

Exploring the Futures of the Ummah: A Review of Simulation Models and Approaches to the Study of Alternative Futures

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This article is both a critique of ways of approaching the future and a presentation of scenarios of the Islamic world a generation ahead. The critique covers various global models, including The Club of Rome's classic Limits to Growth (LTG),¹ Mankind at the Turning Point (MTP),² and World 2000,³ and other approaches to the understanding of the future. Drawing from poststructural theory, we ask: What is missing, who does the analysis privilege, and what epistemological frames or ways of knowing are accentuated, are made primary, by the models used? What can the Islamic world learn from these models? We attempt to go a step further than merely asking the Marxist class question of who benefits financially. For us, the issue is deeper. We are concerned with what knowledge frames and (more appropriately, from an Islamic perspective) what civilizational frames are privileged, are considered more important. An appendix presents recommendations focused on making the Islamic ummah more future oriented.

However, global models are only one way of approaching or understanding the future. There are other ways of approaching the study of the future from which can be derived specific assertions about issues, trends, and scenarios as to the likely and possible shape of the future. We also inquire into the utility of these models for better understanding the future of the Islamic ummah. We conclude with visions of the future of the ummah.

Visioning Imagination and Imagining Vision

The purpose of this discussion is not a summary of global modeling⁴ or futures studies;⁵ this has been done elsewhere in much more detail. Rather, our purpose is to use such a discussion to analyze alternative futures for the ummah in coming generations and generate policy recommendations as how to envision such futures. We are concerned with vision, asking not only what might the future look like—given the structure of historical trends and events—but also what we want the future to be like. The challenge becomes how to imagine futures that are different than the present, that take us into the unknown, and that force us out of the categories and patterns of the present. A vision then is a break with the present; it is a rupture and thus is not accessible by simulation modeling. A vision is more than who we are. A vision cannot be rationally planned for; a vision about the future is fundamentally about myth, about the deeper meaning structures that make people who they are.⁶ Myth is essentially about suffering and transcendence, of a community created through a shared journey.

Does this mean that efforts to imagine the future of the ummah are a waste of time? Not at all. It means that our visioning efforts should first not be confined to intellectual analysis. Other ways of knowing and being—poetry, art, architecture, ritual, community action—all are equally important. What intellectuals can do is create the contexts for dreams and visions. They can do this by giving them legitimacy, by making visions more real to those who exist in strategic and economic worlds. But more than different ways of knowing, visioning is a process that must be embarked upon by leadership and mass, dialectically and interactively.⁷ Visioning as related to myth does not mean fantasy, however. While fantasy is important in breaking out of current frames of reference, it does not touch upon the historical worldview that constitutes Islam. In this sense, the Islamic paradigm as articulated by various Muslim writers is crucial in functioning as a springboard for visioning:

There are ten such concepts, four standing alone and three opposing pairs: *tawhīd* (unity), *khalifah* (trusteeship), *ibadah* (worship), *ilm* (knowledge), *halal* (praiseworthy) and *haram* (blameworthy), *adl* (social justice) and *zulm* (tyranny) and *istiṣlah* (public interest) and *dhiya* (waste).⁸

Tawhīd articulates the larger Islamic unity of thought, action, and value across humanity, persons, nature, and God. *Khalifah* asserts that it is God who has ownership of the Earth. Humans function as stewards, in a trustee capacity, taking care of the Earth, not damaging it. The goal of the Islamic worldview is *adl* (social justice), and it is based on the larger needs of the people, *istiṣlah*. To reach these goals, *ibadah* (worship or contemplation) is a beginning and necessary step. From deep reflection

(inner and outer observation), *'ilm* or knowledge of self, other, and nature will result. One's actions then are *halal* (praiseworthy) and not *haram* (blameworthy). With this framework, *dhiya'* (waste) of individual and collective potentials is avoided as is tyranny, the power of a few, or one over many, or the power of a narrow ideology over the unity within plurality that the Islamic paradigm advocates.

The paradigm becomes the context for the vision, for framing the image of the future within general ideals. It thus contours the vision not so much within specific historical events—revenge against a person, nation or civilization—but within the larger meaning system of the civilization in question, in this case, the Islamic ummah (meaning more than a geographical community but an interpretive community). A vision within this context is powerful because it touches upon the core of the Muslim experience and, insofar as it is future-oriented, aids in transcending the categories of the present, particularly the nation-state framework of modernity under which Muslims are ensconced.

While visions are often framed in personal language or considered to be the realm of the superconscious or unconscious, we use this term in the larger collective sense, of a group vision, a group myth of the future. But a vision is also about action. Futurist/activist Robert Jungk talks about attending a "Visioning the Year 2000" workshop where a participant emphatically asserted "Let's do something about now and not worry so much about the year 2000." After a sleepless night thinking about this intervention, Jungk responded that he would rather turn around the sentence and declare, "Because we worry about the year 2000, let us do something now."⁹ The future becomes a force for motivation. Because we care for future generations, we must ensure that we do not destroy our environmental and cultural heritage.¹⁰

This becomes the key. Humans must think about the future so as to transform the present and past. Without thinking about the future, history remains dominant and the present remains oppressive. The future becomes a place that allows for transformation. To do so requires imagination. But not all imagination is the same. Robert Jungk posits three types. The first is logical imagination. This is the extrapolation of current trends to show their absurdity, thus allowing new ideas to emerge. By focusing on exponential growth curves (instead of linear or s-curves), the problem with current trends can be easily seen. The second is critical imagination. Critical examination asks us to probe deeper, searching for structural weaknesses in existing state of affairs and thereby creating the context for alternative futures. This is deeper than traditional critique which only reveals what is wrong. Critical imagination shows what is wrong and points to desirable futures. The third approach is creative imagination.

Creative imagination is not content with extending, combining or negating already existing trends. It attempts, by breaking out of the existing systems or countersystems, to strike out on a completely new cause, breaking radically with prevalent concepts. Creative imagination gives birth to a new era whenever and wherever it emerges. And very often it locates a new state of mind beyond the controversies which are characteristic of and apparently an inextricable part of the times it left behind.¹¹

Creative imagination is a jump of consciousness, almost a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. The challenge for the imagination of the future, for the vision of the future of the ummah, is not only to create such a jump but to discern how to effectively communicate this possible future, this desirable future to others. This is problematic for many reasons. First, within contemporary economic thinking imagination is considered amathematical and astrategic. Irrespective of our religious beliefs, most of us live in segmented, fragmented, and isolated intellectual spaces. Imagination is fine for children and for religion but not for adults. Real action is in accumulating capital, power, or technical knowledge. Vision is for daydreamers, it is often argued.

Second, related to economic thinking is zero-sum international relations thinking. In this model, reality is about hidden motives, about security, about the enemy. Indeed, the self and nation are not defined by race, language, or territory but by not being the enemy. We are who we hate. Strategic thinking borrows from neoclassical economics and argues that we are but self-interested egoistic individuals. Methodological individualism becomes the guiding sociology. Following Hobbes, nations are seen as individuals living in an anarchic world. Within this view, visions or imaginations of, say, an Islamic world community which gives passports—defining a postnational identity that does away with the sovereignty of capital and labor—seem unthinkable or are placed in the historical context of empire, of strong vertical relations between a dynastic center and a colonized periphery. An alternative global ummah that is horizontally related through trading, direct mutual investment, cultural and genetic interchange, tourism, and a context of deep dialogue appears as fantasy. It is fantasy not because it is impossible but because the modern worldview undoes—denies legitimacy to—alternative explorations of identity.¹² Nations are real. Nations give passports, regulate labor, and until recently regulated capital, pollution, and identity (of course, globalism has made the nation-state a problematic species if not an endangered one). The underlying model of the strategic worldview is based on a perception of conflict with others, resulting in the need to dominate, to engage in a Darwinian contest of survival.

