

# Islam between Culture and Politics

*Also by Bassam Tibi*

ARAB NATIONALISM: Between Islam and the Nation State (*third edition*)

THE CHALLENGE OF FUNDAMENTALISM: Political Islam and the New World Disorder

CONFLICT AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST (*second edition*)

CRISIS, AND ISLAM AND THE CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION

CRISIS OF MODERN ISLAM

DEMOCRACY IN ASIA (*co-author*)

FUNDAMENTALISMS AND SOCIETY (*co-author*)

EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY (*co-author*)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA: Cross-Cultural Perspectives (*co-author*)

ISLAM AND THE CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION OF SOCIAL CHANGE  
(*co-author*)

MUSLIM EUROPE OR EURO-ISLAM (*co-author*)

PREVENTING THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS (*co-author*)

REDEFINING SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST (*co-author*)

ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GOVERNMENT: New 2004–Edition  
(*co-author*)

THE ETHICS OF WAR AND PEACE (*co-author*)

THE STUDY OF THE MIDDLE EAST: International Perspectives (*co-author*)

TRIBES AND STATE FORMATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (*co-author*)

# Islam between Culture and Politics

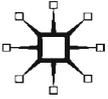
Second Edition

**Bassam Tibi**

*Professor of International Relations  
University of Göttingen and non-resident  
A.D. White Professor-at-Large, Cornell University,  
formerly Bosch Fellow and currently  
Visiting Scholar at Harvard University,  
Senior Research Fellow at the  
National University of Singapore*

palgrave  
macmillan

in association with  
Palgrave Macmillan



© Bassam Tibi 2001, 2005  
Chapters 1–18 © Palgrave Macmillan Ltd 2005

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 2nd edition 2005 978-1-4039-4989-9

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First edition published 2001

Second edition published 2005 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10010

Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-4039-4990-5 ISBN 978-0-230-20415-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230204157

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tibi, Bassam.

Islam between culture and politics / Bassam Tibi.—2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4039-4990-5 (pbk.)

1. Islam—20th century. 2. Islamic sociology. 3. Civilization, Islamic.

4. Islamic renewal. I. Title.

BP163.T529 2005

306.6'97—dc22

2005047296

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

# Contents

<i>Preface to the First Edition</i>	ix
<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	xvi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xx
<i>Introduction: Islam between Culture and Politics: the Scope and Implications</i>	1
The issues: what is political Islam? (p. 1) – Islam and cultural modernity (p. 4) – Is semi-modernity manageable? (p. 6) – An important distinction: globalisation and universalisation (p. 8) – Ignorance and confusion (p. 11) – From Islamic modernism to fundamentalism (p. 12) – From the caliphate to the secular nation-state – and back to an Islamic order? (p. 13) – The place of this book in my study of Islam: the formative years (p. 16) – The cultural study of Islam (p. 18)	
<b>Part I Religion, Culture and Development – Islam between Past and Present</b>	
Introductory remarks	24
<b>1 Religion, Culture and Social Reality: Islam as a Cultural System, and its Diversity</b>	28
The tension between belief and reality (p. 28) – The symbolic clothing of reality (p. 34) – What is Islam? Unity and diversity in historical perspective: religion between doctrine and reality (p. 37) – Islam between divine law, everyday spirituality and a rational view of the world (p. 45)	
<b>2 Cultural Patterns and the Perception of Change in Islam. A Religious Model for Reality: the Islamic Worldview</b>	53
The historical background: the Islamic religious view of the world, its sources and its goal (p. 56) – The Islamic sources of the prevailing cultural patterns (p. 59) – Islamic law (Shari'a): a social regulative or a stumbling block? (p. 63) – The exposure to the industrial West in the modern age (p. 66)	

- 3 Culture and Social Change: Tradition and Innovation in Cultural Analysis** 69  
The study of culture at the crossroads (p. 70) – Evolution and modernisation (p. 72) – Religious reformation and cultural innovation (p. 75) – Who are the instigators of cultural innovations? (p. 78)

