

جلوه‌ها و نمودهای اسلام‌هراسی در اروپا؛ رویکردهای نئومحافظه‌کار و لیبرال

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چکیده

اسلام‌هراسی یا منفی‌نمایی‌های غیرعقلانی از اسلام و مسلمانان، ریشه در فراز و فرودهای تاریخی، رویکردهای سیاسی هدایت شده و آسیب‌های ابزارهای معرفت‌شناسانه غربی دارد. رویکردهای اسلام‌هراسی معاصر بر دو نخله: نئومحافظه‌کاری و لیبرالی تفکیک شده است.

تئوری برخورد تمدن‌ها، مبنای نظری رویکردهای افراطی نئومحافظه‌کار در اروپا شد، به نحوی که مفهوم «یورابیا» در این راستا از سوی برخی از نویسندگان اروپایی ابداع شد و بدون اینکه نتیجه‌ای از این لفاظی‌های بی‌مبنا حاصل شود صرفاً بر احساسات غیرعقلانی اسلام‌هراسانه در اروپا افزود.

اما اسلام‌هراسی در رویکرد لیبرال، با تمرکز حملات بر اسلام سیاسی و قراردادن برنامه‌هایی در جهت لیبرال‌سازی مسلمانان

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اروپایی انجام شد. در این راستا سیاست چندفرهنگ‌گرایی به سیاست تک‌فرهنگ‌گرایی و انسجام فرهنگی تغییر داده شد. رویکرد معرفت‌شناسانه سکولار که به عنوان سازه‌ای اجتماعی - تاریخی در فضای معرفتی غرب تکوین یافته است به عنوان مهم‌ترین سبب آسیب‌گرایشات اسلام‌هراسانه در اروپا محسوب می‌شود و از آنجا که در ذات تعالیم اسلامی و فرهنگ مسلمانان آمیختگی ساحت‌های اجتماعی و سیاسی با بنیادهای مذهبی و اخلاقی وجود دارد، رویکرد سکولار غربی باید اسلام سیاسی را به عنوان «زبانی غیر غربی» از سیاست تلقی کند.

واژگان کلیدی

اسلام‌هراسی، یوراپیا، معرفت‌شناسی سکولار، یکسان‌سازی فرهنگی، همگرایی فرهنگی، اسلام لیبرالی.



Manifestations and Aspects of Islamophobia in Europe: Neo - conservative and Liberal Approaches

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Abstract

Islamophobia or negative irrational perceptions of Islam and Muslims is rooted in historical ups and downs, guided political approaches and distorted Western epistemological underpinnings. today in Europe, the Islamophobia approaches are categorized into two branches:

1. Neo-conservatism and 2. liberal. The theory of the clash of civilizations turned out to be the theoretical basis for extremist neo-conservative approaches in Europe in such a way that some European authors created the “Eurabia” phenomenon and hence, without having any results, these acts have added to the extent of irrational feelings of Islamophobia in Europe. However, the liberal Islamophobia approach concentrated on “political Islam” and incorporated programs in its agenda to liberalize European Muslims. In this respect, the policy of “multiculturalism” turned into “monoculturalism” and “cultural homogenization”.

The secular ideological approach that has evolved as a social-historical structure in the Western ideological atmosphere is one of the most important reasons of Islamophobic tendencies in Europe. The Islamic teachings and Muslim cultural, social and political spheres are mixed with religious and moral foundations. In this respect, the

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secular Western approach should see political Islam as a “non-Western language” of politics.

Key words

Islamophobia, Eurabia, Secularist epistemology, cultural assimilation, cultural integration, liberal Islam.

The terminology of Islamophobia

The first time the word “Islamophobia” was used was in the USA in February 1991. This word has been incorporated into the Oxford Dictionary from 1997 (Sheridan, 2006: 317). From a practical point of view, this word is like “xenophobia”. It is a key word to demonstrate the phobia, horror and dislike of Islam, which eventually leads to phobia and hatred of Muslims. The word Islamophobia carries within itself the elements of racial discrimination and religious discrimination, because most of the Muslims in Western countries belong to a different race than that of the Westerners. Perhaps the animosity towards Islam has not been described more clearly than by Huntington: “Like all ideologies, the demonization of Islam perpetuated by the Western warriors of the clash of civilizations” (Poynting, 2007: 61).

