

protection of life, protection of religion, human intellect, property, and family. One other objective that some scholars have added to this is human dignity. These are basic *sharī'ah* commitments and they assign a place of central importance to what also represent the major headings of any constitution. The bill of rights aspect of contemporary constitutions in almost all Muslim countries thus provides to all intents and purposes a distinctive commitment to the *maqāṣid* of the *sharī'ah*. This is another way of saying that the lines of convergence between the constitution and the *sharī'ah* are unmistakably obvious.

We have also seen a fresh emphasis on the revival of Islam and the demand of Muslim masses almost everywhere to integrate and enhance the relevant aspects of the *sharī'ah* in their otherwise Western-law oriented laws and constitutions. This is a demand that seeks to rectify the imbalances of colonialism and their aggressive downgrading and suppression of the *sharī'ah*. Yet the success of this exercise, and indeed of any other aspect of the constitution, would very much depend on methodical, realistic and moderate approaches toward the revival of a valuable heritage. We need to take cognisance of the reality also that the Muslim world has interacted with other countries and civilisations over long periods of time. We ought to retain and protect the wisdom we can gain from them for our betterment and appreciate what is in common between us – and contribute in the same spirit toward greater harmony of civilisations for the benefit of all.

Round Table of the Perdana Leadership Foundation and the New Club of Paris and Public Dialogues on the Knowledge-Economy

Osman Bakar, IAIS Malaysia

On 15–16 June 2010, a notable two-day intellectual event – the Perdana Leadership Foundation and the New Club of Paris Round Table and Public Dialogues on the Knowledge Economy – took place in Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur. Broadly concerned as it was with issues of knowledge – knowledge-society in general and knowledge-economy in particular – the event could not be more aptly described than as 'intellectual' in nature. It was jointly organised by the Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF) and the New Club of Paris (NCP). The event consisted of a 'Round Table' discussion, which was held on the first day, and 'Public Dialogues', which took place on the second day.

The Round Table, jointly organised by PLF and NCP, was jointly moderated by former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also PLF's Honorary President, and Datuk Dr Tengku Azzman Shariffadeen, a former CEO of the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (MIMOS), who is currently a consultant with the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

For the Public Dialogues on the next day, PLF had invited three Malaysian think tanks to help organise and host the dialogues at their respective premises. Each of them was to take up a different theme of dialogue. The three think tanks were the International Institute for Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), and the Asian Strategic and Leadership Institute (ASLI). The seven NCP participants at the previous day's Round Table were evenly distributed as speakers to the three think tanks. Allocated to IAIS were NCP's Vice-President, Professor Ahmed Bounfour (Paris) and its General Secretary, Dr Günter Koch (Vienna), both of whom spoke on the subject of 'value-based development'. ISIS, with its three allotted NCP speakers, deliberated on the theme of 'development of national policy'. As for ASLI, its two NCP speakers addressed the theme of investing in creativity and innovation.

The Public Dialogues, hosted by IAIS, was well attended. There were about 60 participants representing quite a good cross-section of the Malaysian intelligentsia and professional groups. The Dialogue, which I chaired, began with a short presentation each on the issue of value-based development and related issues of knowledge-economy by Professor Bounfour and Dr Koch, followed by Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali, the Founding Chairman and CEO of IAIS, acting as a discussant. Dr Bounfour touched on a number of issues pertinent to value-based development. These included the concern for intangibles, as well as the issues of the creation of values, education systems, innovation, and of self-confidence. Dr Koch spoke of the kind of dialogue that can be pursued between IAIS and NCP on the theme of knowledge-society and knowledge-economy. He explained to the audience the rationale of NCP and its knowledge-society agenda and referred to a few European experiences and successes in knowledge-economy, especially from Finland.

In his response to both speakers, Professor Kamali, a world-renowned expert on Islamic law, dealt with the issue of value-based development from the perspective of the *sharī'ah* as well as with Islamic views of knowledge in general. The three presentations were followed by a lively discussion with critical and pertinent comments from the audience, particularly from Professor Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM, Penang), who expressed concern about the many shortcomings of Malaysian institutions of higher learning in their knowledge-leadership roles. The issue of the meaning and significance of value and development was contentious among the participants. The moderator concluded the Public Dialogues by expressing his appreciation for the spirited exchange between the speakers and the audience in which both sides benefited from the wide range of issues discussed and the numerous views expressed.

