

Fundamentalism, Extremism and Terrorism; an analysis

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Abstract

Fundamentalism first emerged in Christianity, as a reaction to the liberal interpretation of the religion by Protestantism, at renaissance period in Europe. In 20th century the world saw the resurgence of Islamic world as a reaction to the colonial liberal ideologies of the west. The term “extremism” was coined for those who were religious and desired to take religion on the cost of modernity. A tug of war started between liberal extremists and religious extremists, which resulted in imposing forcefully, ones ideology on his counterpart. From the lap of this mutual struggle came out “terrorism” the most notorious term of the century, destroying most countries of the Muslim world. This paper is an attempt, to analyze the nature of fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism in relation with religion, especially to Islam. Objective of this research is to ascertain the hegemonic features of the liberalism to purge the entire humanity according to their values. The work is qualitative, based on descriptive analytical method; mostly, secondary sources like books, news papers, research articles and online sources are utilized to accomplish the work. This research article concludes that the improper gauging and treatment the nature of the three terms has made the world an unsafe place for living. The uncertain situation created by these obscured terminology, if not handled prudently, will ruin the world.

Key words, *Fundamentalism, extremism, terrorism, liberalism, religion, secularism.*

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Introduction

It is the age of science. Humanity has achieved an overwhelming satisfaction in material well being, luxury and comfort. The distances of years has been reduced to hours, fatal diseases has been cured. Air, light and heat has been controlled, deadly chemicals has been utilized for the well being of humans, the means of communication has shrunk the world to a global village, and man has explored the infinities of the universe. Political and economic theories and ideologies have been developed for pre-dominance. Every aspect of life has been perfected and disciplined to the extent of astonishment. In simple words, materially man has developed to its extreme. But along these there has been emerged a vacuum which has engulfed his placidity. Today there is no peace in his individual and collective life. Weather it is individual or family, village or city, country or continent, nation or international community, everywhere is unrest, cruelty, brutality, scrimmage, conflict, war, injustice and anarchy. Everyone is insane in order to destroy the values of other. Some are engaged in economic clash while others talk about the clash of civilization. Somewhere the tussles are mutual, while other kills each others in the name of religion. Some people promote national prejudice while others are enslaving each others in the name of race and color. Some people ruining the peace of the world for the acquisition of resources. In simple words, everywhere, there is intolerance and lack of comity and exploitation, suppression of the weak, self-laws are forcefully imposed on the others and the imposition of one's opinion and ideologies without the will of the others is the order of the day. The rule of "might is right" is the principle of modern world. In this way, in endure to make this world, heaven by means of material and use of force, innocent people are slaughtered and to get economic benefits and to capture world resources.

Background

In 1492 in Spain three major events proved the premonition of the transformation of the world social order. These events were the characteristics of a new society, which was transforming slowly and painfully through 15th to 17th century. Firstly, the fall of Ghranada (Hispania), on 2 January 1492, secondly, a law was passed to make Spain a pure Christian society. The Jews and Muslims were left with the option to embrace Christianity or leave the country. Third, a Spanish Jew Columbus discovered America.¹ Now the trump of Christianity in Muslim Spain and the discovery of a new world glittered their eyes with a shining future for Christianity. Muslim were, defeated Jews were either exiled or converted to Christianity. Once deprived of a religious belief, one loses faith in any divine revelations, and the same happened with the Juan de Valdes (1500-1541) and Juan Luis Vive became the prophets of modernism and modern culture.²

Gradually developing and constantly progressing, modern science freed itself from medieval views, and the intricate process in which it came into being went hand in hand with the multifold activity with which modern life was confronted. The unity, in which medieval life was concentrated, broken asunder with the passage of time, and primitive vigor bursts the band of common traditions with which history had encircled the mind of nations. Thus the new epoch announced itself the awakening of national

life; the time of the world empire in the past in the intellectual realm also and the wealth and variety of decentralization took place the unitary concentration in which the medieval ages had worked. Rom and Paris ceased to be the controlling centers of western civilization, Latin ceased to be the sole language of the educated world.³

In the religious domain this process showed itself first in the fact that Rom lost its sole mastery over the church life of Christianity. Wittenberg, Genève, London and other cities became new centers of religion. The inwardness of faith, which in Mysticism had already risen in to revolt against the secularization of the life of the Church, rose to victorious deliverance, to degenerate again at once in to the organization which was indispensable for it into outer world. But the process of splitting in to various sects which set in connection with this external organization, weaken all the depths of religious feelings, and stirred for the following centuries the passion and fanaticism of confessional opposition, just by this means, however, the dominance at the summit of scientific life of a complete and definitive religious beliefs was broken, what had been begun in the age of the crusades by the contact of religions was now completed by the controversy between Christian creeds⁴. It is generally believed that the concepts of nation state, secularism, liberalism, materialism and social Darwinism have resulted in two world wars in the 20th century which has almost ruined most of the Europe.

