

THE MANY-FACED IDEOLOGY OF POLITICAL ISLAM AND ITS CHALLENGE TO LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Summary

For the first time since the end of the Cold War the Western liberal democracy is facing an ideological challenge. It is a challenge posed by a religious absolutist ideology of political Islam, also known as Islamism, a phenomenon more complex, elusive and insidious than the communist threat ever was. It is an ideology which regards Islam not simply as a faith system concerned primarily with man's spirituality, but an all-encompassing system of a divine law which must be applied to every aspect of human existence, including public and political sphere. Its claim to universal domination is driven by the nostalgia for Islam's past glory and a deep-rooted contempt for the Western civilization, perceived as spiritually inferior, decadent, degraded, and on its way to either self-destruction, or Islamic conquest. In particular, it viciously attacks the Western-originated nation-state system of international relations, with all its underpinning institutions, norms and values, such as democracy and popular sovereignty, secularism, human rights, gender equality, and liberal freedoms. After its emergence in Egypt in the first half of the 20th century, the contemporary Islamist movement was initially focused on Muslim lands where it launched activities aimed at "de-Westernization". However, as a by-product of Muslim immigration it has also firmly established itself in the West, and particularly in Europe. Western public and policy makers tend to be preoccupied with Muslim terrorism, but less emphasis is given to the ideology which is a driving force behind it. An attitude towards violence is usually the main, if not the only evaluation criterion of Islamist groups. And although Islamism includes the jihadist component, it is by no means limited to it. What often escapes public attention is that the Islamist ideology is very diverse and contains a wide spectrum of movements, brands, branches and organizations applying different forms of modus operandi. The challenge it poses to liberal democracies is twofold. On one hand, it obstructs Muslim integration, which in the long run may lead to weakened social cohesion and to fragmentation of societies with significant Muslim minorities. On the other, it is a great security threat, as it creates a fertile ground for radicalization, including its most extreme manifestation in the form of terrorism. In the face of these threats, there is an urgent need for a deeper understanding of Islamist ideology and what it strives for. Terrorism-related issues are usually accredited to non-ideological factors, such as Western foreign policy, lack of education, unemployment, or racism. However, there seems to be a general lack of recognition of the ideological confrontation currently taking place between the liberal democratic outlook, and Islamist religious absolutism.

Introduction

Since the spectacular 9/11 attack Islamic terrorism has become a recurring phenomenon in the Western world. The collapse of the Twin Towers in New York granted Osama bin Laden the status of a public enemy, and a pop-culture icon alike. More recently, thousands of European citizens have travelled to Syria to join the so called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and many have returned, raising security alerts in their home countries. The recent jihadist terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States have proven that Islamic terrorism has wormed its way into the Western social fabric.¹ Many disagree over how this has come about. On two opposing sides of the argument are those who see violence as inherent to Islam, and those who believe jihadist terrorism is an entirely separate phenomenon. The debate between apologists and demonizers of Islam shifts the focus from the root of Islamic terrorism – the religious fanaticism which lies at the heart of political Islam or Islamism, as it is more commonly referred to.

Religion-inspired violence is neither a new phenomenon, nor limited exclusively to Islam. It can be found in all major faiths. However, what distinguishes radical Islam is its universal political agenda driven by the concept of *Hakimiyyat Allah*: the establishment of a global divine nomocracy based on the *sharia* of Allah. Not surprisingly, Western policy makers and public opinion alike focus on acts of terrorism. Yet the absolutist ideology which drives such terror escapes attention. In addition to inspiring violence, both directly and indirectly, Islamist ideology hinders integration and severely undermines social cohesion of Western societies. In the face of rapidly growing Muslim presence in Europe, the socially disruptive effects of Islamism need to be urgently addressed.

Islamism can be traced to various Sunni and Shia revivalist movements calling for the purification of Islam from un-Islamic elements and for the emulation of early Muslim communities regarded as the most Islamic, and therefore the best examples to follow. Some of them led to the establishment of modern Islamic regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.² Many contemporary Islamist movements draw inspiration from the Society of the Muslim Brothers established in Egypt in 1928. Over the following decades it has developed into a transnational religious movement, widely known as the Muslim

¹ Islamic violent extremism is by no means the only form of terrorism present in Europe. Traditionally, terrorism in Europe has been associated with various separatist, far right, radical left and anarchist groups. According to the European Law Enforcement Agency (Europol), a total of 211 failed, foiled or completed attacks were reported by the EU Member States in 2015. Out of this number 65 were separatist in nature, 13 were linked to the left-wing and 9 to the right-wing groups, 17 were reported as jihadist, and 107 were not specified. However, the jihadist attacks were the most lethal ones, since civilian population is their main target: out of 151 casualties of terrorist attacks in the EU in 2015, 150 were caused by attacks classified as jihadist. Moreover, jihadist suspects constituted more than half of all terrorism-related arrests in the EU in 2015. European Law Enforcement Agency, “*European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*” (The Netherlands: European Police Office, 2016), 10, 44, 45.

[file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/secretary/My%20Documents/Downloads/europol tesat 2016%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/secretary/My%20Documents/Downloads/europol%20tesat%202016%20(1).pdf)

² John Esposito, “Islamic Fundamentalism,” *SIDIC Periodical XXXII* 3 (1999).

http://www.notredamedesion.org/en/dialogue_docs.php?a=3b&id=16

Brotherhood.³ Rooted in the Brotherhood is the ideology of Qutbism, which today serves as a driving force behind Islamic terrorism, or jihadism, as it is also referred to. It stems from the collection of writings by the Muslim Brothers, but also other Islamic intellectuals, and borrows its name from Sayyid Qutb.⁴ Egypt-born Qutb, one of the leading figures of the Muslim Brotherhood, is regarded as the spiritual father of Islamism, Islamism's "most influential ideologue across the globe"⁵, and "the architect of worldwide *jihad*", whose teachings inspired the 9/11 and other terrorist attacks in the West⁶. Of primary importance for Qutb is the concept of *jahiliyyah*: the state of ignorance of the guidance from God.⁷ According to this concept, Islam is not simply a belief system limited to theological or spiritual realm; it requires total submission to God, and more precisely to the God-given law, in literally every aspect of human existence, including its public and political realm. Therefore, Allah is regarded as the only and absolute sovereign and law-maker on earth. Political power is a "divine attribute" which has been sinfully usurped by men.⁸ Hence, every society and system of governance based on man-made laws is *jahili*, ignorant, and should be abolished. For Qutb, the establishment of the *sharia* rule on earth would amount to "declaration of freedom", as any government based on the sovereignty of a man, including democracy, is in fact a "slavery of one man over another".⁹

The end of the Cold War and disintegration of the international bipolar system was one of the main factors contributing to the re-emergence of an Islamic model, as the *de facto* competitor to the Western dominance over the Islamic world. One major aspect which distinguishes Islamic nomocracy is its claim to universality, which brings it into conflict with Western-inspired "globalism".¹⁰ This conflict is not a new phenomenon. The rivalry between what historically has been known as Christendom (and at the time identical with Medieval Europe) and Islam can be traced back to the times, when Islam established itself as world's major religion and civilization. For centuries also *dar al-Islam*, the house of Islam, had the upper hand, conquering vast stretches of historically Christian lands outside the European continent and reaching as far as the European heartland. The turning point for Muslim expansion into the lands of Christendom was the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the gates of Vienna in 1683, which initiated the demise of the Islamic civilization.¹¹

³ Bassam Tibi, "The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism and its Challenge to Europe and to Islam," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no.1 (March 2007): 39.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14690760601121630>

⁴ Dale C. Eikemeier, "Qutbism: An Ideology of Islamic-Fascism," *Strategic Studies Institute* (Spring 2007): 86.

