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The Allure of the Radical: Understanding Jihadist Violence in the West

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> Why did a young man, who was neither poor nor oppressed, who had received a decent education, a man who never had trouble making friends, who enjoyed smoking dope and drinking beer, why would such a man turn into a holy warrior whose only wish was to kill, and perhaps more mysteriously, to die?
>
> Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*

I. Introduction

Grand proclamations of world peace and prosperity, so famously made by scholars and politicians alike in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, today seem naïve and almost laughable. Francis Fukuyama, writing as the Berlin Wall came down, believed that we were witnessing "Not just the end of the Cold War…but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[1] For better or worse, that has not been the case. To use Benjamin Barber's words, we seem to be witnessing "retribalization" rather than "McWorld." The fall of Communism as a global political movement did not bring an end to anti-Western sentiment in the world, as testified to by annual riots in India on Valentine's Day, anti-American rallies in South Korea and Japan, and Peru and Venezuela's explicitly anti-Western regimes. One violent movement in particular, though, has especially caught the imagination of the West, the movement that is commonly referred to as "Islamic terrorism," "global jihad," or "contemporary jihadist violence." Part of what makes this movement so noticeable is its seemingly global reach and appeal. From bombings in Bali, Indonesia, to attacks in India, the Middle East, Europe, and all the way to the United States, "Islamic terrorism" seems to have spread across the world. This essay addresses the appeal of radical and violent interpretations of Islam in continental Western Europe and the United States.

Scholars have attempted to understand globalist radical Islam in a number of ways, indicating that there is no simple explanation. Recognizing that this is an important first step in dealing with the larger questions at hand, a mechanical cause-and-effect explanation will always provide only an incomplete picture. There is no one trigger that has suddenly inspired Muslims to become holy warriors, and attempting to identify such a factor is an exercise in futility. Instead, a more organic approach, which takes into account a multitude of events at the local, national, and international levels—each that must be treated separately but also as part of the whole—gives us a more nuanced and accurate explanation for contemporary jihadist violence. This essay is an attempt to understand globalist radical Islam in the West from a multi-dimensional, historically contextual perspective. It is therefore important to look at trends and transformations taking place at the micro, "meso," and macro levels. Specifically, this means looking at individual case studies, national or regional occurrences, and transnational trends. While this study does not comprehensively address each of these issues, the aim is to expand current lines of reasoning, which are often focused on either the micro-historic (examining only the present) or the macro-historic (exaggerating the role of historical identities) level. I attempt to bridge this divide by first providing historical context to contemporary jihadist violence and then focusing on understanding the significance of globalization. By comparing the radicalization processes in Western Europe and the United States, I hope to add empirical substance to my theoretical base. It must be added here that identity construction, jihadist or otherwise, contains a level of individual variation and choice that is difficult to conceptualize but important to keep in mind.

Clearly defining "globalist radical Islam" is an important first step in research that attempts to understand this phenomenon. Therefore, part two begins with a discussion of this and other key concepts. Section three provides a brief overview of the extant literature, arguing that despite many noteworthy contributions, there is a tendency to focus exclusively on either the historical side of things or to look only at the present. In sections four and five, I attempt to bridge this divide by first offering a brief historical overview of Islam and then focusing on contemporary trends and transformations. Section six discusses the radicalization processes in the United States and Europe respectively, and is followed by a case study of Mohammed B., the murderer of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. I conclude with thoughts on how we

may limit the appeal of violent radical Islam, arguing that adopting a cosmopolitan approach at the individual, state, and transnational level may be the only way to live in an era of ever increasing globalization.

II. Key Concepts: Contemporary Jihadist Violence, Religiosity, Deterritorialization, and Globalization

It is important to make very clear that violent interpretations of the Qur'an are subscribed to by a tiny minority of the world's Muslims. In addition, violent groups that claim to be inspired by Islam exist in many parts of the world and applying a singular narrative to all would be a mistake. Muslim groups fighting for secession in Thailand and Taliban forces attacking foreign troops and local citizens in Afghanistan both use violence, yet their reasons for doing so are largely, perhaps even entirely, unrelated. Consequently, the terminology I have been using so far (contemporary jihadist violence, globalist radical Islam) needs to be specifically defined. For the purposes of this essay, I use these terms interchangeably to refer to the loosely connected global movement that traces its roots to Sayid Qutb's theology. Specifically, this involves placing violent jihad as a pseudo sixth pillar of Islam. These groups generally belong under the umbrella organization Al Qaeda and are supported—financially, technically, or simply ideologically—by Osama bin Laden's group. As declared by Ayman al-Zawahiri, chief ideologue of Al Qaeda, the main objectives of the organization[2] are to create a global Caliphate, which would essentially be a radical, sharia-based Islamic state (Taliban Afghanistan being an example of this form of governance); remove "foreigners" from the Muslim holy lands; and, specifically referring to Saudi Arabia, bring an end to hereditary government.[3]

Religiosity is defined as the relationship of an individual with his/her religion and religion's influence on said individual's choices. Deterritorialization is the weakening relationship between culture and place. I use the term to specifically refer to the "blurring of the borders between Islam and the West" through the process of globalization.[4] Like globalization, deterritorialization can be traced back through history, but the scale and scope at which it is occurring now is unprecedented.

