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(International Institute of Islamic Thought). **Panelists and Paper Presenters:** *Panel 1:* Henry D'Souza (Ontario), Patrick Dikirr (BU), M. A. Muqtedar Khan (University of Delaware), and Patrick Regan (BU). *Panel 2:* Amadu Jacky Kaba (Seton Hall University), Seifudein Adem, and Thomas Uthup (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations). *Panel 3:* Ricardo Rene Laremont (BU), Shireen Hunter (Georgetown University), and Horace G. Campbell (Syracuse University). *Panel 4:* Salah M. Hassan (Cornell University) and Muneera Salem-Murdock (Millennium Challenge Corporation, Rabat, Morocco). **Conference Coordinators:** Layla Sein (AMSS), Seifudein Adem, Ravenna Narizano (IGCS), and Barbara Tierno (IGCS).

Ali Mazrui

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## Iran and World Contemporary Developments

This conference ([www.iranoworld.ir](http://www.iranoworld.ir)), the first one to be organized by the faculty of the Department of Political Science at Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU) and will be held continuously in the following years, sought to develop knowledge and making the ground suitable for discussing and analyzing the work of researchers both inside and outside Iran.

Despite the antiquity of Iran's history, rich oil and gas resources, and monitoring of the strategic Persian Gulf, the country has enjoyed stability in its blend of religion and politics of social affairs in the face of profound change. Contemporary international relations, known for its dominating principles of equal sovereignty and self-determination, is also undergoing change, the most obvious ones being the Soviet collapse, the "new world order," and globalization, all of which have affected Iran.

Over two hundred abstracts from Iran and abroad (i.e.g, India, Pakistan, Turkey, the United States, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Singapore, Australia, Britain, Venezuela, France, South Africa, Russia, Malaysia, Poland, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Burundi) were received; 30 in English and 90 in Persian were approved. Since I cannot cover all of the papers, given space restraints, I will mention the panel titles here and then discuss four of the papers that I found the most interesting: Session 1: Law and Economy Developments; Session 2: Global and Regional Developments; Session 3: Social and Educational Developments; Session 4: Global and Regional Developments; Session 5: Law and Legal Developments; Session 6: Global and Regional Develop-

ments; Session 7: Energy and Economy Developments; Session 8: Cultural and Social Developments; Session 9: The Islamic Revolution and Iran's Foreign Policy Development; Session 10: Military Strategy Developments; Session 11: The Islamic Revolution and Iran's Foreign Policy Developments; and Session 12: Global and Regional Developments.

Among the most interesting papers for me were the following: Seyed Javad Emanjomhazadeh's and Masumeh Zareie Hodk's (Isfahan University) "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Membership of Iran." The presenters detailed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) history, how it is perceived by various experts, and the existence of ongoing talks about amending its mission statement to include, among other things, increased military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism drills. An observer since 2005, Iran requested full membership in March 2008. Emanjomhazadeh sees this as a way for Iran to tighten its contacts with Russia. Experts also says that Iran considers the SCO to be a club of like-minded states that is important to its geostrategic interests in Central Asia.

Abdelkader Nouibat's (University of M'Sila, Algeria) "Development Strategies in Iran and Algeria: A Comparative Study," begins from the assumptions that the state, which plays a major economic and social developmental role in both countries, as well as both countries' reliance upon the petrochemical sector to generate growth and development, would lead one to assume that the results of these strategies would be similar in terms of economic and social development. Using the new comparative economics approach (NCE), Nouibat revealed that the similarities and differences in the two countries' development strategies and their results can be explained by the state's management of economic and social affairs and/or the similarity in their resources endowments, as well as by the changes in their development strategies along with the type and seriousness of internal and external economic and political constraints and pressures.

Muhittin Ataman's (Abant Izzet Baysal University, Turkey, ) "Different Paradigms: The Nation-State System and Islam," asserted that intensified globalization has weakened the Westphalian notion of the nation-state system as a universal political unit. Actually, this has never been true in the non-western world. In the wake of the cold war and Huntington's infamous "clash of civilizations" thesis, the Muslim world emerged as the West's "other" because both civilizations have different political, economic, and cultural paradigms. Ataman stressed that since the concepts of *nation* and *nationalism* are alien to Islam and Muslims, their expansion within the Mus-

lim world has caused an identity crisis. Nationalism caused cultural insecurity and has been one of the main bases of Islamic revivalist movements against the West. Therefore, a conceptual evaluation of the nation-state system, ethnicity, and the Islamic approach to politics is required to understand relations between the West and the Muslim world.

