

The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict

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Edited by

Zoran Matevski

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INTRODUCTION

The content of this book derives from the papers presented at the First European Conference on Religious Dialogue and Cooperation, held in Struga (Republic of North Macedonia) in October 2019. The theme of the conference was “The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict”. This was the first conference of its kind in Europe. The conference will be held every other year, and therefore the next one will be in 2021. The conference featured over 50 papers by eminent professors and researchers from 17 European countries. As the editor of this book, I have selected nine papers that best illustrate the role of religion in peace and conflict in modern European societies, primarily from a sociological, historical, anthropological and theological point of view. The tenth part of the book is by an author who depicts the religious situation in Zimbabwe. This was done to make some comparative analysis of the situations in Europe and Africa.

The global economy, global science, and the global political system can offer very little to the individual or social groups to confirm their identity. Identities are increasingly relativized, and thus individuals lack unequivocal behavior. Religion can play an important role in helping people cope with such problems. Individuals and social groups can reach out to religion to secure their unique sense of identity. It can be used to confirm the superiority of an individual or social group over other individuals and groups in Europe. Religion can mobilize (make movable) these social groups with the desire to gain power and influence in the European society in which they feel marginalized or which they think of as a threat. Religions that seek to emphasize particular differences are often closely linked to religious nationalism. Religious fundamentalism is often seen as a complete or partial rejection of modern goals, be it religious tolerance, secularization, as well as the various advances in society and technology that for various reasons are inconsistent with a particular religious doctrine.

The claims of the Universalist religions that the world was created by one God are based on the conclusion that God is the fundamental driving force in globalization. This leads to the proof that humanity is a single community, regardless of geographical area or political territory. Among the Universalist religions, Christianity and Islam have proven to be the most effective globalizers because of their conversion missions. It is most

explicitly expressed in Islam. The sacred purpose of Islam is to establish a community of believers in which the practices listed in the Quran would be followed literally, and in which in certain circumstances the believers would engage in a holy war against unbelievers. The dangerous thing about fundamentalism is that it accepts only one tradition (its own), and all other traditions, religions, and worldviews are unacceptable.

Hence, the question arises as to, where does the relevance of religious fundamentalism come from, and what does its revitalization at the beginning of the 21st century mean? We could give two conflicting explanations to this question. According to the first aspect, fundamentalism is an essential deviation, a symptom of adjustment that societies undertake when they become accustomed to modern and secularized culture. According to the second aspect, fundamentalism is of permanent importance, and it is a consequence of the failure of secularism to satisfy the constant human desire for spiritual values and truth. Although Shiite fundamentalism in Iran has produced the strongest obligation and commitment, Islam in general is a means of expressing anti-Western aspirations by creating antipathy primarily to globalization as a global process. This was evident in the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, where the spiritual search for religious foundations and traditions became a synonym of militant politics and armed conflict. Nevertheless, globalization is the most important factor in the re-actualization of religious fundamentalism. This is especially evident in parts of Europe where the ethnic and religious identity of people is endangered and constantly challenged, especially among expatriates and immigrants. One of the essential features of fundamentalism is its opposition to the modern world. Now, the crucial question arises: what are the reasons for religious fundamentalism, which is basically a positive political ideology, to turn into a negative phenomenon that relies on aggression in achieving its goals?

Identity politics, whether based on political, social, ethnic or religious specifics, tends to divide people in Europe into “ours” and “others”. Ethnic and religious “others” may be the targets of violent behavior. In that sense, “we” are the chosen people and representatives of good, and “they” are sinners and the embodiment of evil. Ecumenism proposes the idea that tolerance and dialogue can be guided by universal values. In modern times, the ecumenical movement is extremely present, especially within Christianity. Lately a neo-ecumenism has emerged, based on the idea of reconciling Christianity with Islam.

Instead of focusing on diversity, certain religious communities and groups in Europe emphasize common values and beliefs that should become global and common worldwide. An example is the belief in universal

human rights and certain concepts of social justice. Although the theology of liberation is based on Catholicism, its interests are political and religious, with an emphasis on concern for the poor. We could mention religious environmentalism and religious ecology, which try to encourage different religious groups to work together to save what they call a land created by God. However, from any angle, the relationship between religion and globalization is a topic that will be relevant for a long time to come. In the 21st century, opportunities have been created to show what authentic contribution religion could make to the globalizing world. While some Muslims oppose the world of Disney and Nike as decadent, many Christians have embraced consumer habits without realizing it. Despite the fact that large corporations seek to direct globalization, they cannot do so unless they persuade the world's citizens to believe in consumption as a path to pleasure. That contributes to widening the gap between rich and poor. This leads to the reinforcement of Christian and Muslim religious nationalism. Hence, it is undeniable that Christians in Europe could return to the gospels to find the model by which to live. That model portrays them as spiritual beings with material experience. Man does not seek answers only to the question: "who am I?", but also to the question: "who is the other?" He does not think that pleasure is achieved by introducing various instruments and devices, but that it derives from a sincere desire for justice and concern for others.

