RELIGIONS

Tolerance

in

Religions

Religions–Adyan Journal

RELIGIONS/ADYAN is an annual and bi-lingual (English and Arabic) publication in interfaith studies published by the Doha International Center for interfaith Dialogue with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue and the relation between Islam and the other faiths.

In a world of the religious misunderstandings, violence and hijacking of religious faith by political ideologies the RELIGIONS/ADYAN intends to provide a welcome space of encounters and reflections upon the commonalities and shared goals of the great religions of the world. The title of the Journal suggests religious diversity, while suggesting the need to explore this diversity to develop keys to both a deepening of one's faiths and a meaningful opening to other creeds. The Quran suggests a commonality of faiths and a striving for the Truth within the context of religious diversity:

"To reach among you, we have prescribed a law and an open way. If God had willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His Plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so, strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute."(The Table Spread: 48, version of Yusuf Ali).

As a refereed international publication published by the Doha International Center for interfaith Dialogue, RELIGIONS/ADYAN finds its inspiration in the universal message of the monotheistic broadly understood, while engaging the various religious faiths that share common principles and values within this broad defined context.

RELIGIONS/ADYAN encourages comparative studies and interreligious exchanges in a spirit of dialogue and mutual enrichment. Its aim is to promote understanding between religious faithful of various traditions by exploring and studying the rich field of their theological and spiritual common grounds, their mutual and constructive relationships, past, present, and potential future, a better understanding of the causes of their conflicts, and the current challenges of their encounter with atheism, agnosticism and secular societies.

In addition, RELIGIONS/ADYAN   wishes to highlight and revive the universal horizon of Islam by fostering studies in the relationship between Islam and other religions and civilizations in history, the arts, and religious studies. This is also away to revitalize intellectual discourse in Islam, within the context of an interactive and cross-fertilizing engagement with other faiths.

The essays published in RELIGIONS/ADYAN exclusively engage the intellectual responsibility of the authors, and necessarily reflect the views of the DICID. They are published as part of an ongoing dialogue on religions, and should not be construed as the expression of the positions of any sponsoring organizations.

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Conducted by Dr. Mahamade Ali Mahamade

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The Value of Tolerance as a Contribution to the Prevention of Cultural Alienation

Edina Vejo[1]

Abstract

The spirit of tolerance as a fundamental backbone of human relations is (not) the pillar of social life in Bosnia, 'the land of the east exposed towards the west, and the west turned towards the east'. Since an individual development occurs through interaction with the environment, preventive interventions need to focus on creating different opportunities for young people to experience various interactions that promote positive developmental outcomes (Basic, 2009). The purpose of the current study is accepting tolerance as one of the positive developmental outcomes of the multicultural lifestyle of the youth. Hence, the aim of this study is to find out whether there is tolerance among the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and what values lie behind this concept. A sample of 168 male and female students aged seventeen participated in the study. The students completed a questionnaire on (non)tolerance which consisted of two parts. Three expert interviews with Bosnian intellectuals have been conducted within the approach for further interpretation of the research questions. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the chosen answers expressing intolerant attitudes. The differences are due to several variables, such as the attending high school, the environment and mother's level of education. The explanations of the (in) tolerance provided by the expert interviews show a necessity for transposition, which is quite dominant in the pedagogy of applicable normative discourse. The conclusion articulates the development of a universal preventive program for the youth encompassing multiple social domains such as family, school, and community.

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Background and Rationale

Tolerance as a call for cooperation, respect, understanding and interactive life with the differences gets its international framework on 16th November, the International tolerance day. Tolerance means respect, acceptance and acknowledgement of the rich diversity of our cultures, expressions and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also apolitical and legal requirement. Being tolerant does not mean tolerating social injustice or rejecting and weakening other people's beliefs. The practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs (UNESCO, 1995). The Bosnian society, entwined in diversities, is becoming an inevitable topic of discussions on tolerance.

After the war, numerous non-governmental and governmental organizations have promoted, organized and carried out projects and workshops to promote tolerance among the young people from different ethnic groups ("Tolerance among the youth"[2],"The Culture and Tolerance Park"[3], "Building bridges"[4],"TNT FEST – We Need Tolerance"[5], "Climbing for Tolerance"[6]). The projects were based on the national disruptions evident at all levels – from the "dominant ethnic entities" to "ethnical hierarchical institutions" and even "segregated schools" (Two schools undergone roof). This proves that the environment in which young people in Bosnia grow up is negative and inevitably results in prejudice, discrimination, and even hatred and aggression. The goal of prevention is "to develop intellectual, personal and social competence in children and young people" (Basic, 2009: 65-66). Taking the previously mentioned ethnic segregation into account, it can be stated that tolerance among the youth of different ethnicities in Bosnia should be one of the crucial social competencies. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine whether there is tolerance among the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and what values lay behind this concept

The study aims at answering the following research questions: Do the young people show respect for their own ethnicity and culture, and do they live in their closed system? Is

[2]http://www.omladina-bih.net/tolerancija.htm.30 June 2012.
[3]http://www.cem.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137:kulturoloki-park-Tolerancije&catid=25:the-project&Itemid=54. 30 June 2012.
[4]http://www.oscebih.org/documents/osce_bih_doc_2010122614413843bos.pdf .30 June 2012.
[5]http://www.tolerancija.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=3302012.
[6]6http://www.banjaluka.com/vijesti/drustvo/2012/08/21/zblizavanje-uz-ekstremno-penjanje/.302012.

there a tendency to reject others and everything else that is different from their own culture? What is the young people's view on the nature of tolerance in the Bosnian society? Are there differences in the (in) tolerant attitudes of the young people in relation to the attending high school, the environment they live-in (mononational, a single dominant ethnicity in combination with others and multinational) and the parents' education?

