

Stereotyping Islam in Western Perceptions between Fundamentalism and Phobia: Analytical and Critical Reading

Dr. Ayman Talal Yousef
Arab-American University
Jenin, Palestine.

Abstract

This research is a serious attempt to shed lights on the stereotyping Western perception of Islam and Muslims and the reflections of that on Islam-West relations. The researcher tackles the topic from different sides and dimensions covering the importance, objectives and methodology. The research also throws lights on Western Orientalist thoughts that draw a negative image of Islam and Arabism. It covers the fundamentalist idea in the context of the concept itself, the content and the reasons responsible for the rise of political Islam especially after the 1967 debacle and Iranian Revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Accurate studies were conducted about the Western perception of Islamic fundamentalism and how these Western interpretations and comments developed to the extent of making phobia around Islam and Islamism especially after September 11th, 2001. The importance of this research lies in rationally assessing the relationship between Islam and the West in three successive stages. In the first one, the Western Orientalism stereotyped Islam in a very defaming manner to the extent of equating it with backwardness and inability to develop. In the second stage, Islam was connected with fundamentalism and extremist thought, especially after the rise of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamists' bad intention to confront secular regimes in the Arab World. In the third stage, Islam turned to be a real fear, threat and phobia, in the time of Holy Jihad and "suicide bombing" and due to the direct confrontation with the US in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Introduction

The relationship between the Christian West and the Islamic East has been characterized by antagonism, constant conflict and hostility through out long periods of history. This enmity reached its climax during the crusades in the twelfth century because the crusaders represented a Christian European attempt to get back the Arab East from Muslim rule and from the Islamic influence, especially the Holy Land which was within the authority and the sovereignty of the Roman Empire. The Europeans in the stage of geographical discoveries and colonial expansionism clashed with the peoples and nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but their direct confrontation with the Muslim states and emirates used to take a very special and different form. This was so because Muslims throughout history held in their hearts a global, civilizational and humanistic project reflecting Islam as a religion and a culture. In their endeavors to spread the message of Islam all over the world, in the East and the West, Muslims clashed with the European colonial project. The difference between the two projects is clearly visible in the content, objectives and strategies. The Muslim penetration in the world was due to religious and cultural reasons and objectives because Islam as a universal religion represented a new style of life and therefore it is the duty of all Muslims to propagate the message and the spirit of Islam by all available means, including violent Jihad.

At the same time, European expansionism was not motivated by any religious philosophy or spiritual dogma, but it was clearly moved by colonial ambitions, because the industrial, capitalistic and materialistic developments in these societies, encouraged the Europeans, particularly in the post industrial revolution in the 19th century, to colonize the Old World and to discover the New World. The Europeans intended to search for resources, markets, and cheap labor, and to further export their domestic crises to these newly discovered colonies.

The dominance of materialistic consumerism and savage capitalism and blind chauvinistic nationalism in Europe resulted in two destructive world wars that left millions of victims. The First World War witnessed the end role of the Islamic world order after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and Muslim caliphate in 1924. The Islamic state was replaced by Kamal Ataturk with a national secular state based on one form of language, culture, and history rather than religion. The Western colonial attack on the Muslim lands and the retreating role of Muslims in world affairs, along with emerging ideologies such as secularism, socialism, and democracy, all have led to the appearance of political Islam movements. In 1928, Hasan Al- Banna succeeded in founding the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The severity of Islam- West conflict was declined to the minimum degree in the post- Second World War period until the end of the Cold War in 1991. The bipolar world system dominated by the US and the former USSR shed its light, repercussions, and implications on the Muslim countries that failed to influence the system due to lack of actual capabilities and they turned into satellites moving in the superpower's orbits. The political, military and ideological polarization between the US and the ex-USSR provoked reaction among ordinary politicized Muslims. Those Muslims looked at such polarization as a kind of insult to the reputation of the Muslim nation because Muslims as a group could not possess a cultural global project that could compete with American capitalism and Soviet socialism. The absence of the Muslim nation, from the source of power and influence in the world played its role in widening the mass popularity of the Islamists, who have been looked upon as renewals of the Islamic model.

Islam and contemporary Islamic movements became vital variables in the West – Muslims equation and relations in the post- Cold War era. Many Western theories and conceptual paradigms were invented to shed lights on the overlapping nature of the world system during this period. These theories adopted cultural components and dimensions as important factors in shaping emerging international politics. For example, Samuel Huntington in his book about the clash of civilizations argues that culture and religion are more decisive in reflecting the relations among states and nations than national interests, while Francis Fukuyama propagates at length his thesis about the end of history which contends in a Hegelian perspective that the collapse of communism meant the triumph of Western capitalism. In this context, Fukuyama strongly advised Third World countries to imitate the Western model of democracy, free market, and human rights if they want to resolve their chronic socio- economic and political problems and hindrances. Anyone can smell the Western superiority and Western arbitrariness of asserting that the western model of development and modernization is the only available model world-wide. This vision also reflects the Euro-American centralism that was found in the post- geographical discoveries and played its role in paving the way for colonialism and Neo- colonialism.

