

## **Globalization and the Revival of Age of Religion: A Muslim Perspective\***

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**Abstract:** Observation of the recent astonishing growth in new technology, especially in the fields of Information, bio and nanotechnology, may compel us to believe that the new technology not only may leave a huge impact on the core of Globalization, i.e. the Western civilization; but also may pose great challenges and opportunities to the Muslim world, especially if one considers the two following trends: First, failed repeated attempts at introducing an operational Islamic model of economic life so that economic betterment of the Muslim world would be fulfilled, and secondly, a rising trend in the systematic hate against Muslim individuals and communities, i.e. Islamophobia, ignited by global mass media campaigns and recent terrorist activities, above all, the 9/11 brutal incident in the US.

This paper asserts that while the emergence of new technology may offer good prospects in terms of diversification of products and prevalence of "civilization of choice" in near future in the West, it may entail detrimental consequences through increasing the level of social uncertainty sharply and speeding up the degeneration of traditional values out there. These conflicting outcomes may push for the chance of revival of religion in the core of Globalization.

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In the Muslim world and where the Globalization is not a predominant force, common frustration about failing to define and run a practical model of Islamic Economics and outrageous feeling about rising Islamophobia, if coupled with new technological drive, may generate sufficient incentives and efforts to put on record a new mechanics of economic development. The ultimate outcome, apart from robust economic growth, might be the emergence of a more competent reading of Islam, hence revival of the age of religion.

If this analysis has any relevance, then one of its implications for the case of Iran will be optimality of repositioning foreign policy towards satisfying more of domestic objectives, like economic growth and social capital. This way, a better regional and global performance may be on the way.

### **Introduction**

A careful examination of the global environment in which we live, indicates that at least there exist three important trends, potentially of high implications for the Western civilization per se and its interplay with Islamic world. These trends are as following:

1) The ongoing technological revolution, especially in the fields of information, bio and nanotechnology; This revolution seems to play two conflicting rules. From one side, through providing new sources of economic growth it empowers humanity to develop economically much faster and easier than before. As a result, not only materially developed countries can do a better job in the near future, but also developing nations can pave economic development paths much shorter and more robust than before. From the other side, the technological revolution may make humanity socially more vulnerable than before through rising social uncertainty in a progressive way. These two conflicting effects may seem to lead to the revival of an age of religion as we will imagine shortly.

2) Repeated but failed attempts at introducing an operational but successful Islamic economic model; It was assumed that such a model was highly capable of generating economic prosperity, peace and justice, at least for the Muslim community if not for the whole humanity. However, this has not happened.

3) The emerged Islamophobia phenomenon; Islamophobia has been ignited, among other things, by the recent terrorist activities against the Western interests and people in the name of Islam, first and foremost of all, the 9/11 incident in the US homeland. A partial global contributor to expanding Islamophobia phenomenon seems to be airing unfavorable and sometimes false images of Islam by the Western mass media. It has not only prepared the grounds for conducting systematic antagonism against the Muslim world, but also provided stimuli for designing and pursuing grand national security strategies which are almost entirely aimed at making Muslim world obedient and fragile before globalization forces, taking over the control of their huge natural resources, or otherwise aggressing their interests, people and lands.

How do these ongoing trends impact human civilization? What would be the implication of these changes for the Muslim world? How likely would be the revival of an age of religion? And are we really approaching such an age in the light of new technological developments? Questions of this caliber and an exploratory push to find reasonable answers for them, constitutes the theme of this paper.

To pursue this objective, the second section presents a definition for the age of religion and tries to examine the relationship between each pair of words: "civilization", "culture", "history", "time" and "God". The third section utilizes the technological developments recently occurred in the field of information and communication to make it clear that how understanding a distinction between "real world" and "virtual world" with the help of the new technological stuff may enable us to clarify the forgotten relationship between "value" and "object" and its link with the creation of the globe by the Almighty God. The fourth section makes an assessment on the case that whether we are really approaching an age of religion or getting further and further away from it. The fifth section discusses the implication of the revival of age of religion for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sixth section will summarize the paper.

### **What is the Age of Religion?**

It is obvious that if Islam has any chance of ruling society in real terms, that must occur in an age which is truly "the age of being with Him" or equivalently, "the age of God" or "the age of religion." But what do we mean, in the first place, by these equivalent phrases?

To find an answer to this question, the adopted strategy here is examining the meaning of the word "civilization" and exploring a possible relationship that it may hold directly or indirectly with each of the words: "culture", "history", "time" and "God". Our analysis below may show that these words have a consistent and solid connections with each other.

The word "Civilization" has been defined in a number of ways, both conventionally and non-conventionally. In terms of etymology, this word comes (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary, 2008) from the Latin word "civilis", which is the adjective form of "civis", meaning a "citizen or townsman governed by the law of his city." A civilization (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974: 956) is normally a complex society or cultural group characterized by the practice of agriculture and settlement in cities. Compared with less complex cultures, members of a civilization are organized into a diverse division of labor and an intricate social hierarchy. However, the term "civilization" is often used as a synonym for "culture" in both popular and academic circles, but there is a clear distinction between them.

