

Ghassan Weshah: Tomorrow Belongs to Islam!

by Hugh Fitzgerald



At [MEMRI.org](https://www.memri.org) there is an interview with Palestinian historian Ghassan Weshah that is remarkable for its surpassing absurdity. Even among the many examples of nonsense that MEMRI presents every week, Ghassan Weshah – please do watch his video – takes the cake.

Below is a summary, followed by a transcript of his remarks:

Palestinian historian Ghassan Weshah said in a June 6, 2020 interview on Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas – Gaza) that America and its slogan of liberty are collapsing and that Islam is the only power that can lead the world after America, since China is unfit for this. He added that the world has become repulsed by the Chinese “eating anything that moves”. Weshah also cited “scientific studies” that he claimed show convincingly that Germany and France will become Islamic republics within 10 years.

In what way is America “collapsing”? Its economy is suffering, as are many economies, from the effects of the coronavirus. There is high unemployment. But this is temporary, caused by lockdowns, the need for social distancing, and the banning of gatherings of more than a handful, all of which have led to the closures of many non-essential businesses. The country is slowly reopening. Despite having the most coronavirus deaths of any country, America remains the strongest economy in the world; the strongest military power, the strongest deployer of “soft power.” It is the country that immigrants from everywhere, including Muslims, deem most desirable to live in.

Ghassan Weshah predicts that the Islamic world will within a decade dominate the globe, replacing what he sees as a fatally weakened America. But is America more wracked by problems than the Islamic world? In that world, there are three ongoing civil wars, in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, which have caused massive destruction and displacement of populations. In Syria, for example, during the civil war which has so far lasted for nine years, five million people have fled the country, while another six million are internally displaced. Everywhere in the country cities and towns lie in ruins. To reconstruct Syria, to something like its antebellum condition, will cost at least \$350 billion. Syria cannot possibly generate, nor find the aid elsewhere, to undertake such reconstruction. The Syrian conflict has also involved outside Muslim powers; Iran has long supported Assad both directly and through its proxy Hezbollah; in the last year, Turkey has sent troops and weapons to prevent Assad’s army from completing its conquest of Idlib Province. In Libya, the U.A.E. and Egypt support the forces of General Haftar with money, and weapons, while Turkey supports his rival, the Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Fayez al-Sarraj. In mid-June, Egypt moved thousands of troops up to the border with Libya, and has announced that while it seeks peace it is prepared for war with the Turkish forces in Libya, including Syrian Arab mercenaries that Turkey has brought in to fight on the side of the LNA. Planes,

believed to be Egyptian, recently bombed GNA troops approaching Sirte, causing them to halt their advance.

In Yemen, Saudi Arabia supports the internationally-recognized government, mainly by bombing the Shi'a Houthi rebels (and not sparing civilians), while Iran supports those same Houthis with money and weapons. Meanwhile, the U.A.E., which formerly was allied with the Saudis in supporting the Yemeni government, has broken with Saudi Arabia and chosen to support a separatist movement in Yemen's south. Iran continues to support the Houthi rebels. Yemen itself is on the verge of massive famine. Half of its population is food insecure and because of war have fled their homes to areas with no functioning health facilities. Nearly 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, and an estimated 462,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. Yemen faces three epidemics: first, cholera (with more than 110,000 cases so far this year); second, a mosquito-transmitted virus known as Chikungunya virus; third, the coronavirus which has just begun to spread. Three epidemics, mass famine, a war, and the collapse of the economy, is the lot of Yemen today.

