

# **The End of Europe and the Re-Definition of Politics**

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South Africa is a tremendously beautiful country. But it is also a land of powerful contradictions. It may sound a little strange, but I would like to begin my talk on the re-definition of politics, by describing a visit to the beach in nearby Muizenberg. It was there, a few days ago, that I actually came upon the two key themes of my talk.

With your permission, I would like to relate to you what happened there.

A close friend of mine had taken me with him, to watch his little son surf. Initially with amusement, but then with growing admiration, I watched the boy try to climb, at the right moment, onto his little board. He tried a few times. Then he tried again. Then he tried dozens more times. But what to me was so remarkable was not the enormous patience of all this trying, nor the enormous will-power it obviously demanded of him. It was something quite different.

I realised that it was not will-power alone which drove the little boy on and on; it was also his conviction and certainty that he would eventually catch the right moment, even if only once. And indeed, in the end he did manage it. For a few seconds he surfed, and with calm contentment he enjoyed the interaction between his little personality, the wave, and the whole of the world between the land and the sea.

He achieved this moment of success not only by his will, but by a tuned intuition, and his capacity to recognise the right moment. It is this intuition, oriented towards unity and success, which transcends the simple will, and which is in fact our true nature. As we will see, capacities such as these are essential to the powerful re-definition of politics.

A little later that morning, I witnessed the other theme of this talk. In the midst of the colourful beachside world of tourists, surfers and leisure-seekers, an old, strange man dressed in a winter jacket suddenly walked right up to me. But it was not me he was approaching. It was the rubbish basket next to me.

The man opened the bin, and fished out a coffee cup which had been thrown in carelessly before. He swallowed down its entire contents greedily. All the while, with complete impassivity, we seemed to look right through each other.

What shocked me was not the man's dismal poverty. It was the fact that he appeared completely separate, moving in another world with its own set of rules. Between his world and mine ran an unbridgeable divide. These parallel worlds, which are so typical of our times, are what we witness daily on the news. Little boats full of refugees on the Mediterranean, *dashed* on the rocks of our prosperity. The Chinese government, perpetrating acts of barbarity on the Uyghurs, described in tones of grey indifference.

This brings us to the second theme of my talk. The new politics which we are to define are directed towards a single world, undivided justice, and one truth.

I have begun with these two themes in order also to illustrate a fundamental difficulty in re-defining politics.

If it is to be truly new, then the re-definition of politics must find more than just a new language. Our politics must also be based upon a new, different, *whole* way of thinking. In order to understand what constitutes the political, we require an appropriate philosophy – and yet we must not forget that the result of every genuine philosophy is the confirmation of Unity, which in itself spells the end of philosophy as such.

Because it is easier, allow me to state briefly what the re-definition of politics does NOT involve.

At the core of this new political thinking will be neither a “new” opinion, nor a “new” plan. And of course, we will not be hearing the new ideas of a new political class, who pretend to know how we are to get quickest from A to B. It is not about Revolution, it is about understanding political event and destiny more deeply.

Let us go further! We shall not be bemoaning the apparent powerlessness of the Muslims, nor bewailing the lost greatness of former empires. The new politics will not measure its influence on world affairs in terms of human ideas of power and impotence. And we are not yet speaking about the outward manifestations of political or Muslim power, the granting of which is by Allah alone, subhanahu wa ta’ala.

We shall even let go of the idea that there is an individual subject, or individual proponents, of politics. Instead, at this moment, hear and now, our political thesis is quite simply as follows:

We, ourselves, are the Nomos!

What do I mean when I say we are the Nomos? Let us look at things again for a moment, let us re-examine the “condition humaine”.

To understand our situation, it is necessary that we think not only in two dimensions, but that we learn to think and see in several dimensions at once. We must *think* existence and think Divinity, think origin and future – all in one. To return to the image of the successful surfer, we can only become one with the energy of the wave, if we can intuitively perceive the *origin* of the wave, its size, its duration, our own existence, and the world in which we find ourselves – all as one event. The dynamic of our lives will, after all, not consist of watching the wave, but rather surfing on it. Only if we surf on the wave have we done everything right.

The interplay between land and sea, and the change of day to night, are important indicators in the thinking we are laying out. The former relates to our fundamental spatial and geographical orientation, while the latter relates to our fundamental experience of time. In Islam these existential realities of space and time are experienced in-depth through Hajj, Ramadan, and the Prayer. In this way we also form a new political arena.