One of the consequences of this Euro- American suppressive intellectual centralism is the wide- scale use of new variables and terminologies related to current Islamic phenomena such as fundamentalism, Islamic terrorism, and Islam phobia. The clash of civilizations reflects a Western mentality that invaded everything in the world of others including the language, vocabularies, and instruments of dealings and human dialogue. The Western theses around Islam and Islamism transformed into a new brand of intellectual fundamentalism and ideology.

Islamic fundamentalism is rising in parallel with the deepening impact of globalization and its role in confiscating the cultural, political and economic sovereignty of the poor countries including the Muslim ones.

Orientalist Thought and Stereotyping Islam

Edward Said in his wonderful masterpiece "Orientalism" strongly confirms that Orientalism is a European invention adopted by the Europeans especially the French and the British since the 2nd half of the 18th century. Like other thinkers, Edward Said continually worked in introducing his book to give a definite theoretical as well as conceptual definition of Orientalism and set it in its right context. Said viewed Orientalism as an academic cognitive field that serves a group of institutions interested in studies and research about the East from the point view of anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, politicians, art historians and literary critics. Orientalism, indeed, is an already intellectual methodology based on epistemological discrimination between the Orient and the Occident. Orientalism here comes to form a point for discrimination for many scientists and thinkers, especially those who were interested in scientific as well as cognitive fields. This was a means to develop their theoretical performance and test their empirical research, especially those concerned with discussing social or political phenomena, as well as descriptions related to literature, poetry, traditions, and lifestyle in general. Finally Orientalism was considered as a western style or method, smooth but deceptive based on the disintegration of the other's matrix of thoughts and culture to control it. Universities created programs and scientific and academic departments interested the languages and civilizations of the Orient. For example, there is Orient College in Oxford University in Britain. Princeton University also emphasized the influence of the Oriental Studies Department after the World War Second. In 1959, the British government formed a special committee to re-evaluate the changes and developments in the Oriental, Slavic, East-European and African Studies (Said, 1978)

Many factors overlapped and contributed in formulating the concepts of Orient and Occident as two distinct and contradictory concepts different in visions and interests, such as the historical relationship between Europe, the imperialistic and colonial powers, and the poor Orient. Another factor is that Occidental system of teaching in the 19th century, which focused on studying so many cultures of the Orient. A third factor is ideological assumptions and these, pictures, and imaginations. All participated in creating an Occident image of the Orient, which by the passage of time took an everlasting and established feature. Such an image can be clear seen also in some examples of the works of Arab writers who worked hard to explore the origin of the American views related to Arab and Islamic issues as well as the Palestinian issue, that were clear in American literature, school textbooks, the press, films and churches (Suleiman, 1996). The dangers in such ideas about the Orient in general and the Arabs and Muslims in particular lies in its dim grey boundaries since, they attempt to establish a mediocre idea about the Orient and to emphasize the superiority of the Occident. This is also emphasized in the continuous attempt to exploit globalism in its various forms especially that of communications and media, for this purpose, and to make the Orient feel the need for the Occident in this respect (Giddens, 1994)

With regard to culture and imperialism, said seriously attempted in his book "Orientalism" to answer some questions that have not been answered yet. In the period of the disintegration of colonialism after the World War Second, Edward Said showed a group of talented Arab and non-Arab writers from Asia and Africa whose works were creative enough to re-read the history of colonialism and imperialism through dealing with Western manuscripts.

This enabled Said to strongly refuse and reject the separation between the white and the non-white, with regard to creativity and contribution to history and civilization. The world is based on participation and cultures that meet and have much in common to enrich human history and civilization. What Said had embodied in culture and imperialism is setting the foundation stone for a huge revolution in human and social sciences. Said based his mission on the focal issue built on understanding the covert relationship between power, and authority, on one hand, and texts, narratives, and compositions, on the others, then projecting this on culture, history, society, literature and the novel. The danger of narratives, as Said viewed it, is embedded in the fact that they construct formal narratives of history related to the ideology and imperial culture whose main priority is to prevent other's different narratives. The Occidental narratives about the Orient and the Arabs had got a complex form of risk when such narrative collate white media and political theories to produce a "diminutive racial" picture about the Arabs just as people riding camels, with mean types of behavior, just producing terrorists or sheikhs who have big fortunes to spend on their lust for women and temporal enjoyments (Said, 1994)

Islam, as a result, underwent the pressure of both lionization and colonialism and from these two trends came a stereotyped picture that mixed the Orient with Islam, and reflecting all the drawbacks of the orient as part of Islam. The Christians missionaries and the Orientalists contributed to establishing this negative picture, as well as the views were of a brutal colonial type, against Islam. They strongly believe that Islam is missing the features of religion. Islam is and will be a topic that attacks the Occident Thought. A thinker as Hegel says about Islam: "We can not find in Islam the presence of well-established facts related to senses, On the country, it is deeply selective in discarding what is felt or seen".