Whereas the word Islamophobia demonstrates the illustration of a negative picture of Muslims in Western countries after 9/11, the reality is that this word has deep historic roots and also finds its turning points in some contemporary events like the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) and the issue of Salman Rushdie (1989) (Poynting, 2007: 81). The Europeans try to justify their anti-Islamic measures with reasons of security and based on the preservation of cultural identity, and in this respect they reflect a challenging atmosphere against Muslims and illustrate an unreal picture of Islamists; as a result, what is shown is a distorted and frightening picture of Islam. This approach shows that the morals of the media have not increased in parallel with the technical progress in this field.

After 9/11, a conceptual link was fabricated between Islam and violence in the European media. Also, anti-Islamic viewpoints and theory makings led to the occurrence of negative “Islamophobic” feelings, but we should not ignore the role of the media in dictating and inspiring this feeling. After 9/11 the phrase “Islamic terrorism” became prevalent in the media, and European newspapers, radio and television used the same phrase after any terrorist attacks. These kinds of psychological operations and maneuvers became acceptable on the basis of the European people’s limited knowledge of Islam. The media stimulated tendencies that considered Islam and Muslims as a problem and challenge for Europe. On the other hand, according to the report published by The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), the viewpoints expressed and stances taken by European political figures were among the factors that have brought xenophobic, racist and Islamophobic views to the public (Shirgholami, 2009, 15). On the other hand, it can be said that the public attention paid to Islam after 9/11 also had some positive dimensions. After this event, Islamic books, especially the Holy Koran, attracted more attention, and the provision of Islamic ideas expanded in such a way that, simultaneously with the wave of Islamophobia in the West, we are witnessing a wave of “pro-Islamism”. Although these two trends are apparently paradoxical, evaluations conducted by research centers show astonishing results regarding the increase in the influence of Islam on Europe. In France there is a wave of a tendency towards Islam among the European race, and the interesting point is the tendency of French women towards Islam. Existing evidence at the social and official level in the framework of security and police establishments with Muslims in Europe shows the expansion of Islamophobia and anti-Islamism in both formal and informal levels. Yet, as has been mentioned, anti-Islamism is not a new phenomenon in the West and it can be said that it has deep roots in the history of Europe.

Historical manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe

Islamophobia in the colonial era

Due to the lack of relationships between Muslims and Christians in the last century, people became familiar with Islam and Muslims through the work of academics and linguists. Traditionally, during the past decades, the picture of Islam was presented to others by the way of orientalism. Due to the fact that in the orientalist tradition an ambiguous picture of the threat of Muslims is shown and Muslims are treated as “others” as opposed to “us”, orientalism has faced many criticisms, even in the West. Using the word “other” shows an ambitious movement whose purpose is to place all mankind in a greater society which is influenced by the West and controls everything in the world. As a result, in most of the writings of orientalists, apparent or hidden, directly or indirectly, there is a message that the East is a place which needs to be attended to, restructured and even reformed by the West (Said, 2004: 370). In other words, the main duty of orientalism is to decrease the East to a controllable level. This way of thinking began from the first endeavors of Europeans to understand the East after the capture of Andalusia and the Mediterranean islands (Moini Alamdari, 2001: 127). Therefore, when an orientalist talks about the people of the East in his or her writing, a picture is inspired in the mind of the reader that is apparently real and credible. It is not surprising that we see from 1800 until 1950 that almost 60,000 books have been published in the West on topics related to the Near East, most of them inspired by the racist feelings of the West (Said, Ibid: 367), whereas the number of books written in the East regarding the West is not comparable with the above number.

The Islamophobia which today exists in the Europe is, from one dimension, the manifestation of the arrogance and vanity existing in philosophical, theoretical, experimental and scientific European thought. This arrogance and vanity in the European mind is

something that distinguishes Europeans from the other peoples of the world. This tendency is not a new one, and we can see its traces clearly or in a hidden form in the history of European thought. The appearance of labels such as “barbarian” and “Saracen” and their attribution to Eastern culture and non-Western communities, which was introduced by European thinkers during the course of history from ancient times until the present, is evidence of this bitter reality (Rasekhi Langroudi, 2007: 24). However, today the imagination of the “Islamic threat” has been changed from that of the colonial era and shows a kind of horror stemming from the idea that Muslims are going to change the world.