Islam placed such, leads to enormous tensions between the state and the individual (with individuals who opt for nonstatist versions of Islam

seen as threatening) and between states (with each state claiming the mantle of Islam as defined by power and to some extent fidelity to the Islamic paradigm). The result is a nationalistic, nonuniversal Islam that is defensive toward the West and fragmented and offensive toward its own people. The deepest cost is the loss of category of global community, of ummah itself, not to mention the category of future. The imagination of a universal Islam not bounded by nation or leader or strengthened by enemy, by the fear of the other, is the first causality. The task for visioning the Islamic ummah of the future is about reversing this process, creating a vision that pulls a civilization forward, not draws a people into the glue of greed and fear. As Fred Polak has argued in *The Image of the Future*,¹³ civilizations that have a compelling image of the future (essentially optimistic about the nature of humans and positive about what can be created) rise. Those that have no image (who are essentially pessimistic about the nature of humans and negative about the possibility of change over time) decline. If we add Polak's theory to the Khaldunian concept of power, we have a rich macrohistory and macrofuture.¹⁴

For Ibn Khaldun, those outside of official power (what he calls royal authority) have a more difficult and challenging life. Through struggle they gain communal unity and aspire to state power. But once achieved, over a period of four generations the vision disappears, unity is lost, and as power declines, new forces with stronger vision/unity take the mantle of leadership.¹⁵

We are thus faced with a historic but demanding task. Imagining the futures of the ummah is problematic because of the predominance of (1) economic thinking, (2) international relation's neorealist paradigm of self and nation, (3) our rigid training in history and conventional disciplines, and (4) our fear of being ridiculous or controversial.

But it is possible! To do so, a vision must meet the following criteria: (1) It must have legitimacy among its interpretive community, that is, a vision cannot be merely one individual's fantasy, it must have agreement from its members; (2) it must touch upon the physical layer of reality (the material world of goods and services); (3) it must have some bearing on conventional views of rationality, even as it contests them; (4) it must ennoble a people; (5) it must be neither too far into the future (and thus appear utopian, unreachable) nor too near term (and thus be fraught with emotional ego-politics, with cynicism toward transformative change); (6) it must redefine the role of leadership, the vanguard; and finally (7) it must be mythical.¹⁶

As mentioned earlier, a vision must touch some deep unconscious often metaphorical level of what it means to be human and our role as humans—and Muslims—in history and future. Ultimately, a successful vision must enable each one of us to transform self and society.

Computer models can aid visionary thinking in being more rigorous, in exploring unanticipated consequences, and in testing assumptions.

Futures Studies: Toward an Islamic Perspective

But why futures studies? What is the value of the field of futures studies in exploring the ummah of generations ahead? First, futures studies takes time seriously. Time is often considered an independent variable, but futures studies instead regards time as dependent on human experience, on civilizational experience.¹⁷ For Muslims, part of the uncomfortableness with modernity is that time has always been more diverse. A.H. was as important, indeed, more important a way of calendaring reality than B.C. Moreover, lunar time is equally central. Equally important from a Muslim perspective is future generations thinking. Future generations research attempts to articulate familial notions of temporality, arguing that instead of forecasting decades ahead or being coopted by the language of 21st century studies, we should seriously consider the future as constituted by our children's children, by seven generations ahead. These possibilities can become current once we take the future, temporality, not as a given, but as a problematique.

As we have learned from Zia Sardar in his numerous books on Islamic Futures¹⁸—as well as from Munawar Anees,¹⁹ Parvez Mansoor,²⁰ Anwar Ibrahim,²¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr,²² Merryl Davies²³ and Muhammed Akram Khan²⁴—Islam is a future-oriented worldview. It is so partly because we know from the Prophet's life that a vision, a calling, became a series of strategic plans to realize this vision. The human capacity to reason, to learn from the past, and to rationally search for alternatives and choose a best course of action was perfectly illustrated by the Prophet's life. Islam is also future-oriented in that properly understood it offers an alternative to state-oriented socialism and greed-climaxing capitalism. While some might argue that Islam is not future-oriented in a temporal sense since the primary relationship of the Muslim is one of submission to Allah (as many say, why be concerned with the future, just trust in Allah), Islam should be understood not merely as a religion explicating the relationship between self and God, but as a civilization which advises how to treat each other and nature and to create the good. Issues of polity and economy are not divorced from the religious discourse. Islam not only forces each individual and society to constantly measure between the ideal future as exemplified in the life and teaching of the Prophet and the present but it also has the potential to become a planetary model for the futures ahead.

Islam's commitment to an alternative future does not discount history. Indeed, the Madinah polity and other Muslim historical successes can be recovered from the overarching paradigm of modernism. History can be

used to create the future; history should be seen as part of interpretive space, as future space. We should thus not commit to particular linear images of the future, specifically, that the future of the non-West will follow that of the West. There can be alternative ways out of feudalism, monarchy, and closed-door traditionalism. Indeed, many argue that as the West is in its final fatigue, in a deep crisis of vision, alternatives can only come from those outside the imperium, from those who are not beholden to the images and myths of centralized power and technocracy.²⁵

At the same time, history, while often a resource, can be a curse.²⁶ Most South Asians (as well as most citizens of decolonized lands) and Muslims bear the brunt of history's curses in that they define who they are by particular battles, by historical memory. However, the South Asian diaspora as well as the flux of Muslim refugees, knowledge workers, and tourists are creating a new relationship to the ideal of home. Home is becoming less a fixed place, less of an a priori eternal geographical category. The strength of a particular geography to define identity among South Asians and Muslims is decreasing. What were once significant mythic national events (partitions, revolutions, battles) thus become less important. These nonevents eventually became a positive trend that can force us out of historical memory and present memory. The future became a real place, a place that is, while full of possibility, a home.

Modern Futures Studies

In most civilizations, humans have had a deep interest in what will happen to them, as individuals and as groups. However, it is only recently that the future has come under the purview of scientific methods. Forecasting, usually quantitative, has become the technique par excellence of planners, economists and social scientists. Behind this is a perspective that desires to make the world more stable and to control the future. The assumption behind forecasting is that with more information, particularly more timely information, leaders and managers can make wiser decisions. Having more information is especially important now since the rate of technological change has dramatically increased. We are constantly remaking ourselves. However, the need for information, as in times before, is necessitated by a fear of the future, a feeling of impotence in the face of forces we cannot understand, that seem larger than us. This has been especially dramatic in the last twenty years as each crisis has become a global crisis, partly because of the national/global news media but also because issues are in fact global now.

In recent times, futures studies has, in particular, grown and become semilegitimate. In doing so, it has been modernized and adopted by cor-

porate planners, policy institutes, and government planning bureaus. Futures studies has become linked with short- and long-range planning. But the differences between futures studies and planning are significant.²⁷ First, futures studies is much longer term oriented, concerned with hundreds of years ahead. Second, planning commits to one particular future, but futures studies insists on keeping the future plural and open. In this denotation it is postmodern in that all views of reality are appropriate. For Muslims, while the utility of futures is in keeping the futures open, it is important to close and choose a particular, that is, to create a planning horizon around a particular future. Third, while planning is often top down oriented, futures studies is interactive including as many stakeholders as possible. Fourth, it is concerned with questions of ethics, of what the future ought to be like instead of positing a question-free future, as long-range planning exercises often do. Fifth, futures studies is concerned with the unknown, with the wild-card, with the impossible. Planning tries to narrow the future; futures studies continuously engages in opening up the future. Futures studies thus seeks to make basic assumptions problematic. And, finally, the future is considered multileveled, from the litany of current events to the causes that created them and the worldview underneath the entire process of knowing and discovering. Futures studies is epistemologically sensitive, open to multiple interpretations of reality. It is thus less instrumentalist than planning, which is guided by profit, efficiency, and power goals.