Another example is seen in Drywell, author of "Orient library" in which he divided history into holy history that is represented by the Jews and the Christians and dirty history represented by Muslims. In his opinion Judaism and Christianity are affiliated to civilized geography different from that of Islam, which is very humble. As for Justav Von Gronbaum he produced great works about Islam, works that deny the affiliation of Islam with any civilization or religion. In his opinion, Islam is closed and does not lend itself to development. Max Weber in his book "Islam and Capitalism" considered Islam as void and advocating no morals or ethics that match with capitalism. With regard to Islamic society, he views it as tyrannical and irrational, needing to be under control (Abu Hieja, 2004)

Orientalism is one of the features of the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and rationalism in Europe. It is also considered one of the European capitalist regulations that viewed the Orient with its cultural traditional matrix and its achievements in art, politics, architecture and literature (Arkoun, 2000). Most of the studies carried out by Orientalists were of ethnical and anthropological features. Ernest Glinner studied the normal society of Morocco that was in harmony with Islam and comes to a form of mystic simple, closed type of society. This was in harmony with other studies by other Orientalists about society in the Arabian Peninsula, which is considered as the cradle of Islam and typical to normal life. It always contradicts stability and does not help much in meditation and deep thinking or create the feeling of civilization or that for creativity. And when studying Islamic civilization, they view it also as lacking comprehensiveness, seeing that it contains idealistic spiritual ideas that come at the expense of physical aspects. So, most of their attempt were focused on socio-economic features without studying deeply the basic principles of theology or jurisprudence (Al Mousawi, 1993) Justav Von Gronbaum in this book "Islam" went on to claim that the Islamic civilization fell short of the needs of the modern scientific project that embodies intellect, thought, and openness to others.

This project cuts the role of religion in every useful thing including the norms of human society, as that of capitalism, free market economy, democracy, human rights, scientific progress and secularism. On the contrary, the Western project stands clearly where the Western can frankly deal with himself as well as with his society in issues relates to facts and existentialism, while the Arab intellectuals such as Sati' Al-Hussari, Taha Hussein, Mohammed Hussein Haykal, and Abbass Mahmoud Al-Aqqad set history and events in a selective way that matches the image envisaged by Muslims (Arkoun, 2000). Moreover, Glinner showed that Islam directly praises the person and the Charisma as it focused on rituals and prayers rather than what is actual and logical. Gilnner continues his attack against Islam till he confirms that the early Islamic society, i.e., of Mecca and Medina embodied ideals of purity and deprivation (Zubaideh, 1997).

In the latest decades, Islam and Muslims got much attention and space in Western media, but it has kept showing the superiority of the Occident over those coming from the Orient considering them inferior. Such ideas were rife in most of studies in Orientalism, sociology, anthropology, and political, cultural and traditional studies. Most these studies by the end confirmed that the way towards modernization and progress should go through the Western physical track and way of life. Islam as viewed by most western thinkers, intellectuals, politicians, researchers, academics and businessmen is unable to initiate creativity and change. It is just an expression of literal explanation of Quranic verses and the prophet's sayings. Muslims are backward, closed minded and conservatives who adore wars and bloodshed and ignore the other. Some called the current phenomenon as fundamentalism; others called it political Islam or Islamic revivalism and Islamic resurgence (Tibi, 2001).

Edward Said's book thus came to defend Islam against Western understanding of it and to highlight issues of great importance to Arabs and Muslims. It came to show that the Western concern with Islam increased sharply after the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Said's book revealed the stereotyping of Islam based on already established ideas by most Orientalists and media specialists, which is merely a set of prejudiced ideas against Islam. This was to deny and defeat the other morally and psychologically (Said, 1981)

The Occident- Europe before World War Two and the U.S.A. after the war - continued to view the Orient as inferior and unviable for development. This is not because it is part of Asia or Africa, but because of its connection with Islam and the Arabs. This view got its strength because of the solid resistance to the colonial and imperial plans of the Occident to capture nations and steal their fortunes. The image of Islam was always connected with negative stereotyped concepts and thoughts. Islam is viewed as a "demonic Religion" that provides a rich, fertile environment for fanatic movements like Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and Hamas movement. These movements are viewed as very dogmatic and fanatical aiming to establish a closed fanatical Islamic system that denies coexistence and tolerance with the West, and also unable to accept other non-Muslim minorities in Islamic societies (Said, 1981).

Islam is always linked geographically with the Middle East and North Africa, a region that does not respond to democratic and liberal movements. Moreover, it is a region that is never nominated as a region of achievements. This is because the spirit of Islam never meets with that of capitalism, which built a society that denies the voice of the individual. It is close and unjust and gives devotion to tribe and social ranking. Bernard Lewis, well-known Orientalist, went further than this when he claimed that Islam does not develop people in touch with reality. Muslims are addicted to tales and false history (Said, 1981)

So, it is not strange to find in the Western dictionary terms that tell about stereotyping and hostility, such as Islamic Phobias or the Green threat. Such terms reflect the ideology of the elite, but not necessarily that of the ordinary peoples of Western Europe and America. These ideas are fused and nourished with ideas that emphasize the alliance between capitalism and politics that aims to tame people and deny the other. As a result, the problem lies in the volume of such a relationship and in the mono-type of suppositions and media visions which wage war against concepts and narratives or events of minor importance which are part of ordinary life considering them very dangerous and threatening the future of human society. Islam has been considered as a demonic religion in Western media and works of authors and columns in journals. Such generalizations gave way to new concepts like “the clash of civilizations”, “the end of history”, “The green threat”, and so many others.