**Part II The Context: the Politicisation of Islam in the Global Age**

- Introductory remarks 84
- 4 The Dichotomy of Structural Globalisation and Fragmenting Cultural Self-Assertion: the Case of Islamic Civilisation** 87  
Culture, economy and politics in the global age (p. 87) – Islam at the crossroads: competing civilisational models for the future (p. 90) – An interplay is not a mechanism: modernisation, culture and development (p. 93) – Bringing culture into international studies: what is development in a global context? (p. 96) – Civilisations do matter! (p. 99) – Civilisation-awareness, politicisation of religion and its impact (p. 101) – Modernisation and secularisation: religion, culture, social change and politics (p. 102) – Is the politics of Islamic revival a spiritual mobilisation? (p. 106) – Islam between secularisation and de-secularisation (p. 110) – From secularisation to profanation? (p. 113)
- 5 The Politicisation of Religion: Political Islam as a Defensive-Cultural Response to Global Challenges. A Social-Scientific Interpretation** 116  
The socio-political constraints. The political revitalisation of Islam (p. 119) – al-nizam al-Islami as a backward-looking political utopia of political Islam (p. 126)
- 6 From Religious Belief to Political Commitment: the Fundamentalist Revolt against the Secular Order. Between Cultural Modernity and Neo-Absolutism** 131  
A clear distinction: Islam is not Islamism. Cultural relativist confusions (p. 132) – The background: the predicament with modernity (p. 136) – Culture and knowledge (p. 138) – Islam and the West: a cultural revolt? (p. 141) – Conclusion (p. 143)

**Part III The Framework: the Means of Politicisation.  
The Revival of the Shari'a and the Islamisation of  
Education**

Introductory remarks	146
<b>7 Social Change and the Potential for Flexibility in Islamic Law: the Shari'a between Ethics and Politicisation</b>	148
Legal differences and cultural diversity (p. 148) – The roots and patterns. Islamic law as Shari'a (p. 153) – The reform of Islamic law and the potential for flexibility in the Islamic notion of law (p. 159)	
<b>8 Institutions of Learning and Education in Islam: between the Cultural Accommodation of Change, Religious Orthodoxy and the Politics of Cultural Islamisation</b>	167
Learning in Islam and Islamic institutions of education (p. 168) – The Universitas Litterarum as a European educational institution: its universalisation and incursion into the Islamic civilisation (p. 174) – The crisis of Muslim education and the related cultural perceptions (p. 179).	

**Part IV The Topicality: Islam and the West between  
Inter-Civilisational Dialogue and Political  
Antagonisation**

Introductory remarks	188
<b>9 Islam Matters to the West! Islam and Europe, Islam in Europe: Islamic Migration between Cultural Assimilation, Political Integration and Communitarian Ghettoisation</b>	191
Islam in Europe: the Euro-Mediterranean dimension (p. 192) – Is the global village an international system or an international society? (p. 195) – Islam and the West in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Inherited burdens and new patterns (p. 197) – Islam in the West: culture and politics (p. 200) – Dialogue needs to be reason-based. The politicisation of cultural-religious beliefs leads to confrontation (p. 203) – An urgent distinction: cultural pluralism is not communitarian multiculturalism (p. 204) – What Islam in Europe? Conclusions (p. 206)	

<b>10 Islam and the West in the Age of Conflict among Civilisations: the Alternative of Intercultural Dialogue as a Means of Conflict Resolution</b>	210
Why do Europeans know so little about Islam? (p. 211) – Religion and politics in Europe and Islam (p. 214) – Between polemics and analysis: understanding world politics and the heterogeneity of civilisations (p. 216) – Islam: civilisational unity in cultural diversity (p. 218) – Islam and the claim for a de-Westernisation of the world (p. 222) – The options: head-on collision or bridge-building between the civilisations (p. 224) – An alternative to fundamentalism in Europe: Euro-Islam as an opening for migrants (p. 226) – Is an Islamic–Western peace of civilisations possible? Cultural dialogue without self-denial (p. 228)	
 <b>Part V The Predicament of Islam between Culture and Politics Revisited after September 11, 2001 and March 11, 2004</b>	
Introductory remarks	232
<b>11 September 11, the Global Cultural Turn and the Return of the Sacred in Islamic Civilisation: between Religious Revival and the New Totalitarianism of Political Islam</b>	234
Is Orientalism at work when <i>jihadism</i> is addressed critically?: freedom of speech, the philosophical discourse of modernity and the study of Islam (p. 235) – Islam and the debate on the return of the sacred (p. 244) – The study of political Islam since the Islamic Revolution in Iran and September 11: the overall context (p. 249) – The alternative to global <i>jihad</i> : joining democratic peace (p. 254) – Political religion vs globalisation and the secular nation-state (p. 259) – Is dialogue over order possible under conditions of polarisation? Islamic peace vs democratic peace (p. 262) – Islam and the return of the sacred revisited: conclusions (p. 269)	
<i>Notes</i>	273
<i>Bibliography</i>	316
<i>Name Index</i>	328
<i>Subject Index</i>	331

