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Document Date: **2/11/2006**

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Subject/Description: **2006 MISCELLANEOUS OUT BOX MATERIALS
(UNCLASSIFIED) -- KHATAMI SPEECH IN "ISLAM AND
THE WEST" -- ARTICLE FROM YAHOO NEWS, "TIMELINE
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Khatami Speech in "Islam and the West" Conference, Malaysia

Service: Politic
1384/11/22
02-11-2006
11:42:34
News Code :8411-11716

ISNA - Tehran
Service: Politic

Former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami participated in an international conference on "Islam and the West" in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



According to ISNA, the full text of Khatami speech in this conference is as below:

In the Name of God

Who can speak on behalf of Islam and as the representative of the Muslim world? There is no easy answer, if this question is to be replied to with "Insight" and "Cognition". But it appears, I may have foreshadowed my desired response, which is "insight" and "cognition". Only those with insight and cognition of Islam and the Islamic world can speak on behalf of Muslims. Before further elaboration we require some reflection.

With the emergence of "Secularism" after the 18th century, long-standing concepts also gradually become secularized, and inline with secularism "insight", which is in essence a spiritual, religious, philosophical and or moral concept, was transformed into "Intellectual", and those with cognition came to be known as Academicians or Scholars. Albeit Academy is the garden of Plato and Intellectus is collective wisdom, which is more moral than material, words are not obliged adhere to their historical roots as they evolve.

Turning to our brief answer: Only those with insight and cognition, or put differently, only academicians and scholars can represent the world of Islam. But that is not to say that any academician and scholar is qualified to do so. To further explain, we must construct a more precise typology of the academicians and scholars of the Islamic world.

If we divide the scholars of the Islamic world into two groups of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, and further divide each group based on the method of education and research, and sources of study and thought, into traditional and modern, we will be faced with four groups:

1. Traditional Muslim scholars (including jurists, experts of hadith, and commentators, both Shia and Sunni)

2. Modern Muslim scholars (also known as Muslim intellectuals)

3. Traditional non-Muslim scholars (such as the orientalist and Islamologists of the nineteenth century up to about the third decade of the second half of the twentieth century, who were mostly philologues, historians, geography experts, archeologists and specialists in heresiography)

4. Modern non-Muslim scholars (usually comprised of journalists, sociologists, economists and experts in political science and international law)

To understand the thoughts and language of the first group, their main source of knowledge and thought must be examined.

The speed at which sciences grew in the first centuries of Islam will amaze any researcher. Surely this speedy growth was inspired by the teachings of the Holy Quran and the many religious sayings on the subject knowledge and scholarship.

Today we are more or less familiar with the internal and external sources of Islamic scholarship as well as many figures of the Islamic civilization, including jurists, experts of hadith, theologians, philosophers, commentators, mystics, astrologists, mathematicians, physicians, and literary experts. What has been neglected, is not the way Islamic scholars perceived Greek philosophy and the other sciences and teachings that were transferred to the Islamic world, rather it is the way they perceived Islamic sources.

Islamic sciences—including the history of jurisprudence, theology and interpretation of the Quran—were faced with unique constrictions, restrictions and facilities; and without recognizing their circumstances and obstacles, a more precise answer cannot be provided on the extent that these scholars participated in speaking on behalf of the Islamic world.

In this midst what has greater clarity and can be spoken about in more definite terms is the fact that the first condition of answering and speaking on behalf of the Islamic world is understanding the elements of thought and culture in today's world. Without sufficient understanding of today's world, with all its complexities and difficulties, no matter how well-versed a scholar is their field, they cannot speak on behalf of Islam in such a world.

The second group, which also consists of Islamic intellectuals, have in recent history come to be know as the resurrectors and reformers. However, many prominent figures can be cited which have been classified in both the first and second group.

Surely intellectuals are better acquainted with the contemporary world, but how many of them are well-acquainted with the main sources of Islamic scholarship, foremost of which is the Holy Quran? How accustomed are they with the work of their predecessors? Moreover, to what extent are they fond of or even infatuated with Western civilization? Have they been able to impartially assess Western civilization in the same critical and detached manner as they have evaluated their own history and traditions?

The third group, namely the orientalist and Islamologists of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries have conducted remarkable research and study into the details of the Islamic world and civilization. But it is commonly known that for most of these researchers Islamic civilization and scholarship belongs to the past and at most it was alive and well until the sixteenth century and with the emergence of the new all-encompassing world civilization, not only its exteriorities and symbols, but also its very base and foundation belongs to the past and in a museum. Even though these scholars have significant research and study in many areas, one cannot and should not rely upon their work to speak on behalf of Islam and the Islamic civilization in the modern world.