While modern futures studies has grown because of the assumption that better forecasts, or more information, will lead to better decision and policy making, this view forgets that policies are often made irrespective of the "facts." Decisions are reached or not made because of political reasons, funding concerns, or lack of institutional will. Merely listing problems or fears often does little but create a politics of fear in which instead of creating true alternatives, nothing is done—the status-quo continues. This has been one of the criticisms of the various global models in that they were doomsday reports, merely creating fear, not transformation. Alerting others is not enough since we have become numbed by the global news industry. News has become global gossip, useful for advertising but not for social and political change. This is less true at the national level where pride, prestige, and the desire for re-election or World Bank/UN dollars often leads to change, as evidenced by the successes of UN Human Development Reports.

However, it is fear that has led to the development of futures studies. Futures studies developed in the USA and Europe in the 1950s, primarily as a tool to gain strategic military advantage. This has ranged from Herman Kahn's *Thinking the Unthinkable*²⁸ (postnuclear war scenarios) to Harold Linstone's efforts to predict who will attack first (deterrence scenarios).²⁹ However, forecasting was immediately problematic. Faced

with situations where there are no facts—while we can remember the past, we cannot remember the future—Olaf Helmer developed the delphi technique.³⁰ In delphi, information about the future is gleaned through expert knowledge. This is done in rounds so that experts learn from one another (determine how far or near they are to other experts) and anonymously so no one super-expert skews forecasts. Through repeated rounds, forecasts eventually normalize around a central tendency.

Futures studies quickly became commonplace in governmental agencies as well as corporations. In the former, the hidden goal was to appear modern, to rationalize decision making, and to increase budgets. In the latter, strategic business advantage was of concern.

This latter type of futures studies gained global fame during the 1970s era of global models, such as LTG, where the range of trends creating the future (population, arable land, industrial output, pollution) were interactively related to each other. As one might expect from a politics of fear, the solution was that civilization as “we” know it (meaning the West), would collapse unless dramatic changes were made. The goal was not strategic advantage but system change, or so it seemed. Critics argue, however, that the deeper politics of the system—its class, civilizational, gender, imperialistic history—were not touched upon. Fundamentally this was technocratic predictive-oriented futures studies, quite different from the imagination-based futures studies called for by Jungk.

Three Types of Futures Studies

In my model of futures studies, I divide epistemological approaches of the future into three areas. The first is predictive, the second is cultural/interpretive and the third critical.³¹ We will use this framework to further explore various world models.

In the predictive, language is assumed to be neutral, that is, it does not participate in constituting the real. Language merely describes reality serving as an invisible link between theory and data. Prediction assumes that the universe is deterministic, that is, that the future can be known. By and large, this view privileges experts (planners, policy analysts, and futurists), economists, and astrologers. The future becomes a site of expertise and a place to colonize. Linear forecasting is the technique most used. Scenarios are used more as minor deviations from the norm instead of alternative worldviews. Most global models, whether LTG, Mankind at the Turning Point, or other models, use this approach. They take a western civilizational view of reality even as they assert that they are universal. They are civilizationally poor, not asking what are the categories other civilizations use to construct their futures. For example, population is always seen as a fundamental negative. To Muslims and

others this is absurd: children are more important as a resource. Overpopulation is a symptom of deeper inefficiencies and inequities at world, regional, national, and gender levels.

However, what can be useful in predictive models is that a long-range time horizon is often used (100 years for LTG and MTP). Most current models in the 1990s have shied away from the future (out of fear of critique and also having understood that the future is an open and not a closed space). Still, LTG and other models served an important purpose by expanding our time horizon. They also played a dramatic role in influencing how world decision makers saw the future. Through public and personal information marketing, they changed the global agenda.

The Islamic world is in desperate need of such a world model, but one based on Muslims' conceptions of society. Globally publicized, such a model could play a great role in legitimating the view of the future from Islamic perspectives. A long-term horizon, even beyond a hundred years, would be especially welcome. It would force Muslim technocrats out of the nation-state present and into projected futures.

As one might imagine, the strict predictive approach is lacking in its thinking about the future. It is technocratic and civilizationally impoverished, and it avoids issues of values. From an Islamic worldview where holism, an integration of values in science, is paramount, it is entirely inappropriate.

There are other approaches to futures studies though. In the cultural approach, the goal is not prediction but insight. Truth is considered relative with language and culture both intimately involved in creating the real. Through comparison, through examining different national or gender or ethnic images of the future, we gain insight into the human condition. This type of futures studies is less technical, with mythology as important as mathematics. Learning from each model—in the context of the search for universal narratives that can ensure basic human values—is the central mission for this epistemological approach. While visions often occupy center stage in this interpretive view, the role of structures is also important, whether class, gender, or other categories of social relations. Planning and policy analysis rarely practice an interpretive/cultural form of goal setting or impact analysis. This view is important in, for example, comparing Islamic and Sinic visions of the future or the assumptions behind models. It is also useful in asking whether one's own vision of the future can be universal, can it be exported, or is such an act a violation of the Other. The role of the Other is thus central. Most global models are unable to deal with this level of reality since all factors must be quantitatively interrelated. However, the cultural frame too has its limitations as it is often only qualitative and thus lacking in precision.

In the critical, futures studies aims not at prediction or at comparison but at making the units of analysis problematic, to undefine the future.

We are concerned not with population forecasts but with how the category of population has become valorized in discourse; for example, we might ask why population instead of community or people. How would Islamic notions of community fit in? Why is population being forecasted anyway? Why are growth rates more important than the level of *'asabiya* or unity to reconjure Ibn Khaldun? The role of the state and other forms of power in creating authoritative discourses is central to understanding how a particular future has become hegemonic.

Critical future studies asserts that the present is fragile, merely the victory of one particular discourse, one way of knowing, over the other. The goal of critical research is to disturb present power relations through making problematic our categories and evoking other places, scenarios of the future. Through this distance, the present becomes less rigid, indeed, remarkable. The spaces of reality loosen, the grip of neorealism, of the bottom line, of the predictive approach widen, and the new is possible. Language is not symbolic but constitutive of reality.

While structures are useful, they are seen not as universal but as particular to history and episteme (the knowledge boundaries that frame our knowing). Central to the cultural and critical approach is the notion of civilizational futures research. Civilizational research makes problematic current categories since they are often based on the dominant civilization (the West in this case), and it informs us that behind the level of empirical reality is cultural reality and behind that is worldview. If they are to be of use to more than elite think tanks, global models must be able to bridge these civilizational barriers. They often do not because they construct science as value free, as neutral, seeing it as a universal product and not a civilizational one. In this the Islamization of knowledge project is crucial in rescuing knowledge from a particular worldview. Science, and models in particular, can thus be civilizational diverse.

Indeed, the Latin American Bariloche model was that.³² Far more concerned with social justice, with equality, than with issues of growth, the model showed that satisfying basic needs was the key to development. It was, however, rejected by The Club of Rome.