While there is no universally agreed upon definition of the term, I use "globalization" to refer to a sweeping phenomenon characterized by time-space compression[5] and "rapidly developing and ever-

densening networks of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life."[6] In this epoch of globalization, the most pressing issues are transnational and therefore require a collective global response. It is also important to point out that globalization occurs on a number of levels—cultural, political, economic, to name a few—and results in varying degrees of both fragmentation and integration.[7]

III. Current Approaches

The outpouring of literature in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (though in all fairness there were notable contributions before 2001 as well) has attempted to explain this contemporary jihadist violence in a variety of ways: as a response to American anti-Muslim foreign policy, a continuation of Islam's imperial history, or a part of Samuel Huntington's inevitable "Clash of Civilizations," for example. These explanations can be divided into three broad categories: the theological school, the historical school, and the situational school. I will not engage with the first, which argues that the Qur'an inherently incites violence, for two simple reasons; first, I have no training in Qur'anic studies, and second, as Olivier Roy notes, "the key question is not what the Koran actually says, but what Muslims say the Koran says."[8] I focus instead on the historical and situational approaches to understanding globalist radical Islam.

Theorists belonging to the historical school argue that the jihadist violence we are seeing today is inextricably linked with the history of Islam and/or the world. Huntington, whose famous 1992 "Clash of Civilizations" essay categorizes the world into several inherently conflictual civilizations, belongs to this school of thought. He sees the "Muslim Civilization" as a monolithic entity that finds itself at war with the Western, Hindu, Orthodox, and other civilizations. In a similar vein, Efraim Karsh argues that Islam is inherently imperialistic and present day violence is a continuation of this historical trend.[9]

On the other hand, the situational group focuses on the present state of the Muslim world and argues that anti-Western jihad can be explained through specific, contemporary reasons. Examples can be found in theories that see groups like Al Qaeda as reacting to American foreign policy, Israeli treatment of Palestine and Palestinians, or the absence of a Muslim voice on the global stage. It is important to look at Olivier Roy's work here, as he argues that the rise of Islamic neo-funda-

mentalism can be explained as a response to the increasingly pervasive effects of globalization. Referring specifically to Muslim immigrants, Roy explains neo-fundamentalism by arguing that it results from the efforts of globalized Muslims to assert their identity in a non-Muslim context.

In this article, I take a position in between this debate, arguing that to understand violent Islam in the West, we must look at the history of Islam but also focus on contemporary realities, especially the phenomenon of globalization. Using only one of these tracks leaves us with an insufficient explanation. Mohammed Ayoob is a rare scholar in that he takes into account the history of Islam but also acknowledges the importance of looking at present day realities. For Ayoob, the emergence of neo-fundamentalism is "a result of their [Muslims] search for an explanation for past humiliations and a remedy for the present plight of Muslims," which is why "Islamists, from Morocco to Indonesia, advocate a return to the imagined pristine purity of early Islam and cling to a romanticized notion of a golden age."[10] To Ayoob's analysis it is important to add Roy's work, focused on globalization and deterritorialization, to more completely understand contemporary jihadist violence. In addition, the role of the jihadist "project" must also be acknowledged. Before reaching the situational discussion, however, it is important to look at the history of Islam.

IV. Two Levels of Observation

A. Providing Historical Context

While understanding that it is simplistic to associate a monolithic narrative with a religion as vast as Islam, it is not surprising that scholars across the board[11] see the Islamic civilization as having fallen from its zenith some 800 years ago. The pendulum of power and knowledge has swung from a point in the 12th and 13th centuries, when the Muslim world was seen as the centre and the West the periphery, to the present day, when no country with a Muslim majority holds a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and none of the world's elite educational institutions are located in Muslim majority states.[12] This section looks at what has happened in these 800 years with an eye toward understanding the contemporary situation of Muslims. While I support my arguments in this section with a variety of sources, the

general structure of the argument is based on Ahmed Samatar's framework of the "three humiliations of Islam."[13]

As early as the 10th century, "Europeans recognized Muslim intellectual superiority, and quickly began translating Muslim works in such fields as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy from Arabic into Latin."[14] By the 11th century, the best universities in Europe were in Al-Andalus (parts of present day Portugal and most of Spain) while the library of Baghdad was reputed to be the greatest in the world. Due in part to its economic clout, political power, and geographical location, which allowed scholars in the Middle East to synthesize past knowledge from China, India, Persia, Greece, and Rome, the region became *the* global center of knowledge. Many, if not most, of the major scientific advances of medieval times were made in the Muslim world, in fields as diverse as mathematics, medicine, architecture, and astronomy. It was in the middle of the 13th century, however, that the first of the three humiliations began.

The first step in Islam's fall from medieval glory was the start of the Spanish *Reconquista*, with Cordoba falling in 1236 and the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258.[15] This was followed by the continuing Crusades, the replacement of the Middle East as the center of trade (after the colonization of the Americas and Vasco de Gama's journey around the Cape), and the re-Christianization of Spain by 1492. Simultaneously, as noted by Ibn Khaldun, there was the demise of the respect for reason and a weakening of learning in the Muslim world, as rulers sought to regain power by strengthening and supporting soldiers rather than scholars. As the Renaissance and then Enlightenment took place in Europe, the center of knowledge and power moved definitively out of the Muslim world.[16] The first humiliation, a fall from the zenith of world civilization, was complete.