The current study, and tolerance as a phenomenon, is based on the preventive concept of developmental advantage. The reason for this lies in the fact that this concept defines social competence (Water &Sroufe, cited in Basic, Feric, Kranzelic, 2001) as the ability to create and orchestrate flexible, adaptable reactions to the requests, and creating and taking advantage of the opportunities in the environment. Social competence includes personal skills, such as planning, decision-making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, the ability to withstand negativities and the ability to resolve a conflict in a peaceful way. A child develops these skills to cope with decision making or challenges and chances it comes across in life. If the researchers' belief in the need to invest in developmental outcomes and positive development of children and young people resulted in the concepts of prevention, we believe that further investment in developing tolerance for diversities is crucial since it shows cultural competence. Thus, the phenomenon of tolerance is situated within the advantages of a young man's internal development. These advantages are often seen as cultural competence including knowledge of, respect for and ability to effectively interact with people from different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. The advantages also include recognizing and preventing injustice done upon others, and fighting for social justice (Kostelnick, 2002, as cited in Hand and Kemple, 2006).

The previously mentioned projects and programs were named after tolerance and other synonyms of preventive endeavors that were taken into account when creating conditions for prosocial behaviour of the young. These projects are another reason why cultural competence as a developmental advantage served as a basis for this study. Tolerance as one of the preventive imperatives is reflected through the possibility for prosocial interaction and working with the differences as well as conscious thinking about the inevitable existence of otherness around us, beside usand within us. The experiments of the non-profit organization just Community, Inc.[7]emphasize the importance of tolerance and

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[7]**http://www.justcommunity.com/about/6th February 2012. justCommunity is a non-profit organization based in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. Its mission is to provide consultation, education and training services in the areas of youth development, community mobilization, substance abuse prevention etc.justCommunity is the**

cultural awareness among other things, and even list some of the programs that support the outlined goals. Some of the resources mentioned in the experiments are: Teaching Tolerance [8], which provides free educational materials to teachers and other school practitioners, and is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relationships and supporting equitable school experiences, and Pennsylvania Inter-Agency Task Force on Civil Tension[9]–a group of governmental and private agencies working together on preventing and responding to bias-related incidents.

Methodology

Participants and procedures of collecting and analyzing data, hypothetical framework of the study

Two hundred students from three secondary schools in Zenica and Travnik participated in this study. Thirty-two questionnaires were not included in the analysis because some of the items in the questionnaires were left unanswered, or the answers could not be deciphered and so on. Thus, a total of 168 students aged seventeen participated in the study – 64,9% girls and 35,1% boys. The study was conducted bearing in mind the variable of the attending high school – hence 35,1% of the subjects attend Second Grammar School, 29,8% attend the Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresa (eng. Islamic high school) and 35,1% attend Catholic School Centre'St. Paul'. The students have completed the questionnaire on (non)tolerance that consists of two parts. The first part contains 28 items adapted from the research conducted by Gajic. The items refer to the second factor of the research that emphasizes the differences between people and the superiority of one nation over others. In addition to this, it also accentuates whether there is a closed system, or intolerance and rejection of all things that are different than our own culture (Gajic,2005). Gajic's research showed that the appreciation of one's own culture does not come first, but rather the rejection of others. According to the research, the most common problems were religious intolerance and rejection of everything different. Hence, the mentioned research provides the hypothetical background for our study. In other words, our study will show whether the subjects will show the same closed system and appreciation of one's own culture while rejecting others.

The second part of the research aimed at examining the students' points of view regarding the nature of tolerance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this part, the students were asked to put the following terms in order: balance, relativity, tolerance, hatred, denial, alienation, indifference. The assumption in the second hypothetical framework was that the perceived nature of tolerance would vary from tolerance, alienation and hatred to balance as the most distant term for tolerance in Bosnian society. The second framework was in accordance with the first framework and the mentioned ethnic bias in Bosnian society.

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires included descriptive statistics presented as a part-whole relationship (percentages were determined for some variables) and the results of ANOVA to gain insights into the existing differences within the variables.