# Preface to the First Edition

Islam is both a religious faith and a cultural system, but not a political ideology. The politicisation of Islam in the last decades of the past century has created an increasing interest in contributions capable of drawing a clear distinction between Islam as a religion, thus as a cultural system, and the political use of Islamic cultural symbols resulting owing to the rise of the new political ideology of Islamism. At issue is the distinction between Islam and political Islam, the latter being an Islamic variety of religious fundamentalism. The need to be informed about this highly significant distinction created a demand for my earlier book *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change* published subsequently in 1990 and 1991, but out of print since 1994. In that book I analyse Islam as a cultural system and enquire into the constraints of its politicisation. In fact, political Islam is emerging out of a crisis situation; it is both a crisis of meaning and equally a political and socio-economic, that is, a structural crisis. This twofold crisis requires new approaches for explaining this phenomenon to create a better understanding of it.

During my Bosch Fellowship at Harvard in the years 1998–2000 I envisaged a radically revised edition of my book *The Cultural Accommodation of Social Change*, but soon realised that it would be better to write a completely new book. I acknowledge the use of the materials of that earlier book for writing the new one. In doing so I selected a few of the chapters of that book and engaged myself in a radical rewriting to fit them into the structure of this new book. Most of the chapters of *Islam between Culture and Politics* are, however, new ones. They focus on the oscillation in Islam between culture and politics.

The intention of this book is to provide conceptually based reflections on *Islam between Culture and Politics* that account for the most recent debate on the issues in question. Among other things, I take a closer look at the structures of our present world, in which Islam is embedded. At issue is a global system of Western design. In this system the structural networks cover the levels of socio-economics, transport, and communication, but not that of culture. In the main, I contend that there is a simultaneity of globalised political and socio-economic structures and of cultural fragmentation. I maintain that this simultaneity is the background for the politicisation of Islam. In

developing this argument, I raise the question of the patterns of interaction that dominate current intercultural structures of communication. I also enquire into the direction in which these structures could develop in the foreseeable future, in the pursuit of peace.

My earlier book *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change* was described by a reviewer as a 'post-orientalist' contribution (*The American Anthropologist*, June 1992). My entire enquiry is pursued in the light of the drive of non-Western peoples to culturally dissociate themselves from most of the Western patterns prevailing in the present global system. I interpret this drive as an effort at a *de-Westernisation* of the world. To be sure, being 'post-orientalist' does not necessarily mean having to be anti-Western. I do not share the self-hating attitudes of some Westerners and thus clearly do not subscribe to any demonisation of the West by the champions of de-Westernisation, although I am a Muslim and a non-Westerner myself. A critique of Western hegemony need not amount to a wholesale rejection of the West and of its values. Moreover, my critique is not one-sided, for I am also highly critical of the Islamist attitude towards approving the adoption of modern instruments (for example, science and technology) while they contest any accommodation of cultural modernity, above all of its worldview and its values. It is this attitude for which I have coined the formula: the Islamic dream of semi-modernity. I myself approve of cultural modernity as described by my German academic teacher Jürgen Habermas and see no inconsistency in combining this commitment with a critique of Western hegemony. In my earlier German work *Der wahre Imam* (1996) on the history of ideas in Islam I revive medieval Islamic rationalism and show how consonant it is with modern rationalism.

