



July 2009

UNDER THE SURFACE

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At the end of June 2009, the British think-tank, The Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC), published the following statement:

The government's UK Trade and Investment organization is co-sponsoring the "Islamic Finance and Trade Conference" with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). The MCB has strong connections with the Jamaat e-Islami, an Islamist political party which created the first detailed argument for the creation of an alternative, Islamist financial system. The government recently [distanced](#) itself from the MCB because Daud Abdullah, Deputy-Secretary General of the MCB, put his name to a [statement](#) in support of violent jihad in Israel which explicitly rejects all peace initiatives in the region and makes indirect threats to British Naval vessels involved in stopping the smuggling of weapons to Hamas.

The document with the signatures of those endorsing it reveals a number of Muslims living in Britain in support of the stance contained in the document.² Considering the status of the *shari`ah* law among tribunals in Britain, already referred to in this series, it is clear that there is an Islamicization process occurring, just as Bat Ye'or and others have warned. In the legal sphere, within the Muslim community, an alternative method for settling disputes enhances the separation process and sense of separate identity but also allows community, Islamic, rules to be practiced instead of having to obey British legal norms solely and exclusively. This means a creeping loyalty to the wider *ummah* not to the British state (used here to cover the legal systems in England and Wales and, on the other hand, Scotland). However, the financial institutions are also conforming to the demands of Islam.

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² <http://www.hurryupharry.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/istpdf.pdf>.

Western liberal democracies, of course, view by definition, differences of lifestyle, as John Stuart Mill famously pointed out, as desirable and proper. However, to Muslims, they may be perceived as weak-willed and open to exploitation. This enhances the perception of them as *dhimmi* and inferior and certain to give way before Islamic determination and long-term thinking. Alongside the place given to *shari`ah* and its potential for future encroachment is this area of financial, Islam based development.

Islamic banking is becoming increasingly accepted as a viable and fair alternative to the current “Western capitalist” banking system. European governments, including the UK’s, are embracing Islamic banking. Gordon Brown recently declared that it was his desire to make Britain the Islamic finance capital of Europe. A number of leading UK banks now offer *shari`ah*-compliant financial services and the Treasury is considering the implementation of the *sukok*, or *shari`ah*-compliant, bond. Such moves fail to recognize Islamic banking for what it is – a modern Islamist construct, designed as another wedge between Western Muslims and their societies.

Since the recession, Islamic banking’s supporters have been seizing the opportunity to present it as not only a more moral option, but as an economically safer one. But there are three questions that need answering: How is Islamic banking different? Who are its biggest cheerleaders? Why are they pushing for it?

Among the many justifications for his declaration of war against America and its allies, Osama bin Laden cited the un-Islamic and evil nature of the Western financial system. In a November 2002 “Letter to America”, he wrote:

You are a nation that permits usury, which has been forbidden by all the religions. You build your economy and investments on usury. As a result, in all their different forms and guises, the Jews have taken control of your economy...³

Let us be clear, the document cited above, “A statement by the religious scholars and proselytizers (*du`a*) of the Islamic Nation (*ummah*) to all rulers and peoples concerning events in Gaza”, with the militant signatories, made very clear the loathing of Israel. Needless to say, in attacking western banking, Bin Laden attacked the Jews, predictably perhaps, alluding to *The Protocols* and to conspiracy theories. It would be remarkable if the West felt able to stand up to Islam by making explicit its resolve to stand with Israel and the Jewish people. This is almost exactly what is not happening. The rewards of hostility to Europe and to the USA are displayed for the West and for the Muslim world by the policies of President Obama and the European Union: appeasement under the guise of mending fences, removing misunderstanding and sympathy for the aggressor. The “intellectual pedigree” of Islamic banking theory is itself most revealing:

The first detailed and comprehensive argument for the creation of a *shari`ah*-based financial system was articulated by the Pakistani journalist and thinker Sayyid Abul-ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), one of the godfathers of modern *jihad* and the founder of the Jamaat e-Islami (JI). For Mawdudi, the answer to the perceived ills of Muslims around the world was to be found in a return to the days of Muhammad. He identified western concepts, particularly secular liberal democracy, as an existential threat to the *umma* (the worldwide Muslim population, conceptualized as a monolithic political bloc) and his answer was twofold. First, Muslims had to identify themselves first and foremost by their religion and therefore separate and isolate themselves from the “unbelievers”. Second, Muslims had to engage in *jihad* to reclaim formerly

³ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, “Banking on Allah”, Standpoint, July/August 2009, at <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/1706/full>.

“Islamic lands” and eventually establish global supremacy. Mawdudi believed that Islamic finance was one of the essential cogs of a totalitarian Islamic state.

This notion was quickly taken up by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), one of the founders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, widely recognised as a direct inspiration for al-Qaeda. The fact that Islamic economics offered very little change in practical terms was of little significance to Islamist ideologues such as Mawdudi and Qutb. It was simply yet another way of Islamising Muslims and presenting the West as evil, avaricious and corrupt.⁴

The British state is already bending over in order to submit to Islam. The writer cited makes plain how Islamist and violent agendas are no bar in reality to the advancement of Muslim ideas. Jewish lives lost in Israel are no bar to Islam’s advance in Britain at all: lip service does nothing to stop what is happening under the surface:

In more recent times, *shari`ah* finance has been taken up by Europe’s leading Islamists, who are enjoying significant success in convincing Muslims and non-Muslims of its merits. Last year, I attended an event called the Global Peace and Unity Conference (GPU), attended by thousands of Muslims at the ExCel exhibition centre in London, despite the fact that its chairman, Mohammed Ali Harrath, was and is the subject of an Interpol Red Notice, and has been convicted *in absentia* by the Tunisian government for terrorist-related offences. Speakers at the event included *shari`ah* advocates, Hamas supporters, Holocaust deniers and 9/11 “truthers”. Books on sale included *Women Who Deserve to Go to Hell* (the answer is: most of them). The event was also attended and addressed by members of all three major political parties. The Conservative MP and Shadow Justice Secretary Dominic Grieve took the opportunity to criticize the organizers, but distressingly the Labour and LibDem contingent, which included party leader Nick Clegg, clambered over each other to pander to extremists and self-appointed representatives of the “British Muslim community”.

Alas, like Neville Chamberlain before them, many British politicians regard the Middle East, like Czechoslovakia as a far-off place about which they know little. But they had better wake up, since the real Muslim external frontiers with Europe strategically lie with Israel’s struggle to live at peace – and internally they are being rapidly eroded; let Israel take note.

⁴ Ibid.