

Western Political Discourse on Islam and Its Reflection

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Abstract

The relation between the Islamic East and the American and European West is potentially an important concept in discussions about religious coexistence. The domination of a discourse in opposition with coexistence can be a major obstacle in the formation of peace and the relations between the two worlds. The political discourse between the West and the Islamic world, though not always the same during time has been based on three main concepts of authorization, ethnocentricity, supremacy, well after the modernity. In other words, the West has exhibited a different, negative image of Islam, while presenting liberalism as the best model culture. The universalization of such a model has been pursued through modernity and technical ability. The discourse has been the hegemon for a long while. Even the East acknowledged it and developed the center-margin model of coexistence based on Wallerstein's theory, which gradually turned into the Islamic rival discourse. The political Islam tried to improve a social and political identity by rejecting the western discourse. After September 11, both discourses tended towards fundamentalism, and rivalry and confrontation replaced coexistence. In fact, a second Cold War was developed between the West and Muslim World. It seems that such a dialogical, polarized condition would not be apt to maintain any effective discourse. In this article, the elements and processes in the formation of such a discourse, and the effects on the existing challenges would be explained.

Keywords: Discourse, West, Islam, Otherness, Coexistence, Fundamentalism, Orientalism

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Introduction

From the beginning of modernity, when the West and the Christian Europe tried to develop a distinct identity for itself, defining the east as the "other" became necessary and the West took measures to define itself in contrast to the "other". Edward Said believes that orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the "orient" and the "occident" and East is an image of a strange and underdeveloped (other) versus the developed West. This kind of orientalism is (patriarchal, self-centered, racist and imperialistic (Said, 1978: 43). The orient signifies a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the orient into Western learning. The orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. Said here clearly illustrates that the logical theorizing perspective from which to construct orientalism is not that of the "orient" but that of its opposite side -- the "occident." That is, the "orient" is merely what exists in the eyes of certain Western people. It is constructed as an "other" opposed to the occident.

The story exemplifies Edward Said's well-known pronouncement in *orientalism*: "When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting the end points of analysis the result is usually to polarize the distinction the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western – and the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies. short, from its earliest modern history to the present, Orientalism as a form thought for dealing with the foreign has typically shown the altogether



regrettable tendency of any knowledge based on such hard-and-fast distinctions ... to channel thought into a West or an East compartment.” (Said, 1979, 45-46). Said argues that the European dominance over the East is not only political but also economical as well as cultural. This matter involves constructing a certain discourse named (orientalism), which is based on intensifying differences between the friend (Europe, West, us) and the stranger (East, West, they or other) (Saeed, 2007: 9). Edward Said believes that, in the literary context, the static and recessive orient is reproduced continuously in western literature (Turner, 2004: 4).

In the direction of realization of the "peaceful coexistence between Islam and West" project, what seems necessary is to change the political discourse in the West against the East, especially Islam. The political discourse between Islam and West based on three elements of making otherness, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism which is accompanied by domination prevents creating a suitable discourse climate. In this article, we try to review the political discourse of West which has prevented the realization of peaceful coexistence.

The main questions of the article include: 1) what are the central signifier elements of the political discourse of the West? 2) How the political discourse of West⁽¹⁾ influences the peaceful relationships between West and the Islamic world and how it creates a challenge between West and East and prevents peaceful coexistence between the two cultures? In this direction, we examine the relationship between West and Islam in theoretical framework of discourse analysis and to analyze and examine the available methods for creating coexistence between Islam and West through studying documents as well as on the basis of Documentary methods. At first we need to define in summary the concepts of coexistence, peaceful coexistence and discourse.

Coexistence: this is a concept used originally by the head of Soviet delegation, Chichrin, at the Geneva conference in 1992. It



implied the era of cold war between two systems of capitalism and socialism which had agreed to cooperate in economic fields and to have a peaceful coexistence.