The second humiliation was the colonial experience in the 19th and 20th centuries. While the Ottoman Empire commanded a large territory, its influence by the late 1800s was waning and, after the First World War, it collapsed altogether. At the same time, England ruled millions of Muslims in India (including Bangladesh and Pakistan), Sudan, and Yemen; the Dutch ruled Indonesia; and the French controlled Lebanon, Syria, and much of North Africa. Winston Churchill expressed the triumph of the West when he asserted "that the dog in a manger had no final right to the manger even though he may have lain there a very long time." Europe saw its colonies, including the vast

majority of the Muslim world, as inferior and unworthy of self-rule. The experience of colonialism was the second humiliation.

The post-colonial moment failed to resurrect Islam. On the contrary, the Muslim world continued and continues to fall further behind the West. While a group of Muslim states with relatively small populations are economically wealthy (Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and a few others), the vast majority of Muslims live in relative poverty. According to data collected by the World Bank in 2000, the average annual income in Muslim countries was half of the world average. In addition, when we look at the relative conditions of Israel and its neighbors, the comparison becomes starker still. Bernard Lewis notes:

> In the 1990s the combined gross national products of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon—that is, three of Israel's neighbors—were considerably smaller than that of Israel alone. The per capita figures are worse. According to United Nations statistics, Israel's per capita GDP was 3.5 times that of Lebanon and Syria, 12 times that of Jordan, and 13.5 times that of Egypt. The contrast with the West, and now with the Far East, is even more disconcerting.[17]

Notably, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are significantly wealthier than Niger, Sierra Leone, or Afghanistan—the poorest of the Muslim countries. The weak economic situation of Muslim countries, especially when considered relative to Israel and the West, is significant in explaining the frustrations of Muslim youth. This sentiment has been capitalized on by radical leaders like Bin Laden, who stated in October 2001:

> Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than 80 years. Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked, and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed.[18]

Some of the factors that contribute to the feeling of "humiliation and contempt" are the establishment of Israel and its subsequent alliance with the United States, victories over various Arab states and alliances, and the occupation of Palestine; the success of the militantly secular, democratic, and modern state of Turkey, which emerged from the ruins of the Islamic Ottoman Empire; the failure of political Islam; non-

Islamic control of Jerusalem; and the foreign presence in Saudi Arabia ("the land of Muhammad").

Yet the humiliation is not entirely real. It is reinforced by a (sometimes unconscious) tendency in the West to look down on the Islamic world, seeing it as lacking the Western virtues of reason and rationality. In his seminal 1978 work *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses the representation of Muslims and the Muslim world by Western, specifically British and French, agents. He argues that these representations, which function at many levels, including the arts, politics, and academia, work within a coded discourse that carries certain ideological aims. These aims have changed over time, from colonialism to the desire for oil or control of territory. Orientalism creates and magnifies the divide between East and West, showing the West as enlightened and superior. When such discourse is internalized by Muslims themselves, the historical humiliations become exacerbated. While it is true that scholarship today is less bound up in oriental discourse than before Said's treatise, undercurrents of European/Enlightenment superiority still exist. As Amartya Sen notes in his 2002 essay, "How to Judge Globalism," a common understanding of globalization is that it is "a gift from the West to the world," while in reality the phenomenon, especially when understood historically, has truly global roots. Yet even though the first known republic was in Vaishali, India, and Muslim rulers in medieval times were far more pluralistic than their Christian counterparts, and the first modern scientists worked in Baghdad and Al Andalus, the concepts of "Democracy" and "Pluralism" and "Reason" are considered entirely Western. It is not difficult to accept that sentiments of inferiority are heightened among Muslims living in Europe or the United States, having been taught that everything good has come from the West.

To summarize, part of the frustration experienced by Western Muslims can be explained by looking at Islam's three historical humiliations. Whether or not these humiliations are real or imagined is not the main point. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that these can have tremendous power to motivate, especially when mixed with situational frustrations.

B. Situational Factors

The third humiliation, the post-colonial experience, brings us to the turn of the 21st century. This historical narrative, however, does not

adequately deal with two important and intertwined developments, namely, the rapid increase in globalization starting at the end of the 1980s, and the "project" behind globalist radical Islam.

Olivier Roy's work on contemporary jihadist violence nuances our understanding of the phenomenon by explicitly discussing the forces of globalization. In particular, Roy looks at the experience of the Muslim diaspora in the West, noting that, "a third of the world's Muslims now live as members of a minority."[19] Roy's central argument is that neo-fundamentalism is a result of Muslims trying to assert their identity in a globalized, non-Muslim context. Traditionally, the immigrant experience in the West has been explained through either assimilation (sacrificing unique cultural practices to become Western), multiculturalism (cultural practices remain but groups are segregated, typified by the Dutch policy of the same name from the 1970s to the 1990s), or the idea of a "melting pot" (immigrant groups interact freely with the host culture and there is no state intervention, the United States being a commonly cited though imperfect example). Arguing that none of these three models explains the experience of Muslims in Western society, Roy suggests that Western Muslims go through a process of individual identity construction. He acknowledges that Muslims have lived as minorities in non-Muslim lands for centuries, yet the contemporary experience of deterritorialization is different:

> While old minorities had time to build their own culture or to share the dominant culture (Tatars, Indian Muslims, China's Hui), Muslims in recently settled minorities have to reinvent what makes them Muslim, in the sense that the common defining factor of this population as Muslim is the mere reference to Islam, with no common cultural or linguistic heritage.[20]

The new identity is a hybrid of Western ideas and Islamic principles. This interaction creates a religiosity that stresses "individualisation, the quest for self-realisation, the re-thinking of Islam outside of a given culture, and the recasting of the Muslim *ummah* in non-territorial terms."[21] By examining the vast corpus of contemporary Muslim discourse, especially Internet forums, Roy is able to provide ample evidence to support this claim. Among second-generation Muslims in Europe, there seems to be a tendency to hyper-individualize Islam, which can lead to either a rejection of the faith and its attached cultural significance or a quest for a pristine, untainted version of Islam. It is in

the latter case that the radical project enters the equation, as it offers a supposedly true, non-Westernized interpretation of the Qur'an. I discuss this idea further in the next section, looking specifically at the case of Mohammed B.

It should be noted that Roy's monolithic understanding of "Muslim immigrants" is problematic, as is his oversimplification of the choices faced by Muslims (atheism and neo-fundamentalism), yet the idea of a unique process of identity construction is nonetheless valuable. Amartya Sen, in *Identity and Violence*, puts forward a similar argument that stresses the importance of the individual in the process of identity construction. This is not to say that societal factors play no role with regard to how we perceive ourselves, but rather that there is an element of critical self-examination that takes place and should not be ignored. To put it succinctly, it is important to keep in mind that while macro- and meso-level analyses are certainly important, it is at the individual level that identities, including that of the jihadist, are created.

To further understand the role of globalization in the rise of contemporary jihadist violence, we must first acknowledge that this phenomenon is a project with a clear structural hierarchy and definite aims.[22] Thus, while it is important to look at socio-historical context, we cannot ignore the role of the movement itself. Here once again we see how globalization processes have facilitated the spread of radical Islamist ideologies.

With regard to the "project," it is important to look at how radical ideas are created and spread. Improvements in communication technology and the increasing ease of international financial transactions have meant that interactions across countries and continents no longer pose a barrier. Groups like Al Qaeda have been able to plant radical imams in the West, as evidenced by cases like Anwar al-Aulaqi in the United States,[23] Abu Hamza in the United Kingdom,[24] and Abou Khaled in the Netherlands.[25] It is difficult to imagine such a level of global coordination in an era with less "time-space compression," to use Harvey's terminology. In addition, the Internet has played an important role in the dissemination of violent radicalism. The World Wide Web can be used to identify and exploit sympathizers (fund raise), spread propaganda (recruit and motivate), maintain anonymity, magnify the perception of the power of radical groups, function as a command and control center, and gather information on potential targets.[26] In a 2004 article, Brigit Bräuchler explores how radical Islamic groups consider the Internet an important tool, not only to plan and

implement terrorist attacks but even to support the creation of the neo-fundamentalist thoughts and ideas.[27] Bräuchler notes that radical Islamic groups use the Internet to "construct an identity that is congruent with their offline philosophy but extends its reach."[28] She proceeds to discuss how, by offering skewed interpretations of religious and historical texts like the Qur'an and the *hadith*, as well contemporary news, radical groups are able to reach "a wide range of people whose perception of Islam is strongly influenced by these presentations."[29] The Internet has allowed contemporary jihadists to convert youth to their radical ideology, communicate while remaining anonymous, and plan attacks without being geographically present.

A key question now arises: how should Western Muslims react to the historical humiliations, given that they live in an era of globalization with a worldwide project aimed at recruiting them for violent purposes? For many Muslims living in the West, dealing with humiliation may not be an important enough issue to affect daily life. But for some, especially those marginalized by other factors, when the deterritorializing force of globalization and the radical Islamist project are added to the mix of historical humiliation, then violent, neo-fundamentalist interpretations of Islam become attractive. Yet an aggressively reactionary response is only one potential outcome of the contemporary Western Muslim experience. As I will discuss in the final section, a cosmopolitan reaction is also possible and, according to Jytte Klausen, already taking shape. It is important to note two aforementioned points; first, only a tiny proportion of Western Muslims are tempted by the jihadist ideology promoted by the radicals and, second, the process of radicalization is not mechanical in nature. This is especially significant in light of Roy's and Sen's emphasis on the individual element in identity construction. There are a number of unique factors that affect each individual decision. In the following section, I hope to tease out some of these as I compare radicalization processes in the United States and Western Europe and then, in the penultimate section, discuss the case of Mohammed B.

VI. Radicalization in the United States and Europe

As I have highlighted throughout this essay, it is important to look at world-level trends but also specific experiences to understand the allure of the radical. Comparing radicalization processes in two different places is one way to identify more specific factors at work. Here, I

begin with a brief discussion of the history of Muslims in Europe and the United States, followed by an analysis of demographic differences between Muslims on both sides of the Atlantic and how strongly jihadist ideologies resonate in both groups. This is intertwined with some primary observations made during my time studying in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Maastricht in the Netherlands. Finally, by focusing on the case of Mohammed B., I discuss an individual example of radicalization.