<http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/07spring/eikmeier.pdf>

⁵ Tibi, "The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism," 39.

⁶ Jonathan Raban, "Truly, Madly, Deeply Devout," *The Guardian*, March 2, 2002.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2002/mar/02/socialsciences.highereducation>

Simon Ross Valentine, "Sayyid Qutb: Terrorism and the Origins of Militant Islam," *Islam Daily*, December 14, 2008. <http://www.islamdaily.org/en/islam/6965.sayyid-qutb-terrorism-and-the-origins-of-militant-hm>

⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, 1964, 33.

<http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Milestones%20Special%20Edition.pdf>

⁸ *Ibidem*, 67.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism* (Berkeley, Calif London: University of California Press: 1998), 15.

¹¹ Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic*, September 1990.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/>

At the same time, Europe itself was undergoing profound changes, which defined its civilizational identity, leading to its own bid for world domination. The process of modernization, rooted in the Italian Renaissance, which became fully fledged during the Age of Enlightenment, was characterized by two parallel phenomena: the demise of the power of the Church, and the rise of reason and scientific thought. The fragmentation of Medieval Christendom and the Thirty Year's War marked the end of Latin Christian doctrinal unity, encouraging freedom of thought and diversity of belief. Theological warfare gave way to secular learning, which facilitated scientific development.¹² The Westphalian settlement of 1648 was the key moment in the emergence of contemporary European nation-states order and state sovereignty, as well as religious tolerance. Strict division of the divine and the secular resulted in personalization and privatization of faith, and in the decline of political influence of the Church. The industrial revolution and the economic development that followed fueled colonial expansion, and the ascent of modern Western civilization, which steadily overtook a declining *dar al-Islam*.

It should be added that the seeds for the separation of religion and state stem from the nature of Christianity. Unlike Islam, Christianity during the first centuries of existence was a severely persecuted religion of the poor and the downtrodden. Islam on the other hand, rising through proselytism (*dawa*) and military conquest (*jihad*) made no distinction between the worldly and spiritual leadership. As Bernard Lewis points out, despite great literature produced by Islamic scholars on every aspect of state functions and powers, "*What is not discussed to any great extent is the difference between religious and temporal powers. The words for 'secular' and 'secularism' in modern Islamic languages are either loanwords or neologisms. (...) Conceptually, this dichotomy simply did not arise.*"¹³

The nostalgia for Islam's past glory and the re-establishment of its lost supremacy over the world are therefore the essential and recurring themes in Islamist teachings.¹⁴ The West, perceived as a single, homogenous political and cultural unit, is identified as the main rival and obstacle to Islam's world domination. Islamists view Western supremacy as a historical anomaly which needs to be reversed. They feel that "*the West has deprived Islam of its core function, that is, to lead humanity.*"¹⁵ Western imperialism is very often cited as the main grievance behind Muslim hostility, even hatred against the West. Islamists however do not oppose imperialism per se, but rather the current balance of power: "*What is truly evil and unacceptable is the domination of infidels over true believers. For true believers to rule misbelievers is proper and natural, since this provides for the maintenance of the holy law, and gives the misbelievers both*

¹² Bertrand Russel, *A History of Western Philosophy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 491-495, 525.

¹³ Bernard Lewis, "Islam and Liberal Democracy. A Historical Overview," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no.2 (April 1996).

<https://omarjasim.org/2012/08/12/bernard-lewis-islam-and-liberal-democracy-a-historical-overview-journal-of-democracy-7-2-1996-52-63/>

¹⁴ Bassam Tibi, "Ballot and Bullet. The Politicisation of Islam to Islamism," (lecture at the Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark, September 9, 2009), 13 - 14.

http://cir.au.dk/fileadmin/site_files/filer_statskundskab/subsites/cir/pdf-filer/H%C3%A6fte_5_Tibi.pdf

¹⁵ Tibi, *The Challenge o Fundamentalism*, 15.

the opportunity and the incentive to embrace the true faith."¹⁶ What is challenging is that these feelings resonate among mainstream Muslims.

From an Islamic perspective, not only is the Western dominance an anomaly; it entails a deep feeling of injustice reinforced by a particular contempt which in Islamist thought is reserved for the West, regarded as an ideological, philosophical and physical enemy.¹⁷ Despite all its intellectual, scientific and technological achievements, Western rationalism and humanist philosophical foundations are perceived as materialistic and void of any spirituality, leading to the "state of animalism". In Qutb's view, Western reliance on reason and pragmatism, and lack of spiritual and moral values are the prime causes of its decadence and degradation, which in the final result will lead either to its self-destruction, or conquest by spiritually superior Islamic civilization.¹⁸

To be more precise, modernism, and in particular its derivative in the form of a secular nation-state and all institutions, norms and values associated with it, is the product of Western civilization most challenged by political Islam. Strict division between religion and state, where the former is regarded as a private matter, is perceived by Islamists as an "evil neo-pagan force".¹⁹ The concept of the nation-state has acquired universal appeal, and today constitutes the elementary unit which international system rests upon. Such appeal however is often not supported by the norms and values that this concept is based on. The historical context, as well as political and cultural processes which led to the emergence of the secular nation-state in the Western world, were absent elsewhere. An alien construct imposed by the Western powers after the Ottoman Empire was dissolved, it particularly failed to strike roots in the Middle East, leading to the "crisis of legitimacy", today articulated by Islamists.²⁰ As Lewis puts it, "*For vast numbers of Middle Easterners, Western-style economic methods brought poverty, Western-style political institutions brought tyranny, even Western-style warfare brought defeat. It is hardly surprising that so many were willing to listen to voices telling them that the old Islamic ways were best and their only salvation was to throw aside the pagan innovations of the reformers and return to the True Path that God had prescribed for his people.*"²¹ The series of failures and crises in the Muslim world, such as for example the humiliating defeats of the Arabs by the infant Israeli state, the Bangladeshi-Pakistani civil war, the Lebanese civil war, or the Iranian Revolution, reinforced the notion of Islamism as an alternative ideology to the Western-exported models of modernization, perceived as a form of neocolonialism.²² Iran-Iraq War, as well as the First and Second Iraq Wars later shattered the nation-state model for the Arabs, as did the recent disintegration of Syria and Libya.