In terms of international law, peaceful coexistence means a kind of inter-countries relationships with different social and political systems: It means observing principles of the right of sovereignty, equality of rights, immunity and territorial integrity of all countries with whatever size; nonintervention in internal affairs of other countries, respecting the right of all the people to elect a free social system of their own as well as solving international problems through negotiation (Kariminia,2008: 17). In terms of this important principle, people of countries with different religions and beliefs get along with each other peacefully and settle their differences through peaceful means. Stally Brass (1982), in the (dictionary of new thought), describes coexistence as following: In sociology, the relations of mutual dependence are named coexistence if the groups are different and their ties are complementary to each other (Stally Brass, 1982: 835).

Lessons from the Peaceful Coexistence debate for International Law and Law-making in periods of competing systems or colliding civilizations:⁽²⁾ First, keep open the lines of communication at all times with other competing systems and seek out a dialogue. Second, try to de-ideologise any inter-systemic dialogue by avoiding non-productive rhetorical debate over abstract ideology and dogma by concentrating wherever possible on concrete and immediate tension-issues between the competing systems, and seeking common solutions on a basis of mutuality and reciprocity of interest in any common consensus-based outcomes.

By Islamic-Western coexistence, this article intends a situation in which cultural differences are acknowledged. In other words, each side accepts cultural distinctions without yearning superiority, and tries to communicate based on mutual respect for the sake of peace keeping. This implies the pluralist discourse. Discourse: discourse is



viewed as a phenomenon which has its own properties, properties which have an impact on people and their social interactions. These properties include systems of categorization, metaphors, narratives, frames, and other interpretative schema that can influence cognition, perception, and action within communities of shared discourse. (Karlberg, 2005).

In Michel Foucault's view "discourse involves the difference between what can be said accurately in a certain time, under logical and grammatical rules and what is said in practice. (Azdanlu, 2004: 18) Any property of discourse that expresses, establishes, confirms or emphasizes a self-interested group opinion, perspective or position, especially in a broader socio-political context of social struggle, is a candidate for special attention in such an ideological analysis. Such discourse structures usually have the social function of legitimating dominance or justifying concrete actions of power abuse by the elites (Van Dijk, 1999).

Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough believe that discourses are always born in the inside of power and ideology; then they will grow and spread. These discourses marginalize other ones for a time and rule over the society as the dominant system of meaning. Whenever a discourse is unable to reproduce itself and lose its meaningfulness force, one of the rival discourses will be replaced that (Moghadamfar, 2009). According to Ernesto Laclau "discourse is a kind of analysis which does not refer to real things, but it addresses the conditions of possibility. The fundamental assumption of every analyses of discursivity is that the possibility of imagination, thought and action is related to structuring of meaningful area which exists beyond any objective immediacy (Mac Donell, 1998: 56). The meaning of objective and external realities is determined in terms of discourses so that there is no meaning and meaningful reality beyond them. Human beings always live within a discourse. Each discourse maintains and identifies some possibilities and deletes others. Not any single discourse is able to produce the whole possible meaning (Bashiriye:



1999: 26-27). Our recognition and action would be meaningful only within a discourse, which has been constructed beforehand (Tajik, 2004: 44). These recognition and action are the basis for judgment and movements; thus social and political identities are the results of discourses (ibid, 2004: 49).

So, modernism, as a post-discourse tries to make a kind of ontological and epistemological distinction between binaries patterns such as East/West, Islam/Christianity, civilized/Barbar, as well as to define itself in terms of defining an inferior "other", in order to obtain a consistent meaning, thought, theory and identity through the elimination and making otherness process. (Ashraf Nazari, 2008: 319). Jacques Derrida says: all the Western ideas form pairs of double contrasts in which the member is regarded as superior and prior and marginalizes the other member (ibid, 2008: 320). Regarding the necessity of creating "other" for explaining one's identity, Huntington says: if there is no Barbarian in the real world, we should create them. The world can be understood better in terms of conflicting concepts. Natural consistency is a dangerous illusion (Bashiriye, 1999: 138).