There is financial ruin in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories – in both cases, the result of mismanagement and massive corruption. There is internal violence by, and against, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, there are violent sectarian conflicts between Sunni and Shi'a. There are ethnic conflicts, too, throughout the Muslim lands: Turks vs. Kurds in Turkey, Arabs vs. Kurds in Iraq, Arabs vs. Berbers in Algeria. There is the dispute in the western Sahara between Muslim nations, where Algeria supports the Polisario Front that claims territory Morocco considers its own. There are threats from reconstituted remnants of the Islamic State in the Sinai, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. There are political rivalries that have in some cases become violent, as that between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the

West Bank. Secularists oppose Islamists in Tunisia and Turkey. Qatar has been subject to an air, land, and sea blockade by its neighbors Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., and Bahrain, to punish it both for its continued friendly ties with Iran and its support of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Even in the Gulf Arab states, there has been an economic debacle. Mismanagement, wild overspending, too great a dependence on oil sales and a concomitant failure to build a more diverse economy, and the pandemic that has led to plummeting demand for oil – all this is reflected in a drawing-down of reserves. Saudi Arabia, the richest of the oil states, has seen its foreign assets decrease from \$750 billion to \$448 billion in just the last few years, and they continue to drop in 2020 by about \$25 billion a month. At the current rates, within a year the Saudis will have drawn down another \$300 billion of foreign assets. And meanwhile, the oil price keeps going down, because of the colossal decrease in demand due to the pandemic. It's not only Saudi Arabia that has seen its oil revenues plummet – so have the U.A.E., Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Iran, and Libya. Even when the pandemic subsides, oil producers face ever greater challenges, as electric vehicle sales soar. Longer-lasting and ever-cheaper lithium batteries, and government subsidies have brought the price of such vehicles way down. In mid-June a million-mile battery was announced as being in the works, while in China, new legislation promotes electric vehicle (EVs) sales by allowing individuals to sell, for the first time, the CO2 credits they accumulate by using EVs. All of this is bad news for the oil producers. Less money, less clout, and a frantic search by the oil states for alternative revenues – does this suggest an Islamic world that is on the march to world domination, as Ghassan Weshah seems to think?

Here is the transcript of “Palestinian historian” Ghassan Weshah’s televised remarks on Hamas’ Al-Aqsa television on June 6:

Ghassan Weshah: "The future belongs to us, to our people, and to the Arab and Islamic nation. This is what the scientific studies say. They say that the United States is collapsing and that Islam is the only power that is fit to lead the world after America. Islam! China is incapable of doing it and the people who herald the theory that China will lead the world know that it cannot. When China was the strongest superpower in the world, it built the Great Wall of China. Do you see how Chinese culture is? Their culture is directed inward. They cocoon themselves. Tell me of a single place China conquered throughout history? [Not even] 10 square centimeters. To this day, parts of China are under Japanese occupation. Such a culture cannot... When you lead the world, you are leading it from a cultural and military perspective. You need to lead it in terms of culture and knowledge. Today, the U.S. leads the world with a false culture and it has begun to collapse. American's slogan of liberty is collapsing at its first test. [The coronavirus pandemic] was a big embarrassment for China and a large part of the world is repelled by the Chinese culture and about how they eat anything that moves. These people are unfit to lead the world. Our entire nation needs to see the scientific research that is coming out of Europe."

Interviewer: "What does it say?"

Ghasan Weshah: "That France and Germany will become Islamic republics within ten years. There are studies that say that German and French citizens are converting to Islam hourly. There are studies that say that every 24 hours, there are churches that become mosques. Islamic culture is on the march."

"The future belongs to us, to our people, and to the Arab and Islamic nation"? At a time when that Islamic world ("the Arab and Islamic nation") is riven by every sort of conflict – ethnic, sectarian, political, economic – with no prospect

anywhere of amelioration, Weshah foresees, despite all the evidence to the contrary, with a quasi-fascistic faith, that “tomorrow belongs to us.” [We have been here before.](#)

Where does Weshah’s claim of the Islamic world’s future irresistible rise to dominance come from? From “scientific research that is coming out of Europe.” The research is carefully unnamed because it is non-existent. According to Weshah, other “studies” tell us that “the United States is collapsing and that “Islam is the only power that is fit to lead the world after America.” How is the United States collapsing? Not militarily, where it remains by far the most powerful country. Not economically, despite the temporarily high unemployment rate, the result not of any economic mismanagement, but of a novel coronavirus that no one could have foreseen and from which all countries, including Muslim ones, are suffering. America has not declined in its ability to innovate, especially in such vital areas as solar energy, electric vehicles, and computer technology. It has not seen any decline, either, in its attractiveness to the world, as it remains a magnet for immigrants, including many Muslims who are eager to leave their Islamic lands and settle in America, demonstrating they do not agree with Ghassan Weshah’s prediction of an inexorable American decline and the Islamic world’s just as inexorable rise.