Despite my acknowledgement of the seniority of Samuel Huntington and his laudable accomplishment in bringing cultural issues to the fore in our discipline of International Relations, I forward my own very different views and reject his bias regarding Islam. In my view, there exists an alternative to the 'Clash of Civilizations'. In focusing on Islam as a civilisation I underline the need for intercivilisational dialogue. In my understanding, dialogue is a variety of conflict resolution in the pursuit of world peace. Dialogue is not simply an unbinding exchange of views. Cross-cultural bridging and establishment of a consensus over international morality are essential in my understanding of dialogue. In my view, intercivilisational dialogue could serve in our time as an instrument of crisis management in that it may provide a means for interactive conflict resolution.

The structure of this new book pays increased attention to considering the context of our global age based on world time. I view Islam as a cultural system which, however, historically and traditionally has served as a political legitimation. Based on my enquiry, I suggest that Islam is suspended between adjustment to the ongoing change and resistance to the needed accommodation. The politicisation of this resistance leads to an oscillation in Islam between a culture of meaning on the one hand and a politics of revolt against the new global conditions, as well as against the related hegemonic structures designed by the West, on the other. These themes determine the focal point of my enquiry into the interplay between culture and politics in contemporary Islam.

Despite my professional identity as a scholar of International Relations, the basic framework of this enquiry into Islam is cultural analysis. In the present case, the anthropological concept of religion as a cultural system for the production of meaning understood in the Geertzian sense is at issue. From this perspective I grasp religion in most non-Western civilisations as the major source of cultural symbols. Under the present conditions in Islamic civilisation these symbols are used and abused for giving legitimation to the pursuit of political ends. After doing this groundwork, I then enhance the horizon of my enquiry by conceptualising this subject matter in my mind and with the tools of the discipline of International Relations, that is, the community to which I belong. In short, I argue against established traditional wisdoms and present reasonable arguments for the inclusion of religion and culture into the study of International Relations.

The cultural patterns related to religion, as Clifford Geertz puts it in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, give a kind of 'meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves'. In my enquiry into the interplay between social and cultural change I follow this Geertzian understanding, but develop it further in an effort to go beyond it. Thus, in the introduction to this book I clearly outline the limits of my adherence to Geertz and to the recourse to cultural anthropology. In short, I establish clarity about the limits of the anthropological study of Islam. The horizon of the anthropological approach needs to be broadened through consideration of the international dimension; in our global age cultural anthropology will remain wanting without these needed new outlooks. In other words, I draw on cultural analysis, but give it an injection of International Relations. This is a challenge, equally to scholars and anthropologists of

International Relations. Scholars of International Relations need to learn how to study culture, and anthropologists are to be introduced to international perspectives in our global age.

There is a further requirement for the analysis of this subject-matter. The interplay between culture and politics cannot be grasped adequately if one pattern of change, be it the political, the social or the cultural, is reduced to the other. This would be a reductionist trap. A deeper insight into the complexity of this interplay calls for wariness of all kinds of reductionism. Hence, aside from going beyond the confines of the cultural-anthropological study of Islam, this book represents an effort toward overcoming the old wisdoms of reductionist approaches. Both my Islamic background and my close exposure to Geertz – in the course of an earlier research fellowship at Princeton University back in the academic year 1986/87 – helped me to develop a better understanding of the locality of culture. In particular I learned from Geertz how to grasp the production of meaning within a local set-up. Later on, I shall nevertheless explain why I fail to follow Clifford Geertz in two major issue-areas. First, I do not share the overlooking of the global environment of culture inherent in the Geertzian analysis. Second, an importantly, I am against his cultural relativism. In fact, I vigorously oppose all schools of cultural relativism as my readers will clearly notice. Furthermore: Geertz has no grasp of ‘civilisation’. In contrast, the distinction between culture and civilisation is essential in the present analysis. Related local cultures, like the Islamic ones, group to form a civilisation. I am in favour of bridging between local cultures and respectively the regional civilisations to which they belong. This pursuit creates a need for cross-cultural outlooks to establish, for instance, a cultural underpinning for the universality of individual human rights and other values such as secular democracy. This is a prerequisite of democratic peace.