I- Discourse Analysis Theory

In recent years the theory of discourse in various areas of humanity has been applied extensively. One can attribute the main cause of this extension to dissatisfaction of positivism. Development of this theory has been also influenced by a linguistic turnabout in 1970s and hermeneutic theories, critical theory and post structuralism in 1960s and 1970s. This theory stresses on the role of language in representation and also in constructing social reality. According to this theory, reality is accessible only through language. In fact, the world is the result of discourses and things and phenomena obtain meaning only through discourse. Change in discourse brings about a change in the social world and conflicts in discourse leads to the change and reproduction of social reality (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 189). This theory assigns a pivotal role for understanding social phenomena



and relations and how they change the political processes, contrast and conflicts between making otherness forces over formation of social meaning (Moghadamfar, 2009). According to David Howarth, the theory of discourse pays attention to meaningful role of social actions and ideas in the political life and evaluates semantic systems and speeches which form man's impression of his especial role in the society and politics in a historical period of time (Howarth, 1995: 115-133). According to the theory of discourse, all the social developments are the results of semantic conflicts between the discourses. Discourses try continuously to maintain the meaning of "insider" and rejecting the meaning of "outsider". In this view, semantic domination on public opinion is the best and the most effective way of exercising power. Through semantic strategies discourses compete with each other to attract public opinion; and the rest of social developments are subject to semantic conflicts (Soltani, 2004: 73).

During the processes of producing discourse, some discourses are forbidden or suppressed and some are accepted. Discourses are divided, in this process, into logical / illogical or true/false and throughout a process named will focus on the truth, true discourses are preferred to false ones (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 191). According to Stuart Hall, the discourse constitutes a series of statements which equip a language for talking about a certain type of knowledge of a topic. Discourse does not include a single statement; rather there are several statements at work to form something which Foucault calls "formulation of discourse". In this formulation of discourse, Foucault presents the links of knowledge and power; and believes that discourses are the institutions of knowledge and are always inherent in a social institution and are tied to power as well as to produce the methods of understanding (Sabouri, 2008: 76). Power, in Foucault's view, (which is laid in all ranks of society as well as in human actions and movements) gives the discourse a determinant and hegemonic character. According to Foucault's view power should not be limited



to political institutions; because it is in the whole society and plays a directly productive role (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 192). An example of formulation of discursivity is colonial discourse. If a part of the world is to colonize another part and rule over it, it is necessary for both, the colonizer and the colonized, to perceive and represent the world in a certain way. In fact, representing the production of meaning is done through conceptual and discourse frameworks (Sabouri, 2008: 78-79). Laclau and Mouffe believe that every action and phenomenon should be put into a system of discourse if it's to be meaningful and understandable. Nothing has a distinct identity by itself, but obtains its identity from a discourse within which it lies (Moghadamfar, 2009). To understand better the theory of discourse of Laclau and Mouffe, we review the concepts used in this theory.

All the current discourses present in political arena, turn to authoritative measures targeted to political affairs in order to dominate and expand their desired truth. In other words, the success of political groups depends on their ability in producing meaning (Soltani, 2004: 89). In Laclau and Mouffe's view, discourse is a scope in which a set of signs becomes a network and their meaning is fixed there. Every sign which enters this network and is cemented to other signs by the action of articulation is a one time. The meaning of these symbols is the result of their difference from each other. The meaning of the symbols within a discourse is fixed partially around a central point. The central point is a significant and distinct symbol from which other symbols become regulated and articulated to each other. The fixation of the meaning of a symbol within a discourse takes place through rejection of other possible meanings of that symbol. Accordingly, the discourse reduces the possible meanings (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111). According to Laclau and Mouffe, there is no distinction between discourse and non-discourse phenomena. Production, reproduction and changing the meaning are political actions. Politics has a general meaning and refers to a state in which we continuously construct the society in a way which rejects other



ways (and Jorgenson and Philips, 2002: 36). In fact, politics is organizing society in a specific way so that it rejects other ways. Thus, different discourses may challenge and conflict with each other over the society organizing with their own method.