Then there is China. Ghassan Weshah claims China was always “directed inward,” and never conquered any territory. That is why he rules it out, apparently, from taking America’s place as the dominant world power. His history is completely wrong. China has grown steadily over the centuries because it looked outward and continually conquered borderlands (when it was not being conquered itself, by the Mongols and the Manchus). What about the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), that doubled China’s size from what it had been during the Ming dynasty that preceded it? What about the conquest of all of present-day Xinjiang, in the 18th century? What about the conquest of Taiwan, which

first appeared on maps of China's imperial domain in 1683? What about the conquest of Tibet in 1950 by the Han Chinese, undertaken in order to seize that state's considerable wealth of natural resources? Yet Ghassan Washah insists "do you see how Chinese culture is? Their culture is directed inward. They cocoon themselves. Tell me of a single place China conquered throughout history? [Not even] 10 square centimeters. To this day, parts of China are under Japanese occupation."

"Tell me of a single place China conquered throughout history"? Here goes. Xinjiang. Inner Mongolia. Manchuria. Taiwan. Tibet. And many smaller bits and pieces, including some, such as northern Vietnam, which China first conquered, then later relinquished.

"To this day, parts of China are under Japanese occupation." Completely crazy. There are no parts of China "under Japanese occupation." Japan lost World War II, Ghassan – remember? It gave up every square inch of Chinese territory it had previously held, which consisted mainly of the puppet state in Manchuria that the Japanese renamed Manchukuo. How could Ghassan Weshah have failed to notice? Or could it be that such news never made it to the Middle East?

And what about China right now? Can anyone – other than Ghassan Meshah – claim that the Chinese are "directed inward" and "cocoon themselves" when those same Chinese have been engaged in the largest international infrastructure project in history, consisting of hundreds of huge projects built by Chinese all across Asia and into Africa, in an undertaking known as the Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI)? This is a gigantic attempt to connect China both to raw materials for its industries and to markets for its products, throughout Asia and Africa. The BRI is described at [The Architect's Newspaper](#):

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013 by Chinese president Xi Jinping, includes hundreds of

infrastructure i projects financed and constructed in part or in whole by Chinese entities in lands far beyond China's borders. Projects include ports, airports, rail lines, utilities, industrial centers, highways, and even entire new cities and urban sectors. "Belt" refers to roads and railways while, paradoxically, "road" refers to sea-lanes; together they aim for nothing less than the unification of almost all of Asia and Africa.

The initiative segments the globe into "corridors" and involves differing levels of participation from host countries. There is no official count of participating countries, but estimates range from 60—covering nearly all of Asia—to well over one hundred. The BRI's six main economic corridors include the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Bangladesh-China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, and the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor.

Ghassan Wesheh, doesn't the Belt-and-Road Initiative show that China is looking outward? Can the Chinese people who are building the vast BRI project, covering many lands and many peoples, all across Asia and into Africa, be said to "cocoon themselves"? Weshah has a poor grasp of the Chinese past; his grasp of the Chinese present is just as poor.

In his predictions of a future when America will lose its dominant role – no doubt he would call it an "American hegemony" – the Palestinian "historian" Ghassan Weshah does not even consider the possibility that America might be replaced by a resurgent Europe. Why not? The E.U. alone has a GDP very close to that of the U.S. – \$19,700 billion for the E.U. (2020 est.), and \$20,190 for the U.S. (2020 est.). If one adds in the GDP from 13 European countries that are not part of the E.U., including such rich countries as Switzerland and the Russian Federation, the Europeans pull far ahead of both

the U.S. and China in GDP. And Europe has more than twice the population of the United States. But that continent is not mentioned by Ghassan Weshah – save as a putative source of “studies” foretelling Islam’s triumph – who takes it for granted that Europe is in permanent decline, instead of being capable of remarkable recuperation, economic and political, as it demonstrated after World War II.