But the fourth group, the modern Western non-Muslim intellectuals and Islamologists, in addition to having the same shortcoming as the third group, they have an additional problem which results from being exposed to new issues that are critically important and often political, which were almost unheard of by their predecessors. When dealing with present-day political occurrences these intellectuals see themselves obliged to create theories in political sociology to justify and explain them. These theories cannot outlive the political phenomena which have been their real subject, and as a result, they are distanced from offering consistent and comprehensive views.

I must emphasize that this categorization has only been for the purpose of easing the discussion and cannot be free from shortcomings.

With a brief glance at this typology it becomes clear that none of these groups can serve as a complete representative of the Islamic belief and the Islamic world. The ideal type of representative of Islam should possess the most significant advantages of each of the mentioned groups while lacking their significant shortcomings. Recounting the distinctive features of this group also requires adequate discussion in the various, but significant, aspects of Islamic teachings, which must be addressed elsewhere.

But beyond this academic discussion, Islam and the Islamic world are realities which cannot be denied. All this discussion and argument and even commotion and plans regarding the Islamic world serve as the greatest testimony to the existence of this important reality in our time.

Thus, I ask to be permitted to speak about Muslim people and the condition Muslim societies have today.

In the eyes of a believing Muslim, Islam is a religion that has been revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam and in accordance with the teachings of Quran, a Muslim is—as is the Prophet himself—a believer of this religion.

The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His books, and His Messengers. (They say,) "We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers"—and they say, "We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all)." Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets a reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned. "Our Lord! Punish us not if we forget or fall into error, our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those

before us (Jews and Christians); our Lord! Put not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Pardon us and grant us Forgiveness. Have mercy on us. You are our Patron (Supporter and Protector) and give us victory over the disbelieving people”.

Holy Quran 2:285-6

In accordance with the explicit expression of this holy verse we can see that firstly, a Muslim is someone that believes in all the prophets and places no difference between them, and secondly, that humans are plagued with faults and forgetfulness and suffer from a host of sensual, social and historical limitations. Islam is nothing but heeding and obeying and submitting before the Almighty God who is absolute and unlimited wisdom, knowledge, kindness, beauty and love. But what must be considered alongside the essence and truth of religion, which is consistent between all revealed religions and supersedes the limitations of history, time and place, is that Islam has—similar to other revealed religions—emerged in a historical context which is associated with the internal and external situation and conditions of humans. Thus a religion that has emerged in a historical context will naturally face limitations in other periods of history. A calamity that has occurred in regards to all religions is that humans who have established a relationship with the essence of religion in conditions and circumstances particular to specific a time, place and history, equate this view with the entire religion, and when we downgrade true religion in its entirety to an aspect of it, which is confined to human understanding and time and place, we prohibit the opportunity of different readings of religion in other times and places, which are more suitable for those conditions.

Today, history shows us governments which consider themselves related to religion and we see traces of Islamic civilization, scholarship, sciences and culture developed in the Islamic world. In the branches of Islam established throughout history, we witness various opinions, styles and experiences, all of which consider themselves Islamic and are so firm in their conviction that it sometimes leads to disputes and bloody conflicts. Notwithstanding the wars between various religions in the history of Islam and Christianity and other religions, we have also witnessed bloody and catastrophic wars between different faiths within a single religion.

Religion which has a supernatural source, must in any case be sent down and revealed to a human who is a creature confined in many internal and external limitations, and it is with these very limitations and possibly even prejudices that humans approach religion. As mystics, philosophers, theologians, jurists, exoterics and esoterics each have approached religion from their own viewpoint and offered their own unique interpretation, which brings about a valuable variety and volume of thought into the sphere of religious life, which is appreciated in its own right. These are all indicative of the fact that Islam, similar to other great revealed religions, possesses such a delicacy that it can address the needs of different people. The tragedy is when a human interpretation of religion is considered to be the actual religion without regard for the transformations that occur in human life. Instead of renovating thoughts and suggesting new notions of the world, humans and religion, some try to force insufficient readings of religion unto the minds of lives of humans despite the transformations they have undergone, and they face the scorn of God where he considers dogmatist bigots as deviators from the true path and disapproves of those who answer “we have found our fathers of this belief and we follow in their footsteps.”

