Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UK, and USA. This means that the entire Muslim community has adopted or is tending to adopt the use of *imkān-i ruʿyah* basis of calculation. The difference lies in regard to the quantum of the criterion for visibility of the new crescent moon. The mathematical calculations and the details of the varying quantum (criteria) are not discussed in this book. A conscious effort for seeking convergence of varying quantum is necessary and it is considered to be relatively easier and scientifically justifiable.

Progress is being made, with a lot of scientific work from 2000 onwards, on the astronomy of new moon’s visibility, or on the selection of a criterion for the Unified Islamic Calendar. These efforts are in process in many countries like Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Guinea, UK, and USA. These efforts will help achieve a convergence of the varying quantum of the criterion for Unified Islamic Calendar.

The book rightfully acknowledges that the remaining task is to focus on the implementation of a correct *imkān-i ruʿyah* criterion as a basis for the Unified Islamic Calendar. This book outlines a step by step procedure to solve this issue and suggests collaboration between scientists and Shariʿah scholars to be followed by serious effort by the authorities in every country to implement the decisions at which they arrive.

To sum up, this book is a valuable road map for solving and implementing the much needed Unified Islamic Calendar, without going into scientific discussions and research for the criterion of *Imkān-i Ruʿyah*.

Khalid Shaukat

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In the wake of the 9/11 events there has been a tremendous influx of questions revolving around the future of the West-Islam relationship. Though such questions did exist before, they took on a new meaning and urgency after September 11, 2001. Gilles Kepel in his book, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam
and the West, tries to take a deeper look at the issue and in the process, tackles some of the questions characterizing the West-Islam relationship.

The book begins with an “introduction” (pp. 1–9) which cites the reasons given by Ayman al Zawahiri [al-Zawāhirī] for the 9/11 attacks, and elaborates the jihadist agenda of forcing “reform” in Muslim countries (a euphemism for overthrowing the governments in the Middle East) by bringing the western enemy to its knees, and resorting to the use of the Palestine issue as a justification for this philosophy of violence. It then highlights the other side of the picture by explaining the neoconservatives’ stance — their lack of faith in the Oslo Peace Process, their feeling of mistrust towards the Arab nations, and especially their idea of use of force to bring regime change in the Middle East to protect Israel. Thus, we come across two sides having opposite worldviews while sharing the same agenda, though aiming at completely different results.

9/11 was followed by President Bush embracing the neocon ideology and announcing the War on Terror which, however, led Al Qaeda [al-Qā‘īdah] and its sister organizations to a greater use of the cyberspace to achieve their purposes. The success of this move to the cyberspace was visible in the attacks held on the European soil, and thus the author concludes that the real war is now being waged not on the ground but in the race to win Muslim minds in the West. The rest of the book, comprising seven chapters and a conclusion, basically revolves around this theme. In fact the author has simply elaborated in the book what he describes in the “introduction,” at times analyzing and at times simply relating the series of events, especially the political intrigues, leading up to and consequently stemming from 9/11.

The first chapter titled, “The Failure of the Oslo Peace” (pp. 10–46), is a look at the issue at the very heart of the whole mess. The situation in Palestine had started to deteriorate in 2000, starting with Sharon’s provocative walk across the esplanade of Haram Sharif, the subsequent announcement of the intifāda [intifādah] by Yasir Arafat [Yāsir ʻArafāt (d. 2004)], and the eventual explosion of violence after a decade of fragile peace. Most interesting is the author’s reading of the intifāda called by Arafat, which unlike the previous one, was controlled from the top, i.e. by the tanzīm. However, with the carefully targeted tanzīm strikes failing to show results, militant groups spread violence to civilians in Israel. This move from control to confusion received support from all over the Muslim world, thus increasing the support for militants groups, and showing the inadequacy of Muslim governments in the face of American disregard for Muslim causes and sensitivities. To further explain this cycle of violence the author turns to the history of US involvement in the Middle East. Along with US interests in the oil resources of the area, concern for Israeli security led the US to the initiation of the peace
process. In the meantime, people expressed their antagonism towards the lenient approach of their leaders on the streets, resulting in the rise of terror groups, which after the end of the Afghan war of liberation began to perceive the US as their next enemy. Israel, exposed to neocon views, and bereft of Yitzhak Rabin (d. 1995) too, began to lose hope in the Oslo process. Thus, Sharon’s walk across al-Haram al-Sharif brought to the fore feelings held by both camps, and the Oslo process finally ended.

