



**SPEECH TEXT**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM  
PRIME MINISTER**

**IN CONJUNCTION**

**ISLAM-CONFUCIANISM LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE  
“THE IDEA OF ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP: ISLAMIC  
CONFUCIAN PERSPECTIVES”**

**29 NOVEMBER 2023 (WEDNESDAY)**

**RENAISSANCE KL HOTEL,  
KUALA LUMPUR**

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*Menteri Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi;*

**Tuan Yang Terutama Ouyang Yujing,**

*Duta Besar Republik China ke Malaysia;*

**Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar;**

**Lee Chean Chung; dan**

*Semua yang membantu menyelenggarakan dan menjayakan penerusan seminar dan persidangan Islam dan Konfusianisme.*

1. *Tentunya kita lihat tadi betapa usaha ini harus menjadi usaha yang berterusan kerana kefahaman tentang budaya, melatih untuk menghormati perbezaan itu bukan perkara yang mudah kerana kita di besarkan dalam satu bentuk kepompong budaya yang tertentu.*
2. *Jadi saya mengambil kesempatan ini juga untuk menzahirkan penghargaan, khusus kepada Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar yang komited dalam hal ini serta juga sahabat lama saya, Prof. Tu Weiming.*

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates and guests,

3. The world is witnessing an alarming resurgence in identity politics, a phenomenon that has emerged from a long and complex arc of history. This trend, which has been simmering for decades, gained momentum with the global war on terrorism and the subsequent unraveling of the Middle East. No doubt that 9/11 has added fuel to the fire of Islamophobia, turbo charging with even more acrimony and venom. You have seen this trend, the trend in United States and Europe with the growing fascism, which is of course concerning not only to Europe and the West, but also to the entire world.

4. A key turning point is, of course the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which significantly heightened the anxieties of the Sunni nations as the Shia crescent emerged. This event marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented chaos in Iraq, Syria and other parts of the Middle East, leading to a deep seated tragedies that have permanently scarred the region.
5. The large scale movement of refugees from these troubled lands to Europe tested the limits of tolerance in Europe and the european societies, straining their social fabric. This influx of refugees, overwhelming in both speed and numbers, has ignited a troubling rise of the fear right across European nations.
6. We have seen government emerge, some anti-immigrant, others out of Islamophobic, claiming victory in elections. But let us be clear, the rise of identity politics is not confined to the Middle East or Europe. It is a phenomenon we have to observe, and we have observed globally, from Asia to the Americas. Extremists on all sides are falling over each other to be over more extremists, as every narrative gives rise to a counter narrative, seemingly validating Huntington's Clash of Civilizations.

7. Nevertheless, it is in this context that the significance of this conference cannot be overstated by focusing on the points of convergence, I reiterate points of convergence between Islam and Confucianism. We are actively choosing to diverge from the path of discord. We are actively turning our backs on the narcissism of small differences so that we can rise above and soar the higher notes of harmony.
8. This approach is of paramount importance in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society such as Malaysia. Here we have to contend with a force of obscurantism which wish to impose uniformity, stemming from a yearning for the recreation of an imagined Puritans past. But let me assert with clarity and conviction, that is not the path we wish to tread, we must and we will move onwards and forward.
9. This conference represents more than just an academic exercise. Indeed, it embodies policy in action as we engage in our discussions, we may well unearth fresh insights to the rich tapestries of Islam and Confucianism through certainty, not confined, though certainly not confined to these two giants or domains. Indeed, the significance of our endeavor extends far beyond academic realm.

10. It is an era of increasingly characterized by growing intolerance and divisiveness. The very act of engaging in civilizational dialogue represents a bold act of defiance. This stands as a resolute affirmation of our steadfast dedication to nurturing mutual understanding, a culture of inclusivity in diversity and an active pursuit of peace and harmony. We delve into discussions that are crucial not just for our times, but for the future of our planet.
  
11. In our pursuit of solutions for the contemporary challenges facing humanity, we are reminded of the rules of pragmatic wisdom inherent in Islam and Confucianism. We are happy that Prof. Tu Weiming is with us today, despite his current state of health. Although this is through video conferencing and we are trying to get, I don't know, Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar, are we able to do that? Yes. Oh, thank you. He is a great friend and have been consistent for decades and he has given a great contribution not only to the neo-confucians ethics and understanding, but the measure of tolerance and appreciation for other civilizations and in particular Islam.
  
12. Now the idea of a dialogical community is important for our time. This seems to be the new theme of Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar 's thesis. When societies are becoming

more culturally complex and intercultural relations are problematic, Islam-Confucianism Dialogue on Enlightened Leadership is a significant step in the right direction to advance the idea of a dialogical community.

13. Just as Confucius founded a dialogical community in China, Prophet Muhammad SAW laid the foundation of Islam's dialogical community and culture in Madinah al-Munawwarah. The idea of Enlightened Leadership in Confucianism and Islam necessarily brings in the question of advocacy of the moderate or middle path. In the West, Aristotle talks about the Golden Mean. In Islam we say islamic wasatiyyah. In confucianism is the *chungyung*, pardon my pronunciation, YB Chang Lih Kang did not allow me to practice other. Well, in both golden mean, *wasatiyyah* or *chungyung*, the middle path is expounded as follows:

“While there are no strings of pleasures, anger, sorrow or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of equilibrium.”