For some, modernity and liberalism is power and freedom while for others it is tyrannical and destructive. Today it is casting negative effects on humanity, as the west is extending its ideologies of modernism, and liberalism to the third world countries, resulting in the polarization of these societies into two extremes, those who welcomed modernity and those who stuck to the fundamentals of their beliefs and strongly rejected the foreign imposed ideas and cultures.

Emergence of Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism emerged in the end of 20th century. There are fundamentalist elements in every major religion. Christian fundamentalists do not believe in the discoveries of Biology and Physics, which these disciplines have made about the origin of life. They insist that “The Book of Genesis” is according to science. The Jewish fundamentalists are embracing the old beliefs and thoughts more than the past. It is not limited to Devine religions; rather Buddhism, Hinduism and even Confucianism have fundamentalist elements. They kill each others on the name of religion.⁵

It is generally believed that it is a reaction to the centuries old, growth and evolution of Godless, materialistic and secularist Ideologies, which have created a fear in the religious circles that, if not preached, practiced and implemented, religion will be vanished. So they took upon themselves the duty to preach, preserve, practice and permeate in their lives, the teaching of the religion, more than ever.

Islam really liberalized is simply a non Christian Unitarianism, it ceased to be essential Islam. Western civilization can never lead them to the goal. Obsessed by material wealth, obese with an industrial plethora, drunk with the miracles of scientific advance blend to the riches of the world of spirit and deafened to the inner

voice by the outer clamor, western civilization may destroy the old in Islam, but it cannot fulfill the new.

However the term “Fundamentalism” is not a clear, refined and perfect term as it is used in different contexts and for different purposes by the people of different ideological orientations. According to Karan Armstrong, “In Arabic, literally the term refers to the study of the sources of Islamic law and its various principles”. However in west there are some, who have only a fundamentalist façade, but their objectives are not, what, they appear to be.⁶ Therefore the term is obscured and misleading.

The past few decades have witnessed a great upsurge of Islam on the political scene, which can be seen nearly everywhere in the Islamic world, including in the Iranian Revolution of 1979; the rise of Islamic activism in Lebanon and Islam in the Contemporary World among the Palestinians; the strengthening of revivalist movements in Egypt and Algeria; the increase of power of Islamic parties in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia; the rise and later defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan; and the ever increasing strength of Islamic forces even in the outwardly secular state that is Turkey⁷. Due to a great misunderstanding of these movements in the West, they have usually been grouped together under the name of “fundamentalism,” a word originally taken from an American Protestant context and then applied to Islam and other religions. As far as Islam is concerned, there are many varying types of religious activity, with very different natures, that, unfortunately, are usually clustered together under the category bearing the now vilified name of “fundamentalism.” I use the term here reluctantly and only because it has now become so prevalent; otherwise it would be better to avoid such an ambiguous and misleading term completely.⁸ There exists in the Islamic world the widely prevalent desire, shared by the great majority of Muslims, to preserve their religious and cultural identity, to reapply the Divine Law that was replaced by European legal codes during the colonial period in many Islamic lands, to draw the various parts of the Islamic world and the Islamic people (al-ummah) closer together, and to reassert the intellectual, cultural, and artistic traditions of Islam. These widely held wishes and the impulse to implement them must not be identified purely and simply as “fundamentalism.” Rather, most people who share these ideals are traditional Muslims.