The history of Islam's interaction with Europe is decidedly different than with the United States. Islam reached Europe by the start of the 9th century, although likely much earlier. From the 10th to the end of the 15th century, large parts of Spain and Portugal, as well as Sicily and areas of southern Italy (though for shorter periods of time), were under Muslim rule.[30] Right up until the early 20th century, the Muslim world, in the form of the Ottoman Empire, remained at the doorstep of Europe. However, large Muslim populations only began migrating to Western Europe in the 1950s, primarily as labor for post-War reconstruction. The large majority of these migrants were men and, once the reconstruction projects were complete, they were expected to return to their countries of origin.[31] This repatriation, however, never happened. Since then, despite regular attempts by Western European governments to make immigration more difficult, migrants, the majority of them Muslim, have continued to arrive in large numbers.

In the early history of the United States, Islam plays a trivial role.[32] The first Muslims to arrive in America in significant numbers were slaves from West Africa. While no accurate numbers exist, historians estimate that as many as 20% of slaves brought to the U.S. may have been Muslims.[33] Despite some notable exceptions, slaves were either not permitted to practice their religion or forcibly converted to Christianity. Recently, musicologists have noted the similarities between the Blues genre of music and Muslim calls to prayer as one of few lingering, though unrecognized, traditions linking contemporary America with Muslim Africa.[34] While small groups of Muslim immigrants arrived during the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was not until more recent decades that Muslim immigrants have arrived in significant numbers. Some 39% of America's Muslims have only arrived since 1990.[35] It is also important to point out here the Nation of Islam community, founded in 1930, which introduced an unusual brand of Islam to America's Black population. While in recent years the organization has fallen more in line with mainstream Islam, its early teach-

ings included the belief that the founder of the Nation of Islam was a "savior sent by God" and that "spaceships hovering above the earth will eventually play a major role in smiting sinners and rescuing the righteous."[36] It is critical, therefore, to keep in mind that the Islam discussed in the American context may be different from Islam at the global level, although in all fairness, the Nation of Islam's influence and significance is presently minimal.

With an understanding of the history of Islam in the United States and Europe, we can now discuss current trends. As mentioned above, in both Europe and the United States, Muslim immigration has taken off in recent decades. In terms of both number and percentage, however, Muslims constitute a far larger share on the eastern side of the Atlantic. Since neither the U.S. nor any of the Western European governments include questions regarding religion in their respective censuses, accurate figures are hard to come by. The best estimates, though, put the number of American Muslims between 2.5 million (or 0.8% of the population)[37] and six million (2%),[38] while the corresponding population in Germany is three million (3.6%), five million (8.0%) in France, one million (2.3%) in Spain, and 945,000 (5.8%) in the Netherlands.[39] These numbers, however, do not tell us much. More interesting results are found in a 2007 study by the Pew Research Center, titled "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," that attempts to understand the "demographics, attitudes, and experiences" of the American Muslim population. While the majority of the study is focused on the United States, important comparisons with Great Britain, France, Germany, and Spain are also made.

Perhaps the most striking statistic found by the Pew study regards poverty. In the U.S., Muslim poverty rates are 2% higher than the national average while the corresponding number for France and Germany is 18% and even higher in Britain and Spain. In a similar vein, 71% of American Muslims believe that hard work will lead to success, which is higher than the national average of 64%. These data paint a picture of a middle class and upwardly mobile group of people, quite unlike the stereotypical image of immigrant ghettoes in Europe, where radical preachers often find willing listeners in marginalized youth. While 8% of respondents in the U.S. said that suicide bombings were justifiable under certain circumstances, the corresponding figure was 15% or more in France, Spain, and Great Britain. Support for Al Qaeda was also lower than in European countries. Interestingly, though, young American Muslims under the age of 30 are about twice

as likely to both condone suicide bombings and support Al Qaeda, a proportion that holds true in the European case as well.

A final point from the Pew Global Attitudes Survey can be made with regard to the religiosity of Americans and Western Europeans. While Europe is regarded as secular and largely non-religious, religion continues to play an important role in the lives of Americans. Interestingly, more Christians visit churches weekly (45%) than Muslims visit mosques (40%). Being devoutly religious in Europe can perhaps lead to further marginalization as it is contrary to the majority practice. Despite the presence of parties like the Christian Democrats in many European countries, the overwhelming majority of Europeans agree that religion should play no role in politics and policy-making.[40] This is in strong contrast to the United States, where politicians are expected to lobby religious groups and references to God are common in political speeches. While it is true that by and large these groups are Christian, it is nonetheless worth noting that religion is considered important and valuable, whereas in Europe it is not. It is not difficult to imagine, then, that European Muslims may feel looked down upon for being devout practitioners.