Samuel P. Huntington defines (Huntington, 1997) "civilization" as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have, short of that which distinguishes humans from other species". Some theorists<sup>1</sup> using system theory look at civilizations as complex systems or networks of cities that emerge from pre-urban cultures, and are defined by the economic, political, military, diplomatic and cultural interactions between them.

Giving a global dimension to civilization, there are also some environmental scientists (Laszlo, 2008) who see the world is entering a "Planetary Phase of Civilization", characterized by a shift away from independent, disconnected nation-states to a world of increased global connectivity with worldwide institutions, environmental challenges,

economic systems and seriousness. (Rockefeller, 2008) To understand what a “Planetary Phase of Civilization” might look like in the current context of declining natural resources and increasing consumption, a research group named “the Global Scenario Group” using scenario analysis to arrive at three archetypal futures: “Barbarization”, in which increasing conflicts result in either a fortress world or complete social breakdown; “Conventional World”, in which market forces or policy reforms slowly precipitate more sustainable practices, and a “Great Transition”, in which either the sum of fragmented Eco-Communalism movements add up to a sustainable world or globally coordinated efforts and initiatives result in a new sustainability paradigm. (Raskin et al, 2008) The importance of the mentioned citation becomes clearer once one takes note of the fact that we are in search for understanding what the age of religion is about.

If we think for a while about the meaning of “civilization”, we realize that it should be made of two distinctive parts: “Culture” and “life style”. That is because human being usually participates<sup>2</sup> in: 1) a “culture”, defined (Wiktionary, 2008) as “the arts, customs, habits...beliefs, values, behavior and 2) “material habits” that “talk about people’s life style”. This characterization seems to be useful in better understanding the relationship between “culture” and “civilization.” Of these two components, one seems to be “internal” (culture) and the other (life style) “external.” In other words, one seems to be like “soul” and the other like “appearance.” Or equivalently, one seems to be “the cause” and the other “the effect.” Therefore, while “material habits” or “life style” of human beings could be looked at as an outside or apparent component or the effect of civilization, “culture” seems to be its internal component or its soul or cause.

This decomposition or causality analysis seems to be useful if we are to arrive at a suitable definition for the age of religion. Running the same argument with culture, we realize that while the cause of civilization is culture and its effect is life style; the cause of culture, in turn, is history and its effect is civilization. In the same fashion, the cause of history is time and its effect is culture. Last but not definitely least, the cause of time is God, the Almighty, while its effect is history.

History is often said to be the mother of culture and a bed in which culture flourishes.

“God, the Almighty”, is the sole creator of “time”. Therefore, decomposition of the word “civilization”, or equivalently running a causality analysis on it, makes it clear that civilization is a highly cultural group of people whose main characteristic is behaving in accordance with the decrees of God. Therefore, categorically, each age of civilization should be an age of religion or an age of God, the Almighty.

To see that how genuine and consistent may look like our finding, we take a look at the non-Muslims perception of civilization like Jewish and Christians.

In Hebrew, (Civilization, 2008) for instance, human civilization may contrast sharply with the conventional notion attributed to civilization. A human civilization, therefore, would be an expression and extension of the two most basic pillars of human life: “Honest standardized weights and measures” and “a moral and healthy constitution.” Indeed to the degree the surface terrain of a human society, (i.e. culture) is civilized, to the same degree the internal terrain (characteristics, personality or substance) of people and leadership must also have been inoculated by and inculcated with a moral foundation. The Biblically described “Sodom,” for instance, while being a society comprised of people with a culture, by Jewish or Biblical standards of civility, would have been considered uncivilized. This moral or religious content of civilization has probably pushed many historians to focus on broad cultural spheres and treat civilizations as single cultural units. One example is early twentieth century philosopher Oswald Spengler,<sup>3</sup> who believed that a civilization’s coherence was based around a single primary cultural symbol. Therefore, civilizations experience cycles of birth, life, decline and death, often supplanted by a new civilization with a potent new culture, formed around a compelling new cultural symbol. Historian Arnold J. Toynbee, (Toynbee, 1987) furthermore, explored that the decline of 21 civilizations and five “arrested civilizations” happened due to moral or religious causes, rather than economic or environmental ones.

However, despite this close affinity in meaning between “civilization” and “the age of God”, not every age and civilization, at least in modern time, happened to be an age of God. Therefore, how we envision future in terms of being an age of god or vice versa, this is the matter of fact of our discussion in what follows.

### **The Separation between “Value” and “Fact” and the Revival of Age of Religion**

In the previous section, it was discussed that how close “civilization,” “culture,” “religion” and “age of God” are to one another. In this section, before entering into the discussion of whether we are approaching an age of religion, it seems plausible to offer a characterization about the age of religion with the help of information and communication technology. An analogy between “the command of God” and “the command of computer” is helpful in this regard. Furthermore, it is important to know that religious texts tell us that the world created by God, not only will be continuously subject to receiving Grace of God, but also has been created in the best of shapes it could take. Therefore, in Philosophical terms, “evil” does not represent a God’s creature, and its existence is perceived just upon the lack of “good things.” In other words, “to be” in Genesis is equivalent “to be good and worthwhile.” Nonetheless, human beings in the modern age have caused and indeed suffered from a handmade misfortune, which is the separation between “value” and “object.” We will shortly see that it is expected that in the age of God this separation comes to end. This will be the consequence of the civilization impact of new technology, which in turn would be like traveling some steps towards the revival of age of God or the age of religion. There, “the highest being” and “the highest good” is identical.