Europe's future is coexistence. In the age of globalization, no culture or cultural identity must remain isolated. Globalization must develop personal and collective freedom, enabling the transition from the individual to the collective, from national to international, and from a particular religion to a syncretic credo. In modern European societies, it is necessary to nurture the human spiritual dimension in a new theocentric humanism that will not lack anything that is human, including its divine nature. Man as a person exists in an eminent way, only when he rules with himself, and with all the dimensions of his self. Therefore, mankind needs a "personalistic and communist revolution" that will put the dignity of the human person and the common good above all regimes and ideologies. The strength of the strategy built on shared values prepares people to take on new collective responsibilities for the collective good. In order for the European Union to become legitimate, it needs a sense of shared identity and mutual trust. The European Union can only make legitimate decisions by providing actors who will cooperate, and who will be able to overcome differences through common civic norms.

In Europe, religion has a renewed role in legitimizing the critiques of different systems of power and unity. In an age of accelerated globalization,

Europe needs a more intense discussion not only of its similarities and the elements that unite it (like the Copenhagen criteria), but also of its differences, especially in culture and religion. Every responsible politician should inform the public about the situation in society. In general, both the Christian and Muslim religious communities have no problem with European values. Not only do they live up to Western values, but they also accept them from their own convictions. However, there are groups that do not accept these values or reject them decisively. Speaking of the encounters of the world's major religions with globalization, it can be said that they have no reason to fear globalization, because they are supranational, but also because their messages are able to overcome the cultural, linguistic and other obstacles that divide nations and individuals. They are accustomed to spreading around the world and inculcating in environments quite different from those in which they originated. On European soil throughout history, Christianity and Islam have done the same. Although this role of religion seems to be correct, great historical religions should be careful not to turn religion into a social guide. Religious leaders need to be aware of their role in globalizing society. In this context, religions should approach each other despite the differences between them, having as an imperative the educational role they can play in terms of issues that are common to all. They need to act towards one truth and implement it locally. It will not be a relativization of the truth, but on the contrary, that truth would become global as a framework for common spiritual values and common ethical philosophies.

Islamic religious communities, because of their structural heterogeneity, call for resolving general cultural-civilizational problems. Therefore, their approach is partial, taking into account the specifics of individual contexts. Islam and Muslims call on Europe to solve social problems in a particular and subsidiary way, according to the customs and local institutions of each country individually. The European political elite are obliged to take into account cultural or religious diversity. If they do not, Europe is endangered, not as a customs and monetary union, but as a civilization. When talking about inter-religious, inter-ideological and inter-cultural dialogue, the overall connection and interdependence of humanity must be emphasized. It must always be taken into account that a broader action can have global consequences. It is therefore imperative that global dialogue leads to the construction of a minimum ethical consensus. Such a consensus must not be partially common, it must be global. Global ethics should use language and symbols that are acceptable to large and universal religions. Its language should be humane, not derived from authoritative religious books. This means that it should come from below, not from above. The

global-ethic declaration should not only be anthropocentric, but also cosmo-centric.

Civilization and globalization are not progressing evenly. Civilization seems to be lagging behind. The civilization period which we are entering does not yet have a name that would describe it as it is. Whether or not the crisis of European civilization is unprecedented, it is happening because of the crisis of the spirit. Modern man, without shelter in the eternal and transcendent, builds a civilization without culture. Such an atheistic and indifferent civilization is probably the first of its kind in human history. The role of the church in times of globalization is paradigmatic. The church, of course, cannot and should not compete economically and politically, but it can provide an ethical-moral and religious foundation for modern man. The church should adapt to modern social processes. However, if the church becomes an institution that gives up on the events of the immortal world because of the events of this world, then its function loses all meaning. One of the crucial ethical questions today is: Does man as an individual mean anything to us, or does he exist only as a function of modern processes?

Ecumenical processes have been evident in recent decades. Contemporary theology in the context of globalization has become plural, confessional and ecumenical. Ecumenism is the theology of the 21st century and the key to the renewal of the Church. Ecumenism proposes a plan by which tolerance and dialogue can be guided by universal values. The ideal of connecting people in a human community (ecumenical) was set by ancient thinkers. During the 1960s and 1970s, Christianity experienced an ecumenical movement in which dialogue between its churches and denominations increased in an attempt to uncover general principles and obligations regarding unification. Christians share common, but not competitive answers to the good of modern man. This does not mean that theology is diluted into abstract and non-confessional neutrality through church sermons. This way theology becomes deeply confessional and at the same time open to dialogue with others. European social processes require the Church to discover and develop new forms of solidarity and understanding of religiosity as a significant social force.