Islamophobia in the contemporary era

In evaluating the contemporary era, several waves of Islamophobia and anti-Islamism can be recognized in today’s Europe. The first wave was shaped specifically as of the 1980s and its roots go back to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its consequences all over the Islamic world. For example, in 1988 Bernard Lewis published a book under the title “The Political Language of Islam”, the motivation of which was to analyze the historical, intellectual and social background of “political Islam” and its victory in Iran. He informed his readers of the return of a strong Islam to the international arena. Bernard Lewis is a Jewish scholar in Islamic Studies from Princeton University of the USA, and a well-known figure in Western decision-making circles. The publication of Salman Rushdie’s sacrilegious book can be considered as the climax of this course at the end of the 1980s. In the international arena this period coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar equation, so attempts were made to fill the gap of an enemy for the West-inside Europe and also between Europe and the USA-by introducing Islam as a new enemy. In this respect, many tried to aggrandize the issue of the number of Muslims in Europe and their potential influence on

the future, and by this pretext to provoke Islamophobia as a “unifying” element (Naghizadeh, 2006: 17).

The second wave of Islamophobia and anti-Islamism took place after 9/11. In this period, the Western media tried to inspire that the confrontation between Islam and West was now visible and had been intensified. Two days after the incident, the Herald Tribune newspaper announced that this event had transparently shown the confrontation between the Islamic and Western civilizations (Shirgholami, 2008: 29). The second wave of Islamophobia increased prejudice towards Muslims and, as a result of 9/11 and media publicity, the violent, discriminative and insulting treatment of Muslims began to intensify. This wave also publicized Islamophobic thought among the European elites and politicians.

The third wave of Islamophobia and anti-Islamism stems from the Europeans’ fear of the ever-increasing growth of Islam and the number of Muslims in Europe, and the prospect of the demographic domination of Muslims in some parts of Europe. This wave began with the publication of insulting caricatures of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by the Danish media and its transmission to other European media, and culminated in the production of the film “Fitna” by Garret Wilds, a member of the Netherlands’ Parliament, the inimical statement of the Pope in Regensburg University and the republication of the insulting caricatures. During this complicated course, measures such as the insult, humiliation and derision of Muslims were taken using the latest methods of indirect dictation by the media. In addition, in the formal level, many attempts were taken in the form of anti-migratory policies and decisions regarding limiting the activities of Islamic institutions and Friday-prayer Imams as well as introducing Western and European models of Islam (Shirgholami, 2008: 18).

Islamophobia in Europe: neo-conservative and liberal approaches

Islamophobia is seen in the West and in Europe in general.

However, with a more accurate study, we will find out that in Europe, due to the influence of the USA, two separate but not necessarily contradictory approaches towards Islamic tendencies can be distinguished. The neo-conservative approach, on the basis of the theory of the clash of civilizations, provokes an exaggerated phobia and horror regarding Muslims and, by introducing concepts like “Eurabia”, impresses the atmosphere in Europe. However, in the liberal approach the attacks are focused on “political Islam” and consider the presence of this religion in the political and social arena of Europe as unbearable. In the liberal approach, the policy of the assimilation of European Muslims is followed using concepts like “liberal Islam” and “acceptable Islam”. Considering the fact that the liberal approach is the dominant approach in today’s Europe, in this respect, we have preceded it in a more complete way in this part.

The theory of the clash of civilizations: the neo-conservative approach

The theory of the clash of civilizations was introduced for the first time by Bernard Lewis in 1990 in an article entitled “The roots of Muslim rage” and then, in a subsequent stage, Samuel Huntington completed it in his article which was published in 1993 in Foreign Affairs magazine. In the aftermath of 9/11, this theory became the theoretical basis for the Islamophobic measures taken by neo-conservatives and theo-conservatives. This theory considers Islam as the heir of violence. From this perspective, religion and politics are twins and secularism makes no sense (Kundnani, 2008: 41).