Similarly, Ahmet Davutoglu, who recently resigned from Turkey's Prime Minister office, argued as early as 1994 that Islam and the West represent two contrasting, irreconcilable and competing

¹⁶ Lewis, "The roots of Muslim rage."

¹⁷ Luke Loboda, "The Thought of Sayyid Qutb," (Ashbrook Statesmanship Thesis, Ashland University, 2004), 3.

<http://www.ashbrook.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2004-Loboda-The-Thought-of-Sayyid-Qutb-PDF.pdf>

¹⁸ Loboda, "The Thought of Sayyid Qutb." 11-13.

¹⁹ Lewis, "The roots of Muslim rage."

²⁰ Tibi, *The Challenge o Fundamentalism*, 6-7.

²¹ Lewis, "The roots of Muslim rage."

²² Esposito, "Islamic Fundamentalism."

“Weltanschauungs” (worldviews), stemming from fundamentally different “philosophical, methodological and theoretical background, rather than from mere institutional and historical differences”.²³ These contrasting worldviews are also translated into alternative political cultures, reflected in different justification of socio-political system, legitimacy of political authority, approaches to political power and pluralism, and, lastly, the concept of the universal political system.²⁴ Davutoglu juxtaposes the nation-state based system with the “Islamic bicompartimentalization”, which describes international order as *dar al-Islam* (“where the divine responsibility of man could be performed according to the rules of *fiqh*,” in other words lands governed by the Islamic law), and *dar al-Harb* (“where Muslims do not have such an opportunity”).²⁵ Davutoglu also differentiates between *dar al-Islam* and the *ummah*, understood as a global Muslim community. He stresses that it is a religious-spiritual, metaphysical (“in the sense of being beyond ethnic and territorial limitations”), socio-political *ummah al-muslimah* (Muslim community), and not merely *ummah al-muslimin* (community composed of Muslims), which implies that it is “a totality performing its specific divine responsibility beyond its importance as being composed of individual Muslims”²⁶. The “membership” in the *ummah* is based on a self-identification as a Muslim, and requires absolute loyalty to the global Islamic community, which suppresses any other identities or loyalties that could be acquired (tribal, racial, ethnic, national, etc.). Such interpretation of the *ummah* creates a powerful challenge to global nation-state order in general, as well as to the integration of Muslim minorities living within the boundaries of individual nation-states.²⁷

Islamism therefore can be defined as an ideology which aims to fully subordinate politics to religion. It challenges Western secular order, norms and values, and wishes to replace them with an Islamic order of Allah’s sovereignty on earth embodied in *sharia*.²⁸ It is important to underline that the conflict in question is between modernism, and in particular secularism, including institutions and values it is associated with, and the forces within the Islamic world which reject them. Bassam Tibi goes even further, and describes Islamism as totalitarian. Applying Hannah Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism, he points out that common to all totalitarian systems is complete abolition of separation between the private and the public spheres, and the

²³ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms. The impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America: 1994), 2. These contrasting backgrounds have their origin in different concepts of relationship between God, man, and nature. With regard to the Western concept, it is reflected in what Davutoglu calls “ontological proximity”, and embodied in such Christian dogmas as the Incarnation and Deification of Jesus, the Fatherhood of God, or the Trinity, which led to “particularization of divinity”. It stems mainly from adopting pre-Christian, polytheistic and pantheistic concepts which can be found in ancient Greek and Roman mythological and philosophical traditions. This closeness or overlapping between the divine and human was later reflected in Western philosophical tradition, ultimately leading to relativization of religion, rationalization of knowledge, and secularization of life. In contrast, the Islamic paradigm is based on the concept of “*tawhid*”, the Oneness of God, and strict separation between God, man, and nature. The absolute “unity of God” is also translated into the “unity of truth” and the “unity of life”: since Allah has assigned man with a specific role and mission, it should be recaptured in all aspects of his existence, without dividing it into the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular.

²⁴ Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 196.

²⁵ Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 186.

²⁶ Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 182-184.

²⁷ Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms*, 185.

²⁸ Bassam Tibi, “Religious Extremism or Religionization of Politics?” in *Radical Islam and International Security. Challenges and Responses*, ed. Efraim Inbar and Hillel Frisch (New York: Routledge, 2008), 13.

aim to impose one “*norms of belief and behavior on all aspects of life*”. In this case the goal is a theocratic system embodied in complete subordination of the society to the divine law – the *sharia*.²⁹ Tibi also stresses that it is wrong to define Islamism as “Islamic extremism”, since its appeal is not limited to the fringe of politics in the Muslim world, and in the Middle East in particular. In fact, Islamists constitute the main political opposition groups in the Arab world. In 2015 there was more than fifty Islamist and pro-Islamist parties in fourteen Arab states, half of them formed in the past decade alone.³⁰ Islamism seems to be supported by the majority of Muslims worldwide. According to the 2013 survey conducted among Muslims in 39 countries by the Pew Research Center, the support for Islamic law to become the official state law is very large, although varies greatly from country to country (from 8% in Azerbaijan, 10% in Kazakhstan and 12% in Turkey, to as much as 83% in Morocco, 89% in the Palestinian territories, 91% in Iraq, and 99% in Afghanistan).³¹

In the attempt to “de-Westernize” Muslim countries and to rid it of non-Islamic impurities, before unifying them into a caliphate, Muslim secular rulers are primary targets of Islamists, who accuse them of adopting non-Islamic models of governance and undermining and dividing the *ummah*.³² Similarly to Davutoglu, Qutb also underlines the centrality of divine sovereignty: that a truly Islamic society is not the one which consists of even the most observant Muslims, but the one which is regulated in every aspect by Islamic law.³³ Therefore, secular Muslim countries are also *jahili*, and secular Muslim rulers can be regarded as apostates, in line with the concept of *takfir*.³⁴ In fact, according to the words of Abul A’la Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, a sister movement of the Muslim Brotherhood in Southeast Asia, “*Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam regardless of the country or the Nation which rules it. The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of its own ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of the standard-bearer of Islam or the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic State. Islam requires the earth—not just a portion, but the whole planet—not because the sovereignty over the earth should be wrested from one nation or several nations and vested in one particular nation, but because the entire mankind should benefit from the ideology and welfare programme, or what would be truer to say from ‘Islam’ which is the programme of well-being for all humanity.*”³⁵ The agenda of abolishing secular regimes explains severe persecution Islamists often face in their home countries, particularly in Egypt.

²⁹ Tibi, “The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism.” 37.

³⁰ Annika Folkeson, “Islamist Groups”, *Wilson Center* (2015).

