

The challenge posed to Western values and Western dominance within the international system by Radical Islam.

Part two

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Breeding ground of Radicalism

There are various and intertwined reasons what contributes to the rise of Radicalism in the Muslim/Arab world. Namely: the conceived Western double standards and their cultural-political imperialism, the suffering of the Palestinian people, the dire socio-political the repressive secular regimes in the Arab/Muslim countries and the Islamic values and its past achievements.

1-Considering the growing popularity of the political Islam in the Arab/Muslim, there is in the West a growing political consensus that they have to disturb this process by thwarting democratic elections which will enable Islamist to come to power. According to this scenario the Western interest is to maintain supporting the current unrepresentative – oppressive regimes. Continued support for those formidable regimes did not only cause enormous anti-Western sentiments, but also spark rise of radicalism. It also helped Islamist to mobilize the mass by portraying the Western values as double standards and industrialized Islamophobia.

2-the West and in particular US's unconditional and inequitable support of Israel at the expenses of the Palestinian people and labeling their freedom fighters as terrorist, whilst condoning the atrocities committed by Israel. Here is where the Western hypocrisy and hatred towards Islam is displayed. The West assisted Israel's nuclear program, arms to the teeth, helps her fiscal shortages, use their veto rights to avert Security Councils resolutions critical to Israel. Edward S Herman, " instead of having to leave the occupied territories Israel continues to push out the locals by force, uproot their trees, steal their water, beggar them by 'closures' and endless restrictions, and it suffers no penalties because it has USA approval, protection, and active assistance." Many organizations and individuals labeled today as terrorist by the West are considered in the Muslim world the freedom fighters/martyrs. Equally; many of them were originally either founded or supported by the West like those currently considered the foe of the West.

3-The socio-political frustrations caused by the unrepresentative –oppressive regimes who determined to hold the power at every cost and the followed political and economical bankruptcy constitutes the main reason behind the soaring radicalization. The Islamists address public anger adequately by portraying themselves better alternative by promising to alleviate poverty, power redistribution, and restore societal dignity and national sovereignty which are seen by the local people to have been bargained away by the corrupted elites. According to Al Jazeera critical talk show program (cited Gordon Ph), showed the deep rooted anger and frustrations of the Arab citizens. More than 76% of the participants consider that the sitting Arab regimes are worse than the colonizers. Due to the lack of the socio-economical and political perspectives, absent of freedom of expression, and personal developments have resulted in massive brain drain in the Arab world. According to the UN Human Development Report 2007/08 the percentage of the GDP allocated for the Research and Development is utterly and shamefully shockingⁱ compared to their regional competitor Israel. Apparently, this is the reason why according to Cairo’s Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies (2004) 450.000 expensive and hardly needed Arab scientists fled from their own countries to the West in search for better opportunities. According to this study, such loss of high qualifiers from the Arab world accounts One- third of the total brain drain from the developing countries to the West. No wonder why liberal politicians are so weak in the Arab world. As stated in this study, “Arabs are losing 23% of engineers and 15% of scientists each year, while 45% of students studying in abroad do not come back, this means annual loss of more than \$2bn”.

As it seems apparent E. Sivan, has rightly suggested that Islamic movements are winning the physiological war against the liberals within Muslims. They are using different tactics and establishing power base within their communities. They are increasingly becoming popular, appealing for the youth and middle class people, determinant and powerful. Not surprisingly, they withstood years of oppression and maltreatments from the part of the ruling elites. Debatably, Sivan envisioned that this clear societal shift is where the “future menace” will probably erupt. Here is where the Western fear theory is based. The West is worried that one day these current uncoordinated-unrelated and dispersed dots will unite and form a gathering threat against them.

It is jejune notion to attribute the soaring anti-American sentiments in the Muslim-Arab world because Muslims hate America’s values, namely democracy, liberty, freedom, wealth, human rights and rule of law. All these values are admired and aspired by the Muslims in their own countries but denied by their authoritarian regimes and the West.

4- Since Jan Sobieski crushed the Ottoman Empire’s advancement at Vienna gate 1683, Muslims have felt humiliated and severely defeated. Christians took over, divided and colonized their countries. In the Muslim world, there is a popular feeling that the West is unhindered continuing the crusade against Islam. The West is constantly invading Muslim

countries, plundering their resource, deprecating their faith and imposing their imperialist values and interests on them.

