



PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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Center for Strategic and International Studies “Qur’anic Guidance to Good Governance”

1800 K St. N.W., Conference Room A/B
Monday June 9, 2008 3pm

The Center for Strategic and International Studies’ Hills Program on Governance, in collaboration with the Caux Round Table and the Islamic University of Malaysia, invited **Dean Ibrahim Hazizan Bin Md. Noon, Ibrahim Zein, Abdullah al-Ahsan, and Muhammad Arif Zakaulah** to present an analysis of the Qur’an and its implications on good governance in both the public and private sectors in Muslim societies. Ibrahim Zein is Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization. Abdullah al-Ahsan is Professor within the Department of History and Civilization. Muhammad Arif Zakaulah is Professor in the Department of Economics and Management Sciences. All three are located at the Islamic University of Malaysia.

Introductions were made by **Stephen Young**, Global Executive Director of the Caux Round Table. Additional comments were made by **Cardinal Theodore McCarrick**, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, D.C. **Michael Novak**, George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy, and Public Policy, at the American Enterprise Institute was unable to attend due to a family emergency. Concluding remarks were made by **Roderick M. Hills**, Founder and Chairman of the Hills Program on Governance at CSIS.

Stephen Young introduced the underlying principle of this conference: there isn’t a single Anglo Saxon definition of good governance and that in order to raise the standards of governance, we must reach a broader understanding of the modalities of good governance.

Dean Ibrahim Hazizan Bin Md. Noon discussed objectives of the Malaysian government to encourage collaboration with foreign institutions to further pursuit of global importance. He also introduced the Islamic University of Malaysia and its goal of integrating academic disciplines with Islamic ethics and values for the benefit of all people.

Ibrahim Zein asked what it means to speak of Islam as a form of humanistic universalism, when these traditions have often been ignored in Muslim history. Zein gave an overview of Islamic history, and discussed the origins of “Islamic Governance” in scripture and historical texts. From this historical perspective, the principles of governance that emerge are two-fold. First, that government institutions form a “trust” between itself and the people, in which the government is entrusted with the responsibility of fairness and justice. And secondly, that although Muslims are commanded to be obedient to authority, there is room for dissent if you use Islamic principles to support it. In addition, he noted because Islamic teachings say that over time, and in different context, the definition of trust and justice may change, and that our time calls for collaboration with the global community.

Muhammad Arif Zakaulah discussed how these Islamic principles have been implemented in reality. This required a review of the Islamic state from the time after the prophet until modern times. In an

interesting discussion of the U.N., Zakauallah argues that newly-created states joined the U.N. with the expectation that the U.N. would use its authority to exercise justice for all. When this did not happen, many Muslim nations became frustrated. In addition, Islamic extremists took advantage of this to energize anti-Western sentiment. He argues that the notion that we are in a “clash of cultures” is an inappropriate paradigm. Instead, we should recognize that we have the same cultural values, but both sides have failed to implement these principles.

Abdullah al-Ahsan argued that we can save the world from failure, only if both the West and Muslim nations subscribe to the principles of human dignity, trust, social responsibility, and justice. This is especially important as we continue to live in a global community.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick noted that many of the Islamic principles discussed by the previous speakers are mirrored the great religious and political texts of the West. “When all is said and done, the Golden Rule is the basis of the human condition.”

Stephen Young carried out Cardinal McCarrick’s assertion with a comparison of Islamic and Western texts. He cited Cicero’s concept of an “office,” the Constitution’s “oath to exercise the office,” John Locke’s idea of a “trust,” biblical references, natural rights language implied in the Declaration of Independence, and even John Kennedy’s line “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”