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/islamist-groups-parties-and-factions-0>

³¹ Pew Research Center, “The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society” (30 April 2013)

<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>

³² Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*, 17.

³³ Qutb, *Milestones*, 106.

³⁴ *Takfir* is a central concept in modern *jihadist* ideology, which is used as justification for the use of violence against everyone declared “not devout enough”. The excessive use of *takfir* against fellow Muslims have become one of the main points of disagreement between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

³⁵ Abul A’la Maududi, *Jihad in Islam* (Lebanon: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 2006), 6.

While the common denominator for all Islamists is the establishment of a *sharia*-based system of governance as the ultimate goal, the movement is very diverse and contains a wide spectrum of brands and organizations applying different tools and tactics. Previously active mainly in the Muslim lands, with the ever-growing Muslim diaspora Islamism has been imported to the Western world. Over the last decades Europe in particular has become a logistical base and operational stage for Islamist activities. Its purpose is to challenge Europe not only in terms of security, but to alter European societies and Europe's civilizational identity.

Lorenzo Vidino distinguished three broad currents within the Islamist movement: violent rejectionists, non-violent rejectionists and participationists. Violent rejectionists (jihadists) dismiss democratic system in its entirety and promote the use of violence in achieving their goals. Their presence in Europe can be traced back to the early 1990s, when the so called Afghan-Arabs, veterans of the Afghan-Soviet war, settled down in the continent escaping persecution in their Middle Eastern homelands. Exploiting European freedoms, they began and continue supporting militants in their countries of origin through propaganda, fundraising and recruitment. While considering themselves as a part of the "global *jihad*", they believe that the West as a whole is at war with Islam, therefore every Western country, regardless of its participation in wars in Muslim states, is a legitimate target of attack.³⁶

Jihadists can be defined as revolutionary militants, utilizing terror and violence as the main tools in their struggle for the Islamic state. Jihadism attracts the most attention and is probably the most controversial issue in the debate around Islam and its role in the global affairs. This debate often comes down to the question: does jihadism, understood as a "holy war" against unbelievers, constitute a part of the teachings of Islam? The answer is not a straightforward one. *Jihad* defined as an instrument for Islamic expansion is by no means a new concept. It is rooted in Islamic theology and history, and goes back to the very beginnings of Islam and Mohammed's teachings and conquests. However, in contrast to modern jihadism, classical *jihad* prescribes rules for the conduct of war against non-believers, for instance permissible targets, methods of warfare and code of honour. Therefore, contemporary jihadist terrorism, a form of irregular warfare without rules, is an innovation and should not be equated with classical *jihad*.³⁷ It is nevertheless without doubt rooted in the Islamic religion.³⁸

Many argue in the aforementioned debate that jihadism is a marginal problem, as only a minimal fraction of Muslims engage in it. While the latter statement is true, the same cannot be said about the former one. According to the latest Global Terrorism Index, the five deadliest terrorist groups in the world,

³⁶ Lorenzo Vidino, "Islamism in Europe," (Report commissioned by World Watch Research, April 2014), 5. <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/research/3215322>

³⁷ Tibi, *Political Islam*, 51-52.

³⁸ One of the most significant revivalists of the offensive *jihad* defined as an obligation of Muslims to spread Islam by sword was Sheikh Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah, a medieval theologian and jurist, and a great proponent of Hanbalism, one of four Sunni schools of jurisprudence. His fundamentalist, puritanical interpretation of Islam has provided intellectual inspiration to the Salafi movement, including its Saudi branch known as Wahhabism. The incineration of the Jordanian pilot by the Islamic State in the early 2015 was justified with the ruling based on the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah.

responsible for 74% of all terrorism-related deaths in 2014, were all jihadist.³⁹ Bassam Tibi suggests the resemblance of Islamist militancy to Leninism: the jihadists regard themselves as the vanguards of the revolution in the pursuit of de-Westernization and liberation of the *ummah* and the establishment of a new international order. Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, Bolsheviki also constituted a negligible group, which nevertheless managed to overthrow the tsarist regime. Although they represent a seemingly insignificant minority, their claim should be taken seriously.⁴⁰

Non-violent rejectionists, similarly to their violent counterpart, reject Western democratic and liberal values and call for the establishment of the global Caliphate. However, they do not specify how this should be achieved. They are mainly the followers of the non-violent *Salafi* branch of Islam, but there are also other groups operating in Europe which can be included in this category, the major one being Hizb ut-Tahrir. Founded in East Jerusalem in the 1950s, it is now a global movement, with well educated young professionals stemming mainly from the second-generation Muslim immigrants, whose rhetoric is “*sophisticated and skillfully tailored to the ears of Western Muslims*”.⁴¹ Its objective is to struggle against all forms of perceived colonialism, whether military, or intellectual, cultural, political or economic, which must be replaced by the Islamic way of life. In the Hizb ut-Tahrir’s worldview, any state, Muslim or not, which adopts capitalism and democracy, is a “state of *Kufr*” (unbeliever), since it renders sovereignty to the people, and not to Allah.⁴² Despite the fact they do not openly call for the use of violence, they brainwash their adherents with anti-Western, anti-Semitic, homophobic and misogynistic rhetoric, effectively creating an environment in which young Muslims become prone to radicalization.⁴³

The activism of the Muslim Brotherhood movement is probably the best example of the participationist variation of Islamism. They use a four-stage modus operandi, which includes: preaching (*al-daawa*), participation (*al-musharaka*), consolidation of power while faking legitimacy (*al-tamkeen*), and enforcing *sharia*, once enough power has been accumulated (*al-mughalab*). This strategy was applied in Egypt, and led to the victory of the Brotherhood’s candidate Mohammed Morsi in 2012 presidential election. Once the Brotherhood took over the government, the process of introducing *sharia* into the Egyptian legal system was initiated, interrupted by mass protests and Morsi’s eventual overthrow by the military, followed by a crackdown on the Brotherhood.⁴⁴

In the West, participationists have also adopted a tactic of engagement with the establishment, at the same time fighting a battle for Muslims’ minds and souls. They constitute the largest component of Islamism, and in Europe are represented mainly by the Muslim Brotherhood, the South Asian Jamaat-e-

³⁹ These groups are: Boko Haram, Islamic State, Taliban, al-Shabaab and Fulani militants. In 2014 they were altogether responsible for 18,444 deaths. “Global Terrorism Index 2015. Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism,” *Institute for Economics & Peace* (2015), p. 38.

<http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>

⁴⁰ Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe*, (London and New York: Routledge: 2014), 104.

⁴¹ Vidino, “Islamism in Europe.” 5.

⁴² Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, Khilafah Publications, London, 73, 76.

http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/PDF/EN/en_books_pdf/Concepts.pdf

⁴³ Vidino, “Islamism in Europe.” 6.

⁴⁴ Tawfik Hamid, *Inside Jihad: How Radical Islam Works; Why It Should Terrify Us; How To Defeat It* (The United States of America: Mountain Lake Press: 2015), 47 - 48.