The second chapter, “The Neoconservative Revolution” (pp. 47–69) starts with a brief exposition of the views of the Bush administration prior to 9/11. It describes the two camps in the administration, those preferring the US to act only as a political weight, and those touting the use of US force to transform the world order. After 9/11 Bush chose to side with the second group, comprising the neocons. From then onwards, the author narrates the emergence of the neocons and their subsequent rise to power. He makes an analytical study of the major figures from this camp, and describes the formation of the neocon stand. The neocons viewed the US support of the corrupt regimes in the Middle East as a major contributor to social discontent and thus as a direct threat to Israel. The US, they felt, must begin political reform in the area, starting from Iraq, where the removal of Saddam Hussein [Ṣaddām Ḥusayn (d. 2006)] would usher in democracy and capitalism, which would then spread to the rest of the Arab states, much like a domino effect. This new freedom would foster economic prosperity, and the states would then be willing to accept Israel to further their economic gains, hence guaranteeing Israeli security. After 9/11 we have seen that attempts at the realization of this policy backfired, and the much hoped for democratization failed to materialize. However, very recent events like increasing US support for certain peace plans, make evident the fact that though the agenda has not been dropped, the attempted means of realization might be changing.

The third chapter called “striking at the Enemy faraway” (pp. 70–107), looks at the development of the Islamic jihād groups, and how the 9/11 attacks were the logical step in a path these groups had been following for a long time. Titled “The Faraway Enemy,” the chapter seeks to identity the aim of these groups, namely to inflict defeat on two kinds of enemies. As time had shown, it was not easy to overthrow the nearby enemy i.e. the corrupt regimes at home, without massive popular support, which these groups had failed to mobilize. By trying to bring the faraway enemy — the US — to its knees by use of terror, these groups hoped to muster the popular support needed to bring down the nearby enemy. The author makes an interesting observation when he comments on the post 9/11 videos, showing how, through the use of certain terms, dress, and background scenes, Al Qaeda tried to draw parallels
between itself and the movement of the Prophet (peace be on him) to win popular support. In point of fact Al Qaeda, according to the author, was a product of a synthesis between the radical Saudi and Egyptian schools of thought. The end of *jihād* in Afghanistan led to divisions in the ranks of these activists and the expulsion of most foreign fighters from Afghanistan. These fighters spread to different parts of the world and began to test their *jihād* experience against the “corrupt” elements of society whom they perceived to be the enemies of Islam. From their exile in Sudan, Zawahiri and Bin Laden emerged as the organizing force behind such groups, from the Persian Gulf to London. Each encounter with the enemy gave them fresh lessons and guidelines for future attacks. However, by 1996, these groups were losing ground, and Zawahiri and Bin Laden were deported from Sudan back to Afghanistan. There in Kandahar (Qandahār) they joined forces with the Taliban (Ṭalibān) who were then emerging as the new conquerors of the country. It was at this juncture, the author says, that the US could have put the lid on this network, yet it turned a blind eye, giving these groups the courage required for the events of 9/11.

