

Meet Dr. Nayef Al-Rodhan Author of Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man

By Norm Goldman , published July 9, 2010

Today, Norm Goldman Publisher & Editor of Bookpleasures.com is honored to have as our guest Dr. Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan author of *Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man*. Dr. Al-Rodhan is a Senior Member of St. Antony's College at Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom and Senior Scholar in Geostrategy and Director of the Programme on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalisation and Transnational Security at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Geneva, Switzerland. He holds an M.D. and a Ph.D, and he trained in neurosurgery/neuroscience research at the Mayo Clinic, Yale University and Harvard University. In addition, he is the founder of the neurotechnology programme, headed translational research and founded the laboratory for cellular neurosurgery and neurosurgical technology at MGH, Harvard. He was on the faculty of the Harvard Medical School, has published extensively on neuroscience research and won several research prizes. These Prizes include: The Sir James Spence Prize; The Gibb Prize; The Farquhar-Murray Prize; The American Association of Neurological Surgeon Poster Prize (twice); The Meninger Prize; The Annual Resident Prize of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons; The Young Investigator Prize of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons; The Annual Fellowship Prize of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons.

Norm:

Could you tell our audience what is a Neuroscientist and Geostrategist?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

a) Neuroscientist

A Neuroscientist is one who studies the Nervous Systems (primarily the Brain) at the cellular, subcellular and organ level. The aim is to understand the mechanisms that underlie human behaviour. This includes different aspects of the nervous system like molecular, developmental, computational and medical aspects. It is also an inter-disciplinary science that includes medicine, psychology, philosophy, mathematics, physics and computer science.

b) Geostrategist

A Geostrategist is one who studies politics and security and matches a nation's potential, capabilities, resources, and geography with its political objectives (domestic, regional or global).

Norm:

What motivated you to write Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man and why have you been drawn to the study of the sustainability of history?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

The idea for this book came about because I felt that there was a gap in the understanding of what "propels/drives" human history. I felt that all previous philosophies of history, while very useful, were incomplete. I also realized that the Information and Communication Technology Revolution has changed the global game radically. So I set out in my theory of history to provide a more comprehensive approach.

Norm:

What kind of research did you do to write this book?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

Some of the foundational work for this book had been previously published by me, like for example in my Neurophilosophical Theory of Human Nature "Emotional Amoral Egoism". But the way I framed the Sustainable History book required a great deal of additional research to tie together seemingly irreconcilable concepts.

Norm:

Why do you think this is an important book at this time? What do you hope the book will achieve and what do you want your book to do? How has the feedback been so far?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

The feedback has been excellent. Some of the ideas that I hope the book will highlight include:

1. Global Human Dignity is central to the sustainability of our species
2. All states and cultures have to succeed in today's connected / interdependent world if humanity as a whole is to triumph. In other words, no one can be left behind.
3. Conflict is not inevitable - a symbiotic, progressive and prosperous coexistence is possible.
4. Good Governance is essential in limiting the excesses of human nature - and there are different ways to do this in keeping with local cultures / histories while meeting minimum global criteria to ensure maximum political and moral cooperation.
5. There is only one human civilization comprised of many cultures, all of which have contributed to it at different times.
6. Prosperity and security can only be achieved through the promotion of reason and dignity for all.
7. Global justice is in the national interest of all countries.

Norm:

Do you worry about the human race? If so, why?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

I do worry about the human race and will only stop worrying if three things happen:

- 1) Good Governance paradigms are applied in every country where human dignity is guaranteed for all at all times and under all circumstances.
- 2) Global justice becomes a guiding principle for all countries without exception and is seen as a national interest of all states.
- 3) Strict ethical guidelines are developed urgently by the global community in anticipation of the significant upcoming technological and biotechnological advances in order to avoid their misuse in altering human nature thus guaranteeing global human dignity.

Norm:

How has your environment/upbringing colored your writing?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

It has not really done so...people everywhere share the same needs, aspirations and concerns.

Norm:

What was the most difficult part of writing your book? Did you learn anything from writing your book and if so, what was it?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

The most difficult part was crystallizing the central ideas of the book and connecting its different parts. The book addresses all aspects of humanity and deciding what to leave out was difficult.

Norm:

Were there any elements of the book that forced you to step out of your comfort zone, and if so, how did you approach this part of the writing?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

The Future ("where are we going"?) Chapter was difficult to write. As a scientist, I don't like to speculate but as a strategist and philosopher, I thought I had enough reasonable foundations to make educated guesses about the difficulties that lie ahead for humanity. So, hopefully, it is a mix of these approaches.

Norm:

What are your upcoming projects?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

I am working on the role of emerging strategic technologies in politics and human destiny and also on the politics of outer space and its relevance to global security.

Norm:

Where can our readers find out more about you and your book and do you have anything you wish to add that we have not covered?

Dr. Al-Rodhan:

My personal website: www.sustainablehistory.com covers my bio and my general ideas including where to order books etc.

As a final remark, I would like to emphasize that "In our new interconnected and interdependent world, humanity will either triumph as a whole or it will perish as a whole. Therefore, cooperative and respectful domestic and global politics guided by the guarantee of justice, dignity and the common good are the only way forward."

Thanks once again and good luck with all of your future endeavors.