Hegemony: the concept of hegemony or domination which finds its root in Gramsci's thinking is the fundamental concept in the theory of Laclau and Mouffe. In the thinking of Gramsci, this concept refers to the process of producing meaning and thought to gain and stabilize the authority. hegemony predicates dominance on satisfaction, consensus and convince instead of force, and thus brings the legitimization for hegemonic system (Moghadamfar, 2009). By invoking the concept of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe tried to explain outward processes influencing the awareness of people. By developing the concept of Hegemony, they conclude that an identity given to social agents is realized only by articulation within a hegemonic formulation and has no stability and objectivity. The field of hegemonic actions is an antagonistic social compass as well as different forces and projects conflicting and competing with each other in order to attract social actors and also to impose their desired discourse (Moghadamfar, 2009).

Hegemony is a political logic that leads to the creation of common sense and consent. Laclau considers the political projects of established special discourses as the exercise of hegemony. The hegemonization of a discourse means the success in instituting a set of confidential meanings (Hosseinizadeh, 2004: 194). Hegemony as a process is the perpetual stabilization of identities. Therefore, the solidarity of classes and class subjects is broken into a series of fragile, but dependent situations which could only be unified through hegemony (Luclua, Butler, Zizek, 2000: 54). Thus if a certain signified gets close to a specific signifier so that there is consensus on a certain meaning for a signifier in the society, that signifier becomes hegemonic. Whenever the signifier of a discourse becomes hegemonic, the whole discourse dominates. Hegemonization of sign



means that it has been accepted in a vast level of public opinion, or rather there is a kind of blockage even though temporarily, in the meaning of the sign. Thus one can evaluate the success of political initiatives according to their ability in relative fixation of meaning in a specific and limited area (De-Vos, 2003: 167).

Each discourse in order to stay in the field of semantic developments and conflicts of society defines and stabilizes the intended meaning and acts for making articulation as well as hegemony of the current signifier in the discourse area. Signifiers without meaning are ready to attract meaning as well as the intended meaning of the discourse. In this process every discourse that attracts fluid signifiers and places them in its discourse area and at the same time makes attempts to weaken the norms and beliefs of the opposite discourses, becomes the dominant discourse (Zare, 2007: 49).

As an example, in the international relations, the discourse of "neoconservative" based on secular philosophy and liberal policy, is superior to other discourses. As long as the meaningfulness of the fluid signifiers in the field of discourse of international relations is done through this dominant discourse, the interests of the countries supporting this discourse is provided better and all the international issues and affairs and political trans-boundary actions are formulated on behalf of this discourse. The United States' performance as the world power is the result of this discourse superiority (ibid, 2007: 51). Whenever a discourse becomes dominant and creates its desired man and world, acts to establish "otherness" and builds up itself versus it. For some the September 11 attacks were an act of "inventing otherness", not a defensive reaction done by neoconservative discourse. In different periods of time, the US invoked "inventing otherness" about Fascism (the WWII), "communism" (the cold war) and "terrorism" (after September 11 attacks), to demonstrate its superior discourse as well as to mention its efficiency (ibid, 2007: 52). Rejecting the values of the rival discourse also plays an effective role in fixation and establishment of the dominant discourse. Defining the



truth in a discourse and rejecting other meanings brings about different discourse worlds which according to their power of "attraction" and "rejection" and in a certain situations become hegemonic and determine the measure (ibid, 2007: 53). Thus it becomes clear that the western identities are also the result of discourses; the identities which clearly maintain their bordering with the identities of outsiders.

The concepts of inventing otherness and hegemony:

Inventing otherness occurs whenever there is a conflict between discourses. But it is not a long lasting process and diminishes by hegemonic intervention. Hegemonic intervention is an articulation which reconstructs an unambiguous situation by force and thus causes the partial fixation of the meaning (Laclau, 1993: 282). Hegemony and deconstruction are two sides of a coin. The former causes a signifier to near a certain signified and it also brings about the relative fixation of a sign meaning, while deconstruction, by attributing a different signified and meaning to the signifier, removes the signifier attributed to the signifier by the rival discourse and redefines the signifier, and thus breaks the hegemony of the discourse. Hegemony is the conditional articulation of the element in an unknown sphere, while deconstruction is an operation which shows that hegemonic intervention is itself conditional and provisional and the elements might have been composed in a different way. Deconstruction is the most important concept introduced by Derrida.