Islamic Fundamentalism: Problematic terminology

Islam is a well-known doctrine and ideology. It is also a global religion of a billion and a quarter Muslims around the world. Muslims now form the majority in more than 45 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia, in addition to the growing number of Muslims in India, China, Europe, and America. Islam looks forward and endeavors to develop and accept the different social structures of Muslims living in different societies that are politically, socially, economically, and culturally different. As it is commonly known, Islam always tries to build societies of multi-nationalities and cultures where affiliation to race, color, language, and history disappears, and such societies come under the guidance of the Prophet Mohammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) as explained by revelation from God.

Denny defined Islam as a complex active mixture of people, races, movements, and objectives, where Muslims live in local societies away from a centralized united authority of one state. Solidarity among Muslims results from the fact that Muslim society has the ability to effect changes and cope with new developments and situations that face the nation. This comes through the activation of logical reasoning by the learned and scientists of the nation. Through inquiry, Islam as a religion and philosophy of life owns and gets the ability needed to face and meet social changes, while adhering to the teaching of the Quran, the basics and principle of jurisprudence and Islamic legislation based on the sayings of the prophet [PBUH] (Denny, 1993)

So fundamentalism, with its non- Islamic origins represented by the Christian Protestantism movement at the beginning of the 20th century, has no place in the Islamic context. This is due not only to the Christian tradition and the nature of the term, but also to the negative connotations attributed to the phenomenon of fundamentalism. Many people believe that the term “Islamic fundamentalism” has been deliberately used to distort and give a false picture about the contemporary Islamic phenomenon. The West has been trying to affix this accusation to Muslims, i.e., viewing Muslims as having lust for terrorism, violence and religious oppression, confiscation of opinions and freedoms, the oppression of women’s freedom, and antagonism toward Western civilization. The Western monopoly of media helped in preaching and circulating concept of fanatical Islam and Muslims who are very dogmatic and biased. Many Western observers viewed Islam as a religion of ideological principles that confront and oppose the western ideological model (Al-Zabin, 2000).

In the 1980's, active political Islam became synonymous with extremism and terrorism as seen by Western educators, decision makers, and media. It is also associated with hostages' crises, suicidal explosions, and the killing of foreign tourists. So Denny opposes using the term "fundamentalism" as it is controversial as it is impossible for a person to be a Muslim unless he sticks to its principles.

In this respect, he says," the term fundamentalism was widely spread in the seventies to describe different forms of attempts to revitalize Islam. This term was firstly used at the beginning of the 20th century, to describe well- educated conservative Christians who set a group of principles that true Christian believers must adhere to. And due to the American Protestant origin of the term, many observers of Muslims and non- Muslims believe that such a term should not be used for the Islamic resurgence and activism (Wight, 1992).

Richard Mitchell, an American expert and historian of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, believes that there is no real equivalent term in the Arabic language that can stand for fundamentalism, seeing it as inapplicable in the context of Islam. Another specialist in this field says " it is not wise to bring already prejudiced concept for a group of people and apply it to the Islamic movements, especially when examining and investigating non- Islamic traditions (Smart, 1987).James Bar, a famous theologian, says that fundamentalism is a bad word or expression and people ascribed with it do not like to be called so. It is mostly understood as an unfriendly word that reflects degradation, backwardness, and extremism. However, Robin Wright prefers using Islamic and Islamism as terms that precisely describe the attempts to interpret the creativity that looks forward to building a socio-economic Islamic system. Moreover, some specialists in Middle East affairs and experts in religious affairs also prefer using the term "resurrection" or "resurgence" or "renaissance" to describe the Islamic movements that call for an active role for political Islam. These groups are very keen to make Islam regain its original form and role according to their understanding. (Wright, 1992).

Irvand Ibrahimain, an expert in Iranian affairs, is uncertain about using this term: He is against using "fundamentalism" in the contemporary Islamic world as it relates to its American Protestant origin; but he says that Khomeini and his followers were not able to find a synonymous term or expression either in Arabic or in Persian. As a result, these followers coined a new term, "Punyadagaryan", which means "fundamentals" (Al-Azim, 1993).The Iranian Muslims consider themselves as abiding by and complying with Islam and its principles, as compared to others who deviated because of following foreign concepts, historical distortion of the Quran and, the sayings of the prophet Mohammad and the preaching of Al-Ithana Ashriya. Not only were the contemporary Muslim movements described as fanatical or fundamentalist, but these terms were used to describe certain countries in the Middle East, such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. In Libya, Gathafi gave himself the right to re-interpret Islam. He also doubted the sayings and deeds of the prophet. Most of his speeches and opinions are stated in his book the "Green Book". In Saudi Arabia, there is an alliance between the royal family and religious intellectuals and preachers. This is to gain the support of conservative as well as moderate Muslims and legalize royal control of the country. However, Saudi Arabia was not very much concerned with such type of ideology as fundamentalism. This is because it is very possible this might stand against its foreign relations with the Western world, especially the United States and Europe (Al-Azim, 1993).With regard to Iran, and the criticism of the West was very severe at the time of Khomeini. America is considered by Iran and Iranians as the first enemy of Islam. This is why Iran in American literature and media is described as a state of terrorism and fundamentalism, led by the teachings and thoughts of offensive Khomeini's ideology.