Thus, ideally, one should try to use all three types of futures studies. If one makes a population forecast, for example, one should then ask how different civilizations approach the issue of population. Finally one should deconstruct the idea of population itself, defining it, for example, not only as an ecological problem in the Third World but relating it to first world consumption patterns as well. Empirical research must be contextualized within the civilization's science from which it emerges and then deconstructed to show what a particular approach is missing and silencing.

Other Maps of Futures Studies

While this has been my perspective, some others are equally, if not more, important. Far less philosophical is Harold Linstone's. For him there are three arenas for futures studies.³³ The first is the technical. The goal in this frame is problem solving and product study and design. The main concern is forecasting new technologies and using simulation models to predict the future. The science-technology nexus informs this perspective. The second is the organizational. Issues of bureaucracy, incremental change, and government and business policy analysis are central in this perspective. The third is the personal, where futures are used to better understand our inner world. Story-telling and visioning are more important here.

Using this three-pronged approach, Masini and Gillwald³⁴ have applied it to futures in Europe and elsewhere, arguing that the USA began with the technical orientation (technological forecasting in military and business environments) and Europe with the personal (focused on visioning and social transformation). Both have moved to organizational futures.

However it is with Zia Sardar that this model is applied historically and a theoretical base for this typology of futures studies is developed. In his "Colonizing the Future,"³⁵ Sardar argues that the study of the future is following the much-traveled trail of Orientalism. Futures studies has become primarily western dominated with the source of evolution based on the relation of the West to the non-West. Nonwestern sources and visions are only used when they comfortably fit into western cosmology either in agreement or in loyal opposition. For Sardar, futures studies was focused on military and business concerns as a way to both deal with the threat of the communism (as a possible future for the Third World) and Third World nationalism. It grew naturally out of the American military-industrial complex. From this stage, futures studies took on a personal dimension as issues of self, environment, and purpose became central to the West, once the environmental, peace, and women's movements took hold. Models of the spiritual, however, were caricatures of nonwestern spirituality. To escape its own industrialism, the West projected out its hollowness to the non-West and appropriated its premodern world. In its current phase, futures studies is developing along organizational lines, with issues of disciplinary boundaries critical. As with other disciplines, Sardar argues that western frames of futures studies are championed to the exclusion of other forms of futures studies and futurists. What is needed is the decolonization of futures studies, with different civilizations creating their own frame and style of futures and futures studies.³⁶ The Islamic ummah, the Buddhist Sangha, the Tantric Samaj (people's movement), and indigenous peoples must imagine their own future so as

to counter current methods, trends, and visions that are creating a monolithic future for them. Thus to Linstone's and Masini/Gillwald's model, Sardar adds a colonization/decolonization dialectic.

There is thus an important distinction between forecasting and visioning. Roy Amara of the Institute of the Future, and one of the leaders of the field in the 1970s, argues for a threefold criteria: the probable, preferable, and possible.³⁷ To this approach, Clement Bezold of the Institute of Alternative Futures adds the plausible.³⁸ The possible is what may happen, the extreme range of creative and speculative possibilities. Individuals engage in this approach. The plausible is a subset of this and is what could happen, given various structures, human limitations, and laws of nature and science. The probable is what is likely to happen given various historical trends. The probable is analytic, reproducible (by others), and conducted often by think-tank teams. The preferable is associated with values, and it is normative and participatory. It is imagining what we would like. The possible and preferable are the least quantitative and the probable and plausible the most.

Rick Slaughter places futures studies within a vertical map. For Slaughter there are three main groupings along this vertical axis. The first, futures research, is concerned with prediction, economic and technical forecasting, systems analysis (global modeling), and management science. The second, futures studies, is concerned with scenario writing, visioning, and critique of published works in the field. The third is the futures movement concerned with networking and individual psychological empowerment through transpersonal and humanistic psychology.³⁹

What is missing from the models of Amara and others should be obvious: civilizational futures studies, the imagination of the future from different epistemological categories. For example, the concern for the future is expressed differently in various civilizations. Buddhist futures have very clear principles; dharma is at one level, and another level is much more concerned with issues of past and future lives, with divination. Islamic futures would be more concerned about imagining future Muslim societies based on the Islamization of knowledge project or asking what type of economic development would there be if it was organized around axiomatic Islamic concepts such as *ribah* and *zakah*. They might also be concerned with the futures orientation of different Islamic sects, asking how they differ in their time orientation.

Global models are a particular type of futures studies based on systems analysis. They emerged during a particular time: during the rise of the environmental movement; the beginnings of globalism; the fear of unending economic growth; and concerns about the negative impacts of technology. They should also be seen as part of technocracy. The solutions posited by modelers are often those that are state and government

focused. Civil society is rarely seen as an independent variable worthy of creating futures.⁴⁰ It is the silent variable. Global models are also largely western-oriented, with only Latin America creating a nonwestern based model.

We will now briefly review various models and then move on to scenarios of the future.

A Review of the Models

Clearly the most significant model in recent history is the Limits to Growth model of The Club of Rome. LTG was a crude aggregate systems model of world population, industrialization, pollution, food production and resource depletion. Its uniqueness was that these variables were quantitative, something quite novel then. Also distinctive was the critique of growth. It was the call to limits that inspired environmentalists and others who felt modernity had gone too far and frightened industrialists. However, the model did not disaggregate regions. The overly global nature of LTG was resolved by the much more sensitive Mankind at the Turning Point, where regional models and over 100,000 equations were used to simulate the human condition, or the global problematique. The main conclusions were that current trends will lead to a social collapse (uncontrollable decline in population and industrial capacity, most likely after 2015). However, these declines will not impact the entire globe at the same time; they will strike region by region.

The LTG study (from their standard model run) "assumes no major change in the physical, economic and social relationship that have historically governed the world system."⁴¹ What this means is that historical situations of inequity are reinscribed—the rise of Islam, the women's movement, and new technologies are factored out. Based on this model, the conclusion is: "Food, industrial output, and population will grow exponentially until the rapidly diminishing resource base forces a slowdown in industrial growth."⁴² Part of the sophistication of the LTG study is that time lags are included. "Because of natural delays in the system, both population and pollution continue to increase for some time after the peak of industrialization. Population growth is finally halted by a rise in the death rate due to decreased food and medical services."⁴³

While one cannot entirely fault LTG for having a standard model that is merely average, its alternative scenarios are equally committed to the same variables. For example, in another run, world resources are doubled, but this just leads to more industrial output and thus more pollution, leading to a decline in food production, and the eventual decline in resources, and thus to megadeath. Even if population is controlled this just forestalls food depletion by a decade or two. The result is the same. However one runs the model, the results are always the same. Thus,

instead of choosing alternative scenarios based on different modeled assumptions, the same politics are re-represented throughout. The conclusion is that industrialism unabated will lead to a global collapse.

The recent *Beyond the Limits* uses the same computer model and comes to the same conclusion: "The world has already overshoot some of its limits and, if present trends continue, we face the virtually certain prospect of a global collapse, perhaps within the lifetimes of children today."⁴⁴

This is in contrast to current models such as Scanning the Future (STF), which posits that prosperity will continue into the next generation.⁴⁵ Like Herman Kahn and his *The Next Two Hundred Years* of the 1970s, recent reports assert that growth will and can continue. Only minor institutional and organizational arrangements must be dealt with to allow growth. For Kahn and others, the problem is a loss of confidence, not any systemic relationship between population, pollution, and industrial capacity. Kahn called the current crisis merely part of the great transition that began two hundred years ago with the onset of the industrial revolution. He believes that the plausible future is that by 2126 the gross world per capita will be US\$ 20,000 (in 1975 dollars) and that the population will be 15 billion people, thus making the gross world product 300 trillion.⁴⁶ Of course there will be setbacks, but by and large the trend is up. The population problem should be solved by creating wealth, not by family planning and other measures. New technologies will find new sources of energy. The Third World will eventually adopt efficient institutions and growth-oriented values. The future is bright.