They believe that Islam is a plan projected for violence, prejudice, narrow-mindedness and dictatorship (Ibid) and today’s threat of Islamic terrorism is rooted in the inability of the Islamic world to conform to and accept modernity (because Islam does not have the ability to separate religion and state). In this approach, the anger of Muslims is not derived from unjust policies but rather

results from the irrational response to the Muslims' ever-increasing feelings of humility. Due to their familiarity with their old heritage, they have an arrogance that stems from their long-term civilizational dominance which has overshadowed their intellectual identity. The response of Muslims is due to the fact that they are considered as a second-class group. From their point of view, the collapse of the Islamic empire has caused Muslims see the West and Jews as the causes of their internal problems (Kundnani, 2008: 42).

A manifestation of neo – conservative Islamophobia: Eurabia

The cold war that today is known as the “war on terror” has experienced a geographical shift in recent years, and now Europe has been focused on as the frontline in the war on terror besides the Middle East and South Asia (Kundnani, 2008: 44). Many Zionist and neo-conservative authors, like Mark Stegyn, Douglas Murray, Daniel Pipes, Melanie Phillips and Oriana Fallaci, see Europe as the key battlefield in the war against Islam and, according to their viewpoint, the progress of Islamism should be blocked in Europe. Before 9/11, conservative authors on both sides of the Atlantic had mentioned the “Green Peril” as an external threat stemming from Islamic fundamentalism, comparing Islamic fundamentalism with Nazism and Communism. However, in recent years a new school of thought has emerged (Carr, 2006: 2) whose proponents consider Europe to be a collapsing continent. They believe that Europe is destined to “cultural destruction” due to the expansion of Islamism in Europe, and their Islamophobic keyword is “Eurabia”:

“In recent years, an increasingly influential intellectual consensus on both sides of the Atlantic has presented Europe as a doomed and decadent continent that is being transformed into an Islamic colony called Eurabia” (Carr, 2006: 1).

This term was innovated by Bat Ye'or, a British Jewish author. She claimed that a confidential project is materializing as a result of an agreement between European politicians and the Arab world to Islamicize Europe and transform this continent into a colony. This theory of a plot gradually turned into dangerous Islamophobic illusions that were picked up in the media, articles and European dialogues. This theory of a plot was especially warmly welcomed by conservative authors, rightists and pro-Zionist Europeans. Using the term Eurabia, they warned of the appearance of the Islamic civilization in the heart of Europe's civilization, which they consider to be a Christian-Jewish civilization. The cooperation of Europe in its own decline is the focal point of the concept of Eurabia. This conceptualism was created due to the linkage of European intellectuals and media to the American media atmosphere. Oriana Fallaci, an Italian author, is one of the authors who intensify the horror and fear of Muslims in Europe by the use of this theory:

“Europe is no longer Europe. It is “Eurabia”, a colony of Islam where the Islamic invasion does not proceed only in a physical sense, but also in a mental and cultural sense” (Varadarajan, 2005: 5).

With her racist ideas and by the use of rubbish phrases like “Islamic Nazism” and “Islamofascism”, she has humiliated Islam and Muslims. From her point of view, what is happening today is the ever-increasing downfall of Europe and its suicide, and her radical descriptions have fuelled the fire of Islamophobia in the European press. She expressly talks about the “reverse crusade”.

Mark Steyn, a Canadian author, is another individual who traces the same panicky atmosphere for the Europeans:

“Much of what we loosely call the western world will not survive this century, and much of it will effectively disappear in our life time, including many, if not most western European countries” (Carr, 2006: 2-3).

Denouncing “Political Islam”: the liberal approach

With the end of George Bush’s presidential term, the first phase of the war on terror was over. For the objections towards the theory of the clash of civilizations, that considered a clash between the Islamic and Western worlds, this intellectual foundation in the West broke and this theory that was advanced by neo-conservative and Zionist authors is now reproduced by liberal authors like Paul Berman, Nick Cohen, Martin Amis, Andrew Anthony, Bernard Henri-Levy and Christopher Hitchens. They have re-described the “war on terror” as a new cold war against “Islamism”. They consider Islamism-not Islam-as an authoritarian political movement running along with fascism and Stalinism. The neo-conservative and liberal approaches have some differences theoretically. The liberal authors distinguish between “Islam” and the “historic course of Islam”. They have concentrated on “Islamism” as a modern political movement that, according to them, runs alongside fascism and Stalinism. They believe that “Islamism” is rooted in “modern European totalitarianism”. Distinguishing between “Islam” and “Islamism” is a point that separates the liberal approach from straightforward Islamophobic claims; the liberals believe that, instead of Islam itself, the political ideology of the 20th century is the root of Islamism.