Reasons beyond the Rise in fundamentalist Islam

Some resources see that the reasons behind the rise of political Islam and the revival of Islamic principles started in the middle of the 19th century when a group of thinkers and innovators such as Jamal Aladdin Al Afghani, Mohammad Abdo, and Mohammad Rashid Rida developed an Islamic trend towards dealing with the advanced world around them.

These reformers believed that Islamic peoples were living in hardships because their governments were very weak and unable to protect them against foreign interference. They believed that the best way to treat such situations comes through a logical combination of science and religion, and through comprehensive political, social, and economic reforms based on contemporary understandings and activating scientific and educational institutions. (Al-Azmeh, 1991) Moreover, Western scholars and researchers have focused on other factors that stand behind the contemporary Islamic phenomenon. The most important of these are:

First: The problem of contemporary Islam lies in its being a religion and its success all over the globe. In just a century after capturing Mecca (AD630), the Islamic world covered wide parts of the world, from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to China in the east. The Muslims led a prosperous life at the time Europe struggled to awake from ignorance and other hardships. Such heavenly blessing started to change and decline at the beginning of the 15th century, when Europe began to awake from its deep sleep, and spread its influence through technology, military success and new ideas. So some see that the modern Islamic resurrection is just a reaction against the European monopoly in every field and aspect of life. The Muslims were the leaders of the world and they just became victims of foreign American and European intervention (Pipes, 1980)

Second: One of the reasons behind the contemporary Islamic resurrection is the successive military defeats the Muslim countries received from Western Christian countries since the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire started to disintegrate. The establishment of the Zionist State in Palestine in 1948 was a direct result of hatred against Europe. This is because Israel is in reality an American-European project in the center of the Islamic world, and this contributed to transmitting collective feelings of solidarity and support among Muslims. Napoleon Bonaparte found himself obliged to send a call for the support of the Jews when leading his campaign against the East in 1799, saying, "Oh, you, the Israelis, the Unique People, France is stretching her arm folly to support you, and keeping the tradition of Israel. You... the real legal owners of Palestine" (Abu Fadel, 1992) Muslims will also not forget the bad practices of European countries, especially Britain and France who divided the Arab world into small scattered states by the Sykes-Picot treaty of 1916.

1967 is considered by all measures a catastrophic year for all Arabs and Muslims, and a turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In that year, Israel defeated its "Arab enemies" in the Six-Day War. Israel then occupied the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Sinai Peninsula (Patterson, 2004). The occupation of Jerusalem was a severe blow that destroyed the Arab dignity, and self-esteem, and consideration. The cause of Palestine and the liberation of Jerusalem turned from just a regional Arab issue to an Islamic global one that concerns every Muslim (Ayubi, 1993).

Third: the Islamic resurrection movement in the 1970's and 1980's came as a reaction to the failure of a group of national as well as socialist attempts after the liberation from foreign monopoly. Nasserism in Egypt, Baathist ideology in Syria and Iraq, Islamic socialism in Libya and Algeria and the Marxist socialism in South Yemen all failed. At the political level, the secular contemporary movements failed in the Islamic world. Neither the liberal nationalists nor the Communists were able to keep their promises or commitments to their peoples. The governments in Islamic states were not interested in establishing a legal political stand for them. On the contrary, they were authoritarian type of government led by dictators and military leaders and the army. Political parties were banned or with just limited activities. Elections were not just and fair. Moreover, financial and administrative corruption became a common phenomenon, in addition to malpractice and maldistribution of wealth among the rich and the poor.

The Islamic movements rejected the Marxist model and refused to adopt it since it was a purely secular atheist type of doctrine. Moreover, capitalism produced a new group of elites and a consuming capitalist society. So the Islamists succeeded in gaining the support of the mainstream by focusing on issues such as unemployment, poverty, and unfair distribution of wealth, in addition to authoritarian systems of dictatorship (Schwantiz, 2005).

Fourth: the discovery of oil in huge commercial quantities in the Arabian Peninsula, the natural cradle of Islam, made Muslims feel that Islam was starting to gain power and influence as a central power among nations. There are so many factors that gave strength to this trend, as most petrol is found in the center of the Arab world, where the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) received the revelation from God, and established the first Islamic society in the Arabian Peninsula. The revenues from oil partially supported the presence of Islamic organizations worldwide, which supported the spread of Islam all over the world, and led to building mosques in many countries, especially in Central Asia after the liberation from the Russian rule (Pipes, 1980).