Now let’s come back to the analogy between the command of a computer and the command of God. Invention of computer in any sense should not be considered less than a great human being’s miracle and a sign of existence of God for His believers. That is because computer closely resembles the hardware creation of us but in

a virtual world. In the chapter of Genesis in Bible, as elsewhere like in Qur'an, the image behind the story of Genesis is of God as an omnipotent ruler whose very word is law. God speaks and it is done. So God says "Let there be" and there is. In response to God's word, reality happens. Nothing intervenes between the word of God and reality. God speaks, reality happens.

Now think of God,<sup>4</sup> as a heavenly computer programmer, of course the idea would be tacky and trivial, nevertheless it seems helpful in thinking about reality. In programming a computer, (Lochhead, 2008) we create words. We type, and it happens. We bring worlds into being out of nothing. Yet when we turn off our computers, the reality is gone. Our programs are a reality that happens in response to our commands. The same analogy is true with the creation of God. The world created by God has no stability, no solidity, and no permanence in itself. The world exists only in and through the word of God, the divine command which summons it into being and without which it would disappear into nothing from which it came. In Islamic philosophy, God is presumed to continuously grace the world in order for it to remain in existence. Even further, God graces the units of time to unfold and with them graces entities to come into existence. The more we think about this story, the more we see that reality resembles a virtual world which is created by a computer.

Going further, we notice that not only when God speaks, Reality happens, but also religious texts like Qur'an tell us, when reality happens, God pronounces it to be "good." Unfortunately, what God joins together in creation, human thoughts after industrial revolution, has done its best to put asunder. Modern thought has separated for centuries between "fact" and "value." To the modern mind, the question of "fact" is a matter of "objective truth." Fact is independent of what we might happen to think about it. Fact is objective. To be objective is to be real. "Value" exists only in the mind of the value maker. To the modern mind, values do not change the facts. Instead they are subjective and matters of opinion. They are private concerns and unreal in nature.

Most of us are aware that before the industrial revolution, there was a close connection between "fact" and "value." Therefore,

“the highest being” and “the highest good” were identical. Evil was nothingness and as the absence and distortion of being. “Being” and the “good” were always closely identified and there was no split between fact and value. It means that in creation of the world, when God sees reality happen, God sees it happen well. To be real is to be good. The separation between value and fact, especially in the coming years, seems to continue in a more pronounced way than before. This will be done in particular through the new opportunities provided by the diversification of products and services and the availability of “civilization of choice” in the aftermath of application of new technology in real life. However, in the era of globalization, it is expected that the separation between value and fact along with degeneration of valuable traditions in Western societies, gradually result in rising social uncertainties in a non-proportional manner, to the extent that the modern thought will have ultimately no choice but coming to the window of religion for shopping. This will end the separation between value and fact and boost the revival of age of religion.

### **Are we Approaching an Age of Religion?**

In the second section the concept of Planetary Phase of Civilization and an endeavor by scenario analysts of the Global Scenario Group to visualize that how this concept may look like in future, was mentioned. Interestingly that endeavor came up with three archetypal futures: “Barbarization”, which will surely have nothing to do with an age of religion; and “Conventional Worlds” and “Great Transition,” with varying degree of success at getting closer to a sustainable world and a pattern of globally coordinated living, but whether “with God” or “without Him,” one has to wait and see! Nonetheless, an analysis of future scenarios of this sort may indicate that human being is getting closer and closer to the limits of behaving poorly and uncoordinated.<sup>5</sup> This means that the future world will run out of coordination and cooperation caused by the secular belief system, hence the future world needs a divine source of help, through

reversion of human beings to the religious belief system, hence revival of age of being with Him.

Alvin Toffler, being a secular person, describes religion in his (Toffler, 1970) "Third Wave" to have the following dominant functions in any society:

1. Giving people a systemic view of the world.
2. Giving people community.
3. Giving people structure in an unstructured environment as what to do and what not to do.

Having this in mind, let us see whether in the ongoing globalization era, we are approaching an age of religion or getting away from it, as Alvin Toffler and Fokoyama (Hamshahri Online, 2008) hope. The adopted strategy here to answer this question is looking at three macro trends that are of some importance in determining where the world as a whole is heading towards in future. These trends are as following:

1) Large scale technological advances, in particular, in the fields of Information Technology, Bio and Nanotechnology. The importance of these outstanding technologies is twofold: From one side, as Alvin Toffler has recently indicated, they will have enormous impact on the Western, and one can say, on the global civilization. From the other side, they are capable of providing good grounds and strong causes for economic development of developing world, including Muslim countries. Therefore, the new path of economic development of the latter would be potentially different than previous time, recommended by now materially developed countries of the world. Indeed, an important question in Economics has all the time being about the source and engine of economic growth. Clearly the engine of economic growth for future will pass through the development of information technology, i.e. via its modern applications, in particular, in bio and nanotechnology and their related industries.