Deconstruction is the most important concept, meaning searching for institutions and foundations as well as deconstructing the tradition and discovering its constructing elements. Derrida studies the bipolar contrasts and double differences of western thought by deconstructing his self-established thought so that he regards the former essential categories existing in the history of western philosophy as a system of both possible and arbitrary choices. Deconstruction shows how glorification discourses are vulnerable



internally and owe their existence and identity to otherness and confrontation with other (Hosseinizadeh,2004: 196). According to Derrida the meaning of every being is defined through its contrast with other being. In this logic, the relationship is between the two sides or poles which are the force of the movement and the evolution. Also, in this logic one side is regarded as superior to the other, and this superior one is the basis for defining the other side. (Nojumian, 2003-2004: 122). By constructing a bipolar relationship in the world, West has put itself as a superior force with power, technology and modernity at the one end and the East, especially Islam as the inferior side and opposite to the West at the other end, has invented "otherness" to legitimize its domination.

Among other western political discourses versus Islam is Ethnocentrism, especially Euro-centrism by the West, in which the western man constructs his relationships and ties with the world and other cultures and civilizations based on Euro-centrism, and this motivated the West in domination over the world and imperialism. Euro-centrism as an exceptionalism view towards human culture and civilizations has been studied as a threat and a self-centered process. Euro-centrism has played a definite role in forming the cognitions of modernism and developing Eurocentric thought of modernism. This approach in confrontation with Islam provided motivation and rejuvenation in the Muslims' system of thinking.

Bobby Sayyid Said believes that Eurocentric discourse is going to rise in a situation when the West is no longer regarded the center of the world. However, Eurocentric discourse tries to regain this centrality (Sayyid, 2000: 74). In the modern discourse of (identity/otherness), the Islamic culture is described as illogical, subservient and stagnant and consequently a non-western culture. Such a view which has a political and ideological nature has a Eurocentric outlook towards the issue. Hale believes that before industrial revolution, Europe was no different from other parts of the world, especially Asia and the existing difference is not intrinsic and



genetic but, it is the result of new scientific experiences (Ameli, 2006). In his Eurocentric studies in sociology, Mac Lenan has studied the reasons of unilateralism in sociology with its Eurocentric approach; he has considered the outlook that traditional spheres of science such as sociology still maintain their European self-centered dimension. In Post-imperialistic and poststructuralist perspective of sociology and many other fields of knowledge have preserved their dictatorial and self-reflective approaches on the basis of Euro-centrality (ibid, 2006). Ethnocentric attitudes of Europeans and western intellectuals towards Islam has a phenomenological and discursive character in terms of which they present their identity in relation to discursivity, outsiders (Islam) which should be marginalized (Nazari, 2008: 320).

In a word, the development of European thought was challenging the public, religious and local spaces. Weakening the religion is done through the "objective" and "subjective" structures. The weakening of objective structures is based on constructing social and political systems that marginalize the place of religion in the sphere of political and social authority. This process is imposed upon Islamic societies through secularization and setting up the secular-liberal political systems of democracy. Weakening intellectual structures towards religion is realized by means of making change on the beliefs of religion's followers and neighboring societies in religion and religious institutions (Ameli, 2006).

One of the most obvious examples of weakening intellectual weakening of religious beliefs, which is also an illustration of an exclusionist initiative, is presenting a horrifying picture of Islam and the Muslims. Islamic terror is a term introduced in western media aiming at displaying the ignobility as well as the weakness of Islam and Muslims. Using Islam and Muslim words along with terror, being against human rights, threat, and violence, anti-women, backwardness and barbarianism are some examples of Islam and Muslims savagery which is constantly seen in the news as well as documentaries and fiction of west media. Islamo-phobic is a new term which emerged at



the end of the last century and the beginning of the new century and in fact it is representative of a strong trend which puts the Muslims under a mental and social stress. This term goes beyond racism, because more generally includes all the Muslims. In this new form of religious racism, Muslims are persecuted regardless of their originality and even if they are originally European, they are continuously accused of theft, violence, extremism, fundamentalism, non-tolerance and so and so. (Taheri Mousavi, 2007: 73).