Fifth, the new cultural colonialism in the 20th century shocked Muslims in their norms and behaviors. This created a strong and deep psychological shock for Muslims as they found that they were unable to stand against the new atheist global ideology coming from the West, supported by satellite channels, computer technology, the internet and printed materials. This, as a result, created an ideological gap and awakening of belief among the poor in cities (Eminsallah, 1991). The Islamic awakening especially at the religious and cultural levels produced a new formula that emphasizes Islamic culture and customs, and increased Islamic awareness in confronting the political and economic exploitation of the West and the brain washing ideology. The rise of global powers, strengthened by modern technologies created a cultural debate among Muslims. This started the process of searching for cultural and religious identity in the context of opposing the Western model that stands for confiscating of one's identity and specialty (Choudhary and Berdine, 1994).

The West and the Intellectual Theses of Islamic Fundamentalism

What scares the West today is the principles, ideas and ideologies of the current Islamic renewed thinkers that pose a challenge to the West at different levels. Islamic universality refuses the idea of distinguishing between peoples, races, colors, and languages, in addition to geography. This universality of Islam confirms its comprehensiveness in the light of regulating all aspects of life, political, economic, cultural, and social. The Western intellectual and epistemological paradigms that deal with Islam, have always concentrated on the epistemological theses of modern Islamic thinkers such as Hasan al-Banna, Sayyed Qutub and al- Mawdoudi. All those thinkers criticize Western satanic behavior, its materialism, lust for power, and desire to use force (al- Mousalli, 1993).

This new paganism and ignorance are characterized by the social dislocation, the disintegration of moral principles, economic inequality, and spiritual bankruptcy. Even Qutub has gone to the extent of declaring that Islam is the only civilizing force in the face of Western materialistic values. According to this view, Islam alone is capable of providing solutions to all hardships and to the social and religious crises in human societies because the general role of Islam is to build a real society (Davidson, 2000).

There is a Western attack on the concept of Jihad and revolution in Islam on ground that Islam has spread since the 7th century by all means, including Jihad by sword. Jihad in Quranic perspective means struggle and self- suffering with the aim of building truly Islamic society as against the Western satanic materialistic society (Esposito, 1992).

For Islamists, the change from ignorance to the new Islamic virtue requires certain tools to eradicate paganism and ignorance. Jihad stems from the fact of recognizing the divinity of God and therefore any person or system or tyranny that stands in the face of God's divine kingdom must be removed by revolution and sword. The duty of Islamic revolution is to liberate humanity from all man-made rules and regulations (Hoodbhay, 2005). What scares the West today is that Islamic religious theory divides the world into two parts: the world of peace and the world of war, with the first involving Muslims and non-Muslims who remain adherents of the Islamic state and the second involving non-believers and enemies (Proctor, 19965).

Some intellectuals argue that Islam rejects democracy and one party socialist communist rule because democracy embraces majority rule and the sovereignty of the people while in communism it is the dictatorship of proletariat. However, democracy in Islam means the rule of God, the sovereignty of the Quran and the dominance of Shura (Khomeini, 1981).

Hamid Enayat, a prominent Iranian intellectual, thinks that Islam and democracy are compatible because democracy is pluralistic political system, as against tyranny, and there is no dictatorship in Islam. The principles of government policies and programs stem from the Quran and Hadeeth (Prophet's words and deeds), not from individual will or wishes (Enayat, 1982).

In another context, while the secular national state considers religion a private affair, the Islamists denounce secularism and its content of ignorance, paganism, and rebellion against God. They always love to look at the strength and influence of Islam globally. Their theory is based on the legitimate divisions between those belonging to Hezbollah (Party of God) and the devil's party. Hence no individual can become a member of Islamic society unless he becomes a believer and a Muslim. Qutub rejected the ideology of Arab Nationalism due to its narrow theoretical and practical foundations. According to Qutub, God chose Arabia to be the cradle of Islam, not because of Arabism, but due to a number of other factors and reasons. Some of them are linked to the absence of a central strong state, coercion, or political obligation. While other ecological and climatic reasons helped in spreading tribal and nomadic habits (Qutub, 1966)

***Islam Phobia in the Aftermath of September 11th 2001 ***

The event of September 11th, 2001 contributed to inaugurating a new phase of the international system, which started crystallizing in the post- Cold War period at the beginning of nineties of the last century. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its system of communism in Eastern Europe, and the victory of the allies, led by the US to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991, played a pivotal role in the emergence of a unipolar system. The American control of military, political, economic, information and technological power led to overall domination over the international political system. Despite the broad slogan and the bright headlines brought by the Senior Bush Administration such as the pursuit of spreading democracy, human rights, political pluralism, resolving disputes peacefully and the right of oppressed people to self-determination, the observer of events felt that the New World Order meant American unilateralism and interventionist steps.

Meanwhile, on September 11th, Al- Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden struck a blow at US power and influence, although the strike could not threaten the very existence of the US, nor affect negatively US leadership of the world. The September 11th events are distinguished as being the first strike in the US homeland which was seen as well protected, secure, and an impenetrable fortress. Many thinkers, analysts, and strategists took the task of interpreting the phenomenon of international terrorism in the wake of the shock of September 2001.