The powerful idea of the development of freedom is a goal we can all strive for, without letting the issue of cultural relativism stifle the debate. The planet's resources can and must provide at least minimal supplies (such as food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, and health care for the sick). The world is currently struggling with a growing economic crisis, and we are facing increased violence stemming from ethnic and religious intolerance. Terrorist attacks emerge from local conditions, which

have often been neglected by the European Union. Therefore, it is necessary to restore the basic universal values (above all, the right to life for all). The rights to life and dignity must be the foundation of building a peaceful and compassionate world. A world in which peace prevails must be guided by human rights and tolerance of diversity. Institutions must be built to enable collective security against vulnerability. We must harness the forces that drive globalization to build solidarity and peace in the face of war and destruction. An important starting point (which in itself can be considered one of the consequences of globalization) is to recognize our common vulnerability in an interconnected and interdependent world. The health, economic and political consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are a typical example of modern Europe's vulnerability.

Plurality and reflectivity are not only key attributes of the modern world we inhabit, but are also hallmarks of the concept of globalization. Globalization does not mean removing or erasing local cultures. Local cultures have become as important in the era of globalization as global culture itself. Local cultures do not surrender without fighting external forces, but instead are absorbed by valuing their own separation. In the 21st century, it is becoming increasingly uncertain what is local and what is global. The near erasure of the division between local and global as spatial categories has paved the way for the division between conceptual and spatial polarities.

If we want to put all this in the context of global and local relations, this book will try to answer these crucial questions:

- Is the idea of religious tolerance in Europe a consequence of the influence of global processes?
- Does the role of religion as a strong guardian of Europe's national identity lead to localism and prevent globalization?
- Are Christianity and Islam, as major religious communities in Europe, carriers of the spiritual and cultural globalization, through the idea of ecumenism?
- Is the process of ethno-religious mobilization taking place in Europe?
- Why does religious fundamentalism in Europe reject the practical implementation of the principles of secularization and religious tolerance?
- Is the process of religious universalism taking place in Europe and to what extent, through the ideas of ecumenism and neo-ecumenism?
- To what extent do religious organizations practically implement the principles of religious tolerance in Europe?
- Does religion have a positive or negative role in Europe?

- Is secularization in Europe a myth or reality?
- Is a process of desecularization, or even sacralization, happening in contemporary European society?
- Are religious organizations becoming more and more profane in their activities?
- What is the role of religious tolerance as a principle between religious particularism and religious universalism in Europe?

The authors of the book try to answer all these questions and dilemmas, by analyzing the role of religion in peace and conflict in modern Europe as a whole, with special emphasis on the religious situations in North Macedonia, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Northern Ireland, Romania, Finland and Greece. A paper analyzing the situation in Zimbabwe can be found at the end of the book. I sincerely hope that this is just the beginning, and that new scientific analysis will follow and will be presented at the Second European Conference on Religious Dialogue and Cooperation.

Zoran Matevski

CHAPTER 1

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AS ONE OF THE ROLES OF RELIGION IN EUROPE

ZORAN MATEVSKI, PHD¹

***Abstract:** Pseudo-democratic processes in Europe are a means of governing the majority, and the leaders of those processes manage to manipulate the unthinking majority under the slogans of Christian values. The religious view of the world is the background through which the masses are mobilized and the fascism of a society in which Christian values become ordinary commodities in neoliberal capitalism. The idea that God is one and that belief in Him is set up differently in different religions can lead some individuals and religious and political institutions to the wrong notion that we are "we" because we are not "them", and we can remain "we" if we delete "them". Therefore religious exclusivity leads to a violent ideology: we true believers have the true and righteous God on our side, and on the battlefield we stand against "those" who believe in a God who is not the true one; against unbelievers, atheists and agnostics; and against religious apostates. Religious extremists have the following characteristics:*

1. They perceive the current state of religion in the global world as a pale version of their own faith. They are members of a faith that is highly sought after by them, including the physical sacrifice in the name of their own religion.

2. These believers criticize other religions for their adaptive attitude towards modern cultural values. For example, radical Islamists call for violent resistance to Western European cultural

¹ Full Professor at Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia
Email: zmatevski@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

values, while radical Christians call for open confrontation with all those who legitimize abortion and homosexual marriages.

3. Religious extremists advocate the destruction of secular states and the establishment of theocracies on a global scale. In theocratic societies there is no separation of the private and the public, but religion completely penetrates both spheres of social life.