Weshah again:

“Today, the U.S. leads the world with a false culture and it has begun to collapse. America’s slogan of liberty is collapsing at its first test. [The coronavirus pandemic] was a big embarrassment for China and a large part of the world is repelled by the Chinese culture and about how they eat anything that moves. These people are unfit to lead the world. Our entire nation needs to see the scientific research that is coming out of Europe.”

What American “false culture” that “has begun to collapse” does he have in mind”? Is it American music, American art, American entertainment (movies, television, computer games), American sport, American technology, all of which continue to impress and dominate in their respective fields and markets? And what’s this about America’s “slogan of liberty” that “is collapsing at its first test”? Perhaps Ghassan Weshah has not heard of other tests of America’s “slogan of liberty” (a dismissive way to describe the principle, or ideal, of liberty, enshrined in the Constitution), such as, inter alia, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II? And what could he possibly mean by that “slogan of liberty collapsing at its first test”? I presume that by “the first test” he means the coronavirus pandemic, and the “liberty” that he thinks is being infringed upon by the necessary and temporary limits placed on people’s behavior because of the need for social distancing and for lockdowns. That’s not a police state. That’s a state that recognizes an unprecedented health crisis

and understands the need to limit the spread of the virus. Or could Weshah have something else in mind? Might he be thinking of the Trump administration's so-called "Muslim ban," which was nothing of the sort, for it applies to seven countries, only five of them Muslim, that were unable to supply sufficient information on their nationals which the American government required for security purposes? That putative "Muslim ban" did not affect 95% of the world's Muslims. Whichever Ghassan Weshah has in mind, there has been no serious infringement of the liberties of American citizens.

He offers one last slap at China: "[The coronavirus pandemic] was a big embarrassment for China and a large part of the world is repelled by the Chinese culture and about how they eat anything that moves. These people are unfit to lead the world." Most people are not repelled, but impressed by the exquisiteness of traditional Chinese culture, its literature, its philosophy and, above all, its art. Ghassan Weshah is not among them.

But let's get to his unintentionally amusing charge about deficiencies in Chinese cuisine. Apparently, since some people in China include insects and bats in their diets, that makes the Chinese "unfit to lead the world." Some might argue that people who regard sheep's eyes as a culinary delicacy, eat fried grasshoppers as snacks, favor lamb testicle kebabs, and even drink camel's urine for its medicinal properties, as recommended in a sahih hadith by Muhammad, are in no position to criticize Chinese cuisine.

Weshah has dismissed America from its dominant role because it has a "false culture" that has "begun to collapse" – though no one other than Muslims seem to have noticed that collapse – and has not managed to uphold its "slogan of liberty" during its "first test." He has mocked the world-girdling Chinese for supposedly being so insular and shut in their "cocoon." This charge will come as news to Vietnam, Taiwan, and the Philippines, all of which have suffered from Chinese

expansionism in the South China Sea, including Beijing's building of man-made islands so as to claim their resource-rich territorial waters, and to those 60-100 countries to which the Chinese have brought their massive Belt-and-Road Initiative.

With America and China out of the running, who's left? According to Weshah, it's the Islamic lands that will inherit the earth. How does he know? Oh, there have been "scientific studies" in Europe – he supplies no authors, no titles, no places or dates of publication, no details. Just "scientific studies." Those "scientific studies" from persons unknown – there's been no peer review by demographers – assure us, says Ghassan Weshah, "that France and Germany will become Islamic republics within ten years. There are studies that say that German and French citizens are converting to Islam hourly. There are studies that say that every 24 hours, there are churches that become mosques. Islamic culture is on the march."