Islami (mainly in the UK), and the Turkish Millî Görüş (mainly in Germany). These Islamist movements perceive Europe as a great opportunity for development, as they are allowed to operate freely, in contrast to their countries of origin, where, as have been mentioned, they are often banned and persecuted. Their *modus operandi* includes support for ghettoisation of Muslim minorities and development of networks of Islamist-controlled mosques, charities, youth organizations, think-tanks, Islamic centers, and magazines, through which they disseminate their ideology. In particular, Islamists focus their attention on indoctrination of the youth, through wide range of activities and educational programs, which ultimately serve two primary purposes: to establish new, educated Islamist elite, able to infiltrate electorate and bureaucratic structures, and to nurture the notion that religion and politics are inseparable, and the former is a primary component of individual identity and exclusive point of reference.⁴⁵ In France for example, Islamist agenda is effectively implemented in Muslim-majority suburban public schools. There have been reported cases of students being forced “to refuse to study the Holocaust, the evolution of species, and European philosophers as well as ‘unacceptable writers’”, in addition to subjecting girls to a strict dress code, barring them from attempting physical education classes, and the *de facto* gender segregation in the classrooms.⁴⁶ Similarly, the so called Trojan Horse plot, aiming at gradual Islamization of a group of secular public schools, was revealed in 2014 in the city of Birmingham, UK. The plot was an attempt to replace secular teachers and governors with radical Muslim staff, and alter national curriculum and school environment in accordance with conservative Islamic beliefs and behaviors. Investigation conducted by the Department of Education revealed such practices as: restricting learning programs by excluding lessons in the humanities, arts and music in favor of Islamic religious education; restricting modern language teaching to Arabic or Urdu; partially school-sponsored trips to Saudi Arabia for Muslim pupils exclusively; introducing Friday prayers and exerting pressure on pupils and staff members to attend; banning non-Muslim festive activities, in particular Christmas and Easter; discriminatory treatment of female pupils and staff members; gender segregation in classrooms; pressure to wear conservative clothing; encouraging attitudes intolerant of other faiths, Judaism in particular; introducing “religious police”, tasked with reporting behavior considered inappropriate by conservative Muslim standards; inviting extremist religious preachers and exposing pupils to hard-line Islamist propaganda, including jihadist materials.⁴⁷

When engaging with the Western audience, participationist Islamists disingenuously use rhetoric of peace, democracy, tolerance and pluralism. They avoid confrontation and claim to be fully committed to the integration of Muslims into the European societies. This however is only a tactic to convince authorities of their moderation, in order to be perceived as legitimate partners for cooperation. To go even further, their

⁴⁵ David Vielhaber, “The Milli Görüş of Germany”, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 13, Hudson Institute (2012), 57.

<http://www.hudson.org/research/9787-current-trends-in-islamist-ideology-volume-13>

⁴⁶ Michael M. Laskier, “Islamic Radicalization and Terrorism in the European Union. The Maghrebi Factor,” in *Radical Islam and International Security. Challenges and Responses*, ed. Efraim Inbar and Hillel Frisch (New York: Routledge, 2008), 105.

⁴⁷ Peter Clarke, “Report Into Allegations Concerning Birmingham Schools Arising From the ‘Trojan Horse’ Letter,” Department for Education, July 22, 2014.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-_pdf

aim is in fact to be recognized as the official Muslim representation, and to be granted with a task of handling all aspects of Muslim minorities' lives: *"They would, ideally, become those whom governments task with preparing the curricula and selecting the teachers for Islamic education in public schools, appointing imams in public institutions such as the military, the police or the prison service, and receiving subsidies to administer various social services. This position would also allow them to be de facto official Muslim voice in public debates and in the media, overshadowing competing forces. (...) Making a clever political calculation, the European Brothers are attempting to turn their leadership bid into a self-fulfilling prophecy, seeking to be recognized as representatives of the Muslim community in order to actually become it. Finally, the position of representatives of European Muslims would allow the Brothers to influence European policy-making on all Islamic-related issues."*⁴⁸

Participationist Islamists aim at political mobilization of Muslim minorities in order to create a religiously based, politically homogenous advocacy group which would allow them to influence public opinion and shape governments' policies in accordance with Islamist agenda on all sorts of domestic and international issues, from veiling to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This goal becomes specifically apparent in the aftermath of every Islamist terrorist attack on the European soil. By promoting the politics of grievance and victimhood, Islamists successfully divert attention from problems within Muslim minorities, instead shifting the blame and pointing at Western domestic and foreign policies as driving forces behind radicalization and demanding their alteration. In fact, politically active Muslim voters mobilized around Islamist anti-American agenda, in alliances with non-Muslim anti-American forces, could in the future severely undermine transatlantic cooperation.⁴⁹

A report published in 2007 by the Dutch intelligence and security service AIVD outlined the challenges posed by the growing influence of Islamism in Europe. Although it noted the non-violent character of Europe-based Islamist groups, it nevertheless pointed out they pose a serious threat to social cohesion, solidarity, as well as fundamental human rights, due to their *"tendency towards extreme isolationism coupled with rigid intolerance towards other beliefs and opinions, anti-democratic behavior and in some cases even a desire to impose a separate form of justice, with ultra-orthodox Islamic laws taking precedence over Dutch or Western law"*. Non-violent radicalization constitutes a different sort of risks and threats than its violent equivalent, as it strives for *"the creation of parallel community structures with forms of self-defined justice and the propagation of anti-democratic behavior which could result in polarization, inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions and serious social unrest"*.⁵⁰ While the report recognizes the Salafi movement as the main Islamist challenge in the Netherlands, it also points out at the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Tablighi Jamaat, the groups which successfully operate in other Western European countries.

⁴⁸ Vidino, "Islamism in Europe", 8.

⁴⁹ Jonathan S. Paris, "Explaining the Causes of Radical Islam in Europe," in *Radical Islam and International Security. Challenges and Responses*, ed. Efraim Inbar and Hillel Frisch (New York: Routledge, 2008), 126, 129 - 130.

⁵⁰ General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), "The Radical Dawa in Transition. The Rise of Islamic Neoradicalism in the Netherlands," (2007), 9.