Keywords: *Religious Extremism, Religious Exclusivity, Christian Values*

Introduction

Religion is a very complex phenomenon that has been present in all societies from prehistory to the present day. For centuries, major universal world religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam offered their supporters an exclusive and generalist set of values that stood above the state and the economy. In the medieval world, Christianity was regarded as the Kingdom of God on earth, and Islam has always been regarded as a social community of material and political interests that are above the state. These two theocratic units came into conflict over control of various religious places (Jerusalem, Constantinople, Kosovo, etc.). These religions had a mission in a globalizing sense in which they sought to replace other religions that were defined by them as ungodly and pagan. They were to be merged with expansive empires that had global ambitions.

The theory of globalization leads to the conclusion that religion in different societies should be understood in the context of changes in the world as a whole. But everything is based on the assumption that the boundaries between societies are becoming less important, and that social life in individual societies is increasingly influenced by events in other parts of the world, and that some certain changes are obvious throughout the world, and not only limited to certain places. Globalization involves a situation in which peoples, cultures, states and civilizations that were earlier isolated to some degree are now unceasingly and inevitably acting on each other. It has two opposite effects. On the one hand, there is a growing threat of conflicts between different cultures, which are now in the same society, as it can lead to misunderstanding and hostility. On the other hand, all closer contacts between different cultures and religions can reduce the differences between them, and thus reduce the possibility of collisions. The global society characterizes the clash as one between

particularism and universalism. Particularism emphasizes the importance of the characteristics of individual social groups. These differences can be national, regional, cultural or religious. Universalism emphasizes the importance of similarities between people, particular societies and values systems.

The religious tolerance among the believers from different confessions, the mutual understanding, the respect of the differences, the mutual dialogue and the non-discrimination of the people on a religious basis and affiliation are the essential components of religious pluralism. Religious pluralism should be considered as a mosaic of our cultural wealth, of civilization's achievements, of customs and traditions, and all this should be a basis for progress rather than a motivation for non-tolerance, discrimination, mutual conflict and mutual destruction. It is very peculiar how so many people today, in the contemporary society, can be prepared to lose their lives for the cause of their religion and on the other hand they are not prepared to live in accordance with the principles and the values of those religions. Basically, the principles of different religions, even those which at the first glance seem to be in contradiction, are not as contradictory as some think. According to the aspect of the development of civil society, there is an absolute necessity for an institutionalization of human values, as well as interreligious and intercultural respect. Civil society can find answers to these issues by means of a dialogue between the different religions and cultures.

One of the key questions that contemporary science is faced with is: What exactly is the role of different religions when conflicts emerge between civilizations, ethnic groups and states? Sociological, philosophical, anthropological, historical, psychological and theological approaches are welcome to contribute in an attempt to answer this question. If we want to contextualize all this in time and space dimensions, we must try to establish the relationship between religion and state in times of peace or conflict in the modern societies in Europe (Michalski 2006). To this end it is interesting to search for an answer to the question: Have the wider Orthodox churches, Catholic churches, Islamic religious communities, etc. reduced or heightened ethnic conflicts and problems?

1. The role of religion in peace and conflict in Europe

Tolerance is a model of behavior that allows for the validity of another's principles. The best soil for introducing religious and ethnic tolerance is civic society. This is a supra-national society in which the basic measure is citizenship. In the frame of this type of society basic

human values become more general. The generalization of these values and norms leads towards the creation of universal human rights and values. With this, inherited ethnic rights and linked moral and legal norms fall away. Universal values and norms followed by human rights and freedoms are wider than the values of the special ethnic community. However, the system of norms and values has to be on a universal level.

Since religions are separated from the state, it is clear that they cannot carry the main guilt for inter-ethnic problems in Europe. But they are not completely free of responsibility. For instance, they are responsible for not saying what they should say. It gives the impression that religious organizations in Europe do not have enough power to speak in their own religious language, but in certain social-political moments speak in a collective language on the environment, where ethnocentrism becomes the ideology of modern times.