It can be concluded that the first quantitative part of the research aimed atgaining insights into the existence of (in) tolerance, or the attitudes of the youngpeople towards their own and other different cultures. In order not to merely focus on some insights into the phenomenon, we decided to consider the deeper ideas and thoughts about tolerance. That would enable us to get a better understanding of tolerance, its background and values as well as the phenomenon of tolerance within the pragmatic and theoretical thinking in Bosnian Society. For the purposes of triangulation, several methodological approaches were used within which three expert interviews with Bosnian academics and intellectuals have been conducted. The purpose of such a methodological design was to gain different, yet complementary data for the research in order to get a better understanding of the problem at hand (Morse, 1991 cited in Jenkins and Carrol, 2001). Mixed methods research involves different combinations of qualitative or quantitative research either at the data collection or at the analysis levels (Dörnyei, 2005). Gläserand Laudel (2006: 11) define expert interviews as the reconstruction of situations or processes in an effort to find scientific explanations. The first expert interview was with a full (ordinary) professor of sociological science,[10] the second was with an assistant professor (docent) in pedagogical sciences[11] and the third with the Doctor of Theology.[12] All the interviews have been transcribed, and the text in the interview was categorized in five content areas: the rooted understanding of tolerance, considering

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[10]**Labeled EI 1 in the transcript.**

[11]**Labeled EI 2 in the transcript.**

[12]**Labeled EI 3 in the transcript.**

tolerance within the context of liberal ideas and the traditional religious beliefs, tradition as the underlying reason for the bias in Bosnia, the relationship between religion and modern life and different approaches to achieving tolerance. The interviews were read several times to get the idea of a whole. Then, the text was divided into meaningful units which were then codified. Different codes were compared in terms of similarities and differences and sorted into three categories which constitute a manifest content: nature and roots of tolerance, opposing bias and sources of intolerance and religion-modern life-tolerance.

The Results

The first part of data analysis in the mixed methods design involves the presentation of the results gained from the (In) Tolerance Questionnaire which aimed at exploring the (in)tolerant attitudes of the students. Special attention was drawn to the variables which could be the source of (in)tolerant attitudes. In addition to descriptions(parameters) of the students' (in)tolerant attitudes, the research also included exploring the differences between the (in)tolerant attitudes present in three different secondary schools - Second Grammar School, Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresa(eng.Islamic high school) Catholic School Centre 'St. Paul'. Furthermore, the differences in the attitudes towards the environment the students live in (mononational, a single dominant ethnicity in combination with others and multinational) and the parents' education were explored. The assumption within the third hypothetical framework was that there would not be any statistically significant differences between the variables.

The second part of the analysis encompassed the qualitative part of the research which involved the analysis of the structured expert interviews. Furthermore, it included the attempts to explain the sources of the intolerant attitudes and provide insights into the underlying values of the concept and phenomenon of tolerance.

The results of the questionnaire

The descriptive parameters of the questionnaire, without its modified part, focus on the differences between the people and the perceptions of superiority of one's own nationality over others. For example, 31.0% strongly agree and 11.9% agree with the statement "When I claim that my nationality is superior to others, I show appreciation for my own nationality."

On the other hand, 25.6% strongly disagree and 10.7% disagree with this statement. Similar even distributions of answers were found at other questionnaire items as well, such as "I cannot feel as close to people of other nationalities as I am to people of my own nationality," "I don't think that marriage between people from different nationalities/religions is a good thing, "The sense of belonging to my nation is what defines me best as a person," "I can only see my future with people of the same nationality as my own," "Nationality is as important as family. "There is slight positive agreement with statements according to which identifying with people of the same nationality is a result of a common sense of success (43.5% strongly agree with this statement, whereas 20.2%agree with it). Furthermore, there is positive agreement with statements about the importance of a person's own ethnic identity (31.0% strongly agree and 15.5%agree), ethnicity as an important segment in life (42.9% strongly agree and 18.5%agree) and the statement "Glorifying one's own nationality is absolutely normal"(32.7% strongly agree and 23.2% agree with this statement). The descriptive parameters of the items show a slight devotion to one's own nationality and personal ethnic identity. On the other hand, there is slight openness towards the others which is manifested in terms of respect for other people's religious beliefs. Thus, the assumption of the first hypothetical framework that the subjects live in closed systems has not been confirmed because the final evaluation shows that the rejection of others and living in closed systems are in arithmetic mean (see Table 1), thus supporting the previously mentioned variables (M=32.54).

Table 1: The mean of the intolerance variable	M	Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation
Intolerance and rejection of everything different 32.54 56.00 from one's own nationality	32.54	56.00	12.00	11.14

Table 2: The nature of tolerance in Bosnia according to students' attitudes														
	Balance		Relativity		Tolerance		Hatred		Denial		Alienation		Indifference	
Order	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.00	51	30.4	25	14.9	20	11.9	33	19.6	5	3.0	10	6.0	25	14.9
2.00	29	17.3	33	19.6	36	21.4	13	7.7	16	9.5	10	6.0	32	19.0
3.00	23	13.7	31	18.5	34	20.2	8	4.8	19	11.3	19	11.3	33	19.6

4.00	7	4.2	26	15.5	35	20.8	8	4.8	39	23.2	32	19.0	22	13.1
5.00	12	7.1	21	12.5	21	12.5	13	7.7	40	23.8	40	23.8	20	11.9
6.00	15	8.9	24	14.3	12	7.1	15	8.9	39	23.2	41	24.4	21	12.5
7.00	31	18.5	8	4.8	10	6.0	78	46.4	10	6.0	16	9.5	15	8.9
Total	168	100.0	168	100.0	168	100.0	168	100.0	168	100.0	168	100.0	168	100.0

