Radicalism and the Practice of Violence in the Muslim World

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Abstract

Religion, politics, society and culture coexist in a melting pot; entwining and clashing amongst one another till the origins of their functions and values are debated much like the chicken and the egg. All occurrences are subject to the questioning of: Is the situation a consequence of the religion or the culture? The political dynamics or societal pressure? Under these circumstances, the inherent spirituality of religions becomes contested as the non-spiritual functions of politics, society, and culture are infused with it. Islam, a historical religion dating back to the 7th century, is under duress as the insurgence and force of radicalism and the use of violence within Muslim nations has strengthened and garnered momentum.

Keyword: Radicalism, Islam, Al Qaeda, ISIL, ISIS, Islamophobia, Extremism, Muslim World, Religious Radicalism, Religio-Political Agreement, Wahhabism, Political Participation,
Introduction

Today, we are surrounded by the atrocities of violence and by different forms of radicalism. Radicalism and the use of violence can be portrayed in many ways though relationships, individuals and groups; a world where we are always connected through the news or social media and have endless information at the tip of our fingers. This investigation will focus on radicalism and its use in the within Muslim world, and the way in which the media portrays Islam and its relationship to radicalism and the use of violence to the western public. Major terrorist and extremist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIL (also known as ISIS) have committed extremely violent and horrible acts, which have created a stereotype against your “everyday” Muslims who have done no such harm. Since post 9/11 and the war on terror, the Western world has been consumed by the phenomenon of “Islamophobia”, which is defined in the Oxford dictionary as: “dislike or prejudice against Muslims or Islam, especially as a political force”. Today, the Islam religion is portrayed as an extremist belief with terroristic practices through our news and social media. Although the attacks and violence that have been committed by such groups as Al Qaeda and ISIL are horrific, is it fair to lump and label all Muslims under one category? Did anti-Muslim measures take place only in the wake of 9/11? I would like to argue that the media has the largest impact on the created stereotype of Muslims and the growing phenomenon of “Islamophobia” in the western society. I would suggest ways we can go about trying to break down that stereotype in the western world. Radicalism and the use of violence of Islamic extremist groups has been in media headlines for most of the twenty first century. The first question to be raised is what was the main cause of this anti-Muslim, Islamophobia trend that has erupted in the Western world? Although many scholars argue that there were pre-existing feelings that set the stage for this to develop, they argue that the direct link to Islamophobia was in the wake of an attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 (Basem, 2014). On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen men of Middle Eastern decent boarded flights leaving for Boston, Newark and Washington. These men, who were armed with box cutters, took control of the four planes using excessive force and flew them to their targets in New York and Washington. At 8:45 am the first plane smashed into the north tower, followed by the crash of the second plane into the south tower just minutes later. The third plane, which was targeting the pentagon, went down in a field near Pittsburgh as the result of a struggle with
passengers of the plane, killing all on board (Bergen, 2002). Within an hour around 3,000 Americans were killed, making it the deadliest act of terrorism in history to date. This horrendous terrorist act had been the work of al-Qaeda; an Islamic, extremist militia group, under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden in his holy war against the United States (Bergen, 2002). If al-Qaeda was not a well-known name prior to the September 11, they became a household name hours after the attack. The media erupted with coverage, and all the major news channels were playing the video of the second plane crashing into the south tower. I remember this event vividly as a child, seeing the coverage and being afraid. This is how most of the Western world felt, and it was a major factor that shaped the anti-Muslim ideology that was created out of the attacks. Because of the events of 9/11, major retaliation against the Muslim communities began to take place. After the attacks, American Muslims wanted to be able to educate non-Muslims on the religion of Islam and help them understand that it is a religion based on peace, and does not condemn such violence and terrorism. However, many people in the Western world believed that this was not the case, and many Muslims and other minority groups became victims of increased hostility and discrimination (Basem, 2014). Al Atom Basem, author of “Examining the Trends of Islamophobia: Western Public Attitudes since 9/11” believed that such acts of hostility were coming directly from the messages conveyed to the public through the Media. Ethnic minorities associated with Islam have experienced constant negative attention from news outlets, making it easy for the public to generalize and create a negative stereotype of the Islamic people. We do not have a fully understood notion of the Middle East; therefore, the most popular subjects of discrimination in some cases have been non-Muslims, those who look like they come from the Middle East. There is a widespread ignorance in the West of the diversity of religious faiths in the Middle East, and the diversity of ethnic groups that practice the religion of Islam (Poynting, Perry, 2007). The backlash against Muslims has been the most dramatic in countries that are allied closely with the United States, because when we mention the Western world, we are differentiating our countries from the livelihood of the Middle East. Personally, I believe that the public is so influenced by the news and social media because we live in an era where we are consumed by it. One of the major problems with the media is that they are often biased, and many times misinterpret the meaning of Islamic practices. Within our cultural realm, some argue that there might be justification for the inequalities of ethno-violence. Personally, I do not think that the level of state practices or justifies ethno-violence. I think that the media, because we are constantly hearing about the violence
committed by radical groups, establishes a hostile environment. Meanwhile, I do not think that the media is necessarily support racist activity or participation in hate crimes. I believe that the way the Western media portrays the Islamic religion does result in incorrect label of all Muslims represented by a negative image. In Ramadan Tariq’s article “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim”, he argues that Islam is easily the most misunderstood religion and tries to bring a new understanding to the “moderate Muslim” in our society.