Religious fundamentalism most often manifests as a political-religious ideology that entirely or partially rejects the ideas of cultural globalism (Brekke 2012). These ideas include: religious tolerance; ecumenism and neo-ecumenism; secularization; and progress in science and technology. They are for various reasons not compatible with the doctrines and practices of religious fundamentalists and extremists. Out of all the Universalist religions, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism have been the strongest forces of globalization in the postmodern era. The demographic growth of Muslims worldwide leads us to the assumption that Islam might become the strongest religion of globalization. On the other hand, fundamentalism represents a type of answer to the challenge of globalization. The idea is to establish a moral system of religious and traditional cultural values. The biggest problem of religious fundamentalism and extremism is the idea that only the cultural traditions of Muslim civilization and Sharia law are acceptable. Furthermore, religious institutions, especially Christian ones, are trying to realize a more universal approach towards the believers of other religions. In this regard, religious communities and groups are trying to practically implement the principles of ecumenism and neo-ecumenism, and trying to unite believers with different confessional belongings. Instead of starting by emphasizing the differences, using this principle, religious institutions emphasize the beliefs and religious values that should become common for the entire world in the global era. Contrary to the exclusivity of fundamentalism, ecumenism suggests a plan through which religious tolerance and dialogue could be led by universal religious values and moral norms.

2. Religious extremism in Europe

Today, Europe is faced with a crisis of moral, religious and even civilizational values. Many have talked about the moral decadence of Europe. Furthermore, European countries are constantly faced with political crises. The European Union hasn't fully fulfilled the expectations of its member states. The ethno-religious mobilization of citizens and political parties in the states in the Western Balkans is still present. In that sense, the role of religion and the religious is realized in several directions. If the religious feelings of believers are abused or if religious teachings are brutally perverted, then religion is placed in the role of an amplifier of ethnic and political conflicts. Then a certain illusion is created that those are in fact religious conflicts. Such a case is the conflict in Ukraine, which many call "a battle for religion" (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2017, 111-120). When you analyze the conflict between the Ukrainian governmental forces and the separatists supported by Moscow in the eastern part of the country, it becomes much harder to separate the centuries-long ideological and religious tensions from the current political and military conflict. This became even more intense when the movement to form an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church was supported by the Ukrainian president Poroshenko.

Perhaps the greatest source of social conflict in contemporary Europe is the tension and violence in which people from minority groups of Muslim culture and Islamic faith participate (Olivier 2009, 1-11). This is especially present in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Russia, Germany and the United Kingdom. There are two completely different sources of these social tensions. On one hand, there is the social and economic discrimination towards believers of Islam. On the other hand, there are the terrorist attacks inspired by radical Islamic ideas. Even though they are different, these two sources of societal tensions are dynamically linked and feed off one another. No matter the frequency or absence of terrorist acts, which are in turn more or less individualized, the societal tensions between Muslim communities and the majority population in European countries are clear. In certain cases, a collective violence against minority Muslim communities also appears. Here the ethnic and religious aspects are interlinked. Because of this, today we rightly talk about ethno-religious conflicts in Europe and the radicalization of European Muslim communities (Cavanaugh 2009).

The ethno-religious mobilization is also present in the states of the Western Balkans (Bogomilova 2005). All these states are currently in a post-conflict period, but little is needed for the latent conflicts to once

again become direct clashes between members of the different ethnic and religious groups. Religious identity is always present in the antagonisms that have fragmented the Balkans for centuries (Muslims against Orthodox Christians, Orthodox Christians against Catholics, and Muslims against Catholics). Religion and nationality overlap here much more so than in any other region in Europe. This allows right-wing Christian Democratic political parties, through powerful propaganda and unique mytho-history, to inspire hatred towards the ethnic and religious “other”.

The pseudo democratic processes in Europe are a means to rule with the leaders of these processes manipulating the unthinking majority under the guise of Christian values. The religious viewpoint is a foundation through which the masses are mobilized and society is fascistized and wherein Christian values become nothing more than stocks in neoliberal capitalism. If the basic teachings of the political right in some countries in Europe are directed towards defining society as an organic national, ethnic and racial whole, which is above all oriented towards traditional, national and patriarchal values, the idea that they come from Christianity is problematic, and one could say they falsify Christianity as their source. In the case of Europe, the division of people between “us” and “them” produces violence based on a totalitarian understanding of faith. The idea that God is one, and that the belief in Him is different in different religions can in some individuals and religious and political institutions bring about a perception that we are “us” because we are not “them”, and therefore we can remain “us” if we eliminate “them”. Because of this, religious exclusion leads to violent ideology: “we” are the true believers and we stand against “them” who believe in a God who is not the one true God, and against the heretics, atheists, agnostics and religious deserters.

However, the rise of ethnic and political conflicts with religious dimensions should not blind us to the specific contribution of some religious leaders or religious communities and groups in solving said conflicts. Religious dignitaries at the local level can and do stop the development of violent conflicts through their everyday activities. They can also encourage dialogue between different religious communities. Religious groups and individuals are sometimes involved in the efforts to mediate between ethnic and political groups that are in conflict. In some cases, local religious powers are involved in peacemaking efforts. Religious groups and individuals led by their religious values are successfully involved in the process of making peace.

