

Islam and Contemporary Civilisation

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Islam and Contemporary Civilisation

Evolving Ideas, Transforming Relations

Halim Rane



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297

To Usama, Amira and Humza

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Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party, Turkey
AMSS	Association of Muslim Social Scientists
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CISSM	Centre for International and Security Studies at Maryland
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
DOP	Declaration of Principles
EU	European Union
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front, Algeria
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
JA	Jewish Agency
JNF	Jewish National Fund
KN	Knowledge Network
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAS	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
PASSIA	Palestinian Academic Society of International Affairs
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PIPA	Program on International Policy Attitudes
PKR	People's Justice Party, Malaysia
PKS	Prosperous Justice Party, Indonesia
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
WPO	World Public Opinion.org
WZO	World Zionist Organization

Preface

This book is the culmination of my research, writing and teaching in the field of Islamic studies for almost ten years. Following my undergraduate degree in sociology and Islamic studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia, I returned to Australia to complete a Master's degree in media studies. Upon completion of this degree, in early 2001, I was approached by the head of the international relations department at Bond University to design and teach a course on Islam that deals with the range of contentious issues concerning the religion and its adherents in the context of the modern world. The course I designed and taught for the next five years at Bond University was entitled 'Islam and Contemporary Civilisation'. I continued to teach variations of this course at the University of Queensland and I presently teach a course called 'Islam in the Modern World' at Griffith University in the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies.

Various events over the past few decades, including the Iranian revolution, Israel–Palestine conflict, Salman Rushdie affair, Gulf war and, of course, the attacks on 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror, have brought Islam and the Muslim world to the attention of Western publics. The images of Islam and Muslims in the Western media portray a religion and people that are violent, intolerant and anti-Western. An examination of the ideas and behaviour of some Muslims shows that this portrayal is not incorrect. However, to what extent is it representative of the essence and higher objectives of Islam as well as the ideas, beliefs and practices of the majority of Muslims?

Islam and Contemporary Civilisation is written so that Western readers, of all faiths and no faith, can gain a better understanding of Islam in the context of modernity as it pertains to the most contentious issues with which Islam and Muslims have been associated for the past few decades. The debates and dilemmas addressed in this book were selected on the basis of their extensive media, public and scholarly attention; their impact on how Islam and Muslims are perceived in the West; their need for re-examination in terms of Islamic thought; and their centrality to Islam–West relations in the international context.

Almost all of the issues covered in this book can be found in other books. The unique contribution of this book, however, is

twofold. First, it provides a comprehensive understanding of Islam and Muslims in terms of beliefs and practices, historical developments, law and thought, as well as addresses all of the contentious issues concerning Islam and Islam–West relations in a single volume. Having taught Islamic studies for almost ten years now, I know firsthand the shortage of books on Islam that are this comprehensive in scope. Second, this book does not simply describe the debates and dilemmas it covers but takes an analytical approach. It applies a contextual-*maqasid* methodology towards a resolution of the various issues covered based on a contextualised reading and the higher objectives of Islam's sacred text, the Quran.

Noting the shortage in the market and need for a book such as this, I intended to write this book many years ago. At that time, my intention was to write it with the person who inspired me to set upon this path, my wife Nora Amath. As it turned out, I wrote this book as a solo author but there are a number of people I must thank for their assistance. Thank you to my students Nora Kuusik, Bridget Minogue and Julia Nho for spending your precious vacation time reading the manuscript of this book and ensuring that the interests, concerns and misconceptions of students and the general public alike are appropriately addressed. My thanks also to Nora Amath for making the time to copy-edit the manuscript and for ensuring that the words on the pages are consistent with my vision for this book.