It is, above all, the existential experience of Hajj which resolves within us the contradictions of space and time, origin and future. The Throne remains always the same.

Now that we have touched upon the arena and true setting of politics, I would like to speak briefly about the end of Europe.

Allow me to take you on a very short, yet not altogether unrelated excursion into the history of Europe. The period we

are talking about is the beginning of the 1990s. Shortly after the re-unification of Germany, which signalled the end of Europe's division, and its final integration into the global industrial-technical project, Professor Ojembarrena organised a fateful encounter in Bilbao, Spain. At the suggestion of Shaykh Dr. Abdalqadir As-Sufi, some of the Muslims of Europe undertook to honour Ernst Jünger, the century's great author.

By that time Ernst Jünger was the last living member of the threesome known as the "Big Three". The philosopher Martin Heidegger, the jurist Carl Schmitt, and the author Ernst Jünger, had weathered the post-War years, and they had done so by living a kind of lonely political asylum inside their own land. Their thinking was still adventurous. They declared the end of the old model of soldiery, of classical warfare, and they declared the end of philosophy and the end of the old concepts of law. Despite all this, their political impact on the Federal Republic of Germany was basically zero. The fact that they lived in Germany had in itself a certain significance.

Heidegger wrote his great works while living in a hut near Freiburg; Carl Schmitt lived in a small bungalow near Plettenberg, which he named "San Casciano" in allusion to Machiavelli's asylum; and Ernst Jünger lived as a sub-tenant to an aristocrat in the countryside of Swabia. Throughout their lives, their thinking remained politically incorrect, and public proximity to them was always dangerous.

Each of the three thinkers described in his own way the demise of intellectual and spiritual Europe. To them,

modernism and the formation of its ideologies (that is, fascism, communism and Americanism) was one continuous process, which, especially after the re-unification of Germany, finally integrated all of the counter-forces of politics into the unified situation of the World State. Carl Schmitt described the historical evolution of the World State in his renowned book "Land and Sea". Schmitt recognised the geopolitical revolution which he associated with the superseding of land-power by naval-power, and of naval-power by air-power.

In Bilbao at the end of the 1990s, Ernst Jünger described the tense situation in Europe in his usual brilliant way: "The old values are no longer valid, the new values are have not yet arrived."

It is in this state of suspension that we still find ourselves, and it contains great opportunities but also considerable dangers. To return yet again to the image of land and sea: our situation is like the moment after which a great wave has retreated, leaving nothing behind but a level, empty expanse.

The demise of the traditional European States, and the resulting profound crisis of civic society, are of great political significance.

First we must set down the three most important aspects of the erosion of the nation-states:

1. According to the classical definition, there *are* no more nation-states. We are today witnessing not only the

lifting of old borders, but also the break-down of the old integrity of territory and race. Think of the reality of Turkish Germany, Pakistani England and Algerian France.

2. The political sovereignty of the nation-states and their governments no longer exists. The state itself has mutated into a mortal god, which is forced to take more and more, and to give more and more, in order to survive as an opulent security-state.
3. Every modern nation-state has the inherent potential for dictatorship. This means – as we have experienced in the so-called War on Terror – that every nation-state is permanently on standby to declare a state of emergency, thereby instantly dissolving law.

As a consequence we are forced to conclude that the new political order of the world – which means a world without the old nation-states – is a Nomos without meaning. Today's world is made up of various prosperous zones, a series of failed-states, and a plethora of camps hemmed in by fences, and, in the case of Europe, shut out by the great divide of the Mediterranean.

Amid this nihilism striving for the World State, we see – and this is very important – the emergence of a Pseudo-One-World with a Pseudo-Single-Philosophy. This new world is to the Revelation and reality of Islam, as the night is to the day.

Allow me to describe the effects of this nihilistic world by four of its salient features:

1. The World State arises out of the dissolution of order and location.
2. The spirit of the World State emerges from the muddled revelation of the Internet.
3. The society of the World State arises from the creation of global stocks of consumers, workers, and tourists.
4. The values of the World State are formed by assigning a quantifiable value – or a lack of it – to all living things and all products.

And yet the worst aspect of modern nihilism is the permanent warfare and state of emergency that we see at home and abroad.