The traditional definitions state that tolerance is toleration and that different people have the right to live in peace even if their points of views and ideas are not accepted by others. Lately, tolerance is defined as acceptance –acceptance and acknowledgement of the rights of others that result in the ultimate virtue of appreciation of diversities (Von Bergen and Bressler, n.d.). This research has examined the attitudes of students towards the nature of tolerance in Bosnia. Table 2presents an overview of all the terms believed to describe the nature of tolerance by the students in Bosnian secondary schools. In the table, number 1 refers to the notion closest to tolerance, while number 7 refers to the notion that is the furthest from tolerance in meaning. The analysis presents the frequency of pupils' answers as well as their percentile values. The order was established according to the greatest percentage/frequency of answers within a rank. The results show that the majority of students put balance first (30.4%), while 46.4% believe hatred is the least important factor for the tolerance in Bosnia. Furthermore, the majority of students believe that toleration/tolerance comes after balance (21.4%), and are also in the third place, according to the beliefs of 20.2% of students. Denial is in the fourth place (23.2%), and it shares the fifth place (23.8%) with alienation (23.8%) that is also in the sixth place (24.4%). Thus, it can be concluded that the young people that participated in the research believe that the nature of tolerance in Bosnia lies in balance and toleration, while it is negatively affected by hatred and alienation. This partly confirms the assumption in our second hypothetical framework according to which the nature of tolerance is reflected in toleration, alienation, hatred and balance.

Table 3:The results of ANOVA on the differences between secondary schools and the intolerant attitudes				
Intolerance and rejection of otherness. LSD				
(I) Name of secondary school(J) Name of secondary school	(J) Name of secondary school(J) Name of secondary school	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std, Error	Sig.
Second Grammar School	Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresaTravnik (Eng. Islamic high	-8.42678[*]	1.77297	.000

	school)			
	Catholic School Centre st.paul.	7.30508[*]	1.69820	.000
Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresaTravnik (Eng. Islamic high school)	Second Grammar School	8.42678[*]	1.77297	.000
	Catholic School Centre st.paul.	15.73186[*]	1.77297	.000
Catholic School Centre st.paul.	Second Grammar School	-7.30508[*]	1.69820	.000
	Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresaTravnik (Eng. Islamic high school)	-15.73186[*]	1.77297	.000
*. Significance level of 0.05				

The results of the ANOVA and the post hoc analysis show that there are statistically significant differences (p = 0.000) between the students attending three different secondary schools in terms of the expressed intolerance toward other ethnic groups. Thus, the students attending Elci Ibrahim-pasina medresa Travnik (eng. Islamic high school) show more intolerance towards others than the students attending Catholic School Centre 'St. Paul' or Second Grammar School. On the other hand, the students at Catholic School Centre 'St. Paul' show slightly more tolerant attitudes toward other ethnicities than the students at Second Grammar School (Table 3).

Table 4: The results of the ANOVA indicating the differences between the environment the students live in and the expressed level of intolerance				
Intolerance and rejection of otherness. LSD				
(I) The environment you live in is :	(J) The environment you live in is :	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std, Error	Sig.
Mono-national (there is only one nationality)	dominant (my nationality is dominant, but there are people from other national backgrounds)	3.57854	2.20854	01.7
	Multinational (there are people from different cultural backgrounds)	12.84755[*]	2.14818	.000
Dominant (my nationality is dominant, but there	Mono-national (there is only one nationality)	-3.57854	2.20854	.107

are people from other national backgrounds)	Multinational (there are people from different cultural backgrounds)	9.26901[*]	1.67692	.000
Multinational (there are people from different cultural backgrounds)	mono-national (there is only one nationality)	-12.84755[*]	2.14818	.000
	dominant (my nationality is dominant, but there are people from other national backgrounds)	-9.26901[*]	1.67692	.000
*. Significance level of 0.05				

In order to broaden the framework and provide the insights in the environment the young people live in, the arithmetic mean was derived. According to the arithmetic mean, the greatest intolerance was expressed by students living in mono-national environments (M = 39.6897; SD = 9.14995). Slightly less intolerant are the students living in an environment where their nationality is more dominant than the others (M = 36.1111; SD = 9.18468). Finally, the students living in multinational environment showed the least intolerance (M = 26.8421; SD = 10.58811).

Further analysis (table 4) shows that the results have the p-value of 0.000.The comparison of the answers shows that the students living in mono-national environments and environments with one dominant ethnicity express less tolerance toward other ethnicities than students who come from a multinational environment. However, there are no statistically significant differences between the intolerant attitudes of students who live in mono-national or environments with a dominant nationality (p=0.107).