2) Repeatedly failed attempts at presenting an operational model of Islamic Economics, a model that could potentially offer good opportunities for economic growth and economic prosperity.

3) A seemingly institutionalized antagonism against Muslims or “Islamophobia,” This antagonism has been ignited at global level by the occurrence of a number of terrorist activities and incidents, above all, 9/11 incident in the US. This incident not only opened up a social gap between Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Western societies and heightened the wall of distrust between these two, but also induced political theorists and in particular Pentagon strategists to think of offering pessimistic models and scenarios for future in which the Islamic world and its movements will be contained and technically obstructed.

The subsequent parts offer some explanations about the implication of these observed global trends for the revival of age of religion.

#### **A. Civilization Implications of New Technology**

The renowned American futurist, Alvin Toffler in his 1970 seminal book, “Future shock”, predicted that the years to come would be marked by information overload, an acceleration of technological change, and a resultant social upheaval that he likened there to “mental illness”. Twenty six years later in 2006 in another book, titled: “Revolutionary wealth,” (Toffler, 2006) Toffler and his wife, Heidi argued that more and more economic activity will take place through processes that do not involve the exchange of currency. Clearly the rapid rise of this non-monetary wealth system has major implications for both the global economy and for humanity in general, implications that have been by this time underestimated.

But more interestingly, Alvin Toffler recently in an interview (Fisher, 2008) with Lawrence M. Fisher proclaimed that:

“The nature of the emergent wealth system is changing our civilization. But the reverse is also true, and to understand how these affect each other, you have to synthesize observations across all traditional academic borders, the boundaries that separate economics from sociology, from history, and so on.”

To understand that how recent technological advancements will change our civilization and to what extent these changes have reflection on the chance of revival of religion, the attention here will be focused on only three social dimensions. They are as following:

- 1) Prosuming phenomenon,
- 2) Revolution in the nature of time, i.e. The clash of speeds and de-synchronization between social and technological institutions,
- 3) Family impacts of new technology,

Overall the effect of these phenomena will be translated in a progressive way into a rise in the level of social uncertainty, something that predictably will conduce to the ultimate revival of age of religion.

The new technology usually has been stimulated and driven by two factors of "market competition" and "the allure of diversification." The desire for diversification once modified and strengthened by market competition and put in the context of new technology will introduce a new wealth system based on "prosuming," a process in which production and consumption takes place in one unit. This means that consumers themselves help produce products they need for their own use. This phenomenon is the same as classical do-it-yourself activities, like raising children, caring for elders, fixing a leaky faucet, painting or gardening at home, but this time the nature of job is more pronounced, diversified and amplified. In reality, prosuming acts like a "free lunch" to the money economy and its subsidization. The new wealth system based on this phenomenon will provide an opportunity for economic activities to go back and forth between money and non-money economies.

Apart from prosuming, "time" is also a deep fundamental of wealth creation. It is interesting to know that under the new wealth system, time will characteristically be different than under the previous industrial wealth system, where prosuming was not a major development. "Time" in the Industrial age was "impersonal", "collectively standardized" and "homogenous". Every one was going to work from 9 to 5 uniformly. However, in the new wealth system

“time” turns out to be “personal” and “irregular”. New technology will reduce the costs of variety, undermine manufacturing assembly lines and enable “niche production”, “customization” and “diversification”, and give the choice as to how we schedule our daily lives.

Not only “time” under the new wealth system would be irregular, but also it would be paced at different rates. This conducts us to a new concept: “The clash of speeds,” which talks of “de-synchronization” between the pace of developments of social institutions and technological applications. To see how, it would suffice to see that according to Moore’s Law, (Cringely, 2001) the Silicon Valley’s rule of thumb is that:

“The number of transistors per each square inch of integrated circuit will be doubled each 12 to 18 months for the next two decades, at least”. This means that ever-larger capacity will enable ever-faster speed of computer calculations.

The fact of the matter is that acceleration of time as a result of human beings’ well doing in introducing new technology at incredibly accelerated rate will cause a clash of speed between the rate of the great technological surge and the pace of accommodation to social change. In other word, a clash between the old, lumbering mass system and the diversity, flexibility and acceleration demanded of institutions built on knowledge, will emerge. That’s why social institutions will fall out of sync with technological surges, which may bring about institutional Katrina in future with perhaps socially deep disastrous effects.

This clash of speed may boost the level of uncertainty in society and open up a channel for new technology to impact civilization. Of which, one might be revival of religion in the US, Latin America and Africa, among other places.