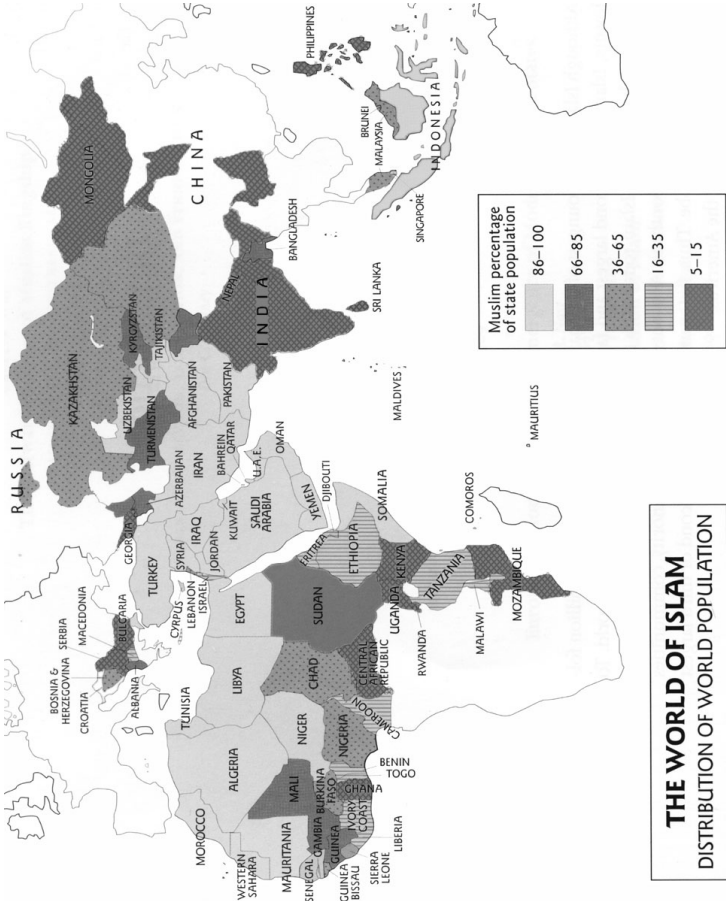
There are also three scholars in particular to whom I am indebted as their ideas and writings have shaped my own: Fazlur Rahman, Mohammad Hashim Kamali and John Esposito. I never had the fortune of meeting the late Professor Rahman, but I regard him as the most important Islamic scholar of the twentieth century. His work in the field of Islamic studies is seminal; his approach preserves the integrity of the Quran in a way that is rational and relevant to modernity. I am fortunate to have attended many lectures given by Professor Kamali and to have engaged in in-depth discussions with him on numerous occasions. His work on Islamic law is the most important in contemporary times; it is both grounded in the original and classical sources and responsive to contemporary realities and conditions. I have also intensely studied the extensive work of Professor Esposito, whose ideas about political Islam and approach to Islam–West relations are foremost in the promotion of mutual understanding and respect between the Muslim and Western worlds.

Throughout this book I have referred extensively to the work of each of these scholars and to each I give the highest respect.

It is my hope that *Islam and Contemporary Civilisation* will contribute to a better understanding of Islam and Muslims, and that after reading this book there can be more informed debate and discussion about the issues it addresses. I trust that readers will be left with a better appreciation of the factors that underlie the current tensions within Islam and between Islam and the West. I hope this book will contribute to an approach to Islam based on a contextual and higher objective reading of the Quran becoming normative among Muslims. In turn, may this foster a deeper appreciation for common humanity, concerns and aspirations in Islam–West relations.

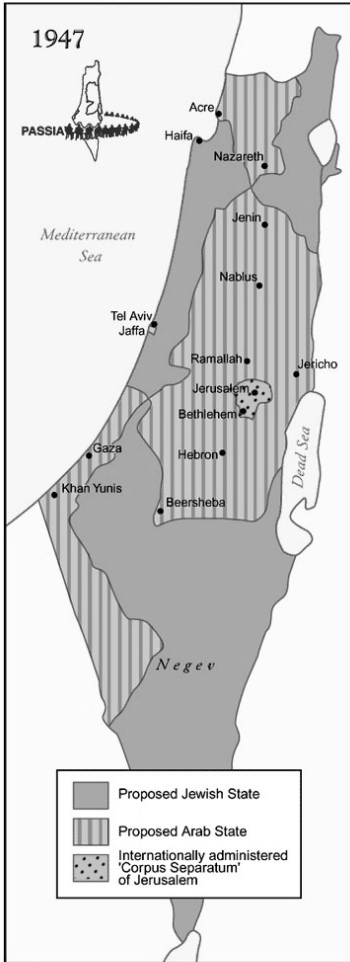
Dr Halim Rane

10 May 2010

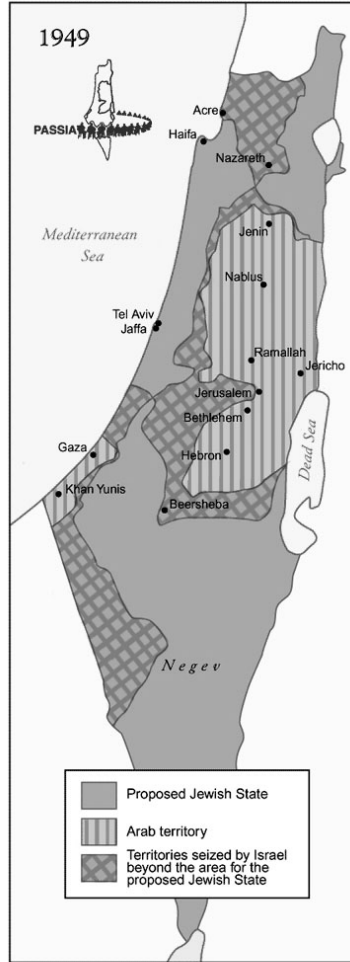


Population distribution of the Muslim world
SOURCE: JOHN ESPOSITO (ED.), *The Oxford History of Islam*, p. x. UPDATED BY CAROLYN STUBBIN.

United Nations Partition Plan
UN Resolution 181



Rhodes Armistice Line



Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

The expansion of Israel in Palestine from the 1947 UN Partition Plan to the Armistice of 1949

SOURCE: PASSIA, WWW.PASSIA.ORG/PALESTINE_FACTS/MAPS/1947-UN-PARTITION-PLAN-RESO.HTML. MODIFIED BY CAROLYN STUBBIN.

The Near East after the 1967 June War



**Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs
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The Near East after the Six-Day War of 1967

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