The neo-conservatives consider Muslims to naturally be “anti-modern”, while the new liberals think that Muslims are choosing an incorrect kind of modern politics. Neo-conservatives talk about the clash of civilizations, while liberals talk about the inter-civilizational clash between extremist and moderate Muslims. Neo-conservatives consider Judaism and Christianity as the basis of Western identity, while liberals introduce liberal secularism as the foundation of Western culture (Kundnani, 2008: 42-44). Although new authors, like Paul Berman and Christopher Hitchens, disagree with the generalizations of Lewis and Huntington regarding the Islamic world, they end with similar

results (Kundnani, 2008: 43).

For instance, Martin Amis says that the Islamic community will suffer in the future until it acts according to the customs in its home. Suffering, in his viewpoint, is not equivalent to expulsion or forced effort but means “limitation of freedom”. (Ibid) From a liberal point of view, just as the West won the historic war against communism, so it should eliminate the new totalitarianism or Islamism, whether among Islamic communities or Western Muslim society (Kundnani, 2008: 44).

In this context, Europe is the frontline for the war of hearts and minds. In the name of the defence of liberal freedoms, it is necessary for the violation of human rights to be conducted against political Islam. The important point is that liberal authors are unable to understand the complicated dynamism of Muslims in Europe in a way that many of the new Muslim generation in Europe are choosing a kind of globalized Islamic identity for themselves that is different from the racial and ethnic culture of their parents. This process is the product of democratic activities and is distant from violence-based policies; it does not emanate from policies created by European governments (Kundnani, 2008: 40). However, according to the liberals, either this issue is not recognized by them or they may prescribe that “liberal Islam” should be organized in Europe so that the political and even social dimensions of Islam could be removed.

Now liberals also see the presence of Muslims in Europe as the potential for the fifth column of Islamism. They also promote the idea of infiltration, according to which Europe is exposed to Islamism by a secret network. This ideological debate is provoked extensively by the European media on the basis of the two different approaches of liberalism and neo-conservatism. This approach has constructed a distorted framework, on the basis of which social phenomena and events are described in such a way that “the threat of Islamism” is increasingly and publicly

aggrandized by the media, claiming that this matter is taking place under the cover of European Muslim society. For instance, the availability of the Islamists' books in mosques and other places is warned of on the basis of the claim that extremist goals may exist beyond a moderate image, or it is mentioned that extremism has been incorporated in the majority of European Muslims. (Ibid)

A manifestation of liberal Islamophobia: cultural assimilation

The neo-cons' "war on terror" strategy and its reproduction by liberals has significant influence on the policies for racial relationships in Europe. New legitimacies, as well as anti-terrorism policies and measures taken in Europe, have considered Muslims—be they residents or migrants—as "internal enemies" in this continent (Fekete, 2004: 3). This policy has weakened the approach for the support of asylum-seekers and at the same time includes parameters that have injected racial discrimination into the European Muslim community. Today, Islam is considered as a threat in European society. The consequences of this approach are not limited to the violation of the civil rights of Muslims, but also the role of multiculturalism is weakened and monoculturalism is promoted. Today in Europe, integration policies are considered as a part of antiterrorism laws and regulations. For instance, the discriminative ban on Islamic hijab by the French government has been adopted on the basis of a spirit of integration. Discrimination against Muslims is seen in European structures. Some believe that the 9/11 incident caused the institutionalized parameters of "racism against aliens" or "anti-alienism" expand to the ethnic minority community who have resided in Europe for decades (Fekete, 2004: 4). European Muslims, even if they are European citizens or were born there, are included in the vast circle of racism against aliens. They are not considered as internal enemies for supporting terrorism; instead, they are considered so because of their support for and adherence to Islamic values and norms (Ibid).