It is the cruel horror of war that reveals the terrible nature of modernism. Think of Dresden, Hiroshima and Baghdad. With reference to the atomic bomb, Carl Schmitt defined the new spirit of warfare as follows: "Weapons of absolute destruction demand absolute enemies." Earlier, Hegel had of course made a similarly apt statement: "Weapons are nothing other than the essential being of the combatants themselves."

So in view of these realities let us come now to the key question of politics:

How can a political person possibly break through the global dominance of technology and the dominance of ideologies that are contrary to law itself?

To begin with we must recognise that there is an inner connectedness between technology and ideology. Some years ago I visited the grounds in Nuremberg where the Nazis held their marches. I was overwhelmed by the enormous size of the place. The field in which tens of thousands of Nazi adherents marched is almost a kilometre wide! As I stood there in that sinister place where Hitler had indoctrinated the masses, I realised how small this terrible man himself actually was. How could a man have possibly instigated his criminal ideology there in that place? Without a microphone he would not have reached more than 150 people. A question came to me which proceeded to occupy me for some years: was it the microphone that brought forth Hitler, or was it Hitler that brought forth the microphone?

But let us return to Heidegger, Schmitt and Jünger. Of course, without the inspiration of Islam, the responses of these three great Germans to the global dominance of technology and to the last great ideologies is in the end somewhat individualistic and inadequate. I hope that the world's Heideggarians, Schmittians and Jüngerians will forgive my simplified summaries of their work from a political perspective.

However,

- Heidegger's response to technological enslavement was an esoteric call to remain calm, and wait – somewhat abstractly – until a God rescues us.

- Schmitt counselled us to hold to the strength of the old distinction between friend and enemy, and to hope for the establishment of a new Nomos. Yet what he never could answer was, who in fact is still the protagonist of political action?
- Ernst Jünger preferred not to engage in the wars of the Titans, as he considered the total establishment of the World State to be the precondition for the return of true politics. But what if the world destroys itself by then?

It was at this spiritual and intellectual location, in Bilbao, where the greatness of German thinking had to come to an end, and where it received a decisive new inspiration from Islam.

Heidegger's favourite poet, Hölderlin, said: "But where danger is, grows the rescuing power as well." This rescue is without any doubt Islam.

Inspired by Qur'anic Revelation, the political work of Shaykh Dr. Abdalqadir as-Sufi began to bring light into the existential prison. With its categoric prohibition of interest and its outlawing of paper money as a base currency, only Islam shows how millions of Divinely inspired people could put a stop to the tsunami of financial technique.

In his writings, like an archeologist, Shaykh Abdalqadir lays bare the nature of Madinah and the origins of Islam. And in books like *The Time of the Bedouin* and *Political Renewal*, he

corresponds with the great contemporary European thought – correcting it, adding to it, completing it.

He basically confirms Heidegger's insights of genius into the nature of language, being and unity. But the Heideggerian inability to act is overcome by an understanding of Qur'anic ordinances, as explained in *Technique of the Coup de Banque*. Readers inspired by Carl Schmitt will find in the political works of Shaykh Abdalqadir the clarity of knowing that the source of good and bad, of enemy and friend, is the same. And finally, Jünger's image of the solitary Anarch is transcended in *The Time of the Bedouin* by the possibility of brotherhood and social strength – Assabiyya.

Although Islam is not actually established at all today, new political possibilities are nevertheless appearing on the horizon, following the demise of the great German thinkers. What is particularly electrifying is the realisation that the financial system, as we now all too well know, could collapse at any time, and that the "humanists" living in our cities could suddenly turn into murderous wolves. The dangerous situation in which we are living forces us to ask fundamental questions that are by their nature dramatic, and whose impact will be profound:

- Why should there be any rules at all in a world without God?
- Why don't we simply abolish all the world's borders, not just Europe's?
- Why is no-one occupying and taking over any new

territory any more?

- Why and by what right do our children have debts from birth?
- Why can we not decide for ourselves what currency to use?

Remember the words of Jünger, that “the old values no longer apply and the new ones have not yet arrived”, and that we find ourselves in an interim situation. The question for every politically thinking person who recognises the situation has to be: are we inwardly prepared for this new state of affairs?