The enquiry pursued in this book is set up by asking the following two questions: How do Muslims perceive the ongoing rapid and often disruptive social change taking place in their societies termed as part of the ‘abode of Islam?’ Do they culturally accommodate this change? My ensuing reasoning takes into consideration the present structural conditions of Muslim societies unwillingly integrated into the prevailing global system. The politicisation of the cultural system of Islam under the conditions of world time is thus an expression of a revolt against the West, that is, against the imposed global-structural constraints and, of course, also against the value systems related to them. In going beyond the specific dealing with Islam I refer to the social theory-

oriented debate on the interplay between social and cultural change to facilitate a thorough conceptualisation of the presented analysis.

The present book took shape and was completed at Harvard in the years 1998–2000. As acknowledged, it also reflects a further elaboration and expansion of my earlier work also completed at Harvard a decade ago, back in 1998–90. As earlier mentioned I have been reluctant to consider a reprint, or even a revised second edition of my ‘Cultural Accommodation’ study. I felt that further research was needed and therefore decided to write the present book. The window for this opportunity has been my most recent affiliation with Harvard’s Weatherhead Center for International Affairs/WCFIA as Robert Bosch Foundation Fellow (1998–2000). Apart from my teaching at a German university since 1982, Harvard has been the most valued scholarly retreat for me and my work and this book therefore, is in many ways a Harvard product. The research has also been sponsored, as documented in its publication in association with the WCFIA.

This book reflects an integral part of the two to three decades I have spent thinking and writing about a variety of cultures belonging to the Islamic civilisation. I am not among those scholars who make use of quantitative methods. I follow Hedley Bull, who has rightly argued that thinking is research. My book on *The Crisis of Modern Islam*, first published in German in 1981, was the start of this process. The background lies, of course, even further in the past. It goes back to the Islamic environment of my upbringing in Damascus. In that historical city in which the records of my family Banu al-Tibi date back to the thirteenth century I received my primary education which strongly affected and continues to affect my identity and my views. Thanks to my Western academic education, and in particular to the philosophical reasoning studied in the Frankfurt School of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, I have acquired the detachment needed for pursuing a scholarly non-apologetic approach, as well as for related unbiased thoughts. Islamic orthodoxy and Islamists, who refuse to distinguish between rational knowledge and belief, despise this reasoning and reject it as heretical. Islamic *fiqh*-orthodoxy has a long-standing record of oppressing Islamic rationalism in the past as well as in the present. There are equally Muslims and Westerners who view intellectual detachment and the willingness to subject Islam to scrutiny as cultural treason. I professedly stand in the tradition of Enlightenment, and thus I am neither an absolutist nor a postmodernist. Thanks to a personal exposure to the great philosopher Ernst Bloch in 1965 (*Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left*, 1963) and then to the Harvard scholar Muhsin

Mahdi, who became a friend, I discovered the traditionally dismissed Islamic rationalism in medieval Islam and learned not only to value it, but also to revive its meaning and topicality for the present time. I believe a revival of Islamic Averroist rationalism is more promising to Muslims than the politicisation of Islam. These remarks are pertinent to the topic of this book.

The present book is my sixth monograph published in English. For many reasons I consider myself fortunate to be in this domain of publishing culture in the Anglo-Saxon world. The publication of the first US (St. Martin's Press) and British (Macmillan) edition of my successful book *Arab Nationalism* (three editions: 1980, 1990, 1997) was followed by *The Crisis of Modern Islam* (Utah University Press, 1988), as well as my Harvard book *Conflict and War in the Middle East. From Interstate War to New Security* (two editions, 1993, 1998, again with Macmillan and St. Martin's Press). My very first monograph directly written in English was: *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (University of California Press, 1998). Since the publication of these books – in addition to numerous co-authored American books – I have been able to join a global academic community much different from the parochial German one. To be sure, I am not biased and appreciate the German *Buchkultur* (i. e. reading culture), which ranks higher in continental Europe than it does in the US. However, none of the German universities could compete in the publication of academic books with the leading American universities, simply because none of the German universities has a university press.