Then there is an older puritanical and often rationalistic reform movement, or rather set of movements, that seeks to return to a strict application of the Sharī‘ah while opposing both Western encroachment and the intellectual, artistic, and mystical traditions of Islam itself in the name of an early puritan Islam considered to have been lost by later generations. To this category belongs the Wahhābī movement, which, in alliance with the Saudi family, finally captured Arabia during the early twentieth century and which remains dominant in that land today. Such movements as the Salafīyyah of Syria and Egypt and the Muhammadiyyah of Indo-nesia are related to some extent in their perspectives to Wahhābism and need to be mentioned here although they also differ from Wahhābism in basic ways. One can also include in the category of “fundamentalism” the Ikhwān al-muslimīn, founded in Egypt in the 1920s by Hasan al-Bannā’, a movement that is still strong in many Islamic countries, especially Egypt and the Sudan, and the Jamā‘at-I islāmī of Pakistan, founded by Mawlānā Mawdūdī after the partition of the Indian Subcontinent⁹. The latter

continues to be a strong religio-political force to be reckoned with in Pakistan as well as through its offshoots in Bangladesh and among the Muslims of India. All of these movements share in their desire to re-Islamize society and to apply the Sharī‘ah fully and have usually been peaceful in their methods of achieving this, except in the case of Wahhābism, especially during its earlier history, when it came to power as a result of its political union with the Saudi family in the Najd, and some who claim a Wahhābī background have been carrying out extremist activities.

In the whole world nations are struggling to reform their religion, customs and traditions because those were framed for totally different social setup at that time, and are completely alien to the existing ones. Fundamentalists think that they are in a state of war with the forces which are trying to destroy their sacred values.¹⁰ The thing which is difficult for both the counterparts is to understand each other point of view. For resolving issues, it is vital to understand each other. If they became able to listen to and understand each other there will be no hatred, violence and clashes in the name of ideologies or civilizations.

Extremism; religious and secular

The world has become a dangerous place for the lives of the moderate people. Moderate minds are at a trade-off position between opting in either extreme that is secular and religious.

In liberal democracies, extremism is applied to any ideology that advocates radical or religious supremacy or opposes the core principle of democracy and human rights.¹¹ Extreme feeling of dislike of liberal and religious minds for each other, in several African, Asian and western nations is the example of extremism.

Within Islam, notion of extremism is ascribed to the thoughts of the ‘chosen ones’ and the ‘perfect people’, which is construed as a diseased thought that lends bias, prejudice and a sense of narcissism and these feeling always leads to violence.¹² Therefore if people belonging to any religion, sect or ideological orientation claims to be absolutely right, and impose their ideas and values on other religion, sect or people of other ideological orientation, with force and use means of violence, against an unyielding counterpart, are extremists.

Hiding of body and veil (Nikaab) of Muslim females considered as religious extremism by the liberal west. Though it is something very personal and has nothing to do with lives and actions of others. The taking up of the veils is similar act and may be termed as secular extremism. In a secular society one should be left free, to do what he or she wants to do with his personal life.

It will be relevant to highlight here that many in the Muslim world, are extremely passionate about Islam and easily roused to anger in its defense. It is note worthy is the fact that in a society where millions are barely literate, raised to revere rather than to question, and with limited sources of information, should not be surprising to being easily swept up in mob hysteria anyone accused of insulting their religion. When we use Islam for the accomplishment of our own objectives, reduces its vigor, similarly a state, a government or a group interpret it in a manner which fulfill their objectives, in

both the cases the kind of Islam, is not Islam, but in this shape, it determine a direction of clash between “we” and “them”, benefits none of them.

It is a fact that for the last few centuries, Muslims in all corners of the world have been subjected to violence by liberal forces and their allies. The colonialist European states with the alliance of the local oppressive regimes have caused great sufferings to the Muslims at large. However for Muslims, this was a situation that has to be approached and responded to form a purely Quranic stance. In no part of the Quran dose God command believer to respond to violence. On the contrary the God commands Muslims to “respond to evil with goodness”¹³.

A good deed and a bad deed is not the same. Repel the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will be like a bosom friend.¹⁴ (Quran, 41:34)

It is, no doubt a legitimate right of Muslims to react against this cruelty. However, these reactions should never turn into a blind hatred, and unjust enmity. Consequently, carrying out terrorist acts against the innocent people “representing innocent group” is by no means compatible with Islam¹⁵.