II- The Muslim Response

Generally, in reaction to the political discourse of West as well as to getting rid of the label of "other", the Muslim countries act in two forms: first by turning to "reform in Islam" and "rejuvenation of Islam"; secondly by (Islamic Fundamentalism). The issue of rejuvenation and renovation of Islam and at a more advanced level, the reconstruction of religious thinking in order to solve the backwardness and internal decline problem and dealing with the issue of West as well as invasion of Western culture, civilization and colonialism was put forth and followed by the leaders, scientists, reformers and religious intellectuals of the Islamic world during recent centuries.

Bobby Sayyid believes that it's likely that Islam has many signifieds³⁾, but it's never without signified. He regards Islam not a signifier⁴⁾ without the signified, but a signifier that its meaning has been presented by means of conducted formulations. Signifiers usually preserve some prints of previous formulations, but it is possible to formulate and reformulate these prints in several chains. He argues that for Muslims, Islam is not a normal element of their discourse, but the center and foundation of their Islamic narratives. Islamists present Islam as the superior signifier of their political discourse in that it's the point unifying their discursivity efforts (Said, 2000: 63).

According to Huntington, "the simultaneous effort of West to



globalize its values and institutions, maintaining its military and economic superiority and intervention in the conflicts of the Islamic world has provoked the outrage of Muslims". (Huntington, 2001: 235). Bobby Sayyid defines Islamism and the rejuvenation of Islam by the term "returning of the suppressed". He relates the cause of Westerners fear of Islamic fundamentalism to the very matter and believes that the rejuvenation of Islam, in a broader level illustrates the cultural and political anxiety of the West; Because, Islamic fundamentalism has questioned the hypotheses which leads us to see the West as the example of the political, social, cultural as well as intellectual progress and also it challenges the universalism of the West and stresses on its deficiencies (Said, 2000: 16).

The important feature of Islamism is setting the ground for formation of a distinct and unique identity in a world in which the globalized capital and mass media dominant over public culture are creating universal (Western) identities (Ashraf Nazari, 2008, 321). In the West's view what makes Islam the only probable option for confrontation, is the structural capacity of Islam in establishing an identity and a universal mechanism which claims to be universal (ibid, 2008: 322). According to Bobby Sayyid, for Western analysts, Islamism is a horrifying, threatening and complex issue which like "the spirit" has an ubiquitous character and is able to put the liberal institutions into chaos (Said, 2000: 22). Some scholars believe that the emergence of political identity of Islam can be examined in relation to "Western hegemony" which is based on Christian values and tries to globalize its own values and institutions (Ashraf Nazari, 2008: 326).

Fundamentalism is one of the symbols of spreading conflicts at the level of universal cultures which by "decentralization of the West", emphasizes the traditional and cultural self-consciousness. The current fashion in post-colonial studies has reinforced this decentralized view of the world: "It is commonly assumed that globalization has had two effects on political systems around the world. On the one hand, globalization has reduced the minimum



efficient scale of politics, resulting in the proliferation of nations .On the other hand, globalization has also been associated – on the same logic – with decentralization within nations.”⁽⁶⁾.

In this approach fundamentalism is a kind of resistance and fighting against the process of western modernization and modernism which is seen more in societies undergone a real or imaginative crisis of identity. Consequently, fundamentalism is a symbol of "policy of identity" in which fundamentalists everywhere present their perspective as a way of getting rid of the dominant western culture, and try to reconstruct their native culture. In fact, Islamic fundamentalism has been formed in order to fight westernization of the world and the universal thinking based on centrality of the West; and in this orientation it has a close overlapping to post-modernist perspective derived from within the West, this challenges the universalism of western thinking, especially recent Euro-centrism which intends to renew the centrality of Europe in the modern world. (Said, 2000: 86). At the end, he points out that the emergence of Islamism is based on debilitation and devastation of Euro-centrism. Decentralization of the West has created an atmosphere in which different cultural sets are able to search for different political terms; so it's better to regard Islamism as a new area of moral, cultural, political as well as social action instead of a name for a group of radical political movements (ibid, 2000: 86). Fundamentalists are affiliated deeply with those principles and original foundations which were based on manifests of the book, the tradition, and the manner of pious predecessors with manifest instances such as Ibn-Timieh, and in a way it is the continuation of the past process of ancestralism (Movassaghi, 2001: 110).