In the past two decades I have found a retreat at Harvard and elsewhere outside Germany while maintaining my basis on a nice small island, that is, my centre, within German academe. In saying this I do not mean to engage in transgressions. I am addressing a very important issue which strongly pertains to the topic of the present book when referring to my personal case as an example. In Chapter 9 I deal with Islamic migration to Europe and argue that the interplay of culture and politics is no longer an issue-area restricted to the Islamic civilisation itself. In my Global Village Lecture in Stockholm in April 1997 my topic was 'Islam and Europe, Islam in Europe'. The implication is that Islam with a growing community of more than 15 million Muslim migrants has increasingly become part of Europe. The *othering* of this Muslim segment of Europe's population would only contribute to the politicisation of Islam and to the rise of fundamentalism among the migrants in the European diaspora of Islam. I argue for integration as opposed to the building up of ghettos.

At the present time, and unlike earlier historical periods, Islam has not come to Europe through *jihād*-conquests (for example, the Arabs from the south-west in the eighth century and the Turks from the south-east in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries), but rather through *hijra* (migration). I, myself, am one of these Muslim migrants. An integration of Muslim migrants would help us to become European citizens and to make a separation between Islam as part of one's cultural identity and Islamism as a claim for bringing about a divine political order. Eurocentric attitudes of exclusion paralleling related policies towards Muslims living in Europe like myself inadvertently contribute to 'othering' the migrants. As argued, the result would be to unwillingly support Islamic fundamentalists in their effort at forming ghettos and building up their logistics in European exile. In alienating the Muslim migrants in Europe, Europeans are increasing the appeal of Islamism and thus doing harm to Europe and to its civilisational identity itself. In stating this, I reach the conclusion that under the conditions of a global age and Islamic migration to Europe the pendulum in Islam between culture and politics becomes a matter of concern within European societies themselves. It is definitely an issue that also highly affects European security!

# Preface to the Second Edition

This is an updated edition of my study completed in the years 1998–2000 at Harvard. In those years I enjoyed a tenure as the Harvard Bosch Fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs of Harvard University. In the same year of publication the assault of September 11, 2001 took place and in its aftermath the book received more attention. It was first reprinted and then translated into Bahasa Indonesia, the language of the demographically greatest nation in the world of Islam. On September 11, 2002 I participated in a great dialogue between Islam and the West in Jakarta, Indonesia, which included former President Wahid (his nickname: Gus Dur). In the following year 2003 I went again to Jakarta, this time to teach at the Hidayatullah Islamic State University of Indonesia. Within this framework I exposed my Muslim students to the reform-Islamic ideas presented in this book, including the plea for a depoliticisation of Islam. In an extensive class I taught the course on ‘Islam in the twenty-first century’ and discussed with my Indonesian students two competing visions for the future of the world of Islam: either to join the wider international community based on democratic peace and pluralist grounds, or to follow the call for global *jihād* presented by the *jihād*ist fraction of contemporary political Islam in the pursuit of an Islamist neo-absolutism. It was reassuring to leave Indonesia, the country of ‘civil Islam’ (Robert Hefner) at the end of 2003 with the knowledge that my Muslim students *unanimously endorsed* the plea for incorporating the Islamic *umma* into a democratic peace while rejecting *jihādism*. Before this teaching tenure I engaged myself prior to September 11 (between 1995 and 2000) and after it (2002) in promising Islamic–Western dialogues in Jakarta, within which the participants went beyond the rhetoric preventing the clash of civilisations to addressing the related pending issues of conflict for seeking a peaceful resolution.

A year after my visiting professorship in Jakarta I returned to Harvard, this time as a visiting scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) for the academic year 2004/05, next to my new position since July 2004 as A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University. My return to Harvard concurred with the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the CMES. On this occasion a comparison was made of the world political situation of the years of 1954, i.e. the year of the

