

Notes on the Fiasco In Kuala Lumpur

by Hugh Fitzgerald



All 57 Muslim states were invited to the meeting in Kuala Lumpur of representatives of the worldwide Umma. But only twenty, a little more than one-third, bothered to send delegations. And many of those delegations were led not by heads of state, but by those lower down on the political totem pole. Among those that did not take part were four of the most important Muslim countries – Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Egypt, and Pakistan. Prime Minister Imran Khan’s decision to pull out – after having said that he would be present – was particularly humiliating for the meeting’s organizers, for Pakistan had been, with Malaysia and Turkey, one of the three

original promoters of the meeting. And the circumstances of his change of heart were even more embarrassing: having said he would attend, Imran Khan was summoned to Riyadh by the Saudi Crown Prince and read the riot act, after which Khan announced that he would not be attending the meeting after all. Nor would Pakistani be sending a delegation. To make matters worse, the O.I.C., based in Saudi Arabia and largely controlled by it, issued a blistering attack on the Kuala Lumpur meeting as deliberately intended to undermine the O.I.C.'s authority.

“We’ll Always Have Palestine”

Meanwhile, in his opening speech, Iran’s President Rouhani blamed “serious security threats” facing the Muslim world, and the Middle East in particular, on the “Zionist regime.” Rouhani said the plight of the Palestinians remains the most important issue in the Muslim world.

Hassan Rouhani insists that the main “security threat” facing the Muslim world is the “Zionist regime.” Even Mahathir Mohamed, the genial antisemite and Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his opening address nowhere mentioned the “Palestinians” or the “Zionist regime.” Many of the world’s Muslims no longer regard the “Palestinians” as a central issue; Iran is now seen as the greatest security threat to the world’s Sunni states. They have plenty of evidence to support this view. It is Iran that is supporting the Shi’a Houthis in Yemen, hoping to turn that war-ravaged country into an Iranian ally that could threaten, possibly even with Iranian bases, its northern neighbor, Saudi Arabia. It is Iran that has supported the despot Bashar Assad, an Alawite (the Alawites are regarded as Shi’a Muslims), in the Syrian civil war, even as his regime caused five million Syrians to flee the country, and another six million to be internally displaced. It is Iran’s proxy Hezbollah that in Lebanon has opposed the recent popular protests, and instead supported the corrupt ruling elite that the Lebanese – including many Shi’a – want to see resign. In

Iraq there have been widespread, often violent demonstrations, not just against the government for its mismanagement and corruption, but also because it is seen as beholden to Iran. In November the Iranian consulate in Najaf – a Shi'a city – was burned down. Protesters around the country shout “Out, out, Iran.” President Rouhani doesn't see Iran's interference in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon as a “serious security threat,” but many Muslims in those countries, and in neighboring states (Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Bahrain, Egypt) beg to differ.

As for the “plight of the Palestinians” being “the most important issue in the Muslim world,” as Rouhani insisted, is it more important than the 1-3 million Muslim Uighurs who are now being held in “re-education” camps by the Chinese? Is it more important than the 780,000 Muslim Rohingyas who have fled Myanmar for Bangladesh? Is it more important than the threat of the Islamic State, which may have lost its “caliphate” in Iraq and Syria but remains a threat, with a significant presence in the Sinai, Libya, Algeria, and Somalia?

Rouhani went on to claim that “the war in Syria, Yemen, and riots and turbulence in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Afghanistan is the outcome of the combination of domestic extremism and foreign intervention.”

That's quite right, but not in the way Rouhani wants us to believe. The war in Syria is the consequence of the Syrian people becoming fed up with the corrupt and cruel rule of Bashar Assad, but it is Iran that, through its “foreign intervention,” shored Assad up and helped him to win the civil war, even if it meant destroying much of Syria. In Yemen, the “foreign intervention” Rouhani is alluding to is that of Saudi Arabia, but Iran has been interfering just as much through its support, with weapons and money, of the rebel Houthis.

As for the “riots and turbulence in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Afghanistan,” in two of those countries – Iraq and Lebanon –

Iran has interfered far more than any other Muslim country, as the street protests (those “riots and turbulence”) against that interference, through its puppet Hezbollah (in Lebanon) and through other Shi’a militias (in Iraq), testify.

Calling Iran a “model of resistance,” Rouhani also urged the Muslim world to develop its own economic framework “to save it from the domination of the US dollar and the American financial regime.”