Students whose mothers have or have not completed primary education have showed less tolerance than the students whose mothers have completed higher education. Further analysis of the results (table 5) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mentioned variables. Hence, students whose mothers have not completed primary education show lower levels of tolerance toward others than the students whose mothers have completed secondary school (p= 0.003) and faculty or more (p = 0.002). Pupils whose mothers have completed primary school show less tolerance towards others than pupils whose mothers have completed secondary school at the level of 0.000, and at the level

of 0.001 in comparison to the students whose mothers have completed faculty, or have earned ahigher degree. The analysis of the influence of father's education on the intolerant attitudes is particularly interesting. The arithmetic mean shows that father's education has a slight influence on the intolerant attitudes of the students. Thus, there are statistically significant differences in the expressed intolerant attitudes of the students with regard to their father's education (p = 0.736; p = 0.568; p = 0.262; p = 0 .361; p = 0.187).

Table 5: The results of the ANOVA indicating the influence of mother's education on the intolerant attitudes of the students				
Intolerance and rejection of otherness. LSD				
(I) Your mother's education :	(J) Your mother's education :	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std, Error	Sig.
Hasn't completed primary school	Secondary school	10.23814[*]	3.33643	.003
	Faculty degree and higher	12.72727[*]	4.00240	.002
Primary school	Secondary school	7.91627[*]	2.03589	.000
	Faculty degree and higher	10.40541[*]	3.00537	.001

The results of the expert interviews

The nature and the roots of tolerance

The theoretical framework of tolerance is usually defined by the philosophical and political issues (Raz, 1986; Mendus,1988; Gutmann, 1994; Pleckaits, 1995 in Chreptaviciene and Urboniene, 2005) and by the sociological and educational discourse (Morrow and Torres, 1995; McLaughlin, 1997 in Chreptaviciene and Urboniene, 2005). This gives rise to the question if tolerance as a basic quality of the modern society finds its roots in the traditional religious beliefs or it emerged as a "worldly political solution that resulted from the context of European religious conflicts in the 16th century in order to form the norms of the secular social systems and western society by the use of liberalism, enlightenment and the modern democracy of the 20th century" (Sarcevic, 2003: 434-435).

"John Locke, the modern British philosopher, initiated the idea of the

political articulation of the term 'tolerance' in his book "A Letter concerning

Toleration" (Epistola de Tolerantia) published at the end of 17th century. The idea of the political concept of tolerance is explicitly or latently based upon two facts of great importance. First, Locke's Epistola de Tolerantia was completed during Locke's political exile, and it resulted from a fear of possible political and public safety changes that would occur if England fell under the rule of Vatican. Secondly, Locke's ideas were clear – the state looks after the external aspects of a man's life, while the 'internal' aspects of a man's life (the soul and the spirit) are governed by religion. Therefore, it is important that all the religions present in a country (and all moral values) are loyal to the authorities. The implementation of liberal political concept of tolerance rests on two premises: that the plurality of religions inevitably leads to violence, and that the religious beliefs of individuals have to be separated from the civil activism (state). This approach excludes the traditional principles of the religious pluralities (Kur'an, 30:22) and dialogue as an imperative (Kur'an,3:64). The quintessential differences between the concept of inter-religious relationships (conceived in the post-enlightenment years) and the traditional understanding of differences as realizations of God's will have been further deepened in the period of neoliberalism and global capitalism. The traditional beliefs do not acknowledge the principle of separating the "internal" from the "external" factors, even if it is merely a theory. Religion literally insists on the integrity of human existence – it includes everything from the internal factors(religiousness) to their external manifestations that guide human behavior and actions in the society. Nowadays, there have been numerous examples of obvious hostility between people of different religions in the economically developed societies, namely in Western Europe and the USA. This gave way to the most practical system of well-arranged human relations – a democratic social system that is based on a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people, or the majority. The increased social dynamics lead to the idea of liberal democracy that would protect minority interests from majorities in representative democratic bodies. Under these circumstances, the practical meaning of tolerance was conceived, and it shifted from the initial 'openness' toward others to literal 'tolerance of' or 'putting up with' others. This is the very reason why many theologians and religious officials accept, and sometimes even equalize the liberal concept of tolerance with

the traditional principles of the religious pluralities and dialogue as an imperative. The core difference between these two concepts has become quite apparent in the period between the late seventies and now. The current principle of neoliberal democracy where elite groups have power over the broader ('global') community shows the significantly different concept of 'tolerance'. The neoliberal concept of tolerance implies the real possibility of realizing the theoretical right to protect the interests of the weakest in the market on one hand, and the practice of providing such protection for the economically stronger groups with the power to impose ideas and values on the weaker groups on the other. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between the principle of tolerance as it is perceived by the neoliberalism and the traditional principle of the religious pluralities and dialogue as an imperative in the analysis" EI 3 (R20-65).

"Some social indicators, such as the lack of a high-quality everyday interaction, show a complete crisis and tolerance, and above all acceptance of differences in this fragmented world of postmodern system. Nowadays, the illusion of the central crisis is mostly seen as a result of the violent functional education and social and political pressures expressed in a form of violent behavior of the members of community. The very character of the direct and obtuse violence that became meaningful leads to the disappearance of authenticity of all the ideas we know– whether they are "Right", "Left" or "Political Middle", and as such labeled liberal or traditional. The meaning should be sought in non-violent ideas that oppose the violent ways of promoting tolerance – ideas that can be found only in people who favor authenticity, honesty and Truth. We will find the authentic roots of tolerance where we find the Truth" EI 2 (R13-23).