foundation of the CMES and the present one of 2004, the year of its 50th Anniversary. In 1954 the West was challenged by communism while it is today, in 2004, confronted with a revolutionary situation related to the rise of political Islam and its *jihadist* movements. In fact, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies are challenged to contribute to a proper understanding of the new situation as well as to assume the task of mediation between Islam and the West. The same challenge applies to International Relations (IR) scholars. In Afghanistan and in Iraq the USA has been sending troops to unwittingly pursue a political job for which they have not been trained. In fact, these servicemen and US decision-makers lack knowledge about Islam and the Middle East and are thus causing damage, instead of preparing this part of the world for a democratic peace. The conclusion in this situation is that Middle Eastern and Islamic studies are now needed more than ever, not only for academic research, but also for outreach. There is a need for a balanced study of the pending issues that will be able to contribute to a better understanding of Islam and the Middle East. In my view, the challenge is twofold: first, to understand the present 'revolutionary situation' in the world of Islam affecting world politics and second, to avert the potential of clash of civilisations that could emerge from it. In the pursuit of this end one needs to go beyond the accusation of the West as well as beyond the blaming of one another for Orientalism. This culture of 'accusation' and 'blaming' is now spreading as 'discourse' in the academe. This is a most uninspired and disturbing approach that one finds among US students of Islam and Middle East, which distracts instead of illuminating. I find myself among the victims of this plague of demonization and accusation.

In this Preface to the second edition of the present book I refer equally to my recent experience in Indonesia and to the Western, primarily US debates in Islamic studies. I continue this at length at the outset of the new Part V added to this updated edition; I keep on arguing against the rhetoric of clash of civilisations and present my plea for an intercivilisational dialogue based on shared civic core values and on mutually accepted rules of conflict resolution (*see* Chapter 10). Earlier, I co-authored the book of the President of Germany, Roman Herzog, when he was still in office, published under the title: *Preventing the Clash of Civilizations*. There, and in the present book I argue that this effort requires on the one hand from the West an abandonment of its hegemonic policies, and from the people of Islamic civilisation, on the other, a separation of faith and politics for smoothing the way for dispensing with their utopia of mapping the world in *Dar al-Islam*.

In my understanding of Islam and of its universalism, I believe this is possible in Islamic terms, if a rethinking of Islam is admitted; neither the notion of *nizam* (order) nor the one of an Islamic state (*dawla*), as applied to the entire world, ever occur in the *Koran* or *hadith*. In Indonesia I argued in the aftermath of September 11 in several Western–Islamic dialogues held and published in Jakarta subsequently in 2002 and 2003 that the escalation of the polarisation between Islam and the West is at work but it can be averted through an Islamic–Western cooperation, including a security dialogue. The mutually threatening existing perceptions of ‘*jihad* against the West’ and ‘a war on *terror* conducted as a war against Islam’ need to be dealt with in all frankness without Islamophobia in the West or accusations against the West as they are spreading in the world of Islam. The indiscriminate accusation of Orientalism is becoming a burden for the study of Islam. There exists a real situation of polarisation and it is not an indication of ‘Orientalism’ to recognise it and address it. Conflict will not evaporate through silencing or suppressing the debate over it by establishing taboos in the name of political correctness.

The overall issue as globally seen, i.e. not only restricted to the world of Islam, is the discernible return of the sacred to world politics. On this assumption, the focus of my updating revolves around this issue. Therefore, I completed a fifth new part to this edition in which I place the events of September 11 into their overall context and also relate the new material to the ten preceding chapters of the earlier edition. In addition to Part V the new edition includes a bibliography that was missing in the first printing. I acknowledge with gratitude that the research for the new edition was pursued during my new Harvard affiliation at CMES. Special thanks are due to Harvard’s WCFIA and its administrative director Jim Cooney for accepting the continuation of this publication to be published under the auspices of that centre. It goes beyond saying that the views expressed in this book are my own for which neither of Harvard’s centres bear any responsibility. My study of Islam is driven by the inclination to seek a better future for the people of Islam in becoming a part of the international community. In this pursuit my reasoning compels me to be a reform Muslim venturing into rethinking Islam. I feel sad for those Western scholars who accuse such an attitude, and the related work, of Orientalism. They are putting themselves on the fringe, because the world moves forward without them, while they in a byzantinic manner continue their debates that are leading nowhere. Again, this is only my own

view and I am also responsible for it. It is a disservice, not only to scholarship, but also to Islam and to its people to curtail the freedom of free thinking in the name of combating 'Orientalism' by Orientalists themselves.