But for LTG and MTP the future can be bright only if population pressures are reduced, if pollution is reduced, if recycling is increased, and if there is more global equity. MTP, however, has a more holistic edge and, in addition, offers these conclusions: (1) a world consciousness must be developed through which every individual realizes his role as a member of the world community, (2) a new ethic of material resources is needed to deal with the oncoming age of scarcity, (3) an attitude of harmony toward nature must be developed, and (4) humans must develop a sense of identification with future generations.⁴⁷

But for LTG proponents, overpopulation will lead to a decline in resources, which will lead to declines in industrial capacity, which will then lead eventually to malnutrition and to population decline. Any way you argue—since all these variables are interrelated—the long-term future of growth is bleak. We must dramatically change our values and assumptions of how humans create and value wealth as well as how they live with nature. For LTG the alternative is a condition of steady state economics, of ecological and economic stability. However, the solutions posited often merely reinforce technocracy (such as developing more antipollution technologies). This partly explains why LTG sold so well:

Its solution and critique were what liberal policy makers could understand. After all, the problem is too much population (a Third World problem); pollution (again, ship it south), bad industrial growth (develop a postindustrial growth society), and diminishing resources (find new resources). Issues of equity and justice were not part of the problem. Moreover, that study and many others have done well because they are fundamentally compatible with Christian cosmology.⁴⁸ From Puritanism, we get the idea of moral restraint; the sinners are the producers of population, pollution, and depletion. The sinner can be converted if he repents and is converted (has less children, doesn't pollute, and avoids nonrenewable resources). And of course, "each converted sinner saves the system from a much deeper conversion."⁴⁹ Finally is the idea of the apocalypse, that a catastrophe is ahead. And the catastrophe is far enough away to be empirically tested but not so far that it does not matter.⁵⁰

Finally from a Third World Muslim perspective, issues of imperialism, colonialism, and unequal distribution of resources (within and between nations) were utterly ignored. Instead of worrying about a crisis a hundred years from now, the catastrophe the authors describe already exists in many cities. The fear expressed by LTG is that this crisis might now become a middle-class First World problematique. Ultimately, LTG as well as Kahn's model and STF are apolitical models that assume a "conflict free world in a world beset by conflict and turmoil."⁵¹

One way to deal with this within the doctrines of futures studies is to capture deep differences through a range of scenarios. There could be a growth scenario like Kahn's, a collapse scenario like LTG, an achievable steady state scenario like MTP, the Global 2000 project submitted to President Carter by Gerald Barney, or (and this is critical) a range of transformative scenarios, that is, where the entire system changes. This is the real contribution of the more visionary futures studies led by Galtung, Dator, Harmon, Jungk, Boulding, and many others. The assumption behind transformation is that either through technological, civilizational, spiritual, or other collective rational means, there is a systemic jump and thus problems are solved. One cannot solve a problem within the framework it is posited. The assumption is that while change is often difficult in most periods of history, during dramatic, plastic times, change is possible, even easy. Bifurcation is possible. The fault with various models is that although they claim globalism, complexity, and interrelatedness, they do not understand how transformation from the periphery is possible; how civilizations such as Islam can renew themselves and become, instead of recipients of global trends, creators of global forces.

Finally, and this becomes the point of entry into our next section, the trends examined are often the most obvious trends; not only are they

entirely apolitical, but they are all too common. Hidden trends or emerging issues analysis are not explored, thus creating plans that exist that do not adequately reflect the changing world environment.

Emerging Issues Analysis

According to James Dator,⁵² emerging issues are those that would have a dramatic impact on society but a low probability of occurring. However, since these issues are often undeveloped, Dator argues that one indicator of knowing that an issue is really an emerging issue, instead of a trend or problem, is that it should appear ridiculous. Issues should thus be disturbing or provocative, forcing one to change how one thinks, especially in challenging assumptions about the nature of the future. Besides searching for emerging issues among the texts and stories of those individuals and groups outside of conventional knowledge boundaries (the periphery, for example), it is first important to scan the available literature within official knowledge.

In scanning one has to digest vast amounts of literature and be able to determine what is within the paradigm, what is outside, and what can transform the paradigm. Where are the leakages? What does not make sense? Issues that straddle these boundaries, that are outside conventional categories, often have the potential of becoming emerging issues. Some examples of emerging issues are the rights of robots; genetic engineering ending sexual reproduction; denial of sovereignty to certain nations because of inability to meet human rights criteria; a new United Nations (house of nations, house of nongovernmental organizations, direct citizen election, house of world corporations, and a world militia); and the end of capitalism. All these issue are generally seen as unlikely, but if they occur they will have a dramatic impact on future society. But merely being unlikely or having a high impact are not sufficient conditions—there also must be seeds, drivers, and reasons as to why one thinks the issue is emerging. Emerging issues analysis is different from fantasy production, it is searching for small ripples that might one day become a tidal wave.

Emerging issues analysis can thus be used to create alternative scenarios of the future.

Scenarios

Scenarios are used for many purposes. For some, they help predict the future. For others, clarify alternatives. For us, scenarios are useful in that they give us distance from the present, allowing the present to become remarkable, problematic. They open up the present and allow the creation of alternative futures as well as alternative histories. The present, especially in the Islamic case, is considered impossible to change:

Muslims are either too fixated on the West or have chosen particular histories which they believe are eternal. Scenarios thus should not only create alternative futures but different histories, to show histories that did not come about, that could have come about if a certain factor had been altered.

Scenarios also have an important visionary task, allowing us to gain insight into what people want the future to be like—the desired future. These are important in that instead of merely forecasting the future, individuals gain eligibility in creating the future.

Unfortunately, instead of developing rich complex scenarios, most technocrats develop models of the future with minor differences between each run. For example, in the Scanning the Future model all three scenarios are considered sustainable. Global shift has a 3.4% growth rate; global crisis, 2.4%; and European Renaissance, 2.9%.⁵³ While this might be realistic work, it is not transformative. The challenge for Muslim modelers is not only to critique such models but to offer alternative definitions of sustainability.

Another way to design scenarios is to change the assumptions by which they are built. For example, we can create scenarios of world politics based on different structures of power. The first would be a unipolar world, a continuation of the present. The second would be a collapse of the interstate system, leading to anarchy within states and between states. The third would be the creation of a multipolar system, with numerous hegemony, such as the United States, the European Community, Japan, China, India, and Turkey (for the Islamic region), each with its own sphere of influence. A corollary would be a return to a bipolar world but with different actors. A fourth would be a world government structure. Policies would be created at the global level while implementation would be local. A fifth possibility would be a fragmented western civilization in positive interaction with an Islamic ummah. This would be a world situation with regional civilizational blocks: an Islamic ummah, a Buddhist-Confucian Southeast Asia, a Vedic/Tantric India, and so forth.

While constructing scenarios it is important to remember that one is not designing perfect places but good places: Contradictions within scenarios should not be left out.