At this time, Islam and West are at a confrontational state everywhere, therefore we should know that, it is not Islam verses Christianity but rather it is west which clashes the former. It is so because the west has became stronger than the religion of Christianity, while the multi-historical, social and multi-lingual Muslim world is still stuck with conservatism and underdevelopment, that is why West is modern and is something more than the aggregate of the different parts and philosophies. It is full of such contradictions which can open many ways of thinking, in spite of all these; their cultural identity is “West”. On the other hand Islamic world is nothing more than “Islam”. As there arise conflicts and experiences of different of varied kinds, the same situation can be seen in the Muslim world but it has the capacity to reduce the differences to the minimum.¹⁶ Moreover, the liberal, irreligious philosophies and Ideologies which prevailed in the nineteenth century west are responsible for these dismal acts. Anti-religious movements opposing the values of Christianity led the way to colonialism. At the root of greatest brutalities of the 19th century lies the social Darwinist Ideology and Spenserian “Survival of the Fittest” theory¹⁷. In the western world today, there are still cruel, mischievous and opposing factors, as well as cultural dominated by peaceful and just elements that have its roots in Christianity.

As a matter of fact, the main disagreement is between the liberal West and Islam¹⁸. Between Islam and west, there has been created a crisis therefore, it should be made known that it is not Christianity verses Islam but rather it is the anti-religious, liberal and materialistic west which is conflicting Islam. It is so because these ideologies are more than the religion of Christianity¹⁹. Contrary to the general opinion, it is between the religious people of the west and of the Muslim world on one hand, and the people opposing religion (materialists, atheists, Darwinists etc) on the other hand.

According to Samuel P Huntington, there are two world cultures that are bound to clash, one is democratic and essentially secular in approach toward governance that west has developed over a couple of centuries. The other was Islam in which the

individual counted much less than the community of which he or she was a part. That community was to be governed not by the laws written by men and women but by those sent down by God²⁰. These two systems were bound to clash, said Huntington. Francis Fukuyama Huntington protégé, carried the argument further, in a powerful and influential book, the end of history, written soon after the breakup of Soviet Union, the American sociologist suggest that the western style of governance had won by beating communism as an alternative system. The cold war that has lasted for almost half a century was won by the west and the demise of the alternative system meant that history of ideological conflicts has come to an end²¹. However, looking at the rise of religious extremism from the prism of conflict will prolong the struggle launched by the rise of extremist group IS and make it even more brutal than it is today.

Terrorism

Every time, there has been a major incident of terror, it has placed Muslim countries in difficult situation. The 9/11 attacks dramatically changed the world, and its impacts still reverberates even today. Al-Qaeda,s actions turned every Muslim in to suspect. Most countries, especially those in the west, placed sever restrictions on the travel of the Muslims. Afghanistan before the brunt of the backlash and Iraq was routed. Pakistan has its share of misery.²² Nearly two million people have perished in the twin Afghan-Iraq disasters, the Syrian conflict has claimed nearly 300,000 lives.²³

Nome Chomsky, an eminent linguist and intellectual writes that, America and other great powers are responsible for the mishandling of the contemporary destruction in the war against terror. America declared war against terror was misleading and condemnable²⁴, according to him the major sources of terrorism are the great powers.²⁵ About the attack on Afghanistan, he writes, that it is not a war against terror rather it is the insane killing of innocent people.²⁶ It is wrong that terrorism is weapon of weak, actually it is the weapon of big powers but as they have a control over the “Ideology formation system” therefore their terrorism is not termed as terrorism.²⁷ therefore the big power are active not to root out terrorism but rather to safeguard their vested interests by containing the elements which are not coinciding their way of thinking.

It is hardly a secret that ISIS was born in the badlands of the US-occupied Iraq with the Jordanian Abu Musab Al Zaraqawi and former generals of Saddam Husain, thoughtlessly disbanded by Bush, acting as midwives.²⁸ Syria next door, with its people rising against the Baathist tyranny and the international failure to rein in Assad, provided the next natural transition, attracting the young and ruthless from around the world. Even president Obama has acknowledged the seminal role the invasion and destruction of Iraq has played in the creation of ISIS and greater radicalization of young Arabs and Muslims.²⁹

Globalization and European integration have shrunk the world and obtained enormous economic benefits from the down trodden developing societies markets, at the same time ,these have also given terrorists an opening to take full advantage of, the terrorist activities, like Paris attack, Orlando attack and downing of a Russian passenger plan

were the part of broader strategy by the militant groups to wage war on their own terms and as a retaliation against what they considers the unjust policies of the west, towards their countries,³⁰ There is no doubt that the west has to share blame in a big way for creating a Frankenstein by destabilizing the middle east, especially Iraq, Syria and Libya, without providing any alternative. The prospects for the ordinary people of these countries extremely bleak, unbearable living conditions at home due to a raging civil war; furthermore restriction on the flow of refugees would be negative fallout from this event. Extremist right political parties and conservative groups in Europe will exploit this incident by stoking anti-Muslim sentiments, which will further increase the sense of deprivation in already deprived Muslims, and will fan extremism.