It must be absolutely clear to us that the civic society into which we were all born cannot remain in existence for long. Its foundations – family and civic association and its natural place of dwelling, the State – as the philosopher Hegel said, are dissolving. Civic society and its representative politics no longer possess any political means to counteract the enormous indebtedness and the ossified ownership structures of the oligarchic formations. Civic society draws its last drops of intellectual strength from the demonisation of its invisible enemies: non-voters, Muslim women, and immigrants.

Tellingly, Rousseau said the following about the origins of civic society: “The first person to fence in a piece of land and to come upon the idea of saying “This is mine!” and to find people stupid enough to believe him – he is the true founder of civic society.”

There is simply no question that we must take up a different

political formation and a different political agenda, if we are to survive future challenges. This will require the intuition which I mentioned at the outset. The great remaining European thinkers are already sensing that.

A mood of new beginnings is emerging in intellectual Europe. Take one example: the popular German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk not only responds sceptically to the global triumph of "Global Socialism", he goes on to warn of a new, authoritarian capitalism. To him, the nation-states are nothing but "Money-hungry monsters". In the upright, bourgeois *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper, Sloterdijk speaks about an "anti-fiscal civil war". And Sloterdijk also fears that the unproductive and poor masses will soon revolt against the last remaining European elites.

If, after looking at Europe in its old form, we dare to look ahead, then only one group is equipped to emerge even stronger than before out of the ruins of Old Europe. That group is the Muslims.

Their potential for establishing their Nomos, or rather of *being* a Nomos, is limited neither by the development of the World State, nor by the financial crisis. We Muslims may even benefit from these things, since, as Ernst Jünger rightly pointed out, the cost of establishing the World State is to allow considerable local freedom in many places around the globe.

So we have claimed that we, the Muslims, ARE the new Nomos. Is that really true? Let us test the thesis!

- Can we establish Salat and Zakat today?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we produce the Dinar, Dirham and Fulus today?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we conduct halal trade between ourselves today?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we take over land today and found Awqaf?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we follow our Amirs today?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we establish networks of Muslims all over the world?  
Yes, we can.
- Can we travel to Makkah and Madinah today?  
Yes, we can.

It is this timeless ability to be a Nomos which promises all of us a good future together. By this Nomos, townships and favelas, destitute zones and camps can become places with a history, location, and order.

At the beginning of this talk I recalled the impoverished old man in Muizenberg. Let us not deceive ourselves. He will be as incapable of establishing the Nomos as a Turkish immigrant in Cologne. But the new Nomos, brought forward energetically by new, Muslim leaders on every continent, is dedicated to him. We all share with him that innate human poverty which we recognise when, dressed in cloths, we circulate the Kaaba.

Shortly before he died, old and destitute, Nietzsche said that

nihilism is equivalent to having no objectives. We, the Muslims, have many, many objectives: from the setting-up of Internet-TV, to the establishment of soup kitchens, to the operation of high-tech coin-minting machines!

We have the objectives. Now we have to seek the wave. Being political definitely means being able to travel! There is no place in the world which has ever been able to contain the Deen in its entirety.

In order to understand what Islam is today, and to see what we as Muslims will be able to do, we must travel on a global scale. Politically speaking, what is required is the identification of possibilities, and the formation of alliances. In Europe this may involve calling the elites to Islam; in Asia it could mean establishing the Dinar, Dirham and Fulous; and in African it might mean organising soup kitchens for the poor.

Every journey has its own secret. Rainer Maria Rilke once said that anyone who wants to know what Europe really is should visit Capri. He said: "Only if you visit Capri will you discover a certain aspect of your soul." Of course, we as Muslims should visit our own cities so that we recognise our own, very Muslim essence. What can you know about Islam and the Muslims if you have never visited Istanbul, Samarkand, Cairo or Granada?

Our strength comes from visiting extraordinary places and people. Of course – and here I come towards the end of my talk – this applies to our visiting Cape Town. Here, in the

Mosque, in the College, in the Madrasa, tremendous chemical laws are at play, laws which Goethe described so wonderfully as "Elective Affinities". May Allah always protect the secret of this city. Amin.

I hope you will understand that, rather than succumbing to the intoxication of the political, I would prefer to finish my talk by putting forward a paradox. The heart of the re-definition of politics which I have attempted to set out to you today, is not political at all. At its heart, beyond friend and enemy, is the experience of Unity.

Allhamdullilah.