They started discussing the options and alternatives available to the US decision-makers in handling this new challenge (Yousef, 2005). Many theories and analyses emerged to explain the phenomenon of terrorism, especially what they called "Islamic terrorism" which struck strongly in September 2001. Some attributed this to psychological factors and causes that reflect the gap between what the "terrorist" believes is true and valuable on one hand and his capacity and capability to achieve what he sees as sacred on the other (Los Angeles Times, 2004). The other reading of this phenomenon focused on analyzing the role of religion and philosophical conceptions in the minds of people, especially young people, and the need to convince them to adopt all ways and means to achieve the religious goals, the fate of the Ummah (nation) depending on them.

This traced the roots of "Islamic terrorism" to 1979, the date of the victory of the Islamic Shia revolution in Iran, and the launch of the Afghan and Islamic Jihad against the Soviet atheistic presence in Afghanistan. Samuel Huntington is one follower of this thesis by which he is convinced that religion and culture are important hidden factors that influence the conduct of international politics in the post- Cold War era (Huntington, 1996).

Many specialists in the affairs of al-Qaeda and other Islamic movements translated al-Qaeda thoughts from its publications, pamphlets and the news on websites. For example, Kabil translated important parts of the book: "Knights under the Banner of the Prophet" of Ayman al-Zawahiri. According to the book, al-Qaeda and all Muslim believers must start their struggle with the closest enemy of the "secular regimes in the Arab and Muslim states", then to move to the largest enemy, the US and Western Europe. In order to achieve this, the Jihadi Islamists built different tools and adopted ways and means to create new leadership characterized by a rational and scientific mentality, along with the ability to confront the West through recruiting new Jihadis who are eager to conduct Jihad. Western sources exaggerated the thoughts and statements of Al-Zawahiri by referring constantly to some Islamists who embraced the idea of killing and bloodshed against Westerners, both civilians and military, on the pretext that these societies are selfish, materialistic, and infidels (Madani, 2005).

A new wave of the Western strategy of exaggerating Islamic fundamentalism in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, was set in motion, to the extent that some intellectuals, journalists and Western experts say that bin Laden and al-Qaeda are seeking to establish a vast Muslim empire extending from Morocco in the West to Indonesia in the East, and from Central Asia in the North to South Africa in the South. Those Islamists are putting more endeavors to achieve their principal goals and objectives by all possible means, including Jihad and violence. If this thesis is situated in a theoretical context, then it could be argued that Western media figures, academics, decision-makers and research centers are trying to deliver the idea that Islamic globalism based on extremism and terrorism has become the next threat, replacing Communism. Therefore, this kind of "harmful" globalism should be contained in every way because it poses a direct threat to civilized societies and Western democracies (M.Barbara, 2002).

When Jihad is situated in the Western theoretical and conceptual framework much of the Western theories have always tried to prove that Jihad for Muslims is more or less a hateful reaction to Western modernity led by the US and against all manifestations of Western civilization (Abu Rabi, 2002)

The views and perspectives of many Western specialists on Islam and Islamism are characterized by narrow intellectual and scientific horizon because they termed the executors of September 11th in Washington and New York indoctrinated Muslims infected by the fever of "bloody Jihad and violence". John Esposito is one who wrote extensively on Islam and also edited numerous articles, books, and analyses in connection with contemporary Islamic movement. He situated September 11th in the context of bloody operations resulting from Jihad ideology coupled with a violent interpretation of Islam creed".

He evaluated bin Laden as a traditional Arab personality whose heart is full of hatred for America and saturated with Jihad principles that grew with him the childhood. According to this perspective, bin Laden was raised in a desert environment dominated by Wahabi ideas. Therefore, Wahabism is responsible for what happened in the United States and hence many calls appeared in the West and in the US from politicians, academics, and research centers for Saudi Arabia to "strike" the terrorists and their hiding sanctuaries in the kingdom". This means the mosque preachers and school teachers who teach Islam to the public by emphasizing on America as No. one enemy in the world and a great Satan of the current age". The supporters of al-Qaeda are working in the dark and they are planning to attack Western interests and foreigners inside the kingdom and outside (Rouleau, 2002).

Some US decision-making and research centers close to the administration launched an indiscriminate campaign against Saudi Arabia and all institutions and charities funded from within the kingdom. These allegations and claims attempted to prove that the Saudi state, with its religious background and social set up, helps in producing and breeding "terrorists". Because of that, the US doubled pressures on the Saudis to reform the system of teaching, the curriculum, and the religious speeches delivered in the mosques on Fridays, as they directly consolidate Wahabi ideas among ordinary Saudis (Simpson, 2003). Martin Indyke, former US Ambassador to Israel and a competent specialist on Middle East affairs, wrote a lengthy analytical article in the Washington Post following September 11th. He stressed the strategic and tactical mistakes of the previous Clinton Administration because of its focus on the goal of strengthening peace efforts between the Palestinians and the Israelis without paying attention to terrorism and al-Qaeda. Indyke tailored a strategy of three points to serve US interests in the region:

- 1- Not only more efforts to contain Iraq and Iran and to prevent them from possessing weapons of mass destruction but also a new policy of combating terrorism.
- 2- More pressures from the Bush Administration on Egypt and Saudi Arabia in order to bring socio-political and cultural changes within them and expand the scope of democratization in the Middle East.
- 3- Easing US pressure on Israel with regard to the peace process with the Palestinians and giving Israel the upper hand in fighting "Palestinian terrorism" as a continuation of the American war on international terrorism (Indyke, 2006).

