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The flagship of excellence

Francisco Jaime Quesado

There is a sense of urgency in developing excellence as the new flagship for Europe. In a time of complexity, uncertainty and crisis, the European actors must more than ever understand that there are no more opportunities. It is time to define the most relevant ideas for a New Economic Governance Model for Europe and this proposal is an effective challenge for Change in a Europe that must face the expectations of a New Society, more demanding and more capable of driving the imperative of excellence.

Unemployment is becoming higher and higher in the European Union area, the European companies are facing more and more the strong competition from companies from Middle East and Asia, Public Accounts of most of the European countries are facing unsustainable deficits. That's why an Economic Governance for Europe is more and more an imperative. The New Europe must be supported different strategic proposals that demand for a new operational agenda.

This Economic Governance Model must be supported by some strategic proposals that demand for a new operational agenda. Europe must know how to integrate in a positive way its citizens. Social cohesion is done with the constructive participation of the citizens and it is more and more necessary an effective attitude of mobilization for this effort. Education must be the right tool for this strategic ambition for Europe.

At the same time Innovation and Technology are the "enablers" for competitiveness in Europe. Universities and Companies must perform a new strategic partnership centered in the objectives of the added value, creativity and knowledge. This is the basis for the effective implementation of the Strategy 2020. Europe has still a strong opportunity to implement an agenda of innovation – the opportunity is more and more know and it can't be lost.

The excellence of Europe is more and more the excellence of its Regions. The development of strategic projects like the Poles of Competitiveness, Clusters of Innovations and Knowledge Cities and Regions is the effective confirmation that the basis for a new agenda in Europe depends on the capacity of its regions. A New Europe is more and more the confidence of the development of New Regions.

Europe has a unique identity based on its strong culture. The European Culture is a unique asset. Europe must be able to involve other global partners in the construction of integrated projects focused on the development of culture as a driver for development. The reinvention of culture is itself a very innovative way to involve more and more the European actors in this project for the future.

It is time to do well doing good. In a context in which people know who they are and have a strong commitment with the values of freedom, social justice and development. This is the reason to believe that this renewal of Europe, more than a possibility, is an individual and collective necessity for all of us, effective European citizens.

Francisco Jaime Quesado is the General Manager of the Innovation and Knowledge Society in Portugal, a public agency with the mission of coordinating the policies for Information Society and mobilizing it through dissemination, qualification and research activities. It operates within the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education

POLITICS

The Illusion of an Islamic State

A book that makes history

By Dionyssios Kefalacos

There are very few books that can be called "the book". Undoubtedly "The Illusion of an Islamic State" is one of them. The title may be provocative for some Muslim extremists like the Iranian governing theocratic establishment, but it states bluntly what it advocates; it is about "an alliance of moderates who launched a successful Jihad against radicalisation and terrorism in the world's largest Muslim majority country"; Indonesia.

The book is a combination of scientific research of the highest standards conducted by academics in Indonesia who were joined by representatives of the various Muslim organizations. Strong opinions and beliefs along with bold scientific research were the instruments the authors used to achieve their targets. The principal authors are Kyai Haji Hodri Arief, Professor Dr. Ratco Lukito and C. Holland Taylor. It was edited by H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid and the prologue was written by Professor Dr. Syafii Maarif and C. Holland Taylor. The epilogue has to be attributed to Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri. The English translation was published by the Lib-ForAll foundation, which is an organisation established and chaired by C. Holland Taylor, a devoted thinker and fighter whose present mission is to "promote a pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual understanding of Islam at peace with itself and the modern world".

The presentation

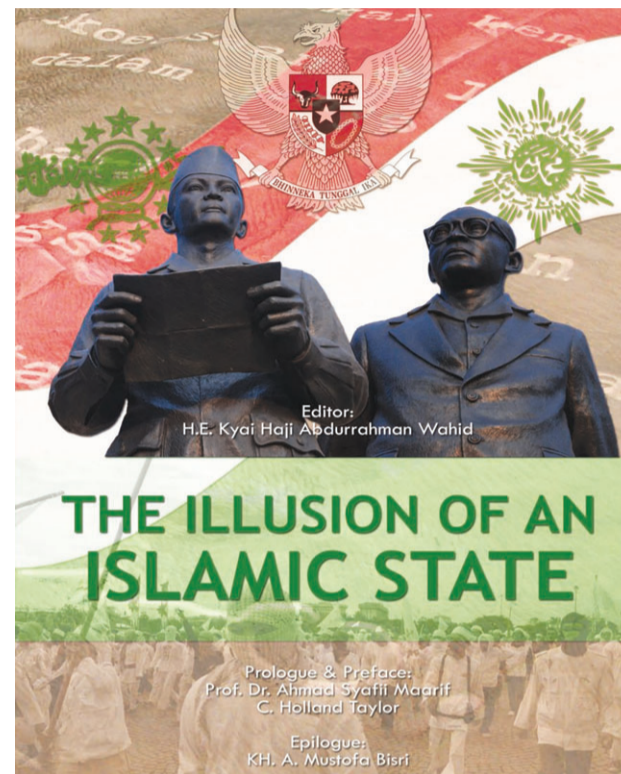
The book was presented last Tuesday 3 May in the European Parliament by Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri deputy chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council and C. Holland Taylor Chairman and CEO of LibForAll Foundation, in cooperation with H.E. Arif Havas Oegroseno Indonesian Ambassador to the European Union and Hon. Dr. Werner Langen Chairman German CDU/SCU Group of the EU Parliament. When it first appeared in Indonesia "The Book" had great impact on the country's religious, cultural and what is more important political life, promoting the de-radicalization of the Islam there. At least some part of it. C. Holland Taylor had been working hard towards this end also in the US where he fought against Islamophobia too.

