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## Faith-Based Harmony through Peaceful Engagement in Participative Pluralism: An American Experiment

by Dr. Robert D. Crane

Two thousand years ago, the great Roman philosopher, Cicero, warned, “Before you discuss anything whatsoever, first define your terms”. He was talking about what today we call paradigms of thought and about what may become the strategy of paradigm management in a coming age of Artificial Intelligence.

The major split and cause of disharmony both within and among religions and nations are two exclusivist paradigms of thought, namely, ideological traditionalism and ideological progressivism. Ideology by definition is a closed system of thought. If one adds the suffix “ism” to any concept, such as “Islam”, it connotes a degeneration of this concept into an ideology. “Islamism” and “Islamist” automatically constitute threats to democracy and to the larger concept of a “democratic republic” envisioned by the Founders of the “great American experiment” in liberty, the United States of America.

“Tradition” can refer to the enlightened heritage of an organic nation that gives rise to common values in the present and common hopes for the future. This is the opposite of modern “nation-building”, which by definition requires the destruction of organic nations in order to impose a secular substitute known as a “sovereign state”. The official definition of sovereignty, as I learned it when I was the founder and president of the Harvard International Law Society, is the secular power to control more than 50% of a given territory.

“Progress” similarly is like a chameleon, because it can refer to envisioning, articulating, and applying compassionate justice in society, whereas in its progressivist form it can refer to either oligarchical socialism or oligarchical capitalism and their end games of totalitarian oppression. The solution to such paradigmatic chaos can be its opposite in harmony through peaceful engagement in participative

pluralism through progressive tradition and traditional progress.

Another major cause of disharmony and conflict is failure to distinguish between the concepts or paradigms of liberty and freedom. Liberty is our freedom to seek guidance from divine revelation in the religion of our choice (*haqq al yaqin*), from studying the natural laws of the quantum universe (*ain al yaqin*), and intellectual effort to understand where these two support each other (*ilm al yaqin*), because if these two endeavors conflict in the pursuit and practice of compassionate justice, then one has misunderstood at least one of them. Freedom, on the other hand, can be self-centered as an obsession to do whatever one wants, including worship of oneself as a false god, which contradicts one's purpose of existence.

In my introductory talk at the First International Youth Forum of the World Muslim Communities Council on December 7-8, 2019, sponsored by the UAE's Ministry of Tolerance, I introduced a three-step progression from "tolerance", which can mean merely, "I won't kill you yet", to "diversity", which can mean merely peaceful coexistence without cooperation, to "peaceful engagement through participative pluralism", meaning, "We welcome you, because we have so much to learn from each other".

Such harmony requires a fundamental shift from a threat mentality to an opportunity mentality. The best way to counter the appeal of terrorists and other "nabobs of negativism" is to promote compassionate justice, as best developed in recent decades through the *maqasid al shari'ah* or ultimate purposes of Islamic jurisprudence and through their application in the governing paradigm of a republic.

The eight *maqasid* (purposes), or *dururiyat* (essentials), or *kulliyat* (universals) that I have developed over the decades consist of four guiding principles at the level of ontology and epistemology and four principles of application at the level of axiology. The guiding principles are respect for: 1) *haqq al din*, freedom of religion; *haqq al nafs*, the sacredness of the human person; 3) *haqq al nasl*, the sacredness of human community as a derivative from its individual members; and 3) *haqq al mabid*, environmental justice. The four principles for application are *haqq al mal*, economic justice; 2) *haqq al hurriyah*, political justice; 3) *haqq al karama*, gender equity; and 4) *haqq al 'ilm*, freedom of thought, publication, and assembly.

The role of a republic in the Islamic *maqasid al shari'ah* is summarised in the *maqsad*, political justice, *haqq al hurriya*. This consists of three princi-

ples: 1) *khilafa*, which is the responsibility of both the rulers and ruled to search for transcendent truth through revelation, critical thought, and applied justice; 2) *shura*, which is consultation with each other by both the rulers and the ruled; and 3) *ijma*, which is the responsibility of the ruled to seek consensus as a means to govern the governors.

The challenge today is to overcome the superficiality of both ideological traditionalism and ideological progressivism by pursuing the principles and thought that have always inhered in the best of tradition in very world religion.

The principal mentor of America's founders was Edmund Burke, who headed the minority Whig party in 18th-century England, and, as part of the Scottish Enlightenment, advocated a republic as superior to a democracy. He supported the American colonists' demands for economic justice against mercantilist exploitation and oppression by the English Parliament. The colonists double-crossed him, however, when they abandoned his movement for reform and instead revolted against the English monarchy as part of a system of government, though they did not oppose the monarchy as such until the revolution was well underway.

In the paradigm of a republic, tradition governs through the constant search for higher truth (cosmology), for transcendent justice as a derivative thereof (epistemology), and for practical application through virtue and institutional reform (axiology).

This is the opposite of a secular democracy, which is based in fact, though not in theory, on the principles of power, personal prestige, plutocracy, and privilege. In a republic, popular elections are an important tool of governance to pursue mutual consultation between the government and the people as a means for the people to develop a consensus on what they want.

In an Islamic republic, and perhaps especially in a Christian one, instead of policies alternating between aggression and timidity and between revolution and reaction, we need grand strategies guided by realism, restraint, and principled reform, including reform of dysfunctional institutions.

In any country governed by a republic reflecting the essence of every world religion, we need both love of each other and love of country, because this is programmed (*fatir* and *fitra*) into our human nature, which is designed for each person and community to give rather than to take in life (*infaq*), though this must be activated from an early age through integral and integrative education.

To love our country, our country must be lovely. Those who want ordered freedom want goodness, truth, and beauty. We should love principles but despise closed-circuit ideologies. We must cherish the individual person as a distinct and unrepeatable center of dignity (*haqq al nafs*), including the principle of proliferating variety. This principle of peaceful engagement in participative pluralism, in turn, is based on the cultivation of virtue (*akhlaq* in Islamic jurisprudence) and self-government by promoting decentralization through federalism or through its sublimation into an advanced form of confederalism.

Thomas Jefferson summarised the vision of America's founding men and women when he declared, "No people can be liberated and free unless they are properly educated. Proper education consists of teaching

and learning virtue. And no people can remain virtuous unless both the personal and public lives of the individual are infused with awareness and love of Divine Providence". Divine Providence was another term for the paradigm of "theism", which recognises that the ultimate consciousness in reality both created and sustains the universe and everything in it. This is distinguished from "deism", in which God may have created the universe like a clock-maker but then disappeared from the scene forever, so that, in effect, man can become his own god.

We read in the Jewish Bible, "What does the Lord require of you? but to do Justice and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8), recognising that God is the best Planner.

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