<file:///C:/Users/Administrator/Downloads/theradicaldawaintransition.pdf>

Therefore, contrary to their official rhetoric, preventing integration, establishing Muslim enclaves, and turning Muslim minorities into a homogenous pressure group is what institutional Islamists in Europe are attempting to achieve. This would pave the way for their ultimate goal: introducing parallel, *sharia*-based legal framework for the Muslim minority.⁵¹ These attempts are not unsuccessful. In 2014, The Law Society of England and Wales issued a ground-breaking guidance for solicitors on drawing *sharia*-compliant wills which would be recognized by British courts. Apart from enshrining Islamic law in the British legal system for the very first time, it would also allow to apply gender and non-Muslim discriminatory rules of inheritance, as prescribed by *sharia*. The guidelines were eventually dropped after public outcry, but the encouragement of applying religious law by such prestigious institution as The Law Society was indicative.⁵² Analyzing the findings of a survey on British Muslims' attitudes and beliefs, the former head of Britain's Equality and Human Rights Commission has pointed out the failure of integration and the threat that the British Muslim minority is on the way to becoming a "nation within a nation", physically segregated and normatively separate from the rest of the British people. Apart from significantly different than the mainstream society views on issues such as gender equality, homosexuality, polygamy or freedom of expression, the survey also showed that close to one quarter of Muslims in Britain would favor some areas of the country to be governed by *sharia* instead of the British law.⁵³ Similar survey conducted in several Western European countries showed that 65% of European Muslims regards religious rules more important than the laws of the country in which they live.⁵⁴

What is the response to Islamism's increasing presence in the West? The main problem seems to be a rather shallow understanding of the ideology and lack of coherent approach and strategy in dealing with the Islamist challenge. Western governments and public opinion alike tend to be preoccupied with terrorism, and an attitude towards violence is the main, and often the only criterion of evaluation of Islamist groups.⁵⁵ As mentioned, they are often taken at face value and regarded as worth engaging with due to their official "moderate" rhetoric, while less attention is given to the fact that their non-violent activism may very well lead to radicalization. Similarly, public opinion does not seem to get a full picture of what drives Islamic terrorism. Every deadly attack in the West is followed by numerous analyses and debates attempting to explain the reasons behind it, but among the whole plethora of potential root causes, the Islamist ideology is downplayed, if not entirely missing.

⁵¹ Lorenzo Vidino, "Aims and Methods of Europe's Muslim Brotherhood," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Hudson Institute, November 1, 2006.

<http://www.hudson.org/research/9776-aims-and-methods-of-europe-s-muslim-brotherhood>,

Vielhaber, "The Milli Gorus of Germany," 60.

⁵² John Bingham, "Islamic Law is Adopted by British Legal Chiefs," *The Telegraph*, March 22, 2014.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10716844/Islamic-law-is-adopted-by-British-legal-chiefs.html>

⁵³ Trevor Phillips, "What British Muslims Really Think," Channel 4, April 12, 2016.

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/what-british-muslims-really-think/articles/all/the-survey>

⁵⁴ Ruud Koopmans, "Religious Fundamentalism and Hostility Against Out-Groups: A Comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no.1 (2015): 43.

<http://www.npdata.be/BuG/255-Fundamentalisme/Article-Koopman.pdf>

⁵⁵ Ian Johnson, "Europe's Underestimated Islamists," *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2011, 44.

<http://www.meforum.org/3059/europe-islamists>

Muslim terrorists are often regarded as, if not psychopaths, then at least mentally unstable and irrational. In his essay critical of Huntington's "clash of civilizations" paradigm, Edward Said described the 9/11 attack as "a pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants", "a tiny band of crazed fanatics", who captured "big ideas" for "criminal purposes".⁵⁶ The phenomenon of the so called "lone wolf" attacks, conducted by "freelance" jihadists, such as the hostage siege in Sydney, has been explained by the perpetrators having "mental problems", rather than their susceptibility to and championing of the Islamist ideology.⁵⁷ Queen Rania of Jordan called the ISIS militants a "bunch of crazy people" that "have nothing to do with faith and everything to do with fanaticism".⁵⁸

Along with Islamist-promoted politics of grievance, it is often suggested that Western governments' foreign policies and their engagement in wars in the Muslim lands, as well as support for Israel, are the main causes of radicalization and terrorism. For example, in the context of murder of drummer Lee Rigby in 2013, who was hacked in daylight on the street in London by two Islamists of Nigerian origin, the emergence of terrorism in Britain, and the West in general, was attempted to be explained by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the West's support for Israel's policies on Palestine.⁵⁹ Similar conclusion was made regarding the attack on Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris, an operation organized by the Yemeni branch of al-Qaeda. The perpetrators were believed to be motivated by the "images of US torture in Iraq in 2004" rather than by perceived offence to Prophet Muhammad, what in line with Islamic doctrine constitutes a crime of blasphemy punishable by death.⁶⁰ In fact, not only France did not participate in the war in Iraq, but was one of its main opponents in Europe. The Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström linked ISIS attack in Paris to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁶¹

Such factors as poverty, unemployment, and general lack of opportunities, as well as racism and discrimination, which altogether lead to Muslim youth's sense of disaffection, are also widely used as an explanation for Muslim terrorism. During a three-day conference on "Countering Violent Extremism" in February 2015, President Obama pointed out at economic grievances as one of the major driving forces behind extremism: *"When millions of people - especially youth - are impoverished and have no hope for the future, when corruption inflicts daily humiliations on people, when there are no outlets by which people can express their concerns, resentments fester. The risk of instability and extremism grow. Where young people*

⁵⁶ Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*, October 4, 2011.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance?page=0.0>

⁵⁷ Malcolm Moore, "The Global Rise of Terror 'Lone Wolf' Attacks," *The Telegraph*, December 16, 2014.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsvideo/11295423/The-global-rise-of-terror-lone-wolf-attacks.html>

⁵⁸ AFP, "Queen Rania: ISIS 'Bunch of Crazy People'" *Al Arabiya News*, March 7, 2015.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/03/07/ISIS-bunch-of-crazy-people-Jordan-s-Queen-Rania.html>

⁵⁹ Mehdi Hasan, "Extremists Point to Western Foreign Policy to Explain Their Acts. Why Do We Ignore Them?" *The Huffington Post*, May 30, 2013.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mehdi-hasan/woolwich-attack-western-foreign-policy_b_3357794.html

⁶⁰ Mehdi Hasan, "As a Muslim, I'm Fed Up With the Hypocrisy of the Free Speech Fundamentalists", *The Huffington Post*, January 13, 2015.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mehdi-hasan/charlie-hebdo-free-speech_b_6462584.html

⁶¹ Raphael Ahren, "Sweden's FM Cites Palestinian Despair in Discussing Cause of Paris Attacks," *Times of Israel*, November 16, 2015.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/paris-attacks-rooted-in-palestinian-plight-sweden-fm-says/>

have no education, they are more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and radical ideas.”⁶² While perfectly valid in a narrower sense, this view is discredited as a wider explanation of Islamic terror. At the same time the UK was struck with consternation following the news that three British Muslim girls travelled to Syria to join ISIS, all three of them were described as “‘grade A’ pupils” from well-off families.⁶³ Similarly, “Jihadi John”, the Islamic State’s “poster boy” known from his horrendous beheading videos, was identified as a Westminster University alumnus with a degree in computer programming, who grew up in a middle-class district of London in a “well-to-do family”.⁶⁴ In fact, Muslims can be radicalized irrespective of their socio-economic background; the most prominent Muslim terrorists most often do not come from the fringes of the society, but from its middle or upper layers.⁶⁵