Clearly, as Alvin Toffler indicates, religion is important in facing with growing trend of social uncertainty, resulted from luddism and pessimism about consequences of application of new technologies and from aging in the Western societies. The latter fear

caused by worry about “mortality” and the so-called “Cramming for the finals effect”. Indeed religion will give a good sense of solace and spiritual comfort in the new difficult but “marvelous to see” times of emergence of new technology.

The sense of uncertainty and dissatisfaction, looked at by pro-globalization theorists as a real threat to the new wealth system and by some others as a new window opportunity for revival of religion, may be further complicated by “family impacts” of the new wealth system and the emergence of “civilization of choice”, mostly ignited by diversification of products and prosuming phenomenon.

Clearly, the nature of family has evolved at historically unprecedented speed for the past century. Indeed, in pre-Industrial time, most families were multigenerational and had many responsibilities, ranging from being a school for children, hospital for the elders and a place for work. In Industrial time, it shrunk down to one generation, nuclear family, as kids went to school, fathers went to the factory, sick people went to the hospital and grandparents lived elsewhere. In the time of knowledge-based economy of nowadays, a diversification in the family format in sync with the diversifying wealth system is observable. In the West, society is on the verge of accepting gay civil unions, if not marriage. There is a growing trend in the number of single mothers, mothers in serial marriages, unmarried couples. That is, polygamy exists along with monogamy everywhere. Many previously social functions will little by little return to the home. Home schooling will become soon fashion. Parents will work at home at least part-time and health care will be backing home soon.

One may easily imagine that how this long array of diversified options in family functions in the context of secularism and tight social competition may cause sense of loneliness and unhappiness by individuals to grow, hence opening up a new channel for accumulation of social uncertainty.

One should be clear that the civilization impacts of new technologies and the ongoing globalization under any sense are not confined to the mentioned effects. Globalization is an unfolding process and with the passage of time, its growing dimensions will be better comprehended.

For instance, as late as time of writing this page, Jagdish Bhagwati (Bhagwati, 2008) in an article talks of a new phenomenon. He calls it: "kaleidoscopic comparative advantage." This new concept refers to a situation where jobs become volatile as a result of shakiness of comparative advantages. For instance, you have an advantage today which you can lose it tomorrow. Fragility of jobs is a strong source of workers' uncertainty. This means that intensified competition, in addition to adoption of labor-saving techniques which continuously threatens assembly-line jobs together with creation of tsunamis for specific industries by giants like China and India, where their exports concentrate, constitute a great source of mental and real uncertainty for the workers in the Western countries, the short run effect of which might be an increase in the number of referrals to the psychiatric clinics but its long run effect a huge impact on civilization, hence pushing for revival of religion. As of date of writing this page, Emma Jacobs writes the following phrase in Financial Times: (Jacobs, 2008)

"As the economy slows and jobs are cut, psychiatric practices based in London's financial center are reporting a rise in referrals. Mark Beadle, chief executive of Capio Nightingale Hospitals, a provider of private psychiatric treatment, says the number of City workers coming to his clinics with depression or anxiety has risen by 30 to 40 percent."

Obviously, a consequence of prevalence of such a situation where the number of sources of social uncertainty increases would possibly be an implosion in the belief system of individuals in materially advanced countries. This, in turn, may prepare the grounds for revival of religion through people's referral to the religious centers in search for solace and spiritual assurance.

But how would be the real characteristics of such an age and the sort of belief in God, that falls out of the destiny and jurisdiction of this paper. Surely, one can contend that potentially Islamic societies compared to the Western societies, might be in better position in this regard.

To see the impact of new technology and its emergent wealth system on the Muslim civilization, there is strong conviction that the new wealth system is also great in terms of enhancing the technological face of these countries, especially in the fields of Information Technology, Nanotechnology and biotechnology that are quite pivotal for economic development. Toffler himself asserts that now due to the diffusion of technology, "capital," "skills" and "wealth" can be created everywhere, nowhere (in cyberspace) and out there (in space.)

For instance China has revolutionized the sequential way we used to think of about economic development. This sequential way was first developing agriculture, then industry and then high technology. China is moving ahead by simultaneously developing both an industrial and information society. It follows a two-track strategy in economic development and India follows the suit as well. This two-track strategy in economic development seems to be a "must" for developing countries, which was not available before the emergence of new technology and its emergent wealth system.

If one thinks for a while about the possible consequences of imposition of heavy weighted economic sanction on Iran by the UNSC in recent years and earlier by the US Government over its nuclear dispute with the West, he or she will realize that the purpose of these sanctions more than being a cause to prevent Iran from getting up the ladder of mass industrial manufacturing, would be an instrument to bar this country from tracking down a two-track strategy in economic development, contrary to the case of China. Such an approach of creating obstacles for Iran aims to gradually gain momentum and push Iran not only away from the ladder of mass manufacturing, but also divert it to a gradual economic implosion with huge social, technical, technological and environmental disastrous consequences.

### **B. A Glance at the Experience of Islamic Economic Modeling**

A short glance at the experience of Islamic economic modeling in this section is important as it indicates that though such a practice in the past - at least to the extent that its consistency with the modern

life and nowadays mode of production concerns- has failed, in the light of the new technological developments, Muslim intellectuals and leaders have more impetus and opportunity to focus on a new trial. Obviously, if such a thing happens, then the dynamics of the international relations in the world to come will change accordingly.