Scenarios should also include various drivers. For the scenarios above we have focused on political drivers. However, these scenarios remain committed to the model of governance that privilege nations before individuals, communities, and people's associations. What is missing are the role of ideas, of the Earth itself, of women, of alternative ways of seeing the world, and of nonstatist nominations of reality. Scenarios then should not only find alternative routes out of the present, they need to configure the present differently, using radically foreign and unfamiliar notions of

the future. The ability to reinterpret the past, contest the present and create alternative futures is what makes future studies different from routine social science, planning, or policy research. The task is not only, for example, to imagine alternative futures for the Islamic world but to rethink governance, power, and structure, to call into question current notions of how we as Muslims organize our social and political life.

Backcasting

Central to rethinking is creating strategies to realize the preferred vision. While traditional planning constructs goals based on immediate needs, the process of envisioning alternative scenarios constructs goals based on backcasting. The future in this perspective is believed to have already occurred. Backcasting fills out the events and trends needed to create such a future. It creates "a future history, a timeline that explains that events needed to occur for the future under discussion to emerge from the present we currently inhabit."⁵⁴ By already committing to a particular vision of the future, the backcast allows individuals to develop creative imagination. The means-ends logical nexus is reversed, creating an effect and cause chain. The end has been realized, the challenge to critical envision becomes remembering how it was realized. In so doing, the future earlier believed to be impossible becomes realizable.

We have made some important philosophical digressions in order to better frame discussion on the future of the Islamic ummah.

Models and Civilizational Dialogues

While we have found fault with earlier models for being unaware of their own politics and for not including the possibility of systems transformation, some models do allow for debate for transformation. One is World 2000. This model seeks to define the emerging global system and shape its future. Its framework is an international planning dialogue from a diversity of views that posit the following supertrends:⁵⁵ (1) a stable population of 10-14 billion people by the 21st century; (2) industrial output increasing by a factor of 5-10 over the next few decades (throughput will increase far less as more efficient means of production are found); (3) a globe linked by telecommunications and other emerging technologies in which there will still be information rich and poor societies; (4) a high-tech revolution of genetics, robotics, and green technologies; (5) global integration in the form of a shared international culture and some form of world governance; (6) more diversity and complexity (in the form of layers of identity and governance); (7) limited crime, terrorism, and war; (8) transcendent values; and (9) a universal standard of freedom and human rights.

Moreover, the models that allow for debate identifying critical issues blocking transformation: (1) lack of sustainable development that values future generations, (2) the North-South gap, and (3) managing complexity. The strategies are all idealistic focusing on green technologies, systems of collaboration, decentralizing institutions, and a preference for human-centered enterprises. This model is in fact a dialogue that intends to bring in other civilizational perspectives. However, clearly it fails as it asks for a civilizational dialogue but maintains a technocratic framework. Further, one can simply glance through the citations to see the cultural poverty of sources. Still, it is an important beginning and at least a pledge to dialogue that notices nonwestern perspectives.

These and other perspectives are well summarized in the recent *World Futures and the United Nations* by Michael Marien.⁵⁶ However, while Marien summarizes the hundreds of books and articles on the future, he uses traditional categories such as technology, environment, and globalization to do so. What is needed are similar summaries from other civilizational perspectives (e.g., prama or dynamic balance from India or ohana from Hawaii). That is, other ways of knowing and other sciences must enter the debate at the level of knowledge classified. Fortunately work by Munawar Anees in the *Periodica Islamica* has begun to classify knowledge from a nonwestern framework.

But the deeper problem, and this is central to the issue of imagining alternative futures, is that the work is still present based. As mentioned earlier, we need to discern emerging issues. We will review two such efforts in this regard. James Dator⁵⁷ believes that we are in a historic transition that will make us all strangers in a strange land. He identifies five tsunamis or tidal waves that promise to change the world. While the trends are such that they cannot be changed, one can surf the waves. For Dator these trends are as follows: (1) population—changes in world population, with Caucasians eventually becoming 5% of the world population by 2050; (2) economics—globalization of capital, labor, technology, and market, so much so that unemployment will become the only reasonable goal, and a global welfare state will ensue; (3) environment—while pollution and sea-level rises are as important as water shortages, more important is the end of the distinction between man-made and natural; (4) technologies—molecular, biological, and electronic, all promise to change who we are (“What will we say to our clone when we wake up in the day?” asks Dator); and, (5) governance—most systems will be local and global but many will be in space. Space promises to transform our earthly ideas of culture, religion, and technology.

These issues will dramatically confront the Islamic world. How will the Islamic ummah confront the responsibility for a greater share of the world's population? Will Islam still be under threat then? Will Islam play a role in globalization beyond merely exporting workers and oil? Will

Islamic models of environmental ethics become widespread? Will Muslims create new technologies, or will they continue to be the recipient of these dramatic new technologies? Will Islamic models of governance remain authoritarian, will they become democratic, or will new models such as Singapore's paternalistic "father knows best" model become dominant? How can faith in the univocal ideas of Islam be reconciled with the eclecticism of Muslims today?

Perhaps there are even more significant emerging issues. I present a few which will certainly challenge the Muslim world at least as dramatically as Dator's tsunamis.

Emerging Issues

The first emerging issue is the end of reality.⁵⁸ Because of the blurring of the physically real with the socially constructed—through developments in computers, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and sophisticated epistemological perspectives that reality is more a function of where one stands than who one is (that is, reality is framework dependent)—reality as we know it will have ended. It will no longer be clear what is value, what is theory, and what are data. With the ability of expanded computer technology, we will be unable to differentiate the real from the imaginary. An image of a world leader promising prosperity might just be an image constructed by a few hackers. Fidelity to traditional notions of representation will be broken. The problem of the original text will be further complicated since distinctions between types of reality will be blurred. Will religions then offer virtual reality experiences of their image of God? In this sense, since Islam is not picture focused, it will be under less of a threat. Reality will never be the same again. We will exist in many epistemes, which will expand perhaps by each technological innovation cycle. What then will be fundamental? While certainly the Islamic world will not have these technologies in the next few days, their impact will be felt in the next few years.

Equally damaging to our traditional notions of reality will be advances in genetic engineering. But instead of ending the real, genetic reconstruction will end the natural. Genetic engineering may start out quite harmless as all of us want to avoid abnormalities, or various genetic diseases, and thus we will rationally desire to be examined by our family genetic engineer. Soon, however, this will lead not to disease prevention but to capacity enhancement. Intelligence, memory, body type, and beauty will be open for discussion. Birthing will eventually be managed by state factories, and we may become the last generation to produce children the old-fashioned way. The biological cycle will have been terminated by technology, and women will essentially not be any different than men once their reproductive capabilities become unnecessary. The

causes of alarm are there since the most likely scenario will be one where it will be managed by the few for the profits of the few, with our genes moving from personal space to the marketplace.

While culture and biology have always trailed science, it will soon be possible for technology to transform our basic biological selves. Within any type of science, this effort must cease to be a private effort but enter public debate. The values of these dramatic transformations must not only be studied, but the project must be made publicly accountable. As currently developing, genetic engineering promises to create dangers we have never imagined possible. It certainly contests a view that only God can create humans. And clearly, as Munawar Anees⁵⁹ has argued, gene therapy (not to mention cloning) transgresses everything that Islam is about, about what is natural and what is wrong.

The third dramatic issue is the end of sovereignty. Exchange models of social action, that is, market capitalism as well as the ecological movement and the need for global early warning systems for natural disasters and wars, have all but withered away the state, even if the passport and visa office still makes life miserable for labor, particularly Third World labor. Protectionism attempts the same for capital but with very little success. Most mobile is capital, least is labor, with ideas generally still spreading downward from the West but also in other directions as well. Sovereignty will not only be problematic at the economic level but also at the level of the self (we become many persons from many cultures) and at the level of text (texts cease to belong to one author but are more epistemic in their ownership).