The Round Table was presented to the public as the main feature of the two-day event. This had already been made clear during the media briefing which was

convened by Dr Mahathir on 1 June 2010 in order to publicise the Round Table. The main objective of the Round Table was to provide a forum in which experts in knowledge-economy would engage with high-level policy makers in Malaysia – especially political, economic, business, and financial leaders – on the crucial issue of the structural transformation of the Malaysian economy into a knowledge-economy. It was in line with this objective that the organisers had chosen the topic ‘Bridging the Knowledge Divide – Building the Malaysian Link’ as the central theme of the Round Table.

Moreover, it was for the purpose at hand that the NCP’s seven experts in knowledge-economy in different cultural and social settings – including its President, Professor Leif Edvinsson – had been invited to the Kuala Lumpur event. In the view of the organisers, a number of initiatives that had been launched by the Malaysian government ought to be considered important steps towards the realisation of a structural transformation of the Malaysian economy into a knowledge-economy. These initiatives, however, need to be synchronised with the emerging global knowledge-community. The Round Table was, therefore, viewed by the organisers as an appropriate means for helping Malaysia to achieve this synchronisation and thus to bridge the knowledge-divide between the present Malaysian economy and the emerging knowledge-economies in other parts of the world.

The key person in the organisation of the Round Table was Dr Tengku Azzman. He was instrumental in introducing the NCP to Dr Mahathir and a few other policy makers in the country and in bringing the seven experts to Kuala Lumpur. He has an excellent grasp of the concept and philosophy of knowledge-economy – especially its practical dimension. Moreover, he is committed to its pursuit as a national policy. He is also well-informed about the latest developments in the global discourse on the subject. With these credentials, Dr Tengku Azzman has also the trust and confidence of Dr Mahathir. The two, in fact, have known each other for quite some time. It was Dr Mahathir who, as Prime Minister, introduced Dr Tengku Azzman to his cabinet as Malaysia’s ‘first knowledge worker’ in those days, when the latter’s expertise was solicited by the government to help it execute its ambitious plan for leadership-in-information technology and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) enterprise.

The first day’s Round Table was a closed-door session; participation was by invitation only. Altogether, 42 names were listed as participants. This impressive list represented also, as far as Malaysia was concerned, a broad spectrum of this country’s policy makers and professional leaders. This writer felt indeed honoured to be invited not only as a participant but also as a paper presenter on the issue of ‘knowledge-society and knowledge-economy in the Islamic context’, especially since his paper was the only one to specifically deal with the main topic of the Round Table from the Islamic point of view. The paper was entitled “Towards a

Global Knowledge Society and Economy: Sharing Islam's Inner Resources and Untapped Wealth."

The Round Table comprised an official opening session with an introduction by Dr Tengku Azzman and two keynote speeches by Dr Mahathir and Dr Leif Edvinsson, respectively, four sessions each with three speakers, and concluding remarks by the moderators and Dr Edvinsson. The participants were told that the NCP will prepare an official report, containing their recommendations to the PLF, a copy of which will be presented to the office of Malaysia's Prime Minister.

Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism

Eric Winkel, LAIS Malaysia

It is with great excitement that we welcome the initiative and book publication of *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism*.¹ In 2007, spurred by Pope Benedict XVI's controversial 'Regensburg lecture', major figures in Islam and Christianity created *A Common Word between Us and You*, an initiative which was instrumental in reducing tensions and the sense of clash between the two religions. Now, Fons Vitae has just published the book *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism*, which is a platform for much-needed, sustained conversations between Muslims and Buddhists. The body of the book is written by Reza Shah Kazemi. There is also a fascinating essay by Hamza Yusuf. The introductions are provided by the Dalai Lama, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Mohammad Hashim Kamali. The latter two were vital participants in the earlier *Common Word* initiative.

Before a common ground can be made, the Muslim has, I would suggest, to address three questions. The first is historical. Hamza Yusuf describes Muslim–Buddhist relations over the centuries as being turbulent, indeed centred in the wider region of which Afghanistan is a part. Buddhists were treated historically by Muslims along a wide spectrum, from being seen as 'People of the Book' to being protected to being condemned as 'idolaters'. Shifting from historical precedent, the Muslim might then ask about the place of Buddhists in the law. Mohammad Hashim Kamali addresses this question and provides a legal argument for an open interpretation of "People of the Book" to include Buddhists, and the legal background for seeing Buddhism as a *dīn* and for Islam to be seen as a *dharma*. The spirit of civilisational renewal, he writes, encourages mutual respect "at a time when the talk of 'clash of civilisations' has become an unwelcome distraction from the Qur'ānic vision of recognition and friendship between the Muslims and other world communities and nations" (p. xxi). If the Muslim has come this far, the last question is, one hopes, what we can learn from each other.