A careful examination of the work done in the past 30 years or so in this field, i.e. Islamic Economics, may show that it could be categorized into three distinctive streams of thinking. But before entering into that discussion and in passing, it is important to notice that up to now model developers in Islamic Economics conceptually had this presumption in mind that they had to go all the way through as to define a comprehensive economic theory based on Islamic foundations and assumptions and comparable to the conventional economic theory. However, this might not be necessary, as far as an examination of the Holy Qura'n concerns and we see shortly.

The first category, we call it "the first wave", covers the early efforts on defining an Islamic Economic system as early as 35 years ago or more, has been attempted by either scholars<sup>6</sup> who trained in the Islamic seminaries or Muslim intellectuals and economists who trained in the Western schools of conventional economics.

Attempts originated from the Islamic seminaries, were largely directed at either describing Islamic principles dealing with economic life at large, in a scattered way and short of describing system requirements of a full model; or offering systematic views of what Islam, in economic terms,<sup>7</sup> was about.

While the first group of thinkers<sup>8</sup> within the this category were short of describing Islamic economic principles in a coherent, consistent and practical way, i.e. putting Islamic economic thoughts in the context of an operational closed system with each and every ingredient necessary for it to survive and sustain in the long term, the second group was also short of offering Islamic economic models compatible with mode of production of the day and conformable to the spiritual environment to which leaders and intellectuals of Muslim countries were adhered. They unfortunately desired more to cope with Western life styles than follow the Islamic principles and morality. Therefore, neither the first nor the second group of these

scholars was successful to offer something capable of bearing practical fruition. Despite this disappointment, one has to admit that these efforts are commendable, as they have been enlightening and shed some lights on the road of thinking about Islamic economic theory. Within the first wave, early attempts by scholars outside of Islamic seminaries were also naïve and primitive in giving way to reliable accounts of Islamic economic theory. Clearly, not only these scholars were trained in the mainstream economic schools of thought in the West and hence under influence, but also they were doubtful on practicality and reasonability of foundations of their contemplated models of Islamic Economics that were to develop. The outcome of this mindset was producing papers (Khorshid, 1995) mostly critical of the conventional economics and to some extent favorable to Islamic economic way of life.

However, within the last decade or so, a new stream of thinking on Islamic Economics has emerged, we call it: "the second wave". In this wave scholars from the Islamic seminaries were so bold as to theorize, at least partially, a set of rules, principles and regularities they comprehended about Islamic Economic way of life. For instance, Mir Moezi (Mir Moezi, 2005) has tried an attempt recently by writing a book, named: "Macroeconomics with the Islamic approach". He went so far in his book as writing the conventional Macroeconomics with adding or subtracting constraints consistent with the Islamic teachings and principles.

Although, his attempt has recently gained more popularity and commend than earlier perceived,<sup>9</sup> one may cast doubt on the genuineness of this work, as it seems difficult to assume that a combination of some partially antagonistic principles to Islam- mainly embodied in the marginal utility functions, selfish competition etc., which are based on bare secularism and individualism- and some Islamic principles such as devotion to Allah, full cooperation and holding trust in human beings and brotherhood, has any valuable meaning as long as keeping faith in Allah and His obedience is concerned.

Within the second wave, scholars who were taught in the West were more decisive and optimistic compared to the past in presenting

(Chapra, 1992) comprehensive critiques of all the streams of secular economic thinking, be it a Marxist view or a classical one. This way they have traveled long but in a commendable way to get closer to the core of the real problem and the very concept of Islamic Economics. However, still the main problem with this group of thinkers is that they do not really have a clear idea as to how they should put together a set of Islamic ethics and moral principles in the context of a model of economics so that firstly that would be worth of following in practice and secondly it would be from the perspective of system requirements of a model, acceptable and comparable to its conventional peers. This in my judgment constitutes a major weakness of this stream of thinkers. One may see the root of the problem in the lack of recognition of the core difference between “culture” and “civilization,” in a context discussed earlier in this paper.

In this regard, taking note of the two following points may shed some light on the matter. First it is instructive to remind the definition of the nineteenth-century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor of the word “civilization”. In his view,<sup>10</sup> civilization is “the total social heredity of mankind.” In other words, civilization is the totality of human knowledge and culture as represented by the most advanced society at a given time. Secondly, we earlier decomposed the word “civilization” into two components: “Life style” and “culture.”

This decomposition, given the definition of Edward Burnett Tylor, seems to be helpful in defining an Islamic economic model. Therefore, an Islamic economic model does not need to take care of either the rules related to the life style in a civilization or the modes of production and consumption of the day, as they both are taken care by the heredity and knowledge of mankind and Islam is totally silent about them. Indeed, one can assert that the destiny of most of the things related to the life style in a civilization is originally and basically determined by the most efficient civilization of the time, i.e. the Western civilization. As such, the only thing that an Islamic economic model should fully take care and handle it, is the spirit governing the economic activities and the cultural values that are attached to them, be it a life style matter or issues related to the modes

of production and consumption. Islam only applies modification where necessary in these stuffs. This means that Islamic Economics more than being a social science, should be viewed as a set of moral guidelines and rules that explain the cultural aspect of life and the environment in which Muslim individuals live.