Bush, in a speech before the National Association of America for Democracy on the first of October 2006, clearly stated that America No. one enemy is "Islamic Terrorism" fueled by bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Bush called the current Islamic phenomenon that combines Islam with Jihad as "Islamic fascism", similar to the Fascism and Nazism that swept Europe in the thirties of the last century. This analogy between Islam and terrorism aimed at assassinating the moral, ethical, and humanitarian character of Islam and Muslims in order to facilitate the process of attacking political Islam without provoking local, regional and international reactions.

Western incitement against Islam featured the use of renewed ways and tools. Some Western sources traced Jihadi radical Islam, in its philosophical and ideological springs, to Bin Taymiyah and to the Salafi Wahabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula. The spiritual fathers of this extreme Jihadi philosophy are Sayyed Qutub, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Abdullah Azzam, and Osama bin Laden. Islamism is an ideology with a holistic umbrella that intends to use Islam as an instrument to capture political power. It is further understood as a "fascist, chauvinistic ideology based on racial superiority with the aim of placing human beings under the umbrella of the rule of God by force. It is also effective since it has enough financial, managerial, and organizational networks (Atkine, 2006).

The event of September 11th marked an important turning point in American foreign policy. This incident had been exploited by certain circles to dramatize the event and exaggerate small, invisible issues by converting them into Satan destroying the world. Active American propaganda in this regard was led by right-wing newspapers and news agencies, along with satellites channels that belong to the neo-conservatives, in an obvious attempt to justify interventionist policies adopted by the Bush administration. The administration further showed particular support for the strategy of preemptive war, which included interference in the internal affairs of some Arab and Islamic states. The US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and the subsequent US pressure on other Arab states to push for political and economic reforms is the biggest proof of that. Days have proved that the allegations and the arguments of US policy-makers regarding Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, which was used as a justification for the invasion, are false and incorrect. Those arguments were unfortunately used as a pretext for intervention and for dismantling the Iraqi state and its social and sectarian fabric (Solomon, 2005).

In order to galvanize American public opinion behind the preemptive wars, the current administration has resorted to dramatizing the danger of al-Qaeda and its ability to threaten American national security. New generation of political analysts and strategists are focused on the mission of using Islam to intimidate Western public opinion. They claim that the next al-Qaeda strike will be deadly and destructive, especially if al-Qaeda supporters possess weapons of mass destruction. They believe that Western countries must be able to wage war in the enemy's land, which requires increased spending on weapons and modern technology, to fight "dirty Muslim terrorist armed by dirty bombs and deadly fundamentalist creed" (Betts, 2006)

Daniel Pipes, a well known American orientalist and specialist in the affairs of the political Islam movements, stood against using the term political Islam in the media, the press and Western literatures in general. This term, according to Pipes, lacks clarity and precision and does not distinguish between Islam as a radical politicized religion and Islam as a tolerant creed. Moreover, the prevalence of this term in the Western academic circles contributes directly to marginalizing the role of moderate Muslims, in particular intellectuals and political elites, in their efforts to deepen the degree of moderation within Islam. Despite this, some press articles and analyses written by Pipes in some newspapers and websites still fall under shiny headings condemning Islam and Muslims as extremists, fundamentalists, and terrorists (Pipes, 2005).

Summary and Concluding Remarks

Western images of Islam and Muslims are typically dominated by negativism, arrogance and disregard for others. The prevalence of these stereotypes doubled in the 19th and early 20th century, when Arabs and Muslims lived a period of decadence, blind nationalism, and the emergence of national sentiments among Arabs and Turks, which accelerated the end of the Ottoman Empire. In those days Europe was achieving tremendous advances in the fields of science, technology, economics and philosophy.

The Muslim Brotherhood played a decisive role in politicizing Islam and immersing it in public Muslim life. The secular nature of the national Arab state, the loss of Palestine after the defeat of the Arab armies in 1948 and 1967 by Israel, all eventually contributed to strengthening the Islamic global tide. The Islamic global project could be felt by observing Friday prayers in mosques and growing religious sentiments. The Islamists have always refused to accept the formula of coexistence among Muslims and westerners.

Events in 1979 constituted an important turning point in perceptions of and predictions about the current Islamic phenomenon, following the success of the Shiite Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This stage is marked by a transition from rhetoric to jihadist action.

However, September 11th, 2001, had great repercussions on US policies particularly towards the Arabs and Muslim countries. In addition to the US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Westerners in general expanded the circle of linking Muslim with terrorism and with everything reprehensible.

The terrorist acts in the States were badly exploited to harass Muslims in Western societies. The direct military occupation and psychological warfare also led to terms and concepts of war and confrontation such as Islam phobia, Islamic terrorism, and Islamic fascism.

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