The Conflicting Divisions and Sources of Intolerance

The conflicting divisions that are symbols of intolerance are nothing strange in Bosnian society, where many incidents related to ethnic segregation have occurred even after the war. Thus, "between 1 January and 18 May 2011, EUPM reported at total of 32 ethnically or religiously motivated security incidents, 11 of which were registered as violent inter-ethnic incidents; the remainders were actions targeting cemeteries or religious/ethnic facilities or symbols. The monthly average of 7.2inter-ethnic incidents in 2011 is alight increase compared to 2010 (5.0), but reduction compared to 2009 (12.5) (Nansen dialogue center Sarajevo, Safeworld,2012).

"Taking into account that tradition clearly outlines a person's authentic identity, it only makes sense to conclude that it is not tradition that causes the conflict between people. What causes misunderstanding and hostility is a non-authentic, egotistic representation of tradition (traditia interpretativa)" EI 3 (R70-73).

"… the conflicting divisions result from non-authentic, ideologized idea of tolerance that was reduced to monopolization, privatization or an effort to deify an ethnicity, a nation and even religion. Unfortunately, it is evident that reducing the universal properties and positive effect of tradition to private possessions is a dominant behavior pattern in our everyday lives. Such an interpretation of a boundary confined tradition is incorporated in the collective violent education and ideas about acceptable social and political behavior. This attitude, however, is not rooted in tradition – I am sure" EI2 (R25-31).

Religion-Modernity-Tolerance

Appleby (1996, in Rasul, 2009) states that religion "is a source not only of intolerance, human rights violations and extremist violence, but also of nonviolent conflict transformation, the defense of human rights, integrity in government and reconciliation and stability in divided societies".

"It is important to emphasize that the principle of coexistence and theory of tolerance are one and the same thing, especially in Bosnia. Taking into account the larger urban centers and rural areas, as well as numerous oral and written records, the principle of coexistence was present in Bosnia before the war. This means that not only were all religious traditions (different ceremonies, festivities etc.) acknowledged and respected, but absence of a deeper understanding of such traditions in terms of theoretical explanation was evident. After the war and the aggression, different interreligious projects and theories of tolerance have been used to try to compensate for the faulty principle of coexistence. The theories of tolerance do not emphasize the honest respect of other traditions as much as the need to theoretically explain other religions (traditia explicative). Simply put, an individual is not expected to honestly respect other people's religion, but rather to have a broad theoretical background on their religion itself" EI3 (R104-122).

We have all witnessed the coexistence, mutually opposing tendencies to promote tolerance (as a basic principle of a democratic society) and the reinforcement of the political options that work hard on limiting human rights of any kind. Such conflicting views push the modern man into a closed circle, a machinery of a violent learning about accepting the different which inevitably leads to more violence. A different point of view takes us back to the values system that is protected by a set of norms. Learning about the system of values means learning about norms that defend the real values from opposing, invalid and quasi-values. Protecting the real values from the opposing values is often aggressive in nature(protecting the value of life, possessions and so on implies sanctions for imperiling such values). In order to tolerate something different, we have to make sure that it does not threat our system of values (in terms of violence). This will inevitably lead to learning how to tolerate in accordance with the dominant system of values. The dominant system of values is designed by whoever holds social, political, economic, military and educational superiority. Achieving dominant status is hard if some violent strategies are not used.

Being dominant means having an exclusive right to make decisions on what can be tolerated and in what way. Therefore, different is possible only if it is the new dominant. An example of coexisting irreconcilable tendencies can also be found in proclaiming the right for gay and lesbian couples which are becoming more and more violent. The reason for this lies in the fact that sexual preferences are no longer seen as a right in teaching tolerance, but are aggressively promoted instead, thus setting up violent attitudes for generations to come. The dominant position is a logical apory (puzzlement) of Tolerance. The odds are that people, the unfinished projects they are, will wait for someone different to take the dominant position using nonviolence and tolerance" EI 2 (R50-71).

"Bosnia and Herzegovina suffers from a syndrome of returning to early medieval religiousness, just like many post socialist countries. This often has nothing to do with the traditional religious beliefs, but rather with political clericalism or clerical politics. Hence, it can be said that religions do not have the characteristics of modernity, but rather some sort of tradition, or better yet opinion that operates on exclusion as its own modus vivendi" EI1 (R26-32).

Conclusion

The present study was governed by the evident divisions in Bosnian society, and it aimed at explaining the aspects of tolerance, its existence among the young people and the attitudes towards the nature of tolerance. The results show that the young people show appreciation of their own culture and ethnic identity, but are also somewhat accepting of the others, especially in terms of respecting other people's religions. These findings are alarming, but the attitudes towards otherness are significantly more intolerant among students who attend mono-national school than students who go to multinational schools. Furthermore, young people living in mono-national environment showed statistically significant intolerant attitudes, which proves that tolerance is conditioned by interaction, acknowledgement and respect of others.