The fourth chapter, “Al Qaeda’s Resilience” (pp. 108–151), looks at the effects of the war of terror on Al Qaeda, from bringing it global fame to unleashing it in a manner undreamt of ever before. The US through its military faced a huge problem; it was prepared to fight, but only against a tangible enemy, an enemy with ground or air as territory, an enemy with an army in a certain area, an enemy that was in the form of a state. Now, since Islam had replaced communism as the enemy, the US had similar visions of fighting Islam as it had of fighting Communist USSR. The US, therefore, ousted the Taliban from power, but it could not finish Al Qaeda, most of whose members managed to escape the US attacks. The Bush administration, however, took “victory” in Afghanistan as an encouraging sign, and used the opportunity to advance the neocon agenda by attacking Iraq. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda improved its tactics, and showed its resilience by attacking targets worldwide. In fact, as shown by some of these attacks, especially the Madrid bombing of 2004, they began to use locals, or immigrants well integrated into local societies, under the command of Al Qaeda operatives as attackers. Another noticeable fact was the expansion of their agenda, from the present to the past. Thus, Andalusia, according to the author, was included in the list of Muslim issues to be resolved. It is at this point that one begins to feel that the author is forcing the issue to try to find some sort of a concrete European tie to the so-called war on terror. To elaborate further, the author states that while the US tried to hunt the terrorists on the ground, Al Qaeda leaders resurfaced in cyberspace, more powerful than ever, ready to influence minds.
It would perhaps have been more useful if the author had tried to take a deeper look at another aspect of this issue — the obsession of the Muslim world, especially of the organizations involved in *jihād*, with acquisition of political power. By this I do not mean to suggest a division between religion and politics, I merely wish to point out an important yet mostly ignored aspect of the whole issue. This issue is very important if one has to understand the workings of the *jihād* movements in the Islamic world. It has generally been the opinion of Muslims all over the world that to confront their issues as an *ummah* they must have political power and leadership so that they can enforce Islamic values and ideals. The problem with this ideology is that we tend to forget that even if such a leadership were available, it would certainly need a base to build upon. This means that they would require a certain percentage of the population to be already adhering to the Islamic principles that they would like to enforce in its totality. In the current scenario this base is not available. This does not mean that there is a dearth of “practicing” Muslims; it only means that while there is an abundance of such “practicing” Muslims there is too much disagreement in their ranks! So even if we do have an “Islamic” government, which form of Islam would it enforce? Wouldn’t that in itself lead to further division and strife? After all, one cannot please everyone.

This brings us to the *jihād* Movements. How can a movement, which bases itself on the ideology of attaining political power, be the solution for a religion like Islam? After all, Islam is a religion which has denounced the human lust for power. Is not the example of Afghanistan before us? The war against USSR was fought as a “*jihād*.” But what happened to the “noble warriors” after the “*jihād*” was successful? Did they not split up into squabbling groups, each struggling for and even openly lusting for power?

Many perpetrators of the 9/11 tragedy were from Saudi Arabia, which has raised questions about that country’s role in the terror network. This is the focus of discussion in the fifth chapter, “Saudi Arabia in the Eye of the Storm” (pp. 152–196). The author first analyzes the nature of the Saudi-US ties which is based on the desire to ensure self-protection on the one side, and to secure oil interests on the other. As long as these needs were guaranteed, each side gave the other free rein, even forgiving the other’s acts, which eventually created tensions between the two allies. This alliance reached new heights in the Afghan war of liberation as both joined hands to finance a war against a common enemy, Communism. The author explains how US weapons along with the active participation of Saudi and other Muslim radicals and activists propelled the war. Most interesting is the author’s analysis of the Saudi monarchy’s dependence on the Wahhābi scholars, and the manner in which
these scholars have been able to indoctrinate the populace. Thus they pressure the government to meet their demands in return for garnering support from the public for the Kingdom’s political agenda despite great economic inequality. A mixture of Wahhābī indoctrination and the influence of the Muslim Brothers, especially of Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) and Muḥammad Quṭb, has resulted in a breed of radicals in the country, and according to the author, the Saudi monarchy’s push for selective reform, is in fact an attempt to get rid of its dependence on religious scholars.