In such conditions, which have often occurred throughout history, what is considered to be religion is placed in opposition to thought, which is naturally inclined towards freedom and grows in a free environment, and history testifies whenever religion and thought were placed opposite each other, both have suffered.

At this point, with these considerations in mind, we can discuss several key points regarding our current situation:

1. In our time we too can hear many voices that associate themselves with Islam, including voices reflecting progress, rationality and democracy as well as voices that are reactionary, authoritative and violent. Such a difference in voices can also be heard amongst other religions and beliefs as well.
2. The Islamic world is undergoing an important transformation which must be guided. This transformation must not be conducted through imitation, which is undesirable and scientifically unsuccessful, rather it should be conducted through reflection and deliberation on the pleasant aspect of life from within and with loyalty and faithfulness towards our own sources of thought and culture in a way that is responsive to a people who are living in this time, and looking towards the future.
3. In our times, in addition to the internal difficulties of transformation, the world of Islam is also faced with an external problem. In other words, this inescapable experience of renovation is taking place at a time that the world is dominated by a non-Islamic and even non-religious and secular civilization and experiencing a new religious system and society is difficult in a secular world. Especially since the secular civilization, has placed the world under its influence, and moreover the language of the powers that consider themselves the representatives of this civilization hint visions of global hegemony.

Today the effects of the new civilization, namely new sciences and technologies and communications and even many common concepts such as nation-state, human rights (as opposed to its responsibilities), liberty and freedom, democracy and so on, have all been shaped according to the modern world's values and standards of thought and have influenced the non-Western world as well. In other words, the entire world, both the West and East, have been greatly impacted by Western civilization and its effects, presumptions and aspirations, while the culture predominant in non-Western societies differs from that of the modern world, and the difference between the physical and metaphysical has confronted the non-Western world with difficulties. However, the West gained this new experience, which lead to this new civilization, at a time when it was not suffering from external pressures; as the Islamic civilization, which has taught the West many things, was subsiding. But we must consider our renovation at a time that we are placed in a network of political, economic, information, cultural and technological systems which have been forged by the West and are still controlled by Western powers. These Western powers are completely influenced by eighteenth and nineteenth century beliefs that considered the West to be the center of the universe and considered Western life as the model for an ideal life for the entire world. Moreover, in political arenas they define everything based on interests that are mostly inconsistent with the interests of non-Western nations. In such an environment—which is not lacking in colorful conspiracies—the unhindered experience of the non-Western world,

including the world of Islam, of establishing a world and spiritual order consistent with circumstances of the time as well as consistent with the cultural and historic identities of these nations is no easy task.

4. The negative mentality which exists between the West and the world of Islam which is due to the Crusades, followed by exhausting colonialism, and moreover the self-centeredness of the West, which wants the entire world Westernized and using confrontation of Islam and Islamophobia as strategic tools for the expansionist policies of some arrogant Western powers on one hand, and the extreme and violent reaction of some parts of the Islamic world, which stems from the humiliation and backwardness of the Islamic world—despite its rich resources and proud history—on the other, has brought about an environment so inappropriate that it can only see ever-escalating violence, whether in the form of war and occupation and repression, or in the form of terror and destruction, with reduced opportunity of compromise and understanding.

5. The disappointment of the Islamic world of the various un-indigenous schools and approaches as well as the calamity of colonialism and dependant governments on the one hand and their increasing concern for violence and extremism in the name of Islam on the other, after about two centuries of dispute between tradition and modernity in the world of Islam, has brought about a high level of mental preparation for the acceptance of a major transformation in the mind and lives of Muslims, which can bring together a great many influential people, especially intellectual geniuses, in the Islamic world and create a new world through paving the way for the establishment of democratic governments who pursue national interests and create the grounds for achieving greater science and technology. A new world that wants to fill the void in the current order, which is the lack of God, spirituality and morality, by submitting before the Ultimate Beauty. A new world that wants to understand and utilize religion in a way that it is not incompatible with freedom and progress, rather it sets us on a clearer path towards the future.

6. Not only in the world of Islam, but in the entire global arena, we must condemn self-centeredness, discrimination, avarice, arrogance and violence anywhere and in any form, so we can have a calm and secure world for all. This is a task that can be pursued by the unprejudiced and informed section of the Islamic world and other non-Western worlds with the understanding of and alongside the unprejudiced section of the Western world. I hope that the welcomed and fortunate trend of dialogue amongst cultures and civilizations, which have been active as national and international non-governmental institutions, can bring about this promising occasion.

Let us strive to amplify the sound of dialogue in each direction.