Ramadan Tariq, the author of “Good Muslim Bad Muslim”, claims that Muslims are easily divided into two categories in our society. “Good Muslims”, are those who collaborate with colonial society and values and the “bad Muslims” are those who resist conforming to anything politically, culturally or religiously of dominate power, which results in immediately being labelled as dangerous or extreme (Tariq, 2010). In the Western society, even those who practice a religion or have a faith do not usually have day to day rituals that are apparent to the public. Tariq thinks that fact that Muslims follow daily religious obligations, such as the way they dress, daily prayer, and fasting, that they are immediately labeled extreme (Tariq, 2010). This is an unfair believe that has been created continues to shadow over all aspects of Islamic debate, especially though the media. Tariq argues that from this viewpoint we have on Islam the “moderate” Muslim is somebody who makes their practices invisible to the public. Some examples of a moderate Muslim in the Western society would be somebody who didn’t participate in a religious head dress, and accepts the culture of the Western society such as drinking alcohol. If they do not fit into this category many people fear them, and automatically label them extremists (Tariq, 2010).

Another major argument that Tariq makes is that everybody can easily argue to condemn the actions of terrorist attacks against civilians all over the world, but then those from the Middle East, who are supporting resistance in Iraq against United States occupation, are labelled to the public as rebels and terrorists. Therefore, are moderate Muslims those who are accepting of this foreign occupation presence in the Middle East? When the same rebel groups were resisting the presence of occupation of the Soviet Union, many of these groups were portrayed as freedom fighters, but now that the United States has declared their war on terror they are the West’s enemy (Tariq, 2010). People in the West do not have a whole understanding of what has happening from both sides. The information they are usually provided with is very general, which
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does not give the viewers all the answers, and only shines light on the point of view on what they want us to focus on. The West believes that the United States actions are justified because of the impact the 9/11 attacks has made on Western society. It changed the way that they live, and the way Western society and security operated. The first thing that needs to be done is to break up the preconceived image we have of the Middle East. Westerns interpret the Middle East as a warzone, backward society; instead, they need to obtain a better understanding of Muslims and the Middle East, in order to break the stereotypes that have been created in the West. Western society is the right one, but it wouldn’t hurt to have a better understanding of a place that is constantly broadcasted to the West. Also, when Western think about the religion of Islam they think that they automatically label it with one political view. Westerns must remember to place the correct political context when they are thinking about Muslims and their practicing beliefs, because the everyday practicing Muslims take a political stance which rejects all forms of violence, and oppression.