Authors will continue to become more anonymous as electronic mail and writing becomes more dominant. We will live in a world of "decentered" words. Attempting to create unique cultural frames such as Islamic science far more difficult in a world where forces of globalization create a world culture and economy. Protecting culture, self, and history will become increasingly difficult and necessary to ensure a world of pluralism. But part of a decentered world is that Islamic science, the Islamic ummah, can finally find space for itself, since ideological hegemony will decrease, the world becoming more of a true marketplace. The space of sovereignty will thus continue its historical decline from God as sovereign, to king as sovereign, to the people as sovereign, and now even to the idea that the self is sovereign. The challenge for the ummah in 2025 is to bring legitimacy to a nested model of God, community, family, and self in postmodern conditions where even the primacy of the egoist self will be contested.

Finally, developments in robotics and artificial intelligence will potentially transform not only the labor movement and our definitions of work but also our conceptions of what it means to be human. We can foresee a time when they will have legal status. Perhaps not the same as humans

but certainly some type of legal category will be found or will develop that gives them protection as well as culpability.

The move from robots as represented as machines, to be seen as dumb but lovable animals, and then to gaining similar rights as children is quite easy to imagine. Coupled with the strength of the environmental movement, in general, this will lead to the end of humans as the primary defining category. This is partly because of the development of robotics but also from new conceptions of life that argue that humans are not the measure of all things, that the universe is far more mysterious than that.

For capitalists, these new technologies promise a renewal, a rejuvenation from the exhaustion that set in during the 1970s and 1980s. They promise to revive the idea of progress. Computer hackers, media lab experts, and genetic engineers will revive capitalism. These new technologies pose the most dramatic problems for those of us who consider the natural as fixed instead of as constantly changing and in the process of recreation. Strict traditionalists—those who do not take a dynamic view of knowledge, wherein *ijtihad* (reasoned judgment) gives way to *taqlid* (blind imitation)—in particular, will find the next twenty or thirty years the best and worst of times. The best because the forces of tradition will flock to them; the worst because the technological imperative and humanity's struggle to constantly recreate itself and thus nature will not be easily forced back. Even biological spills will most likely not be controlled by state regulations but by new technologies themselves. The answer to these types of problems may be in newer advanced—physically, mentally, and spiritually—technologies. Technologies in themselves will be redefined in this process as not merely material processes but as mental and spiritual processes embedded in particular cultures. Our notions of the natural, the real, of truth, and of the technological, will no longer be fixed but porous.

These trends certainly threaten any idea of strict traditionalism and modernism since reality, nature, sovereignty, truth, and humanity are all under threat. After the chaos created by these changes, what will be needed is some type of direction—not a direction that is imitative in nature, but one that finds a new balance between local and global and nature and technology.

They create a postmodern world. While postmodernity destroys the basis for the real, it also opens up the world for a new reality. A reconstructed Islam worthy of its original intent can provide that new paradigm. It would be an Islamic ummah that allows open discussion; freedom from reprisal, a search for multiple levels of the real; and an understanding of the subjective nature of the objective. We would finally live in a world of civilizations with many ways of knowing, many forms of knowledge, and constantly new arenas of what is known (new episte-

mologies will create new discoveries). It might be a world that is dramatically new but, unlike the present, it will not be an unfamiliar world.

Alternative Islamic Futures

But can we say anything about this unfamiliar world? While there has been a great deal of thinking in the western world, save for the work of Zia Sardar and others writing in journals of futures studies and similar places, there is very little futures thinking in the Islamic world.

Sardar's⁶⁰ general argument is that Muslims have lost their way, they have lost their ability to engage in *ijtihad*, either having become overly impressed with westernization or reacting and thus acceding to some fabricated romantic past. Islam needs to reshape itself based on the original message of the Prophet. Islam, for Sardar and others, provides a direction, a paradigm, a way of thinking, of approaching problems with critical openness; it is an invitation to thought, to the future. It is this that must be inculcated.

Sardar's work on the future can be divided into three themes. The first is concerned with the future of Muslim civilization itself. Sardar's guiding questions are what are the current trends shaping the Islamic futures, and what can Islam offer other civilizations. The reconstruction of Muslim civilization should not, however, be seen in simplistic linear models, that is, forecasting the number of Muslims, practicing or otherwise, but in which ways Muslims see themselves and the future through the message of the Prophet. Whether they use the original message of God, as rationally reinterpreted for every epoch, or use sites of knowing that are foreign to their history will determine what future Islam has, Sardar argues.

The second is concerned with Islamic science. Sardar argues that western science is violent against self, society, and knowledge itself. What is needed is a holistic Islamic science. In Sardar's words, an Islamic science is "concerned with the universal values of Islam that emphasize justice, unity of thought and ideas, a holistic approach to the study of nature and social relevance of intellectual and scientific endeavor. In this framework, fragmentation, meaningless and endless reduction and appropriation of god-like powers, or monopoly of truth and marginalization and suppression of other forms of knowledge are shunned."⁶¹ An Islamic science would use the Islamic paradigm as a framework for asking different types of questions—about poverty, powerlessness, lack of education in Muslim nations—as well as framing questions outside of the science, technology, and development project of western institutions. An Islamic science would take seriously the Qur'an's call to gain *'ilm*, to pursue knowledge to reduce human suffering, to elevate men and women to the sublime, and not to focus research on problems that are of little use to

Muslim nations. An Islamic science would have a subjective objective (that is, be based on its worldview and not pretend it is value-free like western science) methodology and divert research to issues concerning Muslims. Thus, what is needed is an Islamic science, a paradigm that is holistic, multidisciplinary, and committed to growth and distribution, and to some basic values, some basic morals. A commitment to values is especially important as the West moves into postmodern relativism.

Sardar's third theme is the encounter of postmodernism with Islam. This meeting is best exemplified in his book *Distorted Imagination* (with Meryll Wyn Davies).⁶² Sardar asks whether postmodernism will actually transform the modern condition, the dominance of the West, or whether postmodernism merely continues the West's distorted imagination of other civilizations. While talk of the information order, of the implications of the science and technology revolution is dazzling for secular intellectuals, most in Muslim countries are ineligible. For them, basic needs such as food, shelter, and basic human rights to resist tyranny have yet to be obtained. As with modernism, postmodernism must be resisted by Muslim scholars. They must ask who benefits and how the new technologies and epistemologies will impact the Islamic world. This does not mean Muslim civilization should remain in the past; rather, it means that the past must be reinterpreted to create futures different from the postmodern. For Sardar and colleagues it is the belief that Muslims can and will rationally reinterpret Islam for the current and coming epochs that is the hope of the future.

In addition to efforts to create a particular Islamic vision of the future, Sardar and others have begun to map out the range of plausible futures ahead. We examine three such scenarios.