How is Iran a “model of resistance”? The Iranian rulers have by “resisting” managed only to send their economy into a tailspin. Oil exports have sunk from 2.45 mbd to 0.26 mbd in just the past year, nearly a 90% drop. The Iranian economy has gone into a severe recession. World Bank projections for 2019 indicate a negative growth rate of minus 8.7 percent in its GDP. The Iranian currency has fallen precipitately since the re-imposition of sanctions, with the unofficial rate plummeting to 135,000 rials to one U.S. dollar, thus adding to the financial woes of the Iranian public. The recent protests in Iran over the mismanagement and corruption in the government show the massive discontent with this “model of resistance.” Iran has become a model not to emulate but to avoid.

Mahathir Mohamed’s History

Mahathir Mohamed gave the keynote address at the Kuala Lumpur meeting, in which he deplored the present state of the Muslim world, which he claimed had once led the world. Here is some of what he said:

If we care to honestly assess our situation, we must admit that we and our religion have become the subject of much vilification and defamation.

Muslims and Islam have been equated with terrorism and failures of Government, of irrationality and acts unworthy of civilised behaviour. Muslim countries are accused of

authoritarianism and lack of concern for human rights.

Could the 36,000 terror attacks by Muslims since 9/11 explain why so many of us connect – not “equate” – Islam with terrorism? Might it have something to do with the many Qur’anic verses that command Believers to “strike terror in the hearts” of the Unbelievers? Or with that famous hadith in which Mohammed boasts “I have been made victorious through terror”? Does noting that constitute “vilification and defamation”?

Does the authoritarianism of Muslim countries, where despots – monarchs, generals – reign almost everywhere, and only a handful of states have managed to create democracies which seldom last, have anything to do with Islam? Wasn’t Muhammad, the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct, himself a warlord and a despot? Doesn’t Islam encourage submission, rather than resistance, to authority, naturally making despotism the default political system for Muslim states?

There is not a single Muslim country which is classified as developed. All, despite their immense wealth are categorised as developing countries. And they are all weak and incapable of protecting the Muslim Ummah, as is their duty by their religion.

Why have Muslim states, including the fabulously rich oil states, failed to develop modern economies? Could it be that Islam itself is a retrograde force, as Churchill once called it, by stunting mental growth? In Islam, submission to authority is encouraged, while free and skeptical inquiry is discouraged, lest it lead to a questioning of aspects of Islam itself. But that “free and skeptical” spirit is what is needed to challenge old ways of doing things, of making advances in science, technology, and the organization of society. And as noted above, submission to authority in the religion promotes a similar submission in governance: the Muslim world is full

of despotisms, while scarcely a single true democracy has lasted long in Dar al-Islam. Furthermore, Islam promotes fatalism: Allah will distribute or withhold his favors as he sees fit. Such fatalism dampens the desire of Muslims to strive economically – why work so hard when everything is up to Allah?

Mahathir Mohamed's keynote address sang the praises – not quite accurately, I'm afraid – of Islam's past:

There was a time when Muslims were recognised for their advanced civilisation. They were able to spread the teachings of Islam to the world of that time. They were well-versed in all fields of knowledge, including the sciences and engineering, especially the manufacture of goods.

But not now. Today we have lost the respect of the world. We are no longer the source of human knowledge nor the model of human civilisation. For a long time in the 18th to mid-20th centuries Muslim countries were all dominated and occupied by European powers. We have now largely freed ourselves. But we have not done much better as independent nations. Indeed, some of us have regressed to the point of once again being dependent on our former colonial masters.

This belief in a fabulous golden age of Islamic civilization is a comforting thought, but many of the advances attributed to Muslims in that Golden Age, from the 8th to the 10th centuries, were appropriations from non-Muslims. Muslims claim to have invented algebra, and the concept of zero, but both of those were taken from Indian mathematicians. Paper-making, and gunpowder were not inventions of Muslims, but taken from China. It was not "the Muslims" who preserved Greek texts from antiquity, but the Christian and Jewish translators, in Cordoba and Baghdad, who performed that task.

Mohamed mentions that Muslims once "were able to spread the teaching of Islam." But he doesn't say how Islam was spread.

His silence might be taken to mean it was a matter of peaceful conversion. But almost everywhere, Islam was spread by conquest. Those Unbelievers who were conquered faced three choices: death, conversion to Islam, or accepting the permanent status of the dhimmi, which meant submitting to a host of onerous conditions, including the burdensome tax known as the Jizyah. Over time tens of millions of dhimmis, in order to end the ordeal of that status, converted to Islam. It was not the sheer wonderfulness of Islam that led to its adoption, but more often fear and despair among the conquered Unbelievers.

