

EDITORIAL

The *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* journal is focused on restoring the civilisational potential of Islam and its guidelines in conjunction with contemporary issues. In this April 2015 edition we provide six papers and four viewpoints as well as an interview, event reports and book review. The articles in this edition cover four highly topical civilisational themes – dealing with extremism in Muslim communities; strengthening aspects of Islamic law in Malaysia; responses needed to assist members of the Muslim diaspora living as minority communities to find security and realise a fitting identity; and fourthly, looking into two seminal elements of Islamic civilisation, past and present – Arabic literature and scientific advancement.

Fast-developing political events are nowadays widespread within the heartlands of the Muslim world, particularly the MENA countries and West Africa, where extremism, terrorism and violence have become all too common and are ripping communities apart. Extremism and terrorism in tandem with sectarian violence and security breakdown are widespread in ‘core’ Muslim countries to such an extent that a non-Muslim and even Muslim citizens shake their heads in disbelief that this can happen in societies presenting themselves as followers of a divine revelation, the Noble Qur’an, and life example of its exemplar, Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*). Consequently I am motivated to provide an explanation of this phenomenon in the article on “Extremism, Terrorism and Islam: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives”, and to look at avenues to address the underlying issues and suggest policy scenarios, responses and recommendations. This topic was also the subject of a well-attended Round-table discussion held at IAIS on 22 January 2015.

Two articles then address separate issues of Shari’ah law in Malaysia. Firstly, Tun Abdul Hamid Mohamad, the former Chief Justice of Malaysia (2007-2008), discusses the “Implementation of Islamic Criminal Law in Malaysia: Prospects and Challenges” – this at the time when the Malaysian opposition party, Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS), has just submitted a controversial private member’s bill for consideration by the Federal Parliament. PAS’s overt purpose is to facilitate implementation of hudud law in Kelantan whose Legislative Assembly passed the *Hudud Bill* amendments in March 2015. These amendments introduce minor changes to the original *Hudud Bill of Kelantan 1993*, which has remained in abeyance ever since due to its conflict with the Federal Constitution. A neighbouring country that is contemplating a thorough implementation of Shari’ah law, Brunei Darussalam, has yet to decide on implementing that part of its *Syari’ah Penal Code Order 2013*, which contains *hudud* offences. The fourth article “Standardisation of Fatwa in Malaysia: Issues, Concerns and Expectations”, is by Deputy CEO of IAIS, Mohamad Azam Mohamed Adil. It is an intriguing subject and discusses the issue of conflicting fatwas that sometime arise from different state jurisdictions and how these differences could be resolved across the country through a standardisation process led by the National Fatwa Committee.

A proposal is also made for appointment of a Grand Mufti who would however not supercede the roles of the respective State Muftis.

Asif Mohiuddin from the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, in his article, “Globalisation and Muslim Minorities: Integration and Identity Dialectics in the West”, focuses on Muslim minorities, how they are affected by globalisation, and the challenging process of finding one’s place and identity in an adopted Western country while often experiencing feelings of exclusion and insecurity. This often results in multiple identities forming within the Muslim community. Mohiuddin proposes meaningful dialogue in order to promote more effective and harmonious integration of Muslims into the host society.

It is fitting that both the arts and science are discussed in discourses on Islamic civilisation – its remarkable past and its enticing future waiting to be grasped. Suleiman Mohammed Hussein Boayo, senior lecturer at the Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilisation (CASIS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, has written on “Arabic Literature in the Rise of Islamic Civilisation and the Present Education System” He stresses here that in addition to the bedrock of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, the Arabic language with its literature has also provided a major foundational source for Islamic civilisation. Its study will enable one to reach the heart of the Islamic civilisation. To cap our articles section, Asadullah Ali Al-Andalusi in his article, “The Rise and Decline of Scientific Productivity in the Muslim World”, provides a preliminary analysis on some leading ‘theories’ for the observed rise and decline of scientific activities in the Muslim world, with start of the decline being noticed around beginning of the 15th century. He rebuts with justification the ‘classical narrative’ of orientalists - that Muslims were no more than custodians of Greek, Persian and Indian science and that Imam al-Ghazali was responsible for a swing to a more conservative bent that hindered free scientific enquiry.

The Viewpoints generally support the foci of preceding articles including Hakimah Yaacob’s overview and appraisal on *The Islamic Financial Services Act 2013*, and the proposed antidote to extremism and moderation of hard power which is love in Ahmad Badri’s insightful viewpoint on “Balancing Power and Love towards Global Stability in the Muslim World”. Another flip of the coin is Tengku Ahmad Hazri’s “State-Building Dilemmas after the Arab Spring” – after all good governance with representative public participation can engender stability and moderation if detrimental external parties do not rock the boat. Also in this vein, the book review by Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri addresses the rise of mass aspirations for democracy in the Muslim world. The section is rounded off by Tawfique Al-Mubarak, a Bangladeshi scholar, writing on “Commemorating the International Mother Language Day: Resisting ‘Banglish’” in support of the Bengali language and its rich literature. International Mother Language Day is celebrated annually on 20 February in commemoration of the Bengali experience.

Significant events also reported in this edition include the FUNCI interview with Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Tengku Ahmad Hazri on Islam and Constitutionalism; the visit to Malaysia of Professor Tariq Ramadan in Late January-February; and the successful Seminar on Gender and Islamic Legal Reform in December 2014.

We also highlight that we believe our readers too have many valuable ideas on the important issues facing Islamic civilisation, and encourage your submission to IAIS for consideration as an ICR article (5,000 to 7,500 words) or viewpoint (1,000 to 1,500 words), with analyses proposing solutions and policies to help project the ummah to a successful and sustainable future. Great intellectual movements are underway in the Muslim world today – we wish to capture the essence of these developments as well as contribute to these from our own platform.

I would finally like to thank all our contributors, the ICR Editorial team, and my colleagues in the Publications Unit for their continued cooperation and support.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali
Editor-in-Chief