

# Fruits for the Week

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*Invited by the Islamic Union of Hong Kong, the renowned Pakistani Islamic scholar, Prof. Anis Ahmad, visited Hong Kong at the end of February this year. In his interview by Ming Pao Daily while visiting HK, Prof. Ahmad gave his views on some hot issues concerning the Muslim world. The interview article was published by Ming Pao Daily on 1 March 2005. Translated into English by the Dawah Committee of the Islamic Union, the article is reproduced here in different parts, starting from this week.*

## “Anti-Americanization safeguards democracy,” said an Islamic scholar

George W. Bush, President of the United States, pledged to promote democracy in the Middle East. The president’s pledge has aroused strong reactions in the Islamic world. Prof. Anis Ahmad, a Pakistani Islamic scholar visiting Hong Kong, despised the pledge. “Bush is actually promoting Americanization, that is what he means by democracy. His aim is to use democracy for supremacy; he wants to change Muslim countries into satellites of America. Anis Ahmad emphasized that the Muslim world also pursues democracy but not Americanization; anti-Americanization in fact safeguards democracy.

### Un-democracy in Islam caused by the West

Anis Ahmad reiterated that un-democracy in the Islamic world was, in many cases, a legacy of western imperialism. Thanks to the support of the US and the West, many Islamic monarchs and dictators got the reign of the government. He didn’t want to criticize any particular Islamic country, but took his country Pakistan as an example: General Pervez Musharraf came to power without election but has received endorsement of the US.

Iran is the latest target of George W. Bush to roll out democracy. Yet, Anis Ahmad pointed out, Iran, comparatively speaking, is a democratic country. “26 years ago, the people of Iran set up their elected government through revolution. You can disapprove the rulers of the government but they are elected by Iranians. The previous Iranian government was a monarchy supported by the US. Can that be called democracy?”

### Criticism: Bush’s Americanization contradicts democracy

Anis Ahmad said that Bush’s reiteration on democracy in his national address is just a propaganda tactic for underlining his superiority. He criticized that the democracy promoted by Bush is only part of the Americanization process all over the world; yet, imposing the American-type liberal democracy on others is in itself un-democratic. “Americanization means global domination and that all nations adopt one same, single system. This is not democracy. A democratic institution accommodates different systems, and does not impose bluntly. I believe democracy is to let people speak for themselves but not to impose on anyone.”

### Modernization does not equate westernization or Americanization

Defending the Islamic world against the accusation of being reluctant to change, he criticized the generally-accepted idea that “modernization equates westernization”. He said that the Islamic world seeks modernization from day one, but it is not like what the American authority conceives – you can’t be modernized unless you are Americanized. He said, “To assume that the western model is the ultimate as well as the only mode of modernization, is the worst case of fundamentalism. Its aim is to make you say: the West is the best, then you close the brain.”

He explained, “I define modernization, westernization and Americanization separately. Modernization is to use modern strategies, techniques to help people get what they need... We have other forms of development (apart from westernization and Americanization) which allow us to preserve our own values & culture. We should preserve our values. We should use technologies, modern communication tools and IT, etc, according to our cultural values.” As to the cultural ‘softwares’ required for employing these modern ‘hardwares’, he believes the softwares can be found in the Islamic tradition. “I believe Islam can offer sufficient groundwork to develop, to modernize.”

Anis Ahmad asserted he doesn’t approve violence, but he agrees with those who oppose Americanization for the sake of democracy. “America forces other cultures to accept her thinking and her culture; this, in itself, is un-democratic. Therefore, those who refuse Americanization are the people who really strive for democracy.”

(to be continued)