14. In fact, I was in Kuching last night talking about the Global Muslim Business Conference, and the theme was of course, energy transition, digital transformation and the problem of the climate challenge. I made reference to the

same principle of *wasatiyyah* in the quranic injunction that we must create a society that can maintain balance and equilibrium.

15. In fact, the term is “*ummatanw wasatal litakoonoo shuhadaaa'a 'alan naasi wa yakoonar Rasoolu 'alaikum shaheedaa*”, only when you achieve the state of equilibrium between the spiritual and the material, mind and body, man and nature, that equilibrium then the society can excel and succeed to be seen as example to the global community. This equilibrium is a great root from which grow all the human actings of the world and this harmony, which is very much confucianist ethics, is the universal path which they all should pursue.
16. Confucianism and Islam share similar emphasis on the idea of moral empowerment and the way to its realization, which stems on issue of values and morality. Whether you talk about economic advancement or technological transformation or energy, you cannot define reflect the importance of values and ethics. Thus comes the term MADANI in our national philosophy.



17. In Confucianism, the way is referred to as an inner cultivation. In Islam, in the Quranic is *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, the idea even the idea of *Darul Islam* is abode of peace and both in Islam and Confucianism, it is inner and external peace. Certainly I wouldn't want to repeat because you say, how do I then craft this whole idea of MADANI, I don't think that it could be done, done without reference to the Islamic text and confucianist or neo-confucians teachings and ideals.
18. This issue of inner struggle of conscience is well expounded by the Algerian thinker, Malek Bennabi, which I often refer to the inner struggle of conscience. Meaning the peace, the justice, the balance must stem from your conviction, and the conviction stems from your own belief. It is not a political or rhetoric. It is not just pious platitudes. It is not just an election manifesto. It is what you sincerely, honestly believe in as an inner struggle of conscience.
19. Now, as we grapple with issues such as climate change, inequality, cybersecurity, and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, we find that these challenges are deeply ethical in nature. Resolving them demands a re-evaluation of our values and the principles that guide our actions.

20. These ancient philosophies teach us about balance, about *chungyung*, *wasatiyyah*, golden mean, ethical conduct, and the importance of considering the collective good. They remind us that our actions and innovations must be grounded in moral and ethical principles.
  
21. As we move forward in this age of rapid technological advancement and environmental crises, these teachings must guide us towards a more sustainable, equitable and ethical path. Malaysia, a nation which major civilizations interact in the mainstream of social political development, stands uniquely positioned to be a beacon of discourse. Yes, Islam is the religion of the federation. Yes, we have the interaction with the the Chinese and Confucianism. Yes, with Hindus and Hinduism and Indian culture and philosophy, and of course the indigenous tribes. We can see the differences as an opportunity to sow the seeds of discord or alternatively, as our sages and teachings of the past have guided us, we use this to fortify our strength through this ethical governance.
  
22. Our diverse heritage offers us a unique opportunity, perspective to be at the forefront in shaping a new era of global ethical governance. We do not talk only about or learn as an academic treatise on Islam, Confucianism,

Indian philosophy or Hinduism, but we interact, we understand, we grow up with the societies, so we have an upper hand if we see this in a positive light.

23. So as we reflect on the myriad of challenges before us, it becomes clear that they all converge on the most fundamental issue of ethics. By embracing the wisdom of Islam and Confucianism, we can work towards a future that is not only technologically advanced, but also morally enlightened.
24. This inflection point of civilization, Malaysia must lead the way in setting the example of a more inclusive world where harmony thrives seamlessly amidst the multiplicity of races, religion, nationalities and genders. Yes, this sort of a discourse is popular among scholars like Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar, academicians and probably students of religion but it is not something that political leaders and statesmen like to be involved in and that is to me a major flaw in the deficit.
25. That is why ambassador, when I went to China, I made special reference to President Xi Jinping's remark when he talked about the need to encourage understanding and see the entire political strategic partnership, not only in

terms of economic advancement to ensure sustainability and growth, or in the fields of digital transformation but he emphasized the term civilization.

26. I made special and specific reference to this in my exchange with President Xi Jinping that you, Mr. President is quite unique in the sense that for a statesman to refer to the need for understanding and civilization when the world talks purely only or confined to technology, climate and economic growth.
27. Toshihiko Izutsu , the Japanese Islamic scholar and philosopher, 'God and Man in the Quran', I think and the other book is 'Epistemology', Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar is more familiar with that, Toshihiko Izutsu reminds us that while knowledge of Qadr brings man a perfect peace of mind, he will at the same time be tormented by intense pain at the sight of all the injustices, evils and sufferings that reign rampant around him. Qadr means things are already certain. Whatever you do, you are fated but that does not preclude from his or our immediate task of working for the good of man and mankind and reject the injustices and corruption in our midst.

28. Let us therefore forge ahead with a renewed conviction grounded in the sound principles of Islam and Confucianism and not be influenced by the likes of Huntington's Clash of Civilization that you can only survive and succeed with western civilization whilst all the rest, Chinese, Indian and Arab are all getting to be obsolete and irrelevant.
29. We take a different view. We cherish all cultures and civilizations and we see that as a source of strength and to us the sound principles of Islam and Confucianism for the pursuit of prosperity that must be shared and the attainment of justice in all its very spheres of human endeavor. *Terima kasih sekali lagi Prof. Dato' Dr Osman Bakar dan rakan-rakan.*

*Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.*