The theorists of Islamic radicalism paid deep attention to the reason, deduction (Ejtihad), and innovation of the new sciences, and in addressing the issue of the West, despite fighting its colonial character, believed in borrowing and adapting its advanced science and technology. The radical reformers were going to renew and



reconstruct the religious thinking and to formulate a comprehensive system of thought which would be answerable to new questions and modern needs in all aspects and could remedy the domestic decadence and backwardness and deal properly with the western culture and civilization (ibid, 2001: 136).

What makes non-western (other) dissatisfaction in the face of Christian culture of the West is the universal and populist idea of the modernization theorists about the Christian culture upon which the culture of the West is global or must be so. They claim that not only the West has led the world to a new society, but all the other civilizations become westernized in the process of their progress, they abandon their traditional values, institutions and beliefs and replace them with homonymous instances in the West (Huntington, 2001:241). The main problem in the relationships between the West and other parts of the world is the inconsistency between the efforts of the West, especially the USA, in promoting the western culture as a universal culture and the inability of the West in realization of this matter. Disintegration of communism and strengthening of this viewpoint in the West that ideology of liberal-democracy has won a global victory, and now has a universal prestige has showed the above mentioned inconsistency more clearly (Said, 2000: 89). Bobby Sayyid argues that now the emergence of Islamism is a part of hegemonic campaign for formulation of roots and the contrast between the logic of Islamism and the logic of Euro-centrism, is a combat over how we should write the history of the future. (Said, 2000: 89).

What seems a solution to the crisis of the West in confronting the East, especially the world of Islam is a discourse outside the current political discourse of the West? In the era of globalization; in the world of interdependency, and in the space of global village, and given the spread of intra-national relations and abandoning the national frontiers active discourse can be regarded as the best strategy for changing the culture of the dispute and contention to compromise and understanding, especially when globalization has created the



atmosphere of discourse and global understanding. Discourse is an opportunity for strengthening the Islamic identity and religion in the era of globalization.

In discourse the parties' concerned attempt to express the truth. In discourse, the purpose is not only expressing the stance of one's own and rejecting the others, but the goal is to solve the problem, or consultation and cooperation of the parties in the direction of fact-finding. In discourse, the hope is that at the end, the view of the parties become closer to each other so that they can improve their knowledge of the reality and each other's positions. (Dehshiri, 2005: 378). Realization of discourse involves providing some requirements of it and observing the practices of interaction and exchange of ideas. These include: double discourse⁶ free from the unequal relations, domineeringly and stressful, making confidence, cooperation and de-stress in order to allow peaceful coexistence and to experience in the stable trade process, and reject absolute reflection, cultural belief superiority, prejudice, extremism, Ethnocentric, distrust (ibid, 2005: 377-378).

Conclusion

Critical examination of ethnocentrism and euro-centrism of the western culture and civilization is a matter which is the result of globalization and inter-cultural philosophy. With dissemination of cultural relativism which later become more prevalent and involved ontological areas, the idea of supremacy of one culture and integration of other cultures into a lofty western culture was criticized severely. Cultural relativism is based on cultural difference. Difference is one of the key concepts in poststructuralist cultural theory and according to Derrida is the most irreducible thing about our "time" (Minler, 2006: 181). In fact it is argued that difference is a value, and being different is right. The ideas about difference try to find out the diverse forms of identity and human experience. This is constantly in contrast to "universal" affairs (Smith, 2004: 379).