Mahathir Mohamed claims that "We are no longer the source of human knowledge nor the model of human civilisation." That's quite a claim. When were Muslims ever "the source of human knowledge and model of civilization"? They never were. He might have said, more accurately, that "in the past, Muslims did make contributions in some fields of science, notably in optics and astronomy. We also helped act as a conduit for advances made in China and India to Europe, such as algebra and the concept of zero, both taken from the Sanskrit mathematicians, and paper-making, and gunpowder, from China. But we have fallen further and further behind the West in every respect. We must ask ourselves why, and not exempt from our investigation those aspects of Islam that may discourage the enterprise of science."

He could then have discussed the role of authority in Islam, and the discouragement of independent thought, as well as the centrality of memorization in the education of Muslims, which stems from the prestige attached to the memorization of the Qur'an. But this comes perilously close to unacceptable criticism of Islam itself, and he might not wish to antagonize the faithful.

He claims that "for a long time in the 18th to mid-20th centuries Muslim countries were all dominated and occupied by European powers." Is this true? A moment's thought would tell

us otherwise. Has he forgotten about the Ottoman Empire? Many Muslim lands were "dominated" not by European powers, but by fellow Muslims, the Ottoman Turks. In the Middle East, the Turks remained in control of what is now Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Arab states, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt, until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a consequence of the Empire's defeat in World War I. In Iraq, the British remained as Mandatary for little more than 10 years, from 1922 to 1932. In Lebanon and Syria, the French remained as Mandatary only from 1920 to 1944 (for Syria) and from 1920 to 1943 (for Lebanon). Iran was never "dominated and colonized" by European powers; it remained serenely aloof. Egypt was never colonized in the classic sense by European powers either, though after the Anglo-Egyptian War in 1882, the British under Lord Cromer entered the country and remained until 1922, largely in order to create an efficient civil service. Egypt declared itself independent of the Ottomans in 1914. Libya remained free of European powers until Italy seized it from the Ottomans in 1911; it then remained under Italian control until the end of World War II, then was administered jointly by Britain and France until 1951, when it achieved its independence. As for the French, they were in Morocco only from 1912 to 1956, and in Tunisia from 1881 to 1956, both places being protectorates rather than colonies of France. The only colony in the classic sense, with the large scale infusion of settlers from the home country, was Algeria, which the French held from 1830 to 1962.

As for Turkey itself, it was never colonized by European powers. The Ottoman Turks ruled over many Muslim lands and peoples for centuries; after the Ottomans collapsed, Turkey lost its empire but remained sturdily independent. Erdogan, sitting right beside Mahathir Mohamed, could easily have set him straight.

Mahathir Mohamed needs to be reminded not only about the Ottoman Empire's rule over many Muslims for many centuries,

but also that three of the most important Muslim states – Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia – were never “dominated and occupied” by European powers.

Mahathir Mohamed continues:

This is the present situation. It was not so in the past. We know that in the past the Islamic Civilisation was highly respected. It was leading not only in adherence to the teachings of Islam as a religion of peace but in all other fields of human achievements. Muslims lead [sic for “led”] in the knowledge of the sciences, in human development, in infrastructure development, in the governance and development of their countries. Muslims built great cities, sailed and map [sic for “mapped”] the seas, traded between east and west along the Silk Road and a great many other things that enhanced the reputation of Islam and the Muslims. Their military strength was incomparable. Muslims and their countries were treated with respect.

Islam as a “religion of peace”? Not to the Believers who read in the Qur’an the 109 verses that command them to fight, to kill, to smite at the throats of, to strike terror in the hearts of, the Unbelievers. Not to the Believers who came out of Arabia, conquered all of the Middle East, and all of North Africa, and then the Iberian Peninsula in the west and Sassanid Persia in the east, and made repeated attempts to conquer the Byzantine Empire. That was finally accomplished not by Arabs, but by Muslim Turks, first the Seljuks and then the Osmanlis. The last stage of that conquest was the taking of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, by the Turks, which was followed by several days of massacring men, women, and children in the city, by the followers of the “religion of peace.”