Looking from this perspective and being caught with the so far failed attempts at defining an operational economic theory, now the time seem to be quite ripe for entering into a "third wave" in Islamic economic modeling. This will optimistically end up with fruition through being empowered technically by the emergence of new technology and availability of short-cut methods in economic development.

### **C. Islamophobia**

Apart from the incentives now available in the age of new technology to economic development of the Muslim world, Islamophobia can act as a new channel for strengthening these incentives. The reason is that unfortunately Islamophobia has implicitly prepared the grounds for powerful nations of the world to design and pursue national grand strategies in the name of promoting democracy worldwide, which are mostly detrimental to the welfare of Muslim world.

Western media, admittedly under the influence of a handful of powerful Jewish lobby, have been repeatedly transmitting views and perspectives capable of generating hostility or provoking enrage against Muslim community. To give a sense of authenticity to these practices, sometimes voices from naïve and uneducated but enraged Muslim individuals are disseminated, who either are critical of the governments of their own homelands for welfare or corruption matters, taking refuge in the West, or are ostensibly hateful of their faith. Apart from this publicized antagonism against Muslim world, rich natural resource endowments of the Muslim world, like oil and gas, may also be a source of trouble and a cause. Gaining legitimacy for possible invasion in order to gain control over Muslim natural resources, of course needs some degree of consensus and spreading

systematic hate against Muslim world, which these prejudiced media are fully apt at.

A glance at an analysis offered by the US national security strategist, Thomas P.M. Barnett in his book: (Barnett, 2005) "The Pentagon's new map" suffices to give us an insight about the provocation caused by the emergent Islamophobia.

The book has been started with a modified map under the same title, in which the world has been divided into two areas: 1) An area contained in a semi-oval, called: "The Non-integrating Gap." and 2) A second area lay outside the first one, called: "Core". The Author by "core" means countries and regions that promote globalization processes and feel friendly and comfortable with their forces and processes. Geographically, these are mostly located either in the upper part of the world's map like: The US, Canada, West Europe, former East Europe, Russia, Mongolia, China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea; or in the lower part of the world's map, like: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The author defines the US grand strategy to widen further and further the core of globalization through the use of military force by the US Government and, in particular by Pentagon.

On the other hand, the remained part of the world map which shows itself like a gap between these two northern and southern thresholds and is called: "The non-integration gap", in the US grand strategy should be further and further shrunk, again by the use of military force exerted solely by the United States' Army. In this scenario drawing, all of the Muslim countries are located in the non-integrating gap. The author believes that they are resistant to the globalization processes and acting against them.

In conclusion, one might be tempted to predict a future, in which a comprehensive and fierce struggle from the West or the pro-globalization bloc against the Islamic values will be started so that as a result, a new era in which the Western values and life style would dominate the whole planet, will be unfolded. However, interplay of complicated factors of which some have been mentioned in this paper might have made it clear that such an outcome would be far from being straightforward. Indeed, an era in which Islamic values have the

chance to flourish and later on dominate the whole world, more through gaining worldwide popularity and support than fighting and struggle against other value systems and ideologies, might not be far from happening. The final outcome, however, depends on the desire and intention of human beings how to play their role in a concert in which Evil forces and God forces are the sole players and determinants.

### **Implication for the Foreign Policy of Iran**

As it was discussed earlier in the paper, there was a chance that the new age would be an age of religion. Now, the question involved here is: "will it have any implication for the foreign policy of a politically leading Muslim country like Iran?"

Enjoying an ethic-oriented governmental apparatus, Iran clearly has a comparative advantage vis-à-vis other Muslim countries once the turn comes to the emergence of an age of religion.

Iran's foreign policy has been deeply involved in regional as well as international issues of conflicting nature, prominent examples of which are harsh dispute over its peaceful nuclear program with the West, holding differing views over peace process in the Middle East with the US government and the Zionist regime as well as adoption of a foreign policy which is more of an aggressive nature than compromising towards the West over US unilateralism and the political project of globalization. Despite more often than not outstanding achievements, Iran economically has paid dearly in recent years for its deep involvement in international affairs. Imposition of several rounds of economic sanction by the United Nation Security Council and the US with detrimental consequences is one example. However, in light of emergence of new technology and its vast social impacts, this trade-off between Iran's political achievements and its losing autonomy in economic performance, deterioration of economic efficiency and labor productivity, this process is aimed to be translated into a gradual and bare economic implosion and to act against the latter in terms of a cost-benefit analysis.

Therefore, given the impact of new revolutionary technology on the Western civilization and the Muslim world, if the resulted outcome has anything to do with the revival of an age of religion, then what would be an optimal response policy for Iran? Clearly, neither an Iran suffering on a long run basis from economic stagnation, can occupy a niche in this market; nor an Iran losing its social capital progressively, and on an unprecedented manner.