Ummah as an Interpretive Community

In an outstanding essay by Anwar Ibrahim⁶³ in a special issue of *Futures* on Islam and the Future, Ibrahim argues that we need to go beyond the thinking of the first, second and third worlds and begin to think of the future in terms of an Islamic ummah. He spells out what this means: (1) The ummah is a dynamic concept, reinterpreting the past, meeting new challenges; (2) the ummah must meet global problems such as the environmental problem. "The ummah as a community is required to acknowledge moral and practical responsibility for the Earth as a Trust and its members are trustees answerable for the condition of the Earth. This makes ecological concerns a vital element in our thinking and action, a prime arena where we must actively engage in changing things";⁶⁴ (3) the ummah should be seen as a critical tool, as a process of reasoning itself; (4) equity and justice are prerequisites and imperatives of the ummah. This means a commitment to eradicating poverty. It means going beyond the development debate since that framework mere-

ly framed the issue in apolitical, acritical language. To begin this means rethinking trade, developing south-south trade as well as “new instruments of financial accounting and transacting . . . and the financing of new routes and transportation infrastructure”;⁶⁵ and (5) is a commitment of literacy for all. As Ibrahim writes: “Only with access to appropriate education can ummah consciousness take room and make possible the ummah of tomorrow as a personification of the pristine morality of Islam endowed with creative, constructive, critical thought.”⁶⁶

Thus what is called for is not modernism but a critical and open traditionalism that uses the historic past to create a bright future. But the ummah should not become an imperialistic concept; rather, it requires that Muslims work with other civilizations in dialogue to find agreed upon principles (and be ready to defend those principles as did not occur in Bosnia). We need to recover that historically the ummah meant models of multiracial, multicultural, multireligious, and pluralist societies.⁶⁷ A true ummah respects the rights of non-Muslims, as did the original Madinah state.

The Future Without a Name

In the same issue of *Futures*, Gulzar Haider takes us to an Islamic future with no name.⁶⁸ In his effort to imagine such an ummah, he discovers that he cannot. After falling asleep and waking in 2020, he sees many men talking to each other. But each quotes the “rulings of his own masters and guides and though they address one another as brothers, they were in apparent frustration.”⁶⁹ He concludes with the following vision. “I have seen a landscape of Muslim Futures and it looks fragmented, bounded, a controlled city of discrete tents. There are some who are alive and awake but are cast out of the city. They continue their search for the Madinah, and till then they keep reading, writing and speaking without fear except of their God and His Prophet. But none of them has a name.”⁷⁰

Given current geopolitical trends, a possible future is the cannibalization of Islam internally and externally—internally, largely due to external pressures, but still nonetheless from sectarian infighting, from deep Sunni/Shi'a divisions and from different models of what it means to be Muslim. Many of these battles are issues of revenge of cursed histories instead of the imagination of desired futures. External forces are such that changes in technology, globalism, and world politics question whether Muslims can rise to the challenges of a world in transformation. Islam, of course, will continue, but will there be worthy Muslims? Even if one is horrified at such a future, this scenario remains an important what-if question. It forces critical self and community reflection and calls for concerted ummah-wide action.

Islam as the Difference

Conversely, then, through human action, Islam could become the difference in world science and politics. Sardar writes that Islam cannot be overlooked. "Whether it is seen as a force for liberation or as an authoritarian step back to the middle ages, Islam cannot be ignored."⁷¹ For Sardar, Islam is the difference, the attractor that will create the next century. Galtung, for example, has argued that Islam and the West are in an expansion/contraction relationship with each other—as one contracts, the other expands.⁷² As the West loses its ability to maintain hyper-expansion, exploitation of nature and other, Islam will come in and either continue the project, as the Japanese have done, or transform the project. As Sardar writes: "At the beginning of the 20th century, Islam—colonized, defeated, stagnant—could have easily been written off from history and the future. At the dawn of the 21st century, Islam—resurgent, confident, 'militant,' 'fundamentalist'—is very much alive."⁷³

But which Islam will it be? This then becomes the task of activists and intellectuals engaged in Islamic science and in Islamic futures: to imagine and create an Islam that creates the future; that is not burdened by advances in genetics, information technologies, and globalism. Such an Islam must engage in the global science and technology revolution but within the values and terms of Islamic science.

In these times of civilization transformation when chaos is ever-present, there is one attractor that leads to a higher more complex state: It is a sense of direction, of inner purpose, of deep morality. If Islam can provide that, the ummah of the future will be alive and vibrant.

Notes:

1. Donella Meadows et al, *The Limits to Growth*, (London: Pan Books, 1974).
2. Mihajlo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel, *Mankind at the Turning Point* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974).
3. William Halal, "World 2000: An International Planning Dialogue to Help Shape the New Global System," *Futures* 25, no. 1 (January 1993): 5–21.
4. See Sam Cole, "Global Models—A Review," *Futures* 19, no. 4 (August 1987): 403–430; and Sam Cole, "Global Models, Data Bases and Geographic Information Systems," in *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies*, ed. Richard Slaughter (Melbourne: DDM and Future Study Centre, 1996).
5. See, for example, Rick Slaughter, ed., *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* (Melbourne: DDM and Future Study Centre, 1996).
6. For more on this, see William Irwin Thompson, *Imaginary Landscape: Making Worlds of Myth and Science* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).
7. For more on this, see Robert Jungk and Norbert Muller, *Future Workshops: How to Create Desirable Futures* (London: Institute for Social Inventions, 1987). Also see Jim Dator, "From Future Workshops to Envisioning Alternative Futures," *Futures Research Quarterly* (Winter 1993).
8. Muslim scientists at the Stockholm Seminar in 1981 identified a set of fundamental concepts which define the Islamic paradigm. See Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Science: The Way Ahead* (booklet) (Islamabad: OIC/COMSTECH, 1995), 39.
9. Robert Jungk, "Three Modes of Future Thinking," in *Hawaii 2000*, eds. George Chaplin and Glenn Paige (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 103.

10. See Tae-Chang Kim and James Dator, eds., *Creating a New History for Future Generations* (Kyoto: Institute for the Integrated Study of Future Generations, 1994).
11. Robert Jungk, "Three Modes of Future Thinking," 116.
12. Among other books, see R.B.J. Walker and Saul Mendlovitz, *Contending Sovereignities* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990); James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro, *International and Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1989); Zia Sardar, "Islamic State in a Post-industrial Age," in *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (London: Mansell, 1985) for an alternative reading that argues that Islam can easily cohabit in a range of political spaces. One can be loyal to community, nation, region and the larger ummah. See El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?* (London: Grey Seal, 1992).
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18. For example, see Zia Sardar, *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (London: Mansell, 1985); *Information and the Muslim World: A Strategy for the 21st Century* (London: Mansell, 1988); *How We Know: Ilm and the Revival of Knowledge* (London: Grey Seal, 1991); and *Muhammad for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1994) (with Zafar Abbas Malik).
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Appendix: Recommendations

1. Efforts to imagine the future of the ummah should include strategic planning dimensions as well as longer visionary futures orientations. Quantitative (inviting rigor) and qualitative (inviting vision) methods must be used.
2. Muslims should explore alternative futures, seeing reality as socially constructed. However, Muslims should choose a particular future and then develop plans to realize that future.
3. Muslims should develop long-range computer simulation models that emerge from the Islamic paradigm, that reflect Islamic concerns.
4. Through institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank and OIC/COMSTECH, the ummah needs to engage in a wide range of futures activities: possible, plausible, probable and preferable, or stated differently, empirical, interpretive, and critical.
5. Muslims should conduct research on temporal dimensions in Muslim civilization (at various levels, individual, community, national, and global community). Conduct surveys on expectations of the futures, needs and desires, and compare with other survey projects such as Mankind 2000.
6. An Islamic model of sustainability must be articulated, differentiated from the dozens of other claims to sustainability, and tied to the development of an Islamic "version" of futures studies.
7. Efforts to forecast and imagine the future should include provocative emerging issues, both for how they disturb conventional thinking and for their forecasting utility.