Nor, for fourteen centuries, was Islam a “religion of peace” the people of Western Europe, who lived in fear of the sudden

arrival of Muslim slavers whose ships for centuries raided up and down the coasts of Europe, seizing what loot they could, and kidnapping more than a million Europeans, who were brought back as slaves to North Africa. These Muslim raiders even managed to attack as far north as Ireland, and once, as far as Iceland. In 1631 Muslim raiders seized several hundred inhabitants from the coastal town of Baltimore, and took them back to North Africa for a lifetime of slavery. Tales of the "Sack of Baltimore" terrified Europeans for centuries.

In the west of Europe, Muslim invaders had conquered the entire Iberian Peninsula and got as far as Tours in central France, where their advance was halted by Charles Martel in 745. They continued to rule in Iberia, where the Christians waged war against their harsh Muslim overlords for 800 years, in the armed struggle known as the Reconquista. In the east, meanwhile, having conquered Persia, Muslim warriors began to repeatedly attack Hindustan, beginning in the mid-seventh century; the first major conquest of north India took place under Mahmud of Ghazni, (971-1030). Over the next half-millennium, and always by ferocious conquest, Islamic states were established in much of northern India. If millions of Hindus lost their lives in battle, many tens of millions more were killed by Muslims after the initial conquest. During the centuries of Mughal rule, beginning in the early 16th century, the historian K. S. Lal has estimated that between 70 and 80 million Hindus were killed. Mohathir Mohamed claims, as so many Muslims do, that Islam is a "religion of peace," but fourteen hundreds of bloody history, especially in India, tell us otherwise.

Having described what he saw as Islam's Golden Age, which he seems to think lasted until the 15th century, though historians agree that it lasted only from the 8th to the 10th centuries, Mahathir Mohamed continued his keynote address with still more of his idiosyncratic history:

Then around the 15th Century of the Common Era, the Muslim

civilisation declined. They neglected all acquisition of knowledge other than that on Islam. Scholars of Islam came up with differing interpretations. The result is the formation of differing sects at odds with each other.

Hadn't Muslim civilization been declining for several centuries before that? Don't we measure that civilizational decline from the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols, under Hulagu Khan, in 1258, and the destruction of the Abbasid Dynasty and its enlightened court? Mohamed is right to note that Muslim intellectual interests narrowed to the study of Islam, with those 50-volume commentaries on the Qur'an, and those endless analyses of the chain of transmission (isnads) of the hadith – the stories about Muhammad's sayings and deeds – in order to determine how reliable they were likely to be. This was a colossal expenditure of mental energy by Muslim scholars on what many of us regard as sterile quarrels. Did Muhammad really say to Habab ibn Bishr what Ibrahim al-Ansari said he did, or did he say it to claims he did, or did he say it to Khalid ibn al-As? Or could it be that the isnad-chain is so suspect, that Muhammad may just possibly not have said it at all? And which of his nine wives and two concubines did Muhammad favor? wives? And what were the precise words that Muhammad used to express his satisfaction when he learned of the death of Asma bint Marwan? How did they differ from what he said when he learned of the death of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraft? And just how hard did Muhammad punch Aisha in the chest? Subjects for endless discussion and dispute.

Again Mahathir Mohamed makes a bizarre remark. He claims that around the 15th century, "scholars of Islam came up with differing interpretations. The result is the formation of differing sects at odds with each other."

The great sectarian division in Islam, that between the Sunnis and the Shi'a, did not begin in the 15th century but dates back to the first century of Islam. So does the Ibadi sect,

now found mostly in Oman and in some oases in Algeria, which dates from 650 A.D. The Sufis emerged, similarly, not in the 15th century, but at least 500 years before, during the so-called “Golden Age of Islamic Civilization.” What sects emerged in the 15th century due to the “differing interpretations” of, presumably, passages in the Qur’an? Mahathir Mohamed doesn’t say.

Muslims lost their countries. They were dominated by European powers. They become colonies of the Europeans.

This repeated insistence that Muslims “lost their countries” and were “dominated by European powers” from the 18th century on has already been discussed in Part 2. It was pointed out that it was the Muslim Turks of the Ottoman Empire that “dominated” the Middle East and North Africa for most of that period. The Europeans – England and France – remained in the Middle Eastern countries only for a few decades, as Mandataries – that is, holders of Mandates, not colonizers. France was the Mandatary for Syria and Lebanon, Great Britain the Mandatary for Palestine and Iraq. The Europeans never dominated Iran, or Turkey, or Saudi Arabia. In North Africa, the French had protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia, but the only true colony was Algeria, from 1830 to 1962. Mahathir Mohamed’s attempt to blame the “European powers” for being “colonists” who prevented the development of the Muslim countries will not wash.