As has been discussed, the phenomenon/s of radicalism, the use of violence and Islamophobia spiked drastically after 9/11 attacks. One major thing that came out of this was the violence targeted against Muslims and Islamic groups. There was an increase in violence activity directed against anything that symbolized Islam, such as mosques and community centres. Muslims and other minority groups in the West became targets of increased hostility. In Al Atom Basem’s article, he argues that the targeted violence against the Muslim community was created from a direct link of media coverage. He also argues that in a poll taken by the Washington Post in 2006, 46% of Americans held unfavourable opinions and attitudes towards Muslims (Basem, 2014). In Diane Frost article “Islamophobia: Examining Casual Links between Media, Race Hate from Below”, she focuses on the influences the media has on British society’s Islamophobia. She believes that it comes from the inter-relationship between the press and government policy since 9/11, along with terrorist attacks on Britain in 2005. In the 9/11 attacks Britain, had lost 78 citizens, which was the single most deadly act of terrorism in their history (Bergen, 2002). Frost argues that anti-terror legislation and other government measures have been seen directly through the press and has been responsible for promotion of moral panic in Britain (Frost, 2008). Although, the media has a major influence over Western society, they are more successful in influencing moral panic. Diane Frost’s contribution is important because it is interesting to look at the trends of Britain society, as it gives us a comparative view of Western society outside of North America. Chris Allen, the author of the book “Islamophobia” believes that Islamophobia,
both as a concept and neologism, has its origins from Britain society. Allen also discusses in his book a poll taken by Yougov in Britain after 9/11, which concluded that 84% per cent of British people tended to be more suspicious of Muslims after 9/11. 56% per cent believed that they had nothing in common with Muslims (Allen, 2010). Allen’s book is an example how everything is turned into an Westerns (us) versus Muslims (them). The phenomenon of radicalism, the use of violence and Islamophobia that continues to be on the rise in the west shows no signs of slowing down. Overall, the biggest thing fueling the phenomenon of Islamophobia is fear. Despite the conspiracy theory and how is behind these radical groups; who created them, just as the fear of the 9/11 attacks was starting to dwindle away, a new Islamic extremist group took over the headlines of Western news and social media. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), sometimes referred as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is an extremist rebel group controlling Iraq and Syria with operations all over the Middle East. The actions that have attracted the most media attention are the kidnapping and beheadings of American and Britain citizens in the Middle East. These attacks are videotaped and ISIS propaganda videos have been made of such footage directed towards Western countries. The group had proclaimed themselves as a “caliphate” which claims that they have political and military authority over all practicing Muslims. Along with the beheadings, one of the major aspects of Western media coverage has been the recruitment of everyday practicing Muslims to join the cause of the Caliphate. This is what has been the most fearful part for Western citizens; the membership of this group is on the rise. It is a scary thing to think about, young members living in Western society, are fleeing to the Middle East to join this extremist group. Everyday there is a different headline about the atrocities committed by ISIS, which is only instilling more fear into the Western citizens making it hard to break down the moral panic which has come out of the ISIS coverage.

A lineage of the radical ideas that underline Al-Qaeda’s reasoning for violence shows that the development of jihadi thought over the past several decades is characterized by the erosion of critical constraints used to limit warfare and violence in classical Islam. This erosion is illustrated by the evolution of jihadi arguments related to apostasy and pursuing jihad \(^1\) at home, global jihad, civilian targeting, and suicide bombings.

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\(^1\) Muslims have disagreed throughout the Islamic history about the meaning of the term *jihad*. In the Qur'an (or Koran), it is normally found in the sense of fighting in the path of God; this was used to describe warfare against the enemies of the early Muslim community.
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Islam, a historical religion dating back to the 7th century, is under duress as the insurgence and force of radicalism within Muslim nations has strengthened and garnered momentum. The radical fundamentalists that constitute the new “global jihadi movement” are not doctrinal outliers. They are part of a broader community of Islamists known as “radical Salafis” (commonly called “Wahhabis”). Although there is consensus among Salafis about this understanding of Islam, there are disagreements over the use of violence.