It is not to say that political and socio-economic factors do not play any role in radicalization. The problem however seems to be much deeper. It is symptomatic that in Europe it is the native-born, second- and third-generation Muslims who constitute the most susceptible to Islamist indoctrination category.⁶⁶ These young people suffer from severe identity crisis and become, to use term coined by Timothy Garton Ash, the “Inbetween People”, trapped between tribal, ethnic or national roots of their parents, and European modern secular culture: the former is distant and unfamiliar, the latter often rejected – either voluntarily, or under pressure of family or community.⁶⁷ Naturally, this does not apply to young Muslims exclusively; identity issues can be equally experienced by immigrant-born youth of all kinds of religious or ethnic profiles. However, what distinguishes Muslim minorities in this respect is the existence and activities of well-organized and usually foreign-funded, transnational Islamist networks with explicitly anti-Western, anti-European, anti-integrationist, illiberal political and social agenda, which lure young Muslims into their ranks. The “In-between People” becomes an easy prey for Islamic fundamentalists who offer them what they crave for: an identity and sense of belonging. In the process of indoctrination they accept Islam as their primary and exclusive source of identity. Entering the imagined global Muslim *ummah*, they also adopt the “identity of vicarious grievances”, expressed in solidarity with real or perceived sufferings of their co-religionists in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia, or Palestine. Since they also accept Islamist-

⁶² “Remarks by the President in Closing of the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism”, *White House*, February 18, 2015.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/remarks-president-closing-summit-countering-violent-extremism>

⁶³ Patrick, Sawyer, “Parents of Three Runaway British ‘Jihadi’ Brides Beg Them to Come Home,” *The Telegraph*, February 21, 2015.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11427093/Parents-of-three-runaway-British-jihadi-brides-beg-them-to-come-home.html>

⁶⁴ Souad Mekhennet and Adam Goldman, “Jihadi John’: Islamic State Killer is Identified as Londoner Mohammed Emwazi,” *The Washington Post*, February 26, 2015.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/jihadi-john-the-islamic-state-killer-behind-the-mask-is-a-young-londoner/2015/02/25/d6dbab16-bc43-11e4-bdfa-b8e8f594e6ee_story.html

⁶⁵ Peter Bergen, “Jihadi John’: The Bourgeois Terrorist,” *CNN*, February 27, 2015

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/19/opinion/bergen-terrorism-root-causes/index.html>;

Laskier, “Islamic Radicalization,” 110.

⁶⁶ Laskier, “Islamic Radicalization and Terrorism”, 103.

⁶⁷ Timothy Garton Ash, “Islam in Europe,” *New York Review of Books* 53, no. 15 (5 October 2006).

propagated worldview of “Islam under siege”, they turn against their host countries, now identified with the wider “West” and collectively accused for all calamities Muslims around the world suffer from.⁶⁸

In a climate of political correctness, identifying religious ideology as a catalyst for global *jihadism* is a difficult task. Understanding the challenges of Islamist non-violent ideology and choosing a correct approach to address it has proven to be even more difficult. Policy makers often see non-violent Islamists as potentially valuable partners for cooperation in preventing extremism. This is particularly true with regard to the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite the fact that, as has been explained above, intelligence agencies in Europe warn against the Brothers’ activities, pointing out that establishing an ultra-orthodox Muslim enclaves governed by the *sharia* inside Europe is their goal, they are often regarded by local establishments as worth engaging with. This is due to various reasons. As has been pointed out, Islamist organizations are eager to portray themselves as representatives of the European Muslims. Due to being usually very well organized, visible and active, they are often accepted as such, this way “fulfilling the prophecy”. Additionally, although many policy makers lack deeper understanding of Islamist movements and their objectives, there are also those who are aware of their nature, but restrain from criticizing them fearing accusation of Islamophobia, which has become a powerful political weapon used by Islamists against their adversaries.⁶⁹

Finally, some believe that “peaceful Islamists”, the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, have evolved and renounced their founders’ aspirations for the establishment of a global Caliphate. Despite conservatism, they encourage integration of Muslims, therefore should be perceived as a positive force.⁷⁰ Ken Livingstone, a former Mayor of London and the Labour Party politician, known for his sympathy for Yusuf al-Qaradawi, serves as an example of this perception. Al-Qaradawi, a prominent Sunni Muslim scholar, and a spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, is an anti-Semite⁷¹, who regards suicide bombings against Israeli civilians as “martyrdom in the name of God”⁷², supports death for apostates⁷³, justifies wife beating⁷⁴, and in the past supported female genital mutilation⁷⁵ (later however he changed his mind and issued fatwa against it). Additionally, along with other Islamist leaders, he has repeatedly expressed his desire and belief, that Islam will conquer Europe and the West, which he describes as miserable, promiscuous and materialistic, although not through sword, but through *daawa* (proselytism).⁷⁶ Nevertheless, he was praised by Livingstone as a “progressive figure who is moving that religion in the correct direction”.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Paris, “Explaining the Causes,” 121-125.

⁶⁹ Lorenzo Vidino, “The Muslim Brotherhood in the West: Evolution and Western Policies,” *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR)*, February 2011, 29-30; Tibi, “Ballot and Bullet,” 17.

⁷⁰ Vidino, “The Muslim Brotherhood,”

⁷¹ Alan Johnson, “Ken Livingstone’s Favourite Islamist Spreads Jew-Hatred in Gaza,” *The Telegraph*, May 13, 2013. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/alanjohnson/100216030/ken-livingstones-favourite-islamist-spreads-jew-hatred-in-gaza/>

⁷² “Al-Qaradawi Full Transcript,” *BBC*, July 8, 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3875119.stm>

⁷³ “Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: Opposing Apostasy is What Keeps Islam Going,” YouTube video, posted by “wff”, April 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDT5YH9bGmI>

⁷⁴ Madeleine Bunting, “Friendly Fire,” *The Guardian*, October 29, 2005. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/29/religion.uk1>

⁷⁵ Readings, George, “Female Genital Mutilation Cannot Be Defended as Part of Islam,” *The Guardian*, October 15, 2010.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/oct/15/female-genital-mutilation-yusuf-al-qaradawi>

⁷⁶ Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 92.

What can be done to prevent the spreading of Islamism? Although every country which faces the problem will need to formulate an individual strategy tailored specifically to its own realities, there are certain general recommendations which can be outlined:

1. There is a need for a deeper understanding of Islamist ideology and what it strives for. In the West in general, and in Europe in particular, there is lack of recognition of the ideological confrontation between the Western rational, liberal, secular outlook, and Islamist spiritual totalitarianism. As it has been mentioned, Islamism-related issues are usually accredited to non-ideological factors, such as foreign policy, lack of education, unemployment, or racism. Western authorities and policy makers should focus upon the ideological background of Muslim organizations which operate in their countries, in particular those they engage with, and avoid taking them at face value as “moderates”, merely by the virtue of their renouncement of violence and willingness to use liberal democracy as a means to an end.