Under the cover of moderate nationalism the reality of anti-Islamic racism is seen. In this regard it is necessary to know that there is a new impetus in Europe for assimilation. This policy is implemented by some tactics and measures like the following:

Re-planning the law of citizenship so that it is compatible with security considerations;

Compulsory learning of the languages of European countries;

Civil examinations for the applicants of European citizenship;

Issuing directives for custodians of mosques in Europe;

Issuing cultural directives for the relationship of European Muslim boys and girls (for example, in some parts of Europe wearing the headscarf in public schools and other state institutions is banned).

In recent years, debates and discussions on the subject of national identity are being held all over Europe. An influential tendency has resulted from these debates, namely that states' race relation policies should move from multiculturalism towards cultural homogenization (Fekete, 2004: 18). In every European country, the debate on national identity is mixed with the incidents which occurred in that country and its specific subjects. The new policies with the European countries' traditional approaches are linked with the issue of minorities. In different countries, models for national assimilation are adopted taking into account the myths of that country and its special matters. For instance, in the Netherlands, the national debate on this issue is carried out considering standards and values. In Sweden and Norway the issue of "cultural impediments" is prevalent. In Great Britain, social solidarity; in France, laicism; in Germany, *Leitkultur* or cultural guidance; in Denmark, cultural cheating among migrants; and in Spain, public security against crime are the subject of national identity debates (Fekete, 2004: 18). Although different terms are used in these national debates, their subject is generally related to migrants' communities and migrants' culture. It is frequently said

that multicultural policy is considered as a threat and a risk to the majority values, cultural solidarity and cultural integrity. There is a constant element in all these debates which is implicitly mentioned, namely that Muslims are accountable for their reactionary cultural activities and their traditions (Fekete, 2004: 18).

In general, the bi-polar element of “us” and “them” regarding Europeans and European Muslims acts as a separating parameter during any debate or discussion about European Muslims. These debates stereotypically deal with aspects of Muslims’ life and culture by denouncing them as backward and reactionary. In this atmosphere, politicians and the media attack multiculturalism and the pluralism of cultures. According to them, the freedom existing in Europe and an equal conduct towards different cultures and assimilating their values has provided suitable grounds for fundamentalism in the West (Fekete, 2004: 19). Due to this reason, the state policymakers are criticized for their tolerance. For example, in England it is said that so-called criminal activities among Muslims, like forced marriage and circumcision, are still being carried out because of an overemphasis on cultural differences and cultural communications (Kundnani, 2002: 11).

François Fillon, the former Minister of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity of France has stated that “communautarisme”, which has been created to meet the cultural needs of minority communities, has led to the creation of this guilty thought that our country is uncertain regarding its values and history.

In the Netherlands, Jan Pieter Balkenende-the former Prime Minister-said, “Our nation has not formed a community of cultural differences”. In Spain, José Maria Aznar, the former Prime Minister, had said that “multiculturalism exactly is that which creates a gap and split in the society” (Fekete, 2004: 19). Also in Germany, when Angela Merkel was the leader of the opposition, she had said: “the idea of multicultural society cannot succeed because this idea has been doomed to defeat from the beginning. Multiculturalism is

different from integration.” (Mokhtari, 2009: 13).

From the perspective of European liberals, cultural policies regarding minorities should be conducted with a view to assimilation and similarity. A pluralistic approach is avoided due to the fear of social disintegration. For this reason, the laws and regulations regarding European citizenship are being reviewed and redefined. A new statute for minorities, citizenship rights and family issues is being codified and measures are being taken in order to punish those who do not respect these laws and regulations. For instance, today if migrants use languages other than European ones, it is said that they are weakening the policy of multilingualism, or it is claimed that dual citizenship is a threat to national security in Europe (Fekete, 2004: 21).

The manifestation of liberal Islamophobia: state intervention in religious affairs

European liberals have adopted audacious and controversial policies in order to institutionalize moderate and Europe-friendly Islam. The official state institutions have transformed the semi-encouraging and soft policy-which was intended to integrate the migrant population and discourage extremism-into an explicit policy for the imposition of state directives on the institutions of the Muslim community. Despite widespread legal disintegration between the state and the church and apparently different national traditions, it seems that the European governments have reached a common solution regarding Muslims, and this solution is to apply religious changes and create an acceptable Islam (Haddad, 2007: 487).