The extremist groups use violence and terror to achieve their radical aims, mostly through suicide bombings, attacks, and armed conflict. The groups claim to operate as agents for the Islamic faith, attempting to restore Islam to its true nature and renew Muslim culture to the literalism of the Quran. However, the fundamentalism promoted and performed by the radical groups is not supported by Islamic scripture or the Hadiths (reports of the prophet Muhammad's conduct). So, it is not the religion which is at fault for the risings of militant groups, and thus it is the consequence of politics, society and culture, or a combination of the three. To fully understand the existence of Islamic extremism, it is important to comprehend its origins in the 20th century in the tribal communities of the Eastern Arabian Peninsula. Islamic radicalism is known as the Wahhabi movement, and received its title from the founder Muhammad ibn Abd-al Wahhab. (Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2017).

The misconceptions surrounding Muslim faith and the core of its values do an injustice to the extinguishment of the militant groups. As the terror and stigma progresses, it further aggravates extremists to achieve their aims while the world ostracizes, misunderstands, and retaliates violently and ineffectively to their aggression. Radicalism within Muslim nations, which has given rise—with high levels of immigration—to Islamic radicalism as a global phenomenon, is not a perplexity of religion. Radicalism within Muslim nations is a product of political strife and social pressure, which are at their core issues of financial resources.

Muhammad ibn Abd-al Wahhab was born in Najd and educated in traditional Sunni Muslim practices. Despite this, he grew opposed to the Sunni practices, claiming them to be idolatrous. His notions were rejected by all respectable authorities and even his own family. However, he and Muhammad bin Saud created a religio-

(ummah). In the hadith, the second most authoritative source of the shari’a (Islamic law), jihad is used to mean armed action, and most Islamic theologians and jurists in the classical period (the first three centuries) of Muslim history understood this obligation to be in a military sense. (Lewis, Bernard, 1988, and Streusand, Douglas E., 1997)

2 The term “salafi” is used to denote those who follow the example of the companions (salaf) of the Prophet Mohammed. Salafis believe that because the companions learned about Islam directly from the Prophet, they commanded a pure understanding of the faith. Subsequent practices, in contrast, were sullied by religious innovations that infected the Muslim community over time. Thus, Muslims must purify the religion by strictly following the Qur’an, the Sunna (path or traditions of the Prophet Mohammed), and the consensus of the companions.
political agreement to start the first Saudi state following along the lines of rejection to Sunni practices and establishing a literalist interpretation of the Qur’an. The motive of Wahhabism was to renounce the traditional scholars and practices, and renew the real doctrines of Islam. It continues to be to interpret the Qur’an for oneself, regardless of traditional interpretations or other understandings one may have on the basis of tradition. Those who do not submit to this new brand of Islam are deemed outside of it, a disbeliever or idolater. Making the “authentic” Muslim lines so rigid, those falling outside of the true believer are now subject to violence and the confiscation of their goods. (ISCA, 2017). The force of Wahhabism can be demonstrated in the case of Hamza Kashgari, a Saudi journalist and poet who tweeted a fictional conversation with the prophet Muhammad on the prophet’s birthday in 2012. This dialogue contained words that expressed respect, friendship, love and hatred. The Saudi people were outraged by his blasphemy and called for his execution. Kashgari deleted the tweets and made a public apology following the incident, however, he was still imprisoned for twenty-one months. Many radicals believe this to be a light punishment and perceived execution to be the only appropriate response. (Valentine, 2015, ch. 1).