Chapter six, “The Calamity of Nation Building in Iraq” (pp 197–240), deals with the US attack on the country and the ensuing violence. The author describes how the Bush administration prepared the ground for an attack on Iraq, and how through it, they hoped to achieve not only control over oil, and hence bring about reform in Saudi Arabia, but also to create a model for Shia [Shi’ah] revolution different from the Iranian one. Thus they expected to create a Shia block, which would not only pressurize Iran into accepting US hegemony, but would also serve as a counterweight against the Arab petromonarchies. The Iraq war, however, backfired, and instead of a welcoming population, the US encountered a variety of groups vying to attack US interests. Apart from these, the dismantling of the Iraqi army meant that the borders were not patrolled, and this led to an influx of jihād warriors from other countries. It is in this scenario that Al Qaeda is also making its presence felt in Iraq. Meanwhile, the author insists that, as the US is embroiled in the Iraq mess, the way has been left open for Al Qaeda to start its war in Europe.

The seventh chapter “Battle for Europe” (pp. 241–287) focuses on the author’s conclusion in the “introduction,” i.e. the real war consists of a race to win Muslim minds in Europe. To establish this he takes the example of Muslim communities in two countries, France and Britain. He looks at the manner in which governments in both countries have dealt with the Muslim community, concluding that two different kinds of Muslim communities are present in these two countries. Each of these communities can be divided into three groups, each hostile to the others. There are the Salafis, preaching a strict version of Islam and taking their guidance from the Wahhābi scholars centred in Saudi Arabia. This group prefers to isolate itself from the host community. Then there are also followers of the Wahhābi sect, who believe in jihād as the means to turn the land of the infidels into a land of Islam. The third are those who are associated with the Muslim Brothers, who not only lead active lives, but also believe in integration with the host community. All three groups have been focusing on conversion of the younger people to Islam in the case of non-Muslims, and to their philosophy in the case of Muslims. They have employed varied tactics to do so. However, there has been the rise of another
phenomenon represented by the young scholar, Tariq Ramadan [Ṭāriq Ramadān]. Commanding a significant following among the Muslim youth, he represents the modern Muslim brought up in Europe, one who is able to defend his faith by turning European propaganda against Europe itself and by fusing symbols of both his Islamic heritage and his European upbringing. Conversely, as in the case of Ramadan, there can sometimes be questions as to whether such people have true fidelity to Islam. All this brings one to the conclusion that the true battle in Europe for the Muslim community is that of self-definition.

In the “conclusion” to the book (pp. 288–296), the author states that the Islamic world is confronted with the issue of ḥiḥāḍ vs. ḥiṭnāḥ. For many Muslims, 9/11 was a ḥiṭnāḥ, and it has placed the authority to call people to ḥiḥāḍ in the hands of salafi militants. (In fact here the author points to an issue which, as recent events have proved, requires the urgent attention of Muslim scholars, for it could lead to a complete disintegration of the already weak fabric of Islamic unity). The Bush administration has failed in its war on terror and has come to a dead end. The only solution is a new Andalusia, i.e. the rise of European Muslims as active participants in the social and political life of Europe, thus providing guidance for their Muslim brothers worldwide to adapt themselves to this new world. This is possible, the author states, if the Muslims can separate the state from the mosque and try to achieve a harmony between their Muslim identity and European norms.

After reading the last part of the book, one is forced to make the critical observation that, the meaning and significance of some of the events have been stretched by the author beyond reasonable limits, presumably to show a causal link between pre and post 9/11 events and thus support his thesis of European Muslims being the new leaders of the Muslim communities. In fact when the author expresses the hope that the Muslims of this new Andalusia will provide an example to Muslims worldwide, leading to a change across Muslim lands, one savours the taste of European neo-conservatism, as if another attempt was being made to force western values upon Muslim societies. Thus, despite the author’s vast experience of the Muslim world, we still find him possessed of merely a limited understanding of the heart of the Muslims as a world community. Like many of his Orientalist predecessors, Kepel too fails to understand the complexity of the faith-state relationship in Islam, for the fact remains that the two cannot be separated. It is commendable, however, that despite being a westerner, the author has been able not only to understand, but also to acknowledge the role of the West in the creation of the crisis that confronts the Muslims today. Kepel appears in the book mostly as a passive spectator, narrating events as they unfold on the canvas of history. This is fine.
What, however, seems flawed is his understanding of the present and the future of the Islamic world, including the Muslims residing in the West.

Madiha Younas

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