We can say, without underestimating the effects of other types of exclusion, that religious exclusion has generated the largest problems in Europe. Faced with this fact, contemporary religious leaders are trying to

overcome this state, which can in the worst-case scenario lead to bloody conflicts. In an interview, Pope Francis said:

The secular state, contrary to states in which a single religion is forced onto everyone, can give every believer the opportunity to believe in God. All people are equal as God's children and as creators of their own personal dignity. Everyone should have the freedom to practice their own religion, in the culture that he or she belongs to.

On the other hand, some Islamic religious leaders have clearly let Europe know that the prophet Muhammad saw the so-called Islamic nation in his visions as a religiously pluralist society, which guaranteed the right of religious freedom to all its citizens.

3. Characteristics of religious extremists and terrorists

Religious terrorists have a fundamentalist view of the world, which is also absolutist. This means that all other relevant religions are observed and explained in relation to their own religion. Fundamentalism forms a mindset in which people recognize: only one religious truth; one religious authority; one authentic religious story that applies to everyone; and one proper religious way of existence and action. From that perspective, they feel superior to the religious "other". Religious extremists believe that there is only one right reading and interpretation of their Holy Books. In fact, according to them, there is only one permissible interpretation of their Holy Books, and only that type of interpretation leads to God's truth. Of course, the interpretation of the Holy Books by their recognized religious authorities is only one of many options. But for them, the only right option is theirs, and all other religious interpretations are declared wrong, false and heretical. When a religious story has a broad narrative basis and interpretation, many believers readily adapt their lives to theological dogmas, religious norms and values, and religious practices and rituals. In contrast, the fundamentalist and extreme religious leaders, as well as writers of certain religious texts and pamphlets, have an extremely narrow-minded and limited interpretation of the Holy Books. In light of the fact that according to them, only their narrow and limited religious narrative is true and correct, it is clear why and how religious terrorists rationalize their violent actions. Therefore, their view of the world leads to the idea that all those who interpret the Holy Books in a different manner should be destroyed and eliminated (Venkatraman 2007, 229-248).

Every religious attitude leads to the ideological attitude of the believer. If his religious attitude is exclusive, then it is normal for his ideological

attitude to be the same. Therefore, members of extreme religious groups completely close themselves off. Everything that is labeled as liberalism, religious freedom, tolerance, religious dialogue and ecumenism, is declared undesirable and dangerous to the fundamentals of their religious belief. Religious fundamentalism excludes religious liberalism. Also, by incorporating politics, the religious views of their recognized religious leaders should be fully incorporated into the laws and legal norms of future Islamic states globally. By uniting these states, an Islamic society would be established, in which all the members would have to adhere unconditionally to the religious rules established by their religious leaders. If this could not be established peacefully, then it would have to be done by force.

When these religious groups establish sources of religious authority that are easily recognized, then the framework of their practical action is determined. From that moment the fundamentalist believer's conservative and traditional (but peaceful) way of understanding and practicing religion can grow into a violent urge to impose one's own position on all other believers. Their religious truth must apply to everyone. The religious story of these religious communities should be normatively introduced into everyday social life. In order for them to develop their terrorist extremist perspectives, believers need to maximize their feelings of self-confidence and self-assurance. This is achieved when believers are primarily guided by two values. The first is the negation of anyone who is religiously different from them, and the second is the affirmation of one's own supremacy over all religious rivals and enemies. The denial of other religious communities is carried out by their rejection, and by pushing the idea that they are rivals, enemies, and present a danger that may undermine the religious beliefs and practices of one's own religious community.

If all ten of the above factors fit into a puzzle, then it is very easy to get to the last two steps that will completely define the sociological profile of a religious terrorist (Borum 2004). This is achieved when their attitudes and actions are approved by the highest authority, whether it is perceived as God or as a historical necessity. At that moment, all personal and family freedoms are sorted and aligned with the religious-ideological commandments that take the highest priority. At that moment, when their view of the world and their mechanisms of action are approved by their religious leader, the whole process of forming an extremist believer is completed. Also, at that moment, extremist and terrorist actions are being legalized. Once the believer realizes that his behavior and practical action is

approved by an Islamic religious leader, or by some Islamic state in the form of political authority, then it is easier to act (Hamden 2018).