This time veiling behind the “war on terror.” They are waging war on Islam. Bush and his hawkish neoconservative team have fueled anti-Western feeling among the Muslims. Bush launched what he called “Crusade against the evil doers”. The former under secretary of Defense, Gen. Boykin, while in uniform, termed the war on terror “spiritual battle against a guy called Satan.” Franklin Graham called Islam “an Evil and wicked religion.” Republican politician Tom Toncredo goes further and advocated “bombing Mecca and Medina,” the two holiest places of Islam. In the Western media, Islam is under persistently depictions and affronts. They accused the Muslim Prophet an epileptic and terrorist. Undoubtedly, all these anti-Islam stands in the West exacerbated the ailing relation between the two civilizations. Nevertheless, taking all these into account, Islamists promulgate that it is the West that hates and determined to obliterate Islam and the Umma not vise versa, and therefore they are obliged to defend this “beleaguered faith” as Emmanuel Sivan has termed it. According to Graham Fuller “today’s global intercommunication and shared satellite images have created strong self consciousness among the Muslims and sense of a broader Western imperial siege against common Islamic culture” this is not about modernity. It is the unceasing Western quest for domination of the strategic space, resource and even culture of the Muslim world, the drive to create pro-American regimes”.

5-There is wider held conviction that the misconducts of war on terror, and the Iraq war, the unbearable suffering of the Palestinians have ideologically, strategically and tactically helped Al Qaeda and her sister organizations while severely debilitated America’s image and its war on terror. The mounting civilian death esp. in the hand of the Americans, and the fact that no one was seriously held accountable for all these unforgivable maltreatments of detainees and unprecedented destructions and lootings angered millions of Muslims around the world. Such erroneous conducts have played extremely good in the hand of the extremist by recruiting new members or increased her sympathizers around the Muslim world. Egypt’s president warned during the run up to the war in Iraq “we have now one Bin Laden, but you are creating millions of Bin Ladens.” In this sense, mistakes committed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have literarily created a new wave of youth fighters what Daniel Benjamin termed “new starters” who devoted to die for their cause.

6- Islamic values and the Muslim’s glorious past achievements encourage almost every Muslim and Islamist with a great degree. Islam lifted Arabia from barbarism, pagans, inter tribe warfare and disunity, backwardness to highest in morality, common ideals,

sense of broader identity/unity, good governance, science and arts, high ethical, sense of justice, jurisprudence, moral values and consistent. It is “that shared common principles, all in deep rooted high culture.” That coalesce all Muslims in their resistance against the Western greediness and encroachments. Hence, Graham Fuller.

Comparing the current degrading socio-economical and political situation of the Muslim/ Arab world with the glorious past during the Caliph’s reign, the Islamists propagate that only if the Umma returns to her religion, then Umma can once again flourish and restore her dignified position in the world.

Conclusion

If Muslim fundamentalist take over the power of the Middle Eastern counties they may reduce the Western political influence, however, it will still remain impractical to suggest that they will and can pose strategic threats to the West. They are weak, fragmented and dispersed. They need to sell their oil to the West and are technologically dependent. Equally, organizations like Muslim Brotherhood have shown that they are eager to adopt a pluralistic political system which serves the interests of the all parties. This suggests that they may form challenges compared to the current regimes, but also they provide tremendous opportunities like political-socio-economical stability, good governance, and thus long-lasting alliances and local legitimacy.

Many experts equalize the current Islamic resurgence as the French revolution, Protestant Reformist, wars of independences. Islamic resurgence is direct result of the deteriorating political, economical social situation of the Muslim world. Apart from the West’s unconditional support of Israel and authoritarian regimes in their countries, their wrath is mainly not directed to the Western world. In contrary, they would seek stable political, economical cooperation and form durable strategic alliance. It is very imperative to understand the social changes the Muslim world is currently undergoing. This includes sense of being under siege vice versa past reminiscence. Ameliorating and accommodating those societal changes through democratic processes rather than forestalling and finding just and comprehensive solutions for the Arab-Israel’s conflicts can lead to de-radicalization and enable a stable and prosperous world. Likewise to address adequately the root cause of the radicalism/extremism will ease the tensions/ mistrust between the West and Islam and consequently help de-radicalization process.

For the part of the West it is pivotal that they transcend the narrowly defined cold war or colonial mentalities, which judged the world alone ideological lines, greediness, self-centered and strive to plunder other nations resources of the colonial era. It is crucial to comprehend the importance of listening and valuing other world perspectives and

national interests and the fact that the world is not in 19th century. The West need to realize that the world has irreversible changed. Unstoppable powers and civilizations are emerging, in this context the zero sum mentality of 19th and 20th centuries does not fit the contemporary world. The Western fear of Islam is mainly based on centuries old mistrust, prejudices, antagonism exacerbated by the politically motivated media outlets. The US as the sole global leader it is to be clever and responsible in consolidating broader voluntary coalitions; bridge shared interests and reform and strengthen international institutions rather than persuading coercive and unilateral approach, self-driven interest and pooh-pooing international body when it does not serve their interest. Such a multilateral approach is regarded sine qua non for better world.

ⁱ Kuwait (0.1951%) , Tunis (0.6289%), Egypt (0.1932%), Sudan (0.3370%), Israel (4.46%), Iran (0.67%)

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