The analysis of the quantitative part of the research showed that the perceived idea of tolerance in Bosnian society is related to the traditional definition of tolerance ad balance and toleration. The results show the need to invest in the positive development of the youth that will enable interaction with other ethnicities who are different through active cooperation and coexistence. Thus, the young people in Bosnia would use that experience to strengthen their values. Intolerant attitudes are evident in the environment that lacks interaction with other ethnicities.

The qualitative part of the research presents the existing ideas about the concept of tolerance. The results of the analysis show the need to overcome the pedagogy of applicable normative discourse and makes way for the critical transformative discourse. Thus, the need to extract the construct of tolerance from the autistic confinement set by liberal democracy becomes apparent. Furthermore, there is a need for reaffirmation of the traditional principles of the religious pluralities and dialogue as an imperative. There is a deep convergence of these needs and epistemological findings in the modern science, such as the ones outlined in Bohr's complementary principle according to which two conflicting terms are seen as complementary rather than exclusive. In the age of seeking authentic pedagogical concept, we emphasize the importance of creating a plan for acquiring cultural competence based on truthful, honest and, most importantly, positive interactions with people coming from different cultural backgrounds.

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Embracing the Other[1]

Grace Ji-Sun Kim[2]

Abstract

Living in religious plurality can be a challenge as racism, sexism and xenophobia overcomes one's attitude towards the Other. There are also important issues of intellectual security resulting from spiritual and intellectual peace. Intellectual security has become essential in protecting human values and ideals. To counteract these attitudes, perceptions and misunderstanding of the Other, there needs to be a renewed conception of God as the Spirit which crosses cultural, religious, social boundaries to become a more holistic and inclusive understanding of the Divine. Spirit or life energy: Chinese call it Chi, Japanese call it Ki, Hindus call it Prana,Greeks called it Pneuma. It is a concept that permeates cultures around the world. This paper offers new perspectives on Christianity within a pluralistic, multi-religious world by presenting a theology of Spirit God that is more inclusive and welcoming of outsiders, women and people of different ethnicities, cultures and religions.

Religion from the Margins

In a broken world of misgivings, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings among the diverse human family created by God, we need to go to the margins to create a pathway toward healing and hope. As a poor Jewish peasant teacher from Nazareth, Jesus was marginalized and stood in solidarity with the marginalized throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus' incarnate life, kingdom teaching, and crucifixion on a Roman cross unveil God as a lover of justice, peace, and liberation.

Those in power often share a gospel of an all-powerful God that is disconnected from the poor's daily struggles through which their community resists oppression and struggles to achieve fullness of life. The God of the privileged does not exist in the margins but rather

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[1] 1This paper emerges out of my book, Embracing the Other: The Transformative Spirit of Love(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

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remains in the center, safe and secure from all alarm. The God of the center who may be spoken of in the margins, but never comes to live there, in the dire circumstances of dirt-poverty. The direct movement of coming towards the marginalized peoples with the intention of building deep solidarity with them as they "enflesh freedom" is an affront to the God of the privileged center.[3]

Asian Americans have been relegated to the margins of society. They have been neglected, discriminated against, and stereotyped since they arrived in North America.

Pushed to the margins, Asian immigrants have an attentive sensitivity to experiences of oppression. The deep wounds of Asian American women are raw and painful within a patriarchal world. As a Canadian of Korean descent teaching theology in the United States, I have experienced the negative effects of structural racism and patriarchy in my own life. It is through entering my own places of pain that my theological vision of healing and hope has emerged. The places of pain in our heart need to be honestly acknowledged and shared with others so that healing can occur and we can do our part to work for a loving, just and sustainable world.

Traditional theologies posit that the God of the Center reaches out to the marginalized with inclusive love. Yet, in such theologies the center remains central command, determining who will be included and excluded. This creates an obvious structural disadvantage for those on the periphery. In many ways, church politics and theology still rely upon modern, masculine epistemologies[4] of the center and continue to institute them[5]. Epistemologies of the

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[3] See womanist theologian M. Shawn Copeland's Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

[4] Steven V. Sprinkle, "A God at the Margins? Marcella Althaus-Reid and the Marginality of LGBT People," Journal of Religious Leadership, Vol. 8 (2009): 78, 79. Cf. Ivone Gebara, "Knowing our Knowing: The Issue of Epistemology," Longing for Running Water (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,1999), pp 19-66.

[5] An example of "peripheral" epistemologies might be found in the Preface to an edition of David Brainerd's Journal, written by the Honorable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge (and not by Brainerd himself.) This Preface describes Brainerd's Indians "…who have for many ages dwelt in the grossest darkness and heathenism and are brought to a cheerful subjection to the government of our divine Redeemer, who from generation to generation have remained the voluntary slaves of 'the prince of darkness'." David Brainerd, David Brainerd's Journal in Two Parts in The Life and Diary of David Brainerd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Kindle Edition,2013) Location 5260 of 7127.It also "assumes" a centrist morality when it describes "those that were sunk in the most degenerate state of human nature…" with the result that they "…at once, not only renounce those barbarous customs they had been inured to from their infancy, but

center only perpetuate the statuesque and keeps power with those who are at the center. This center epistemology needs to be challenged and redefined so that the marginalized can claim their rightful seats at the table and voices in the dialogue.