So, if the future remains as we are now, we will suffer continuous oppression – we will decline further and our great religion will be denigrated as a religion of failure, of oppression and terrorism.

Mahathir Mohamed speaks of “continuous oppression” being suffered by Muslims. That takes some gall. He has apparently forgotten that In his own country, Malaysia, the only people who are oppressed are the industrious Chinese and Hindus, who

are forced to share their wealth with the Muslim Malays through the “bumiputra” system, which – among many other unfair provisions – allows Muslims to acquire equity in non-Muslim enterprises at preferential rates. Where do Muslims now suffer continuous oppression? Only in China – not in any country in the West. By the tens of millions, Muslims have been allowed to settle in Europe and North America. In the generous welfare states of Western Europe, they have taken full advantage of every possible benefit: free or heavily subsidized housing, free education, free medical care (far beyond what is attainable in Muslim states), unemployment benefits (even without having had to have been employed), family allowances, and more. How are they oppressed? Despite the many terror attacks by Muslims all over the world, in the West there have been no roundups or mass expulsions, and the political and media elites make every effort to minimize the role of Islam in these attacks; some news reports even deliberately fail to identify the perpetrators as Muslims; many among our elites continue to insist, along with Pope Francis, and despite all the contrary evidence, that “authentic Islam” has “nothing to do with violence.”

Mahathir Mohamed’s despair over the state of Islam is warranted. Everywhere in the world, the behavior of Muslims has eroded whatever naïve good will toward them may have once existed. Their refusal, or even inability, to integrate into the Western societies that have welcomed them, and treated them so well, has had its effect. More Unbelievers are turning to the Qur’an to discover what it is that explains Muslim behavior. There they discover more than 100 verses commanding violent Jihad against the Infidels, and also find declarations of contempt and hatred for all non-Muslims. Believers are told that they are the “best of peoples” (3:110) while Unbelievers are described as “the most vile of created beings” (98:6). And the Unbelievers realize that those many verses commanding Jihad, and the verses that express hatred for them as the “most vile of created beings,” explain that contempt for our

laws, customs, and mores. And they understand, too, the contempt many Muslims display for Infidel women, who “deserve what they get” at the hands of Muslim men, including those grooming gangs of Muslim sexual predators who have ruined the lives of tens of thousands of English girls. Western Infidels are waking up to the permanent menace; alarmed, they find intolerable the establishment of No-Go Zones by Muslims, who have carved out territories in major cities in Europe where even the firemen now need police protection, and the police themselves enter only in groups.

Prime Minister Mohamed fears that “our great religion will be denigrated as a religion of failure, of oppression and terrorism.”

Failure? Let’s see. Despite receiving nearly \$27 trillion in unmerited income since 1973, the result of an accident of geology, the Arab oil states and Iran have not created modern economies. They have failed to diversify their sources of revenue; the Arab Gulf states, in particular, count on oil and gas for 90% of their revenues. They rely, too, on foreigners to do all the work; in Qatar, 90% of the population consists of non-Qataris who work at everything from building those endless skyscrapers that define Doha, to serving as teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, salesmen, while the 10% who are Qataris are content to be waited on in this rentier economy. In Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E, and Kuwait, the percentage of foreigners in the population is more than 80%, and it is still the same story as in Qatar: the foreigners do the work, while the indigenous Arabs either do not work at all, or have undemanding government jobs that require them to show up at an office for only 2-3 hours a day; foreigners do all the heavy lifting in the Saudi economy. In Saudi Arabia, economists estimate that only 30% of Saudis work at all, and almost all of that 30% works for the government; the private sector is too demanding. Yes, that is what one should call a “failure” of Islamic societies, a failure of the religion to inculcate

the habit of work.

What about “oppression”? Mohamed means “oppression of Muslims by non-Muslims.” But aside from the Chinese “re-education” camps for Uighurs, and Myanmar’s expulsion of the Rohingya, there is no “oppression” of Muslims. They have been admitted into our countries, generously treated, and so far suffered no repercussions for their behavior, from thousands of deadly terror attacks to grooming gangs, to No-Go Zones, to microaggressions of every sort.