“This common belief that it is the political and economic power which drives the western culture is an illusion, because the power is inherent in western culture not an accessory to it. Orientalism has attacked other cultures through this power and the West has achieved a historical supremacy by this aggression” (Davari, 2007: 63). The western philosophy delineated a deep boundary between the new / the past and Eastern / western culture. Edward Said believes that Orientalists’ explanation about the east and Islam is based on four main topics. These involve the general approach of the West and the basis of its discourse: there is an absolute resistance between the West and the east, unreal representation of the east based on Subjective interpretations, the east is unchangeable and it is dependent and obedient. The western orientalist is, on the one hand, fond of the eastern culture but humiliates its people on the other hand. This humiliation is not because the people of the geographical east have cut themselves from their past, but it is because their thought and action is not consistent with the standards of western thought, action, practice and custom (ibid: 67). A confrontation between the east and the West was a western initiative and it was the West who, for the first time, took to academic research about other cultures. In general, the western discourse is supremacist toward the Eastern.

Discourse is not the language of discourse, in that it leads the audience and determines what he should or should not say. This language has been created by those having power. But the language of discourse is the language of freedom and conformity and has a connection and unity with freedom. Domination of politics and politicization is a great barrier in the way of conformity. Whenever politics tries to determine culture, it not only damages the former but also engenders futile and violent disputes (ibid: 239-235). There may be no culture which is dominant by itself, unless in the political sphere it is formed as cultural imperialism which is absolutist. In fact, politics means organizing the society in a certain way; a way in which one discourse becomes hegemonic and compete with other



discourses fighting each other over organizing the society in their desired form. Fighting over creating meaning has a pivotal role and in terms of this theory, dispute and confrontation embraces all ranks of society.

In order to create identity and defeat different identities, the dominant discourse rejects all other identities. Creating an inventing otherness relationship which always involves inventing an enemy that has great importance for establishing political borders. So, the discourse between the cultures and religions begins by the discourse between them is not effective. Intercultural communication can be started with discourse between them. Discourse can delete many cliché images but it can be an effective discourse only when it is done with conditions and in terms. And discourse in conditions means the grounds for discourse. A discourse in an inappropriate political and social condition would not be helpful. Both the dominant western discourse about Islam or fundamentalist discourse are two discourses predominant over political, social as well as cultural spheres which has narrowed the space for effective inter-cultural and inter-faith discourse. The prerequisite for a discourse is avoiding a feeling of superiority, recognizing the other's independent identity and respecting it. Here another principle comes up, that is preparation to learn and solve the problems in common. In a discourse in conditions, the parties should have readiness to acknowledge their errors and correct them and also they should not be afraid of self-criticism (Falatori, 2002: 74-76). This does not mean eliminating the discourses. Conferences and chat shows as well as discussions increase the grounds for intercultural communications. Thus it is necessary that the countries system of education attempt to do this and from the beginning train the way of discourse, tolerance and mutual respect. But the matter is that there are many political and cultural structural inhibitions which if they don't change, communication and discourse and, at a higher level symbiosis seems difficult.



In the recent decade, a movement has begun in the Islamic world which somehow intends to confront the discourse dominant in the West which even the Islamic east believed in it. The movement presents a deconstructive reading of Islam as a superior signifier and tries to redefine the discourse of the modern and modernity beyond the western modernity and remove it from the limit of Euro-centrism. Islamism is not an illogical movement. Although it's fundamentalist form has a military and illogical identity, but Islamism is seeking a kind of local modernity. By calling all the Islamic affairs fundamentalist and based on its ongoing orientalism and under the western discourse about Islam, the West has failed to know it.

Notes

1. "Western world" includes Europe, as well as many countries of European colonial origin with substantial European ancestral populations in the Americas and Oceania.
2. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL LAW, Peaceful Coexistence and Contemporary International Law In: http://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ls/McWhinney_outline_PS.pdf.
3. the Concept.
4. the Image.
5. Garrett, Geoffrey, Jonathan Rodden(2001) Globalization and Fiscal Decentralization, P. 30: <http://www.international.ucla.edu/cms/files/globdec.pdf>.
6. Double discourse basically refers to two different forms of communication or expressions that are occurring simultaneously.

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