Wahhabism founds itself on intolerance; intolerance for criticism, questioning or deviancy from radical Islam. Wahhabism, although founded centuries ago, has gathered momentum in recent decades due to political warfare and colonial influence. The conflicts in the Middle East have sparked radicalism of religious “purification” combined with wars of governmental corruption and wars instigated due to the control over oil and wealth. “Wahhabis themselves prefer titles al-Muwabbidun or Ahl al Tauhid, ‘the asserters of the divine unity.’” (Algar, 2002). Is unity what the radicals are fighting for? Notorious terrorist organization “Al-Qaeda” began as a rebellion to Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. They considered it a jihad, and they were funded by financiers from Saudi Arabia and the United States government. The intention of the group was liberty from invasion, not “divine unity” or purifying the religion, it was political rebellion. When the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, “Azzam favored continued fighting in Afghanistan until there was a true Islamist government, while bin Laden wanted to prepare al Qaeda to fight anywhere in the world.” (Moyers, 2017). Again, the motivation behind the radicalist group was politically charged, striving for greater power and influence in their own country and on a global scale. Al-Qaeda was not concerning itself over the authenticity of Qur’anic verses and deciding
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how to most truthfully live according to the holy scripture. They had political aims and sought support in the Qur’an and Hadiths, and not vice versa. ISIS shares a similar origin, as it was born out of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The U.S. interjection into military and civil services in Iraq caused many people to lose their jobs, and a radicalist group was born from the anger. (The Week, 2015). The momentum that off-shouted from that was driven off of surrounding wars and weaponry from Syria and Iraq, selling oil, and the unquenchable thirst for greater acquisition of power.

The social repercussions of being oppressed by an outside force can contribute to extremism where extremism would formerly not take flight. “Beyond the Second World War, of the 42 Muslim countries that were recognized, only four existed without a colonial power governing it.” (Allen, 2012, p. 33). These colonial powers sought to Christianize the orient, or to reform Islam by secularizing it, as this made it easier for them to control. Colonialism, though never welcomed by the native peoples, was particularly destructive to Muslim people in which the “ummah” (the brotherhood of Muslims as a universal bond) was being torn away, dismissed and reprimanded through laws that enforced borders and subordination. After the Second World War, European colonial powers were sometimes replaced by American ones, as America grew as a military force. The stripping away of Muslim identity by Colonial forces leaves an individual vulnerable to extremist movements that promise refuge from the oppression. A person becomes disenfranchised by a colonial power, and is thus desperate to regain a sense of control. The formation of radicalist groups in this context is a rational response. As a social phenomenon, extremism comes as a response made by a group of people under extreme circumstances to both cope and retaliate. Colonialism is not the only force of negativity descending upon the Muslim person. “For more than five decades, the peoples of the Middle East and Islamic worlds have lived in a vortex of social change.” (Palmer, 2008, p. 18). Youth are forced into cities with overcrowding and mass pollution in search of work, which they often cannot find. Political corruption, inevitably spawning high levels of poverty, push oppressed individuals into religious movements with not always the most spiritual of motives. In oppressive or stressful circumstances, a person seeks solace which often comes in the form of movements seeking change. This is a sensual reaction for it is an attempt to alter unpleasant circumstances. Discrepancy ensues when a movement of social change becomes affiliated with religious convictions; it limits the effect of the political motion if attached to a religion, and it taints and twists the religion to accommodate the political goals. Radicalism in Muslim nations, arises from political or social oppression and propagates
under a guise of religious fanaticism when political aims have been conquered. Response to Muslim radicalism in the west manifests as Islamophobia. “What all this does is to further isolate marginalized young Muslim men who perceive themselves as ever-beleaguered by a popular culture that regards Islam, and Muslims, in antithetical terms.” (Abbas, 2011, p. 11). At home, young Muslims are being bombarded with radicalist images and indoctrinating religious fanaticism combined with various social pressures that push them into terrorist groups. These groups are powerful corrupters and socially structured so that breaking free is tremendously difficult and often not desired. The Islamophobia of the west, which associates radicalism with all Muslim faith, further isolates these individuals and pushes them deeper into extremism. The young Muslim believer feels threatened by a popular culture that presumes their peaceful practice is a form of terrorism and will lead to violence. This threat leads many young men into the hands of groups who desire to be understood and convert the world to their ideology. A defining characteristic of these radicalist groups is their intolerance for alternative ways of life. Islamophobia only strengthens this intolerance, as any conversation to be had about religion is prejudiced with notions of terrorism. The political agenda of the radicalist movements is downplayed by the orientalism of the west and the religion itself is keyed in on. Islamophobia does not consider the foundations of the religious teachings and instead focuses on prejudiced perceptions of the religion based on these radicalist groups. Tawfik Hamid was an Egyptian Muslim who was pulled into the radicalist group Jamaa in his early years. It was upon an incident when Tawfik overheard a Jamaa university student planning to kidnap a police officer and bury him alive over a party that involved music, that Tawfik began to question the radicalist group’s notion of Islam. It occurred to him that the Qur’an does not explicitly ban music, this student considered music to be blasphemous in response to hadiths. Tawfik decided then to join a group called “Quarincs” who chose to follow exclusively the Quran and not the hadiths. “I was doing the opposite of what Jamaa had taught me: I began to analyze.” (Hamid, 2015, ch. 1). Muslim radicalism, though espousing religious convictions as their foundation, misconstrue and manipulate the teachings to validate their evils.