Ah, these "scientific studies" he mentions. The ones that tell us that France and Germany "will become Islamic republics within ten years." Or those studies that assure us that "German and French citizens are converting to Islam hourly." Or the studies that tell us that every day, churches in Europe are being turned into mosques. "Islamic culture is on the march!"

Here are the facts. In France, up to 3,600 people convert to Islam every year. That is an outside figure, according to demographers. And how many Muslims in France leave the faith? No one knows, and for a very good reason. Apostates from Islam do not advertise their apostasy – they would be putting themselves in mortal danger. But some studies claim, on the basis of anonymous interviewing, that many thousands of French Muslims abandon the faith every year. Ibn Warraq, the celebrated apostate and author of a recent study of atheism among Muslims, *Leaving the Allah Delusion Behind*, thinks that

there may be tens of thousands of French Muslims who leave the faith every year. Even if we assume that there are no apostates from Islam, by 2050 the Muslim population in France will rise from 7.5 million to 8.6 million. That is nowhere near enough to turn France into an Islamic republic. And we are expected to believe that Muslim women, in France, given career opportunities that would not have been possible in their countries of origin, will continue to have large families, when it is likely that the fertility rate among Muslim women will fall precipitously, as it has, for example, among Israeli Arabs. All over the world, in Muslim lands, in India, and among Muslims living in Europe, Muslim fertility rates are falling and are expected to soon converge with those of non-Muslims.

As for Germany, the highest figure provided online is 4,000 converts to Islam every year. And there is the perennial problem of estimating the number of apostates who leave Islam, because of the silence, based on fears of retribution, among those apostates. The Muslim population in Germany is expected to rise from 5.1 to 6 million in 2050. And that figure is, again, calculated without taking the number of apostates from Islam into consideration. Given those figures, how likely is it that Germany will become an "Islamic republic" in 2030?

What about Ghassan Weshah's claim that "every day, churches turn into mosques" in Europe? The figures tell us otherwise. In all of Europe, 250 churches close every year for want of parishioners. Of those, about 10%, or 25, each year, are known to have been bought by Muslims and turned into mosques. The highest number for a single country has been in Germany, where in 2018, ten churches were turned into mosques. There have been several high-profile church-to-mosque conversions, as with the Dominican Church in Lille and the Saint Joseph Church in Paris, which naturally make an impression, but the numbers still remain low.

Islam is cause for alarm, but Meshah's triumphalist claims

that “Islam is on the march!” in Europe, and that France and Germany will, ten years from now, become “Islamic republics,” is not borne out by the facts.

Faced with so much internal divisions and disappointments, so much violence and destruction, so much corruption and mismanagement, in Muslim lands, Ghassan Weshah has chosen to console himself with a rich fantasy about the coming triumph of Islam. He allows himself to believe that all those civil wars – in Libya, Yemen, and Syria – will somehow end, that the Sunnis and Shia (in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lebanon) will make peace, even though they have not managed to do so in the last 1,400 years, that Saudi Arabia and Iran will bury the hatchet, that the ethnic quarrels of Arabs with Kurds, Berbers, and black Africans, of Kurds with Turks, of Persians with Arabs, of Turks with Arabs, and all those other permutations and combinations of strife among Muslims – – sectarian, ethnic, political, economic – will soon evanesce. There is no evidence for this, but he’s convinced himself that the unity of the umma – that has never been as fractured as it is today – will nonetheless be attained.

Let him believe whatever he must to convince himself that “tomorrow belongs to Islam.” Let him insist that America is collapsing from within. And that China, despite its centuries of conquest of border lands and today, with its economic conquest through the Belt-and-Road Initiative, has always “turned inward.” That in a decade France and Germany will be “Islamic republics” because “studies coming from Europe” tell us so. Keep repeating to yourself, Ghassan Weshah, that phrase that both stirs and soothe : Islam is on the march! Islam is on the march! Repeat, ad libitum. It’s so much easier than trying to face reality. Meanwhile, the Arab saying recommends itself again: The dogs bark. The caravan moves on.

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