The ‘act of war’ talk may be good rhetoric it is bad policy. Besides by invoking the language of war to describe a terror attack, President Bush made the mistake of elevating a group like Al-Qaeda to a sovereign entity, suggests Noah Felman that, “this was a mistake with respect to Al-Qaeda, but it is a greater mistake when it comes to the Islamic state, whose primary aspiration is to achieve statehood, by saying that the Islamic state is in a war with France, Holland is unwittingly giving the ragtag group the international stature it seeks”³¹. The world powers are treating such extremists as a sovereign state seems to be deliberate. These faceless entities are consciously being lion sided to justify the use of disproportionate, all out force in retaliation.

He further writes that “If even one-tenth of the time and energy spent on fighting the so-called war on terror and preventing attacks, put to use in addressing the sources of the conflict, the world will be a better and safer place. This war cannot be won with fighter jets and firepower or by diminishing Muslims. Only honest introspection and dramatic change of approach by all sides can help”.³² It is inevitable to prudently handle the situation for the survival of the human race on the globe.

More important no war on terror can succeed by targeting Muslims. The West has to work with Islamic world. Muslims are in this together. They have after all suffered the most at the hands of these fiends, with the majority of terror victims being Muslims.

Armed Industry and terrorism

In January 1961, in a firewall address to his nation, American president Eison Hover said that the major threat to America is their “Military Industrial Complex “and the contractors are creating a war like situation in the world. Military establishment and arm industry is unveiled; the American should not make a mistake in understanding its consequences”³³. About half a century has been passed, and the American saw the prediction became true word by word. They have continuously been remained, part of wars. After, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, now Syria is experiencing the experimentation of new arms as a laboratory and a potential market for armed industries.

Furthermore, the arm dealers have created “no go areas” in different regions of the world. Not only the local people, but also tourists and businessmen are prohibited to enter³⁴. That is why; most of countries of the third world are suffering instability.

Even, during a journey to a peaceful country, the citizen of the developed countries remains cautious about their movement. The people of the developed world are paying the price of political policies of their countries, in the shape of insecurity and the fear of being attacked.

The reluctance to resolve the issues between the neighboring countries is another factor which contributes to terrorism, and arm trade in the world. In every region the issues of tension with neighbors, have no serious attempts to be resolved³⁵ as it is not in the interest of the war and armed Mafia.

The arm industry has pushed many of the third world countries in war and created a market for their business, resulting in arm sale and human killings.³⁶ A war like situation cannot be created in days, it may take decades. Like other industries, armed industry is trying to create such situation in the world to sell out its arms and to flourish its business. Thus, it is contributing to the instability of global set up and proves as a fuel to the ever increasing flames of terrorism.

Conclusion

The terms fundamentalist, extremism and terrorism are unclear, obscured and multi-faced terms and all the acts of violence and brutalities are ascribed to the group of words. Such confusing application of the terms provides an opportunity to the people all around the world to mask any insane activity in the name of fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. In the chain of these terms, first was fundamentalism to emerge as a reaction to the growth of liberal ideologies to preserve and promote religion in Europe. Extremism developed in religious circles, with the development of the hegemonic designs of the liberal's ideologies to impose its political and economic values on religious world. Terrorism is the most misleading term and is ascribed to the peaceful philosophy of Islam. Any anonymous activity by any faceless entity is termed as terrorism. It is a term which is leading the world to an unending war. If the causes of the disease of terrorism have not been pointed and cured, this fatal disease will paralyze the body of global system. If the great powers of the world continued to show their muscles by bombing the innocent masses, will ruin the world, but, will remain unable to root, it out of the world.

Suggestions

- The arm business should be controlled by controlling the arm industries of the world to make the world a peaceful place for living.
- The idea of peaceful co-existence should be developed between the two extremist mentalities.
- All the religions should be respected and not be tagged with a specific label to defame or humiliate its followers.
- The great powers should conquer the hearts of third world, with love, rather their lands by arms and fighter jets.

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