Conclusion

With all this in mind, we can conclude that the reasons behind violence and terrorist acts for religious purposes are very intriguing, complex and multi-dimensional. However, one key factor crystallizes from the above. Basically, certain passages of the Holy Books, and especially the Quran, offer two representations of God. One causes love, trust, dialogue and tolerance, and the other causes fear and distrust towards the religious other. It is basically the same representation or image, but the believer sometimes sees first one side, and then the other. Sometimes he sees the real side of the representation, but sometimes he sees the back side of it. However, religious truth does not depend solely on the one who deciphers it, but largely depends on the one who represents it, affirms it, and preaches it. The image and idea of God, much more than any other aspect of religion, affects our understanding of religious messages, our own salvation, and our view of the world. If the image of God is distorted, then one will misinterpret religion, which ultimately leads to religious extremism and terrorism. Today, if we talk about Islamic terrorism, tomorrow we may be talking about Christian or Buddhist terrorism.

In Europe, it has long been considered that the concept of multiculturalism would solve ethnic and religious problems. But that concept did not achieve the expected results, primarily because it is a static concept. Multiculturalism recognizes religious and ethnic differences and introduces the idea that countries in Europe are unitary, but European societies are multi-confessional and multiethnic. The problem is that in such a static concept, there is no more intense contact between members of different religions, cultures and civilizations. Ethnic and religious minorities are segregated in most European countries, and they are only very slowly integrated into all spheres of social life. In addition, a good number of European countries are ethnocentric and have stereotypes and negative attitudes towards religious and ethnic others, especially immigrants. In some countries, this has led to open violence and Islamophobia. Because of all this, multiculturalism has been declared dead by certain representatives of the political elite.

In any case, religion remains a strong guardian of Europe's ethnic identity. Ethnic and religious identities overlap, as two powerful sources of personal identification. This is particularly characteristic of the Balkan region. Almost without exception, every ethnic Macedonian, Serb, Greek

or Bulgarian is a member of Orthodox Christianity. Every ethnic Croat or Slovenian is a member of Catholic Christianity. Every ethnic Albanian from Macedonia, Kosovo or Serbia is a member of Islam. The only exception is Albania, where there are ethnic Albanians who are members of Islam, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Unlike the United States, for example, in Europe the phenomenon of conversion from one religion to another is very rare. If people convert to another religion, they are declared traitors to their own ethnicity. All this leads to ethno-religious mobilization, which is supported and strengthened by the political right that is represented mainly through the Christian Democratic parties in Europe.

The next, very important process in Europe is the interplay between religious and political organizations. This is especially evident in those countries where the influence of religious institutions on social life at all levels is strong. Such is the case in Poland, Italy, Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Greece, and of course in the Western Balkans. There occurs a particular process of political religiousization and the politicization of religion. Europe is largely de-secularized, with secularization becoming more of a myth, rather than a reality. Religious organizations increasingly appear as important factors in building peace in Europe. They have provided the impetus for the process of religious dialogue and cooperation. On the other hand, certain political elites are still abusing the religious feelings of believers in pursuit of their own ends. This reinforces ethnic and political conflicts, which can sometimes create the illusion of religious wars. Typical examples of this are in Ukraine and the states that gained independence after the dissolution of the Second Yugoslavia.

It is difficult to predict how future processes will unfold in modern European countries. But, one thing is for sure: the concept of multiculturalism is outdated. It is maintained only through the practical implementation of the principles of religious tolerance. Therefore, the concept of interculturalism, which is supposed to replace multiculturalism, is more relevant. Unlike multiculturalism, interculturalism is a much more dynamic process. Apart from the declarative recognition of Europe's multicultural features, it foresees a direct contact of different cultures, with members of different religious and ethnic groups engaging in interaction and cooperation. This means they will not communicate from afar, but will communicate by studying in common schools and universities, working together in labor organizations and public administration, and forming joint NGOs and political parties. Interculturalism will ensure the establishment of a society for all. In such a society, all citizens, regardless of their religious, ethnic, racial, political or economic affiliation, will have

equal access to educational institutions, the labor market, and the health, social and cultural institutions of the state.

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CHAPTER 2

WHO IS AFRAID OF DIVERSITY?

GERARD KESTER, PHD¹

***Abstract:** In the current debate on the future of Europe increasing reference is made to the Enlightenment, in defence of “the European Way of Life”. An appraisal of the impact of the Enlightenment shows many tangible positive achievements but also many defeats. The emphasis is predominantly on rationality, the individual, the West. Influential authors like Harari and Pinker submit this Enlightenment will prove an inescapable model for the world, converging to one global neoliberal civilization. Instead of this Neoliberal Absorption Model an Intercultural Diversity Model is proposed in this article. Globalization implies increased and intensified relations between cultures and religions and these need not be molded into one simple culture. Plurality is an asset. Next to the emblematic “sapere aude” of Kant “coniungere aude” may be added – dare to live together in diversity. Tolerance and a concomitant frame of secular rules of the game are not enough; the art is to go beyond living together apart which may continue to nurture inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict. Needed is a common project to replace neoliberal devastation, building a new Europe together in a laboratory of an intercultural society. A new élan is needed.*