I wish to see the world of Islam becoming an 'open society', promoting the rights of free speech and freedom of faith. Not only the ruling autocrats are the 'enemies of open society', but also the opposing Islamists who aim at toppling them. The theocracy of the 'Islamic State' is not the proper alternative to the existing autocratic rule. The lack of freedom in the world of Islam seen in the context of the 'Open Society and its Enemies', is home-made and is not the outcome of a conspiracy by the West against Islam. Thinking about, and the rethinking of Islam needs to be fresh not only from Islamists, but also from some Western-academic bias. This emphasis puts my work at the front-line in the debate on Islam. I recommend to those readers interested in this line of reasoning, in addition to Chapter 11, my study entitled, 'From Islamist Jihadism to Democratic Peace? Islam at the Crossroads in the Post-bipolar International Politics', published in 2005 by Taylor and Francis as Ankara Paper 16, as complimentary reading.

BASSAM TIBI  
Harvard/CMES  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

# Acknowledgements

I would like to move to acknowledge the institutions that supported this project and made the writing of this book feasible. The project and its intellectual environment comprise three culturally different worlds. The scope of the project extends from Europe, in particular Germany, across the Middle East, the cultural hub of the so-called world of Islam, and finally to the United States, where I have been fortunate enough to establish most beneficial scholarly networks. Since the early 1980s I have been a commuting scholar whose life has embraced all of these three worlds. Harvard in particular has been my scholarly home since my first affiliation in 1982. For this reason I need at the very outset to acknowledge how grateful I am to Harvard's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs for providing me with the proper setup needed for the completion of the present work. The same sentiment of gratitude goes to The Bosch Foundation which established a research Fellowship at Harvard for me in the years 1998–2000. In the earlier years I received funding from other institutions, among which were the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Volkswagen and Rockefeller.

Many of my earlier research trips to the Middle East and the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, as well as South and Southeast Asia were supported within the framework of joint public lectures organised by the Goethe Institute (known in almost all parts of the world as the German Cultural Institute). Although this institute is not involved in research, it is engaged in a most important but widely neglected field within the discipline of International Relations – that is, intercultural dialogue.

On a scholarly level I am grateful to the late Reinhard Bendix – both mentor and friend – for the constant inspiration I received from him in Berkeley. With Clifford Geertz I shared the enriching communication we had in Princeton in the course of my tenure there in 1986/87. I hope for Geertz's tolerance in that I sided with the late Ernest Gellner against his cultural relativism. The three of us were guests of the Erasmus Foundation in Amsterdam in May 1994, when the controversy between these two great scholars flared up. Two other scholars of Islam, who became my friends, had an impact on my understanding of Islam: Muhsin Mahdi of Harvard and Bernard Lewis of Princeton. It may come as a surprise to some that I express my gratitude to Samuel

Huntington who first in 1982 invited me to join Harvard. By then he was the director of Harvard's CFIA. Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* made a deep impression on me. International Relations' scholars owe to him the introduction of culture into the study of international affairs. I agree with his placing of civilisations into world politics and also with parts of his analysis, but not his conclusions. I am grateful to Samuel Huntington for the debates that we had on these issues at Harvard's Academy of Area and International Studies in the project 'Conflict and Convergence' (1997). I had the honour to join this project – as well as the Harvard seminar on 'Culture and Globalization' (1998/2000) – on Huntington's invitation; he was running both.

At the German university of Göttingen, my research assistant Jost Esser has been a source of inspiration and invaluable assistance. I am particularly grateful to him, but also to Silke Fauzi for her great support. In the final stages of research and editing as well as proof-reading Torsten Michel, Vera Weidemann and Anja Zückmantel joined our team and were extremely helpful. Indeed, Jost Esser provided the major assistance and thus made a particular contribution. Being myself computer-illiterate my staff assistant Elisabeth Luft was my indispensable partner in writing this book. As a traditional scholar I write and think with my hands. Elisabeth Luft thankfully word-processed all of my writing.

BASSAM TIBI  
*Harvard University*  
*Weatherhead Center for International Affairs*  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*