Therefore, an optimal policy for Iran would be refocusing its attention towards domestic policies at home, i.e. boosting economic growth through utilization of new technology and mending fragile social capital.<sup>11</sup> An Iran sufficiently strong at home can definitely make a difference in its foreign policy over the globe once the turn comes to the revival of religion.

### Summary

At least there are three important trends at global level with high implications for our civilization. They are: The ongoing technological revolution, especially in the fields of information, bio and nanotechnology, repeated but failed attempts at introducing an operational Islamic economic model and rising Islamophobia.

Obviously if Islam has any chance of ruling society, this must occur in an age of religion. To understand the meaning of age of religion, we applied a causality analysis among different related words, such as "civilization," "culture," "history," "time" and "God" and concluded that each and every civilization, at least conceptually, must obey the requirements of an age of God. In other words, there is an intimate relationship between "civilization" and "religion" in meaning as well as the causes for rise and fall. This conclusion proved to be consistent with the Jewish and Christian reading of civilization.

However, this was not honored at least in the aftermath of the industrial revolution, as a killing separation happened between "goodness" and "fact," which will be predicted to break up in the new era of speedy acceleration of technological surge.

An analogy between "the command of God" and "the command of computer" shown to be helpful in not only better

understanding the dimensions of world creation by God but also in making a distinction between “virtual world” and “real world,” of which one huge impact would be revolutionizing our understanding of “the unity of God” in spirit and life practices.

Large scale new technological advances, especially in the fields of Information Technology, Bio and Nanotechnology, will have enormous positive impacts on the global civilization through: Emergence of prosuming phenomenon, creation of non-monetary economy and new wealth system, change in the nature of time, clash of speeds and de-synchronization between the pace of technological surge and the that of institutional accommodation, and last but not least changes in the nature and format of family.

However, these changes especially in the issues related to time and family format may boost the drive for a sharp increase in the level of social uncertainty and hence pushes for the revival of age of religion, as it has been the case in the US, Latin America and Africa in the recent past.

From the other side, new technology is capable of generating strong cause for economic development in the developing world, including Muslim countries, especially if it is being coupled with the common frustration about failing to define and run a practical model of Islamic Economics and outrageous feelings about rising Islamophobia. The ultimate outcome of which will not only be the revival of age of religion but also the emergence of a new reading of Islam with more conceptual strength and influential capability vis-à-vis the Western civilization.

The rising trend in Islamophobia not only will provide more impetus for the Muslim world to rise up technologically, but also gives sufficient incentives to the West security strategists to cook up plans and Grand National strategies aimed at aggression against Muslim world, which complicates further the status quo of international relations in near further.

Enjoying an ethic-oriented governmental apparatus, Iran has a clear comparative advantage with regard to other Muslim countries once the time becomes ripe for the emergence of an age of religion.

Being deeply involved in the regional as well as international issues of conflicting nature, the optimal response policy for Iran is repositioning its foreign policy towards satisfying more of domestic objectives, such as economic growth and build up of social capital. This way, Iran will be better fit to occupy a niche in the new emergent market for religion and serve better globally at a later stage.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For instance, refer to: Jacobs, Jane. (1985) *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, USA: Vintage.

<sup>2</sup>For more discussion, consult the following link:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilization>.

<sup>3</sup> The original source not to be seen by the author: Spengler, Oswald. (1919) *Decline of the West: Perspectives of World History*.

<sup>4</sup> I seek refuge in Him, for being misled in the applied analogy.

<sup>5</sup> For an additional but quite interesting discussion on this issue from another perspective, refer to: Jacobs, Jane. (2004) *Dark Age Ahead*, USA: Random House.

<sup>6</sup> Like Alsadr, Mohammad Bagher. (2004) *Eghtesadona*, Qom: Boostan Books Pub, (In Persian).

<sup>7</sup>Ayatollah Mohammad Sadr of Islam Shia' school of jurisprudence, a pioneer, apt and prominent figure at world level, is among scholars who have tried this way.

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<sup>8</sup>An example would be: Iravani, Javad. (2005) *Economic Ethics from the Viewpoint of Qur'an and Hadith*, Mashad: Razavi Islamic University Pub. (In Persian).

<sup>9</sup>For instance, refer to the following document, mentioning approval of Mir Moezi's idea by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution of Iran: Chair of Theory Making No. 7: *The Pattern of Macro Consumption in the Islamic Society*, Presented by: Seyed Hussein Mir Moezi, Appriased by: The Jury for Protecting Chairs of Theory Making in the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2008, (in Persian).

<sup>10</sup>Original document not seen: Tylor, Edward B.1920 [1871]. *Primitive Culture*. New York: J.P. Putnam's Sons.

<sup>11</sup> A thorough discussion could be found in: Motavasseli, Mahmood and Ali Biniaz. (2002) "A New Approach in Appraising the Level of Social Capital in the Iranian Economy", Tehran: *Journal of Planning and Budget*, Vol. 7, No. 3, August and September, (In Persian.)