His endeavors have made him a devoted adversary against the prevalence of radicals in the entire Muslim world. He is now considered in the US and the world as an authority on Muslim affairs and was called to explain what is going on in Egypt's Muslim institutions in the post Mubarak era. To note that the head of the famous Al-Azhar Islamic University, the chief qadi and the clerics of different mosques in the country, are government appointed. The fall of Mubarak has opened the way to the powerful Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt to take over the country's "Islam". In a communication with Washington Post's Jennifer Rubin recently, C. Holland Taylor, was asked... "what he thought of this development".

He responded via e-mail, noting that his organization's deputy director of academics for the International Institute of Qur'anic Studies is based in Cairo, and has been directly involved with this issue. He explained: "Clearly, the Muslim Brotherhood does wish to seize control of Egypt's Islamic institutions, and they have been infiltrating al-Azhar (University) for many years, with considerable success among faculty, but not at the highest levels of authority, due to the government appointment of the Grand Shaykh, etc. "At present... a movement is underway to have the Grand Shaykh elected by the faculty of al-Azhar, rather than appointed by the government. Both non-Islamist democrats and the Muslim Brotherhood appear to favor this approach, the former due to their intense mistrust of government, and the latter as part of their strategy to gain control of Egypt. "For the time being, the Muslim Brotherhood wants to ensure that al-Azhar does not reflexively support a government, which they do not control. Should the Muslim Brotherhood subsequently come to dominate the government, I would expect them to reassert government authority over al-Azhar."

In Indonesia

But let us return to The Book. When it was first published in In-



onesia the book created a huge wave of applause and anger. In this context it played a crucial role in the April 2009 general elections in this country. The Muslim theologians and academics, by writing and circulating this book, proved to everybody that Islam is a religion of peace and love of man and that democracy is quite compatible with it. The even more interesting thing was that the Indonesian public opinion was deeply influenced by this message. Millions of voters of this country abandoned an mass the extremists and voted for lawmakers who were of moderate opinions. This was just the beginning. The idea is now to prove to the world's 1.3 billion Muslims that Islamic extremism is theologically not at all right and this can only be done by moderate Islamic scholars like K.H.A. Mustofa Bisri. The Mid East is obviously the place to target such campaign and more so Egypt. Naturally the center of Islamic studies is Cairo, especially now that the Mubarak regime has fallen and the way the Egyptian Islam was kept or escaped state controls. It is a fact that the Muslim clergy despite being appointed and also paid by the Mubarak government "ran away" and largely joined extremist ideas. At the end they chose to join the forces that brought Mubarak down.

From the preface to the English edition

The Illusion of an Islamic State represents a landmark achievement in the field of counter-radicalization, which demonstrates how an alliance of moderate Muslim leaders can effectively isolate, and discredit, the ideology of religious hatred, supremacy and violence that underlies and animates terrorism. As such, it warrants serious study—as well as the wide dissemination, and application, of its findings—by public policy makers, journalists and people of good will of every faith and nation, who care about the threat to humanity posed by Islamist ideology, terrorism and a rising tide of Islamophobia in the West. If the Muslim world, including the contemporary Middle East, is to navigate a path between the Scylla and Charybdis of temporal and religious authoritarianism—and, at long last, provide its inhabitants with the kinds of civil liberty, and rule of law, that people in the West have come to take for granted—it can only do so by applying the principles articulated in this visionary work. For the renowned Muslim theologians who authored The Illusion of an Islamic State have issued a stirring theological defense of freedom, grounded in a profoundly spiritual understanding of Islam that is capable of deepening and broadening, rather than destroying, Muslims' faith. As such, it represents a unique contribution from Indonesia to the world, offered in the spirit of love, compassion and respect.