In fact, European countries have adopted interventionist policies against Muslims' religious affairs. These policies have focused on two major points: 1. creating institutions for European Muslims and empowering the Muslims who are chosen to be the party for dialogue, and 2. facilitating control over the Islamic

atmosphere (Ibid: 488). In this new policy and strategy, European governments, in a re-arrangement of the state's role, have turned the government into a judge and commander to be the architect of moderate Islam. For most European leaders it is not a question of convincing Muslims that they are living in their own home, but the question is rather how it can be guaranteed that these societies raise a proper kind of Muslim.

Today their concern is to know how they can join together the loyalty of Muslim citizens with European values. 9/11 and European security concerns are the reasons for part of the intervention of European governments in Muslims' affairs. However, among European countries there is agreement on the goal of creating a new kind of Islam, an Islam which contains parameters officially confirmed by European governments and which supports Western liberal ideals (Haddad, 2007: 488). European theorists call this interventionist European policy in the religious affairs of Muslims, which expedites religious changes, as the "domesticating" of Muslims (Haddad, 2007: 488); an impolite and insulting term which implicitly shows the depth of negative approaches towards Muslims in Europe. Previous policies concentrated on the interaction of European governments with European Muslim communities on the basis of dialogue between Muslims and the government, a policy which stemmed from the spirit of multiculturalism and plurality. But today, European theorists are suggesting that European powers review the criteria and consequences of multiculturalism (Haddad, 2007: 489).

Epistemological pathology of the Islamophobia approaches: secularism

The terms "Islamism" or "political Islam", which are used by European politicians and elites in a negative sense and with a pre-assumption, are among key words which are denounced in the European "Islamophobic" approach. However, it seems that

adding the word “political” to Islam and assuming it to be deviant and reactionary shows the inability of epistemological secular means to understand Islam and Muslims. Even a superficial look at Islamic texts, the history of Islam and the evolutionary course of Islamic communities indicates that Islam has always had certain plans, programs and objectives for governing society, and from this perspective it has always been “political”. In the holy Koran there are more than 100 verses on political philosophy, foreign policy and political thought, and there are the same number of verses regarding criteria and competencies of social management (Abbasnejad, 2005: 10-20).

The establishment of Islamic government by the holy Prophet (PBUH) in Medina and the codification of social and political laws and regulations is great historical evidence for this fact but, today, most politicians and a significant part of European researchers, with their own historic presumptions regarding religion, express views on the appearance of a new wave of Islamism. The historical and social understanding of the relationship between religion and politics produces a kind of epistemology which has turned out to be the basis for their judgments and surveys on all social phenomena. The prevalent tradition of secularist epistemology is applied for changing and producing ontological and epistemological assumptions. Nonetheless, according to some European thinkers, “Secularist epistemology is not pre-given but is socially and historically constructed” (Hurd, 2007: 355). In fact, secularist epistemology is a socio-historical structure that entails basic assumptions about the impropriety of religious intervention in the political arena. Yet, on the other hand, the intervention of religion in the social arena and its role in politics has its roots in the key and constant Islamic teachings. Bernard Lewis, the well known orientalist, has pointed out this fact, despite his inimical approach towards Muslims:

“Islam was ... associated with the exercise of power from the

very beginning...this association between religion and power, between community and polity, can ...be seen in the religious texts in which Muslims base their beliefs. One consequence is that in Islam religion is not, as it is in Christendom, one sector or segment of life regulating some matters and excluding others; it is concerned with the whole of, not a limited but a total jurisdiction” (Lewis, 1994: 135-136). Also, Robert Merry says in this connection that: “the inseparability of religion and politics is etched in the cultural consciousness of the world’s Muslims”. (Merry, 2005: 208)

Yet, despite what is claimed, this natural difference is not considered in the study of European Muslim communities. Also, the potentials and capabilities of the religion of Islam and Muslims’ beliefs concerning the improvement of social life are ignored by promoting secularist epistemology. Secularist traditions hold preferences and agreements that, in spite of what is said, are not neutral or natural. Today, among some Europeans, secularist norms are the political strategy of European leaders (Hurd, 2007, 362). Also, in the academic dimension, “the vast majority of contemporary international theorists...have failed to recognize the validity of non-western languages of politics and their intended orders as legitimate context for imagining the alternative of the present order” (Grovoquei, 1998, 500-501).