“Qur’anic verses are quoted out of context to support action against infidels, unbelievers, and pagans.” (Springer, 2009, p.54). The fundamental teachings of the prophet Muhammad are completely at odds with the conduct of Muslim extremists. “He
commanded us to … be kind to our neighbours, to cease all forbidden acts, to abstain from bloodshed, to avoid obscenities and false witness…” (Muslim Students Association, 2017). It is contradictory to claim radicalism is a case of devout faith, when the radicalism is so contrary to the tenets of the faith. The teachings are skewed to support the misconduct of the groups which are acting out of political corruption and a strive for greater dominance. These instances of terrorism are not a problem of too deep a religiosity, they are a lack of. If the Muslim extremists were to place their faith in the teachings of the prophet and their scripture, there would be no bloodshed at their hands. The hadiths are not a valid enough source of the prophet’s behaviour to found a party’s objectives and to validate their violence. "By the ninth century, the number of traditions had mushroomed into the hundreds of thousands. They included pious fabrications by those who believed that their practices were in conformity with Islam” (Esposito, 1992). The verbal tradition of Hadith has allowed for much deviance and variation in the interpretation. The radicalist groups cannot stake claim on the Hadiths as confirmation to do mass injustice. Although the Hadiths may be a foundational aspect in the religion of Islam, if the Hadith cannot be supported by years of tradition and practice, it likely does not have much authenticity. Like Christianity and Judaism, the scriptures contain commandments against violence, murder and injustice, but stories and other verses contain messages that permit or promote such things. It is not verifiable to assume that either religion is inherently peaceful or inherently violent. The same can be said for Islam. (Ghilan, 2014). The scriptures reflect the world they exist within, containing instances of peace and violence and everything in between. It does Islam a disservice to limit the religion to its violent phrases, when so much of it is peaceful. Violent groups who neglect the key passages of brotherhood and peace are not honouring the true Islam, and are acting out of an alternative motive which is power. Much the same, the occurrence of violence or instances of it, do not reflect an ideology that promotes it. The Qur’an teachings: “There is no compulsion where the religion is concerned.” (Holy Quran: 2/ 256). This means that no one should be forced into believing, it is not a necessity to convert everyone to the Muslim way. Radicalists groups who claim this to be their motive are not acting out their faith, they are blaspheming it.

Radicalism widely refused

It has been shown through namouras research studies that Muslims around the world are strongly rejecting radicalism and the use of violence in the name of Islam. In various research that has been conducted, when Muslim asked precisely about suicide bombing, and any forms of terrorist attack or use of violence against civilians, clear majorities in most nations say such acts are
rarely or never acceptable as a tool of defending Islam from its enemies. (see below table - PEW Research). Yet there are some nations in which considerable minorities think the use of violence is at least sometimes justified due to the political conflict that exist there.