If there is “oppression” of Muslims, save for the cases of the Uighurs and the Rohingya, almost all of it comes from fellow Muslims. The Kurds in Iraq have long been oppressed by the Arabs; 182,000 of them were murdered by Saddam Hussein’s Arab army in Operation Anfal. Muslim Turks also oppress the Kurds in Anatolia, who would like less repression by the army, recognition of the Kurdish language as being on a par with Turkish, and a greater degree of autonomy. In Saudi Arabia the majority Sunnis deal harshly with any sign of dissent from the Shi’a minority who live in the oil-bearing Eastern Province. In Bahrain, the ruling Al-Khalifa family has suppressed, with the help of Pakistani troops, the Shi’a protesters who make up 75% of their subjects. In Iran, the Sunni Balochis in eastern Iran are persecuted by the Shi’a government. In Pakistan, both the Shi’a and the Ahmadis live in fear of Sunni terror groups that have attacked and murdered members of both sects. In Algeria, the shadowy government of Arabs known as “le pouvoir” (“the power”) has long tried to suppress the Berber language and culture, and only recently was Berber recognized, after many protests in Tizi-Ouzou and other Berber cities, as a national language. The inattention to Berber culture, however, continues as the Arabs pursue their historic policy of Arabization. These are only some of the most obvious examples of Muslims oppressing Muslims, over differences of sect or ethnicity; there are many others.

And then there is the third aspect of present-day Islam that

Mahathir Mohamed fears damages the image of the faith: “our great religion will be denigrated as a religion of failure, of oppression and terrorism.” “Failure” – see above. “Oppression” – see above. As for “terrorism,” who can deny it? There have been over 36,000 terror attacks by Muslims since 9/11 alone. All over the Western world Muslim terrorists have struck, and with each attack more people see Islam as the menace it is, and that common-sensical recognition is exactly what Mahathir Mohamad most fears.

Muslim terrorists have struck all over Europe, in Madrid and Barcelona, in Paris (many times), in Toulouse, Tours, Nice, Magnanville, and St. Etienne du Rouvray, London (many times), Manchester, Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Wurzburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Malmö, Helsinki, Turku, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Beslan.

And in the United States, too, Muslim terrorists have attacked in Washington, New York (many times), Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Fort Hood, Little Rock, Chattanooga, Orlando.

For those, who have been paying attention, Islam is indeed, despite the fervent hopes of Mahathir Mohamed that it be see otherwise, a “religion of failure, of oppression, and terrorism.”

In sum:

The “failures” of Islam, economically and politically, are not the result of outside malevolent powers, European colonizers, or Zionist schemers. It is Islam’s reliance on authority, and discouragement of free and questioning inquiry, that stunts mental growth and, in particular, undermines the enterprise of science. It is Islamic fatalism – everything depends on the whim of Allah – that dampens economic activity, for why try so hard when in the end, Allah withholds or dispenses his bounty

as he sees fit? That inculcated obedience to authority has political consequences, too – it makes despotism the default political system. After all, Muhammad himself, the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct, was a military warlord and a despot. Where democracy has been tried in a few Muslim states, it hasn't lasted long enough for Western-style democracy to take root. Out of 57 Muslim states, none are full democracies, and only three states are today what *The Economist* calls “flawed democracies” (with low participation in the electoral process, media censorship, intimidation of political rivals, and an absence of freedom of speech and assembly, as these are understood in the West). These three “flawed democratic” states are Bangladesh, since 1990, Pakistan, since 2013, and Indonesia, since 1999.

The “oppression” of Islam of which Mahathir Mohamed refers is not, as he appears to think, mainly that of Muslims by non-Muslims, but is, rather, the oppression of Muslims and non-Muslims alike by Muslims. Sunnis oppress Shi'a in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt; Sunni Balochis fight Shi'a Persians in Iran; Arabs oppress Berbers in Algeria and Kurds in Iraq; Turks oppress Kurds in Turkey; a Sunni ruler represses his Shi'a people in Bahrain; Arabs oppress Berbers in Algeria, and so on, in a display of every possible permutation and combination of sect and ethnicity. There is no sign that any of this Muslim-on-Muslim oppression is diminishing.

Finally, “terrorism” by Muslims against non-Muslims continues unabated, and will not diminish until Muslims themselves find a way to expunge or reinterpret the many Qur'anic verses that instruct them to “strike terror in the hearts” of the Infidels. And how likely is that?

“Failure, oppression, terrorism” do indeed define the state of Islam today. Let us hope that we, the inoffensive Infidels, manage to not be pulled down with it.

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