Many of the objections that are mentioned by secularists in their Islamophobic approach to the political approaches of Muslims are categorized among these non-Western languages of politics. These languages of politics are basically active beyond the range of secularist epistemology. It is obvious that extremist political tendencies, like those of Al-qaida and the Taliban in Pakistan, are not our purpose; these tendencies are in doubt both from their historical background and their epistemological foundations. Yet, if we put aside this deviant and distorted picture which is intentionally aggrandized in Europe and promotes Islamophobic

plans, almost all the other political and social tendencies of Muslims are examples of a non-Western language of politics. New Islamic tendencies refuse the monopolistic approach of the West in the field of international relations and they do not recognize the distribution of power in the present situation as being just. From an epistemological dimension, they challenge the most effective political idea in Europe-which is the non-intervention of religion in politics-using new approaches. Due to this reason, “as a result of these combined epistemological and political challenges, secularist decision-makers are quick to attribute the Muslims’ “refusal” to acknowledge the special status of the secularist private sphere as a harbinger of despotism in Muslim-majority societies and a threatening challenges to the western organization of public/private divide” (Hurd, 2007, 362).

These issues intensify the Islamophobic waves in Europe and they cause the capacities of the common cultural and historical heritage of Islam and Europe and the high potential of Islam to improve social life and revive morality in society to be ignored. “Islamism” or “political Islam”, which are negatively used in the European communities, are nothing more than a tendency towards “social Islam” in the atmosphere of European Muslim communities. It is evident that in the geographical sphere of Europe, the emergence of all Islamic political components is not possible and it is also not requested. Nevertheless, European Muslims demand a social recognition of Islam as form of thought and conduct.

Islamism in Europe is not a severe reaction against modernism and it is not a return to the past; instead, it is a new language of social thought that challenges the fundamentalist presumptions of extremist secularism. Europe’s understanding of religion is based on its own experiences, but the question is whether it is possible to consider reaching a global social knowledge on the basis of Western historical presumptions and accept it as a framework for

global knowledge. Many discuss this matter cautiously in such a way that Hirschkind says: “greater recognition must be given to the way western concepts (religion, political, secular, temporal) reflect specific historical developments, and cannot be applied as a set of universal categories or natural domains” (Hirschkind, 1997, 14).

The European countries more or less or even unintentionally think, act and live according to the Christian-Jewish tradition and react against unconventional social phenomena. This behavior, feelings and laic customs that are the cause for the continuity and survival of this thought do not solely indicate social realities, but are themselves the architects of these realities. These elements show a collection of parameters that are placed in the center of conflicts between Islam and Europe. The key point of the Europeans’ Islamophobic behavior is the agreement on the separation of religion and politics which exists in Europe. However, there are different forms of secularism and this fact creates special and sometimes conflicting approaches regarding the issue of Muslims in Europe.

Conclusion

During recent decades, the increase of the Muslim population in European communities has attracted attention to their differences from other citizens in the fields of culture, values, identity and epistemology. Although the said trend kept steadily continuing, September the eleventh and its consequent incidents have added to the significance of the issue. European politicians and elites, following the tendencies and theory-makings of Americans, have attempted to solve the existing challenge through neo-conservative and liberal approaches. Studying the neo-conservative waves of Islamophobia in Europe brings the question to mind whether the neo-conservatives basically wish to solve the existing challenge or not; the review of their previous course of action indicates that they have added to the existing challenges without presenting any solution.

However, in the liberal approach, the policy of cultural assimilation and state intervention in the religious affairs of European Muslims in order to produce and support a liberal version of Islam has brought about similar results to those of the neo-conservatives' Islamophobia. To solve the existing cultural and identity challenge, first of all a correct perception of Islamic culture must be realized. An understanding on the basis of epistemological means is necessary to understand Islam. The epistemology which will be produced from Islam and the cultural issues of European Muslims by resorting to the presumptions of secularism would be an imaginary one which is far distant from the reality. Instead of being “managed” or “controlled”, the issues of European Muslims-as European citizens-should rather be “understood” and “analyzed”.

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