon which I will focus my attention.

We shall use the term *globalism* to describe the current on-going global convergence of values. Globalism can be best understood by contrasting it with the idea of centralization. Centralization conceives of the world as one, but clearly identifies what is the center and what constitutes the periphery. In a system undergoing centralization, a global power asserts its domination over "others" by locating itself as the normative, political, and economic center of the universe. It marginalizes the rest of the world, and simultaneously assumes, often through coercive means, the role of leader in moral as well as material terms. There is a clear hierarchy in the system, and the center is the undisputed "hegemon." Thus when the periphery emulates the center, it often does so out of fear or insecurity, and the resulting homogenization is actually hegemonization.

The centrality of the hegemon is based on an anthropological view of the universe, which distinguishes—or rather discriminates—between the good/powerful and the bad/weak. The centrality of the hegemon is a manifestation of its egocentric nature and its sense of superiority over others. It sees itself as advanced, rational, creative, democratic, and peaceful, and constructs others as underdeveloped, traditional, lazy, authoritarian, and therefore inferior. It assumes that it is the best and that the rest must emulate it in their political, socioeconomic, and cultural constitution. Early attempts at global conquest, such as those by

Alexander the Great and Napoleon, clearly were attempts to place their respective societies in the center of the universe. The contemporary phenomenon of globalization is a similar attempt at centralization, for it is a process that places the West in general, and the United States in particular, at the center of the world and makes the rest of the planet peripheral. The relationship of power and domination between the center and the margins is self-evident. The global promotion of democracy and free market economics reflects the reshaping of the periphery in the image of the center. Thus, while there is an emergence of homogenization and many political, socioeconomic, and even cultural practices, this is due to centralization, not globalism.

Globalism, on the other hand, assumes the fundamental equality of all nations, societies, civilizations, and peoples. It stems from a sophisticated, highly evolved, and egalitarian *weltanschauung* transcending the Eurocentric nature of contemporary globalization. It cannot emerge through the globalization of values particular to the West; rather, it must emerge from ideas and values that, in themselves, are inherently universal and nondiscriminatory. More importantly, this movement toward globalism must ride on the convergence of ideas and values, not through economic interests. We believe that such a globalism can emerge from Islam.

Islam as the Foundation of Globalism

From the very beginning, Islam asserted the equality of all people. Its ideas and values always were couched in the language of humanity with a global audience, unlike Judaism (*Banī Isrā'īl*) and other Semitic precursors of Islam that addressed specific communities, peoples, and tribes. By asserting that all of humanity came from one man and one woman, Islam emphasized the primordial equality and unity of all. This is the first cornerstone around which globalism, based on the universal ethics and values of Islam, can be advanced.

The second cornerstone of globalism is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, who declared that the entire earth is a mosque. This beautiful principle, which negates the sacredness and superiority of one place over any other, denies the possibility of a center-periphery division of the Earth. In the beginning, Jerusalem was the direction to which Muslims turned in prayer, but changing the direction and facing Makkah signaled Islam's acceptance of the universal heritage and legacy of Prophet Ibrāhīm.

The third cornerstone of globalism is the values that Islam shares with all other civilizations: unity (*tawḥīd*), truth (*ḥaqq*), guidance (*hidāyah*), justice (*'adl*), purity (*ṭahārah*), freedom (*hurriyah*), and civilization (*'imrān*). These are values that all peoples at all times recognized

as normative ideals. Through the realization of these values, a common and universally acceptable ground could be identified, just as most Muslims have recognized and accepted Western values of human rights and democracy. By emphasizing these global values in discourses and practices, a genuine trend towards globalism can be initiated.

In a world increasingly divided by cultural and ethnic disparities, how can we initiate the conversation that will enable globalism to triumph? The first step is to move away from the traditional division of the world into three separate realms of peace (*dār al Islām*), war (*dār al ḥarb*), and treaty (*dār al ṣulḥ*). This division of the world into immutable regions of war and peace diminishes the possibility of a genuine civilizational dialogue on globalism.

Instead, we must identify with Fakhr al Dīn al Rāzī, who divided the world into two realms: *dār al ijābah* (the land of acceptance, where people accepted Islam and Islamic values are practiced) and *dār al da'wah* (the land of invitation, to which *da'wah* is presented and its people are invited to Islamic values and practices). This view of the world removes the potential for conflict and emphasizes the role and possibilities of cooperation, understanding, and dialogue. In calling for a globalism based on Islamic principles, we are providing a new vision of *dīn, dunyā*, and *da'wah*, which will seek to advance a shared understanding of the global principles identified earlier in order to protect the soul, dignity, reason, and wealth of all peoples everywhere.

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