My experience in Maastricht, where two of the city's larges cathedrals are now a bookshop and a hotel, does at first glance support the notion that Europe has broken from its religious past. Yet I do not believe that this break is as complete as it is imagined. As Jytte Klausen has argued in *The Islamic Challenge*, Europe's Christian past and the religion's contemporary influence is hidden yet pervasive. Unlike in the United States, where Church and State are legally separate, many European countries, including the Netherlands, have a long history of funding churches and Christian schools (France is a notable exception). Yet, as Klausen points out, similar projects supporting mosques and Muslim schools are a recent phenomenon, even though large, concentrated Muslim populations have lived in Europe for decades. While the general European population may not be as devout as in the United States, the influence of Christianity is never far away, as evidenced by the recent debate in the European Union regarding whether or not "Christian values" are a part of being European. The celebration of Christian events happens with as much festivity in Europe as in the United States, and the Sabbath is militantly observed. These seemingly trivial points do add up, indicating that Europe is not as "post-religious" as Europeans seem to think. This paradoxical situation, where Europe is supposed to be non-religious yet continues to exhibit many

characteristics of a Christian society, could leave non-Christians feeling confused and cheated—why are practitioners looked down upon when religion continues to be important in the larger social context?

The situation in the United States, where religion plays an important role in the social sphere, is markedly different. The European double standard (claiming to be non-religious yet being culturally Christian) does not exist, or at least not to the same level. American Muslims, though, continue to feel discriminated against, as indicated by the Pew survey in which 25% of respondents (41% of native born and 18% of foreign born) said they had been victims of discrimination during their time in the U.S. While I could not find a corresponding figure for European states, there have been a number of econometric studies showing labor market discrimination in Europe.[41] However, a key point to keep in mind is the earlier demographic data showing Muslims in the U.S. as being relatively better off than Muslims in Europe. It is likely that job discrimination will have the heightened effect of frustration and humiliation on those from poor backgrounds and with unsure prospects.

In my two-and-a-half years living in the United States, the only visible cases of discrimination I have encountered have been at the airport. "Muslim-looking" people, including Indians like me, are routinely selected for "random" security checks. Being separated from the rest of the passengers and being searched more thoroughly is without doubt a humiliating experience, especially so when it happens over and over again. While paranoia in the aftermath of 9/11 is understandable, cases like that of Omar Rana, an eight-year-old boy whose name is on a terror blacklist, are both absurd and frightening. Every time Rana goes through airport security, he is pulled aside from his family and screened individually.[42] This extent of racial profiling is bound to become increasingly frustrating for Muslims over time. Surely an eight-year-old child does not pose a threat to the national security of any country. Muslims in America have seemed relatively well integrated, however. Policies like racial profiling at airports, the Guantanamo Bay detention center, and the USA PATRIOT Act have the potential to change that condition.

In my research and experience, it seems as if Europe's young Muslims are exposed to more situations in which radicalization becomes tempting. Not surprisingly, then, recent attacks in the U.S. and Western Europe, specifically those in New York City, Madrid, and London, have been planned in Europe and many of the perpetrators have

spent significant parts of their lives in Europe. Even the one attack in the United States was orchestrated in Hamburg, Germany, while the London attacks were carried out by four citizens of Great Britain. During my participation in the Globalization in Comparative Perspective program, though, one case was brought up more often than any other: that of Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh.

VII. The Radicalization of Mohammed B.

The case of Mohammed B., as he is most commonly known, brings together several of the important factors behind radicalization discussed above. At the same time, having an individual case study also allows us to see that the process of radicalization is not a mechanical one. Born to first-generation Moroccan immigrants, Mohammed B. went to university, had a Dutch girlfriend, enjoyed drinking beer and smoking marijuana with both other immigrants and ethnic Dutch friends, and seemed like a case of multiculturalism going well. Yet over the course of a year, starting in February 2003, he completely deserted "Western values" and became increasingly radical.[43] Not surprisingly, perhaps, this radicalization occurred immediately after a number of personal setbacks: his mother passed away, he was rejected by a number of employers, and a community center he was working to build was refused funding by the government. He blamed the Netherlands' unfair treatment of Muslims for these events. Around the same time, Mohammed began meeting Abou Khaled, a radical Syrian preacher with possible ties to Al Qaeda. Khaled taught Mohammed B. and his "close circle of like-minded friends" (what would become the Hofstad Network) a violent, radical version of Islam with a specific focus on hating the "infidels."[44]

While trying to determine what, if any, role the historical humiliations of Islam played in Mohammed's radicalization would be largely speculative, we do have an idea of his views on the religion through his postings on Internet forums. Mohammed believed that, "Muslim people were enslaved by Western lollipops [and] had reached the lowest point in their history."[45] It is likely, then, that Mohammed was aware of and, especially in light of his own failures and losses, experienced a heightened sense of humiliation for being Muslim. In a time of personal crisis, Mohammed turned to neo-fundamentalist Islam, a

source that gave him an authority figure and a clearly demarcated set of rules and ideals to live by and live for.