2. There should be a clear distinction made between cultural diversity (which should be welcomed), and the communitarian form of multiculturalism, which seems to be the minority policy most commonly applied in Europe. This model is a serious threat to a liberal democratic model of governance based on the dichotomy between citizens on one hand, and the state on the other. In addition, it is an obstacle to integration: it encourages grouping along racial, ethnic, or religious lines, leading to isolation from the mainstream society and its culture, and to the formation of segregated, parallel communities. This widespread phenomenon poses a great threat to the very social fabric of European societies. Coupled with demand for distinct rights, which often are completely at odds with host societies’ legal and cultural systems, and with Western liberal values more broadly, it is a slippery slope to fragmentation or “balkanization” of European countries with significant minorities. As Francis Fukuyama already noticed years ago, *“Liberalism cannot ultimately be based on group rights, because not all groups uphold liberal values. The civilization of the European Enlightenment, of which contemporary liberal democracy is the heir, cannot be culturally neutral, since liberal societies have their own values regarding the equal worth and dignity of individuals. Cultures that do not accept these basic premises do not deserve equal protection in a modern liberal democracy.”*⁷⁸ Therefore, what is needed is a de-communalization of European societies, which implies:

- an absolute rejection of any forms of parallel legal systems, including the practice of the so called “cultural defence” (diminished responsibility for crime due to cultural differences)⁷⁹ – there should be one law for all with no exceptions;
- no tolerance to any form of fundamentally discriminatory, illiberal, and illegal practices such as polygamy⁸⁰, child marriage⁸¹, or violation of gender equality (for example gender segregation in public spaces such as schools, universities, and other public social gatherings⁸²);

“Islam: Muslims Will Conquer and Rule Europe! - Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi,” YouTube video, posted by “phase33game”, September 30, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdsQGhiBkSI>

⁷⁷ “Mayor Justifies Cleric’s Welcome,” *BBC*, January 11, 2005.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/4165691.stm

⁷⁸ Francis Fukuyama, “Identity, Immigration & Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 17, nr.2 (April 2006): 15. <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles-files/gratis/Fukuyama-17-2.pdf>

⁷⁹ John Alan Cohan, “Honor Killings and the Cultural Defence,” *California Western International Law Journal* 40, nr.2 (Spring 2010). <http://scholarlycommons.law.cwsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1086&context=cwilj>

- dismantling cultural segregation (through, for example, public housing projects which will prevent, rather than facilitate segregation);
- no concessions with regard to freedom of speech or expression on the grounds of religious or cultural sensitivities⁸³.

3. The issue of hate speech and radicalization in the European mosques and madrasas will need to be addressed. Local training and appointment of imams, as well as strict control, or even banning of foreign funding to mosques and Islamic organizations could be a step forward. Austria for example has already taken measures in that direction, which aim at curtailing foreign and radical influences on Muslim diaspora.⁸⁴

4. Uncontrolled immigration is another sensitive issue which needs to be urgently addressed, particularly in the context of the ongoing migration crisis. The scale and pace of immigration from countries of significantly different cultural backgrounds which Europe is currently experiencing may render impossible to successfully integrate large numbers of the newcomers, creating fertile ground for their radicalization. The humanitarian crisis caused by the chaos in the Middle East and other parts of the world needs to be tackled, nevertheless emotional, knee-jerk reactions to isolated, however tragic events, should be replaced by considerate approaches which will take into consideration long-term consequences of immigration policies.

Finally, it is very important not to follow Islamists' projection of Muslims as a uniform, homogenous, exclusively religiously-defined group. Muslims represent great diversity in terms of nationality, ethnicity, race, and Islamic denomination. Every citizen should be treated not as a member of a distinct community, but as an individual on equal footing with the rest of the society. Constant references to the so called "Muslim community" reinforce Islamist premise, that religion is Muslims' primary source of self-identification, and the *ummah* is where their primary loyalty lies. There are millions of secular Muslims, who do not subscribe to Islamist ideology. It is precisely this group which policymakers and local authorities should focus on as potential partners on the way to effective integration - an indispensable condition for the preservation of the unity, coherence and security of European societies.

⁸⁰ Veronica Federico, "Europe Facing Polygamy: Italy, France and the UK Accept the Challenge of Immigration," (Workshop 6 "The constitutional challenges of immigration" IACL IX World Congress, Oslo, June 16-20, 2014). <https://www.jus.uio.no/english/research/news-and-events/events/conferences/2014/wccl-cmdc/wccl/papers/ws6/w6-federico.pdf>

⁸¹ Maajid Nawaz, "There is No Excuse for 'Child Brides' in Europe," *The Daily Beast*, March 1, 2016 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/01/there-s-no-excuse-for-child-brides-in-europe.html>

⁸² Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, "It's Shameful That Our Universities Have Accepted Gender Segregation Under Pressure From the Most Oppressive Religious Fanatics," *The Independent*, December 8, 2013. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/it-s-shameful-that-our-universities-have-accepted-gender-segregation-under-pressure-from-the-most-8991593.html>;

Steerpike, "Labour Stays Silent Over Gender Segregation at Party Rally," *The Spectator*, May 3, 2015. <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2015/05/labour-stays-silent-over-gender-segregation-at-party-rally/>

⁸³ The controversy over Mohammad's depictions is a primary example. Brought to the extreme, it took form of removing his paintings from public display in some major British and American museums, including New York's Metropolitan Museum of Arts).

⁸⁴ AFP, "Austria passes controversial reforms to Islam law banning foreign funding," *The Telegraph*, February 25, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/austria/11435388/Austria-passes-controversial-reforms-to-Islam-law-banning-foreign-funding.html>

Conclusion

Religion-driven terrorism has embedded itself in the West, and has become a serious security threat. Violence is the end product of an illiberal, intolerant, anti-democratic, and viciously anti-Western religious ideology disseminated through diverse, well-organised and well-funded channels. This ideology's objective is clearly defined: it is to challenge Western liberal norms and values, and to replace them with a religious order embodied in *sharia*. The isolationist, communitarian strategy supported and promoted by Islamist forces leads to fragmentation and "balkanization" of European societies.

It would be untrue to claim that religious ideology is an exclusive driving force behind *jihadism*, and that political or social factors do not play any role in radicalization. Nevertheless, what needs to be understood is that Western concept of secularism is alien to many societies across the world, as well as to diaspora communities which originate from them, and religion can be easily utilized as a tool for achieving political goals, with political Islam representing the strongest epitomisation of this phenomenon. Islamism is a many-faced ideology. Although its violent embodiment is naturally the easiest to identify, counter-extremism policies will not be effective if the non-violent, but inherently illiberal and undemocratic component is not recognized and tackled.

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