News Code: 8411-11716

[Printer] [News view]

THE WHITE HOUSE

Assistant to the President and
Deputy National Security Advisor

Mr. President -

• The Suharto speech
was Malaysia, not
Indonesia.

• I have highlighted
the sections toward the
end that caught my
attention.

J.D

cc: The Vice President
Chief of Staff
National Security Advisor
Dir, National Intelligence

THE VICE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

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AP Associated Press

Timeline Following Cheney's Hunting Mishap

By The Associated Press

2 hours, 15 minutes ago

A timeline of events following Vice President Dick Cheney's hunting accident, all times EST:

SATURDAY, FEB. 11

4 p.m.: Cheney begins an afternoon quail hunt with four other hunters on the private Armstrong Ranch in south Texas. They had been hunting earlier in the day, but took a break for lunch.

6:30 p.m.: Cheney accidentally shoots fellow hunter Harry Whittington while aiming for a bird. Secret Service agents and medical personnel with Cheney tend to wounds on Whittington's face, neck and chest.

7:20 p.m.: An ambulance takes Whittington to a Christus Spohn Hospital Kleburg.

7:30 p.m.: White House chief of staff Andy Card tells President Bush there was an accident, but Card is unaware Cheney was involved.

7:50 p.m.: The head of the Secret Service office in McAllen, Texas, calls the Kenedy County sheriff to report the accident. The sheriff asks to speak to Cheney, and they schedule an interview for 9 a.m. Sunday. At the White House, presidential aide Karl Rove tells Bush that Cheney was the shooter, after talking to ranch owner Katharine Armstrong.

Saturday evening: Cheney and the rest of the hunting party sit down for dinner at the ranch. At some point, sheriff's deputies who heard reports of the ambulance responding to an accident at the ranch stop at the front gate to see if anyone needs help, but are told no one needs assistance. The Secret Service earlier had said the deputies were seeking to interview Cheney, but on Tuesday they said that was not the case. Armstrong says no one at the dinner discussed announcing the accident to the public because they were all focused on Whittington's well being.

9:15 p.m.: Whittington is flown to Christus Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi-Memorial and is treated in the intensive care unit.

SUNDAY, FEB. 12

6 a.m.: White House press secretary Scott McClellan is awakened by a phone call from the White House situation room, informing him Cheney was the shooter. McClellan contacts the vice president's office and urges that the information be made public quickly.

9 a.m.: Kenedy County sheriff's deputies interview Cheney. Armstrong begins calling a reporter at the Corpus Christi Caller-Times and leaving messages. Armstrong says she told Cheney she wanted to tell the local paper what happened, and he agreed.

12 noon: The reporter returns Armstrong's call.

2:48 p.m.: The Corpus Christi Caller-Times posts a short report about the accident on its Web site after confirming

the account with the vice president's office.

3:34 p.m.: The Associated Press, following up on the local story, moves a news alert about the shooting.

Early Sunday evening: Cheney visits Whittington in the hospital before flying back to Washington.

MONDAY, FEB. 13

1:15 p.m.: Cheney takes part in an Oval Office meeting with Bush and the United Nations secretary-general, but leaves before reporters are brought in.

3 p.m.: Whittington is moved from intensive care to a "step-down" unit.

5 p.m.: The chief deputy sheriff for Kenedy County says the shooting is being handled as a hunting accident.

6:20 p.m.: The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department issues its hunting accident report, which says the main contributing factor was a "hunter's judgment factor" when Cheney sprayed his fellow hunter while aiming at flying birds. The report says both Cheney and Whittington were violating state game law because they did not have required \$7 upland game bird stamps. Both are issued warning citations.

7:20 p.m.: The vice president's office issues a statement saying it was not aware that Cheney needed the \$7 stamp and that he has sent a check for that amount to the state.

TUESDAY, FEB. 14

7:30 a.m.: Hospital officials estimate this is when Whittington suffered a "silent heart attack" without realizing it. It was caused by a shotgun pellet that moved in or near his heart. Cheney is told shortly afterward that doctors have decided to perform a cardiac catheterization.

10 a.m.: Doctors perform the procedure. Whittington is back in the intensive care unit and told he will probably need to stay at the hospital another week for observation.

12:30 p.m.: Cheney's chief of staff passes him a note that Whittington's doctors will be holding a news conference in 30 minutes.

1 p.m.: Hospital officials announce the heart problem. Cheney watches on television.

1:30 p.m.: Cheney calls Whittington to wish him well and offer assistance.

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