Yet despite Mohammed's increasing devotion to Islam, he "remained incredibly Dutch."[46] His approach to violence came from a very individualized internalization of jihadist Islam. For Mohammed, this was not a fight for Islam in Israel or Chechnya or Iraq, but rather in the Netherlands. As he stated during his trial, Mohammed could not live in a liberal democratic society because free speech allowed people to insult Allah and the Qur'an.[47] Yet it was exactly through the political liberties afforded to the Dutch that Mohammed planned on waging his larger battle. He wrote:

> Since the Dutch political system encourages its citizens (especially the *alochtonen*, the Muslims) to take an active part in the problems of society…people did indeed rise to take on social responsibilities. Such people not only shouldered responsibilities for The Netherlands, but for the whole world. They will liberate the world from democratic slavery.[48]

As Buruma notes, despite his pessimistic view regarding the state of Islam in the world, Mohammed believed that "rescue was at hand" because "the knights of Islam would rise from…the Netherlands."[49]

The radicalization of Mohammed demonstrates the immense complexity of trying to understand globalist radical Islam. It is difficult to reach definitive conclusions, but we can be fairly confident in arguing that Mohammed was aware of and experienced the humiliation of being a Muslim in the West. The role of globalization is evident at several levels. While Mohammed was a second-generation Moroccan, his radical preacher was a Syrian, and they both had globalist ambitions of rescuing Islam from "Western lollipops." Finally, it must be pointed out that a number of individual circumstances and choices also played a part in Mohammed's radicalization. His radical identity was not entirely a product of his historical situation or a response to globalization or a conscious choice; it was a combination of all three of these factors.

VIII. Conclusion

Contemporary jihadist violence is a complex phenomenon, one that cannot be understood in a straightforward mechanical way. Presently, the bulk of the literature dealing with the issue takes too narrow a per-

spective by either focusing on a specific time period or creating imagined civilizational boundaries. Additionally, perhaps in the interest of finding easy narratives, scholars have tended to ignore the complexity of identity construction. While this essay certainly does not answer every question regarding the matter, the aim is simply to open new lines of enquiry and to try to understand the immense complexity of contemporary jihadist violence.

The question that naturally follows such a study is "What can we do?" The first step is to understand that there is no "quick fix" solution. Contemporary jihadist violence is a product of our historical moment. Campaigns like the "War on Terror" are misleading and probably counterproductive, as they give the impression that there is a clear, identifiable enemy that can be eliminated. Yet this is far from the case. "Borders and frontiers are no longer territorial," notes Roy. "There is no wall defending the enemy, an enemy that is more often than not too elusive to be named and targeted, an enemy who if he is shadowy is sometimes merely our shadow."[50]

Instead, in this era of globalization, we need to ensure that imagined boundaries, by way of exclusion and discrimination, do not drive disillusioned youths to violence. Adopting a cosmopolitan worldview at the individual, state, and transnational levels would be a step in the right direction, though this would require critical adaptation from all involved.

But this is not enough. To counter the allure of the radical, creating a prevailing sense of justice would be a huge step in the right direction. When class divisions are removed from the equation, violent radicalism loses much of its appeal. A discussion of how this should be done is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important nonetheless to recognize the centrality of justice in a globalizing society.

At a more micro level, it is vital to look beyond rigid definitions and meanings of identity, what Sen calls "the illusion of destiny,"[51] and adopt a more cosmopolitan outlook. From the Muslim community, perhaps especially in the West, there is a need for leadership and vision to engage with globalization and decrease the appeal of reactionary radicalism. Scholars like Tariq Ramadan, who argues that Muslims in Europe need to create a "European Islam," offer hope that neo-fundamentalism is not the only religious track that young Muslims can identify with and follow. As Klausen has noted, the genesis of this European Islam seems to already begun. Two specific areas where

there is particular urgency, she notes, are with regard to the role of women and the acceptance of homosexuality.[52]

On the part of the West, populist politicians using anti-Islamic platforms are surely doing more harm than good. It is almost as though these leaders are bent on making Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theory a reality. Yet the vast majority of leaders, Muslim and Christian, are secular in their political outlook. A point of tension is likely to be freedom of speech, an issue dear to Europeans. It may be time, though, for European governments to learn from the United States and initiate anti-hate-speech laws, making it illegal to deride and disgrace religions, race, and other sensitive constituents of the body politic. In an era of increasing globalization, there is certainly a need for discussion and debate, yet there must be defined boundaries. Respect and tolerance will be difficult to foster in an environment where anything and everything is a legitimate target of ridicule.

On a transnational level, there are certain steps that would reduce the temptations of radical Islam. Allowing for a stronger Muslim voice on the world stage would be a significant improvement. Currently, none of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council has a Muslim majority, even though the religion has more than a billion followers worldwide. Security Council reform is desperately needed for many reasons. Perhaps responding to globalist radical Islam will give the process a sense of urgency.

Finally, a conscious effort to reexamine the sources of our knowledge and an acknowledgement of the contributions of the non-Western world in science, the arts, and philosophy would reduce the anti-West sentiment seen around the world (not to mention offer a more accurate understanding of the subject matter!). At present, largely due to the West's domination in the educational sphere, there is little acknowledgment of the plural origins of many of the ideas we hold dear. A sincere effort at recognizing the contributions of the non-West is desperately needed in order to accurately understand the two big questions of "where we are" and "how we got here." In the work of scholars like Sen (see especially his *Argumentative Indian*), there is an attempt to tease out the historical roots of science and philosophy, yet more examination is needed and at a larger scale.