The above table that was a result of survey that has been conducted by pew research center demonstrates slight indication that attitudes toward violence in the name of Islam are linked to factors such as age, social status, gender or education. Likewise, the results reveals no consistent link between support for enshrining Islamic law “Sharia” as official rule and attitudes toward religiously motivated violence. In only three of the 15 nations with sufficient samples sizes for analysis – Egypt, Kosovo and Tunisia – are Sharia supporters significantly more likely to say suicide bombing and other forms of violence are at least sometimes acceptable. In Bangladesh, Sharia supporters are significantly less likely to hold this view. (Ibid, Pew research center).

The table indicates that in most nations surveyed, at least half of Muslims say they are somewhat or very concerned about religious radicalism. This includes six countries in which 40% or more of Muslims worry about Islamic radicalism: Guinea Bissau (54%), Indonesia (53%), Kazakhstan (46%), Iraq (45%), Ghana (45%) and Pakistan (40%). (For more details on views toward extremism, see concerns about Religious Extremism: Religion and Politics)

Islam means “submission to the will of God”. To submit to the will of God is to acknowledge the power of God and the lack of your own. Although Wahhabi extremists believe themselves to be revitalizing the true Islam, their actions and beliefs produce the opposite. Their behaviour is consumed by a
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lust for power and violence. The authenticity of the religion is to be felt in the individual practice of the faith in following the five pillars. It means nothing if one screams to the hilltops about the greatness of Islam if they themselves do not live it. Religious radicalism is not done in the purification of faith, it is done in the pursuit of wealth and dominance. Extremist groups use bombing and war to promote their message. They twist the Qur’anic and Hadith teachings to support their aims and neglect passages that go against it. Terrorist groups are formed as rebellion to colonialist oppressors who come to extract resources and substantiate their power, and they continue long after the oppressors have been conquered. The addiction of power can produce a violent movement; where once they fought for liberty, they now fight for domination. The disenfranchisement of individuals living under conditions of oppression breed extremist groups to combat the extraction of their rights and to fight back against colonial forces. Youth are extremely susceptible to the radical group’s ideology as it can be an outlet for their frustration and ignorance. The threat posed by orientalism and Islamophobia can leave the Muslim individual isolated and angered by the prejudice which can further their resolve to join extremist groups. Radicalism can be seen as a rational response in radical conditions, if one can consider the troubling living conditions and oppressions of people in the Arab world. All wars are political conflicts over wealth and power, their relation to religious concepts is usually unrecognizable, for religion itself is to believe in a higher power. War, dominance, violence, and hatred are to believe in one’s own.

The reasons of radicalism and violence within Muslim world have been religio-cultural, political, and socio-economic and have focused on issues of politics and social justice such as: (authoritarianism, lack of social services, and corruption), which all link as compounds. Many Islamic reform groups have blamed social and cultural ills on outside influences; for example, modernization (e.g., Westernization and secularization) has been perceived as a form of neocolonialism, an evil that replaces Muslim religious and cultural identity and values with alien ideas and models of development. (See below).

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<th>Little Tension Between Religion and Modernity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Median % of Muslims who believe ...</td>
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*Data for all countries except Egypt from "Tolerance and Tension: Islamic and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa." Questions on evolution and conflict between religion and science were not asked in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Across the six major regions included in the study, most Muslims reject the notion that there is an inherent tension between modern society and leading a religiously devout life.
This view prevails in regions characterized by low levels of religious observance – Central Asia (median of 71%) and Southern and Eastern Europe (58%) – as well as in regions where most Muslims are highly observant – Southeast Asia (64%) and the Middle East and North Africa (60%). Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa are more divided on the compatibility of religion and modern life (median of 50%). Muslims in South Asia, meanwhile, are less likely to say modern life and religious devotion are compatible (median of 39%). (For more details, see Religion and Modernity in Religion, Science and Popular Culture).

Radicalism within Muslim nations is a product of political strife and social pressure, which are at their core issues of financial resources. Therefore, radicalism and the practice of violence within Muslim nations, which has given rise—with high levels of immigration—to Islamic radicalism as a global phenomenon, is not a perplexity of religion.

References