Keywords: Enlightenment, Religion, “The European Way of Life”, Migration, Neoliberalism

¹ International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands (retired)
Email: gerardensonsjakester@ziggo.nl

Introduction

Europe (and the West in general) will have to consider whether its compass is still correct or should be re-set. The launching, in 2019, of the well-powered and well-financed EU Portfolio “Protecting the European Way of Life” does not augur well. The Portfolio seeks to accomplish two objectives: the protection of EU borders by halting migration and, as the name of the Portfolio suggests, the protection of Europe from external cultures. Read: religions, read: Islam? Populist politicians like Marine le Pen applauded this as an ideological victory for right-wing populists. The Portfolio was also heavily criticized by several outstanding members of the European Parliament and in the press, as an attempt to adopt an exclusionary ideology instead of one in which citizens should be free to choose their own way of life. Are migrants a threat to the European way of life? Europe is caught between two options: exclusive protection of western culture as it has grown in the past in shared traditions. Or, a European way of life in which Europeans and migrants participate together in finding a new equilibrium and common goals for a shared future.

The political discourse on European values and norms has started to seek refuge in its tradition of the Enlightenment. Does the Enlightenment fit these new realities and new challenges? Can it be a compass for Europe? Three recent books with three different approaches and accents, each with their merits, would appear to be a good basis to explore this question. One of these, *Enlightenment Now* by Pinker (2018), has become a bestseller. In his admirably well-documented study Pinker outlines the benefits of the Enlightenment, laying full emphasis on material and tangible results and taking the individualist western-oriented society as an example to be irrefutably followed by all. The light he shines is that of a *neon light* in a supermarket. Yet, the task of the Enlightenment is not to justify modernity, it must call it into question, the French philosopher Lilti (2019) writes in his book *The Heritage of Enlightenment*. Today the Enlightenment is seen as a totem, and it has become the credo of liberals vis-à-vis religious fanatics. It is a dynamic concept, in constant change, and it has to explore new paths, try to find answers to new economic, social and cultural challenges. Lilti’s light is a *search light*. Both Lilti’s and Pinker’s works leave us empty-handed when analyzing the challenges of migration and mutual integration, in particular the relation between religious cultures and in particular between the “European way of life” and the “Islam way of life”. In the book *Lost in Enlightenment* the Muslim philosopher Benhaddou (who is also the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Gent, Belgium) debates the Enlightenment with Loobuyck, a philosopher

and self-declared atheist of the University of Gent (Loobuyck & Benhaddou 2019). They explore the ambivalences addressed by Lilti further in an effort to reconcile different cultures in the new Europe. The book radiates more human understanding for those who are branded as “not enlightened”. The light Benhaddou offers is a “rational Islam”, which he wants to keep shining, because tolerance is one of the key values of the Enlightenment. His light is a *pilot light*.

1. The Enlightenment: an Appraisal

In 17th century Europe a broad intellectual movement started to reject superstition, mystery, doctrinal coercion of religion, feudalism and monarchy: the Enlightenment. It started to flourish in the second part of the 18th century and has remained with Europe ever since. Tolerance, humanism, happiness, reason, scientific investigation, self-criticism, respect, cosmopolitanism and hope were among its basic values. A belief in the universality of mankind was central: the Enlightenment was cosmopolitan in outlook and tolerant in attitude. The cherishing of one’s own culture was supplemented by admiration for other cultures. Inward-directed nationalism was rejected, with man and mankind seen as universal concepts. The Enlightenment was anti-nationalist and truly republican. Several streams of Enlightenment developed in Europe. In France the emphasis was laid on the end of obscurity, in particular the end of religious doctrines. In Germany the independence of the individual mind was central. Kant’s famous device *sapere aude* (dare to think) remains an iconic reference today. Gradually, key values such as freedom of thought and expression, democracy, gender and racial equality and the idea of a constitutional state became prominent in the so-called “radical Enlightenment”, like that of Spinoza.

The essence of the Enlightenment as we understand it today is, according to Pinker (2018, 8-11), material, intellectual and moral progress, fed by a belief in humanism. Reason and science are its cornerstones, not faith, dogma, revelation, charisma, mystification, miracles, visions, sacred texts or superstition. Enlightenment means secularism, and in the end atheism. It confers to every individual the unalienable right to shape his or her destiny in liberty through the exercise of one’s will. This individual freedom is expressed in liberalism: the free market and private property rights. The Enlightenment has increased well-being enormously over time and Pinker’s progress report is long indeed: health, knowledge, safety, peace, longevity, prosperity, education, individual rights, general human rights, social justice, independent judiciaries, constitutional states and