Globalization has been studied in the last few decades as a phenomenon with the potential to bring people together as well as to push them apart. In the world today we see many examples of both the uniting and the fragmenting attributes of globalization. People from all

walks of life and all over the planet come together and offer help when there is a natural disaster in Myanmar or New Orleans, while others fight against the implementation of neo-liberal policies in Bolivia and the Westernization of India. What we must understand is that globalization is not inherently good or bad. What we do with it will determine what it becomes. ◉

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Notes

1. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), p. xi.

2. Statements made by Al Qaeda over the years have indicated a large and rather complex array of objectives, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this analysis. I have described what have been described by al Zawahiri as the fundamental values of the organization. See Christopher Blanchard and "Full Text: bin Laden's Letter to America," for a more involved discussion of Al Qaeda's ideology, including commitments to anti-Semitism and, interestingly, strains of environmentalism and neo-Marxism.

3. Christopher M. Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology" (4 February 2005). Congressional Research Service. Accessed online on 5 March 2008 at http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/RL32759.pdf.

4. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 24.

5. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

6. John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 2.

7. Ahmed Samatar, "Introduction to Globalization." Globalization in Comparative Perspective Seminar, University of Maastricht (January 2008).

8. Roy 2004, p. 10.

9. Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

10. Mohammed Ayoob, "Political Islam: Image and Reality," *World Policy Journal* 21 (2004). Accessed online on 15 March 2008 at http://worldpolicy.org/journal/articles/wpj04-3/ayoob.htm.

11. From the neo-conservative commentator Daniel Pipes to liberals like Ayoob, there is general consensus on this matter.

12. *Times*' list of the world's top 200 universities contained entrants from 28 different countries. Not a single one has a Muslim majority. While there are certainly problems

with these ranking systems, it is nonetheless telling that Islamic institutions fared so poorly.

13. Ahmed Samatar, "Introduction to Globalization."

14. Egmont Lee (compiler). The Applied History Research Group. Dept. of History, University of Calgary, 1998. Accessed online on 19 June 2008 at http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/index.html.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. As quoted in Richard Hooker, "The Ottomans: European Imperialism and Crisis" (Washington State University, 1996). Accessed online at http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/OTTOMAN/EUROPE.HTM.

18. "Bin Laden's Warning: Full Text," *BBC News* (07 October 2001). Accessed online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1585636.stm.

19. Roy 2004, p. 18.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 232.

22. Michael Ware, "Papers Give Peak Inside Al Qaeda in Iraq," *CNN* (11 June 2008). Accessed online on 20 June 2008 at http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/06/11/al.qaeda.iraq/index.html.

23. Susan Schmidt, "Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda," *Washington Post* (27 Feb. 2008). Accessed online on 19 June 2008 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/26/AR2008022603267.html.

24. Dominic Casciani, "Profile: Abu Hamza," *BBC News* (27 May 2004). Accessed online on 19 June 2008 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3752517.stm.

25. Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

26. Timothy L. Thomas, "Al Qaeda and the Internet: the Danger of Cyberplanning," *Parameters* (2003). Accessed online at http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/03spring/thomas.pdf.

27. Birgit Bräuchler, "Islamic Radicalism Online: the Moluccan Mission of the Laskar Jihad in Cyberspace," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* (2004).

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Lee 1998.

31. Jytte Klausen, *The Islamic Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 5.

32. An interesting side-note: Morocco was the first country to officially recognize the United States of America in 1777. See the websites http://www.state.gov/r/us/67607.htm and http://www.cies.org/country/morocco.htm.

33. Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 76.

34. Johnathan Curiel, "Muslim Roots of the Blues," *San Francisco Chronicle* (15 August 2004). Accessed online on 30 June 2008 at http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/08/15/INGMC85SSK1.DTL.

35. *Muslim Americans* (Pew Research Center, 2007). Accessed online on 1 February 2008 at http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf.

36. Neil MacFarquhar, "Nation of Islam at a Crossroad as Leader Exits," *New York Times* (26 February 2006). Accessed online on 19 June 2008 at www.nytimes.com/2007/02/26/us/26farrakhan.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin.

37. *Muslim Americans* 2007.

38. Smith 1999, p. xii.

39. "Muslims in Europe: Country Guide," *BBC News* (23 December 2005). Accessed online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4385768.stm.

40. "Secular Europe Confirmed by Poll," *International Herald Tribune* (7 June 2005). Accessed online on 19 January 2008 at http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/06/06/news/religion.php.

41. See, for example, Bursell for Sweden, Coenders and Scheepers for the Netherlands, and Goldberg, Mourinho, and Kulke for Germany. While each study has methodological variations, the conclusions are identical: *ceteris paribus*, non-indigenous workers are less likely to be hired by firms.

42. "RP: Racial Profiling" (Amnesty International U.S.A., 2008). Accessed online on 30 June 2008 at http://www.amnestyusa.org/other/rp-racial-profiling/page.do?id=1106661&n1=3&n2=850&n3=1532.

43. Buruma 2006, p. 192.

44. Ibid., p. 211.

45. Ibid., p. 217.

46. Ibid., p. 213.

47. Ibid., p. 189.

48. As quoted in Buruma 2006, p. 217.

49. Ibid.

50. Roy 2004, p. 328.

51. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).

52. Klausen 2005, p. 207.

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