Nauman Asghar (Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan) addressed the "Dimensions of the Arab-Israeli Conflict." Conventional wisdom states that human history is no more than the succession of human and social conflicts punctuated by wars and other forms of violence. In his case study of the six-decade-long Arab-Israeli conflict, which remains a stumbling block to the Middle East peace process, he maintains that in many respects it has become even more complex and intricate. Asghar traced the historical roots of Arab-Israeli conflict, examined the fundamental thorny issues bedeviling the disputants' relations, analyzed the development of several dimensions of conflict (keeping in view the implications of great power influence), and discussed the various peace and other initiatives. He also mentioned how the recent eruption of the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza demonstrates the importance of finding an immediate and durable solution to this ongoing problem. Taking the region's unfolding demographic situation into consideration, he highlighted the significance of the two-state solution.

Bahram Navazeni  
Professor of Political Science and Conference Secretary  
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Salem-Murdock addressed poverty, education, and health. With regard to health policies affecting developing countries, Obama has a tough act to follow: former President George W. Bush persuaded Congress to allocate billions of dollars to combat HIV-AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean. Although Muslim Africa was less afflicted by this pandemic, Bush's strategy against HIV-AIDS abroad was arguably his most enlightened policy.

The symposium noted that during the presidential campaign, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats overtly courted Muslims. On the contrary, Obama was sensitive to the erroneous charge that he was a closet Muslim. Muslims were particularly offended when Obama's organizers removed hijab-wearing Muslim women from proximity to him at a rally when cameras were targeting the candidate. Muslims also complained that Obama was prepared to be seen at churches and synagogues, but not at a mosque, even though Bush had visited one. Attention was drawn to his Muslim defenders who felt that the choice was between a Muslim-friendly candidate Obama and a future Muslim-friendly President Obama. Muslim voters could not have both. Obama had to avoid playing the "Muslim card" while he was campaigning. But within his first one hundred days, he stated that he had Muslim relatives and raised the issue of American-Muslim relations to a high level of urgency.

Candidate Obama pledged to end the war in Iraq, support the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel, and combine military action in Afghanistan and Pakistan with considerable American resources for nation-building and economic development. Many of these pledges became explicit after his election. His performance beyond his first year is awaited with baited breath.

## Endnotes

1. Cited by John Mearsheimer. "The Lobby Falter," *The London Review of Books*, 26 Mar. 2009. John Mearsheimer is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago.
2. I was a panelist at one such meeting sponsored by the Institute of the Black World 21st Century and New York Avenue Presbyterian Church on 24 Apr. 2009. Other panelists included Congressman John Conyers (D-MI).

## Appendix

**Co-Chairs:** David Cingranelli (BU) and Seifudein Adem (associate director, IGCS, BU). **Chairs of Individual Panels:** David Cingranelli, Seifudein Adem, Olga Shvetsova (BU), Nkiru Nwagwu (BU), and Abubaker al Stingieti

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**ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM  
SOCIAL SCIENTISTS  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

The Association of Muslim Social Scientists of North America (AMSS) is a non-profit membership-based organization that encompasses the United States and Canada. It was established in 1972 for the sole purpose of providing a forum through which Islamic positions on various academic disciplines can be promoted, with an emphasis on the social sciences and humanities.

AMSS has based its activities on the belief that the development of Islamic thought is vital for the prosperity of the Muslim world and for the continuity of the Islamic intellectual heritage. AMSS strives to serve the interests of the larger Muslim community by bringing together Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in an academic setting to examine and define Islamic perspectives on issues of global concern that contribute to the prosperity of Muslims around the globe and the betterment of humanity.

To encourage emerging Muslim scholars, AMSS established the "Best Graduate Paper Award" competition in 2001 for papers presented at its Annual Conference. AMSS also sponsors regional conferences in the United States and Canada.

In 2008, an "AMSS University Lecture Series" was established to increase the AMSS profile on university campuses and facilitate dialogue opportunities between AMSS scholars and the academy.

Membership in AMSS entitles one to receive *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS) at no extra cost. AJISS, a blind peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal, publishes quality original research pertaining to Islam and Muslims.

**INTERNATIONAL  
INSTITUTE OF  
ISLAMIC THOUGHT**

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is a cultural and intellectual foundation. It was established and registered in the United States of America at the beginning of the fifteenth *hijri* century (1401/1981) with the following objectives:

- To provide a comprehensive Islamic outlook through elucidating the principles of Islam and relating them to relevant issues of contemporary thought.
- To regain the intellectual, cultural, and civilizational identity of the ummah through the Islamization of the humanities and the social sciences.
- To rectify the methodology of contemporary Islamic thought in order to enable it to resume its contribution to the progress of human civilization and give it meaning and direction in line with the values and objectives of Islam.

The institute seeks to achieve its objectives by:

- Holding specialized academic conferences and seminars.
- Supporting and selectively publishing works of scholars and researchers in universities and academic research centers in the Muslim world and the West.
- Directing higher university studies toward furthering work on issues of Islamic thought and the Islamization of Knowledge.

The institute has a number of overseas offices and academic advisors for the purpose of coordinating and promoting its various activities. It has also entered into joint academic agreements with several universities and research centers to implement its objectives.

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