Spirit

The healing of the world happens through the transformative spirit of love. With restless hearts we long to connect with God, the Other, and the community of creation. Through the practice of prayer to the Triune God our longing is transformed into a Spirit of love. More than merely a longing for sexual ecstasy, our erotic power is a life energy that gives us spiritual strength to love God and love our neighbor. We need to learn to embrace the other.

As we work out our differences and difficulties between people of color and whites, as men and as women, we understand that it is the Spirit God who can reconcile us and bring us together. As a step towards a loving community and intimate relationship with each other, we must consider other possibilities of experiencing care, acceptance, and love. For there to be a healing and reconciliation between men and women, we must embrace our erotic power in healthy, whole relational ways.

Embracing the Other

My baptism into embracing the Other took place in India in 1989. I spent twelve hot weeks in India as a summer intern through a college travel program sponsored byte Presbyterian Church in Canada mission office. I landed in New Delhi around 1a.m. When my missionary contact came to pick me up, I noticed so many people lying on the sidewalks and on beside the road. It was later that I realized that there were homeless people sleeping outside in the hot summer sky. In India I begin my heart journey to embrace the Other.

There were a lot of new things that I experienced during my first summer in India. I

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surprisingly transformed into the character of real and devout Christians." Note that this is the opinion of Europeans, writing in Europe, not of Brainerd himself. Brainerd did not have universal success. The first entry in his journal speaks of his being disheartened by failed attempts of preach to Indians around the Susquehanna River. Brainerd did find that these Indians often raised trivial and irrelevant objections. One might wish we knew what these trivial objections were.

tried on a sari for the first time. I also tasted "lady fingers" vegetables for the first time. I also saw the Taj Mahal which blew my mind away with it's multi-color, mysterious beauty. Compelled by the culture and cuisine, India also presented me with new challenges. The streets of New Delhi and in Calcutta were full of poor people begging for economic survival. Encountering lepers elicited my deepest fears. The fear of the unknown prevented me from approaching them and talking with them, much less embracing them.

I visited Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. There I witnessed many of the sisters and volunteers feeding, helping and changing the lepers. But even there, I just couldn't get myself close enough to be with them, let alone embrace them. These memories have haunted me for over twenty-five years. Jesus has taught about the importance of caring for the lepers and healed them. In the Gospel of Matthew, a leper approaches Jesus and asks to be healed, saying "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the leper saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" (Matt 8:1-3). Jesus welcomed those who were different, ill, outcast, foreigners and the marginalized. As Jesus lived, he challenged everyone to do likewise.

As a Korean American seeking to embrace the Other forced me to do some deep soul searching. I raised the question that troubled my heart: "Can I embrace Japanese who have invaded my homeland too many times?" During the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), so many Koreans lost their lives. Many Koreans lost their lives during the Japanese occupation, while those who survived lost much of their Korean identity, culture, history and society. For example, my grandmother had to change her name to a Japanese name to survive. Other women faced even more traumatic challenges. The Japanese caused great harm to women as many were kidnapped to become "comfort women" before and during World War II.

Comfort women were women and girls forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army. The number of women taken as sexual slaves are estimated to be over 400, 000. Many young Korean girls were abducted from their own homes or were lured with promises of work in factories or restaurants. They were then locked up in comfort stations and placed in small quarters where they were repeatedly raped day and night. They were serving around 50 men a day.

Around three quarters of these "comfort women" died. They suffered tremendously under this oppressive system of sexual slaves, including rape, physical torture, and mental

abuse. The survivors often became infertile through contracting venereal diseases. After the war, many women couldn't return to their families as it was a shame to go back to their homes. Japanese sexual abuse and exploitation of Korean women cast a long dark shadow on many Korean communities. The legacy of Korean "comfort women" during Japanese occupation in Korea created the conditions in which Korean woman could be "orientalized" and exploited again by U.S. servicemen through militarized prostitution in the late 20th century. During such a dark period in our history, like the Japanese occupation, how can we embrace the enemy who has destroyed innocent lives and our sacred culture and folkways?

Sometimes we take Jesus' challenges wholeheartedly, but in most cases, we do not. We find it hard and difficult to follow Jesus and do what he has done during his own ministry while on earth. For me, a challenge has been to embrace those who are different or outcasts; to truly and vulnerably embrace the Other.

First, we need to overcome the doubt of whether Jesus really wanted us to embrace the Other. Did he mean it, or was it a figure of speech. It is the same way we approach the passage about the rich man giving up his wealth to follow Jesus. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (Mark 10:21). Many Christians just take this passage as a figure of speech and do not necessarily follow it. They believe that Jesus didn't really mean it. But if this was a command that Jesus gave out, it is crucial to obey it. Through wealthy people giving their money to the poor, they enter into a deep solidarity with the "least and the lost" that we are called to care for.

However, there are examples in the New Testament where were find that Jesus went against the Other. One day when he was in the temple, Jesus "drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves" (Matthew 21:12). This occurred as Jesus recognized that they were turning a house of prayer into a house of thieves. Situations and contexts require of us to act differently.

Second, there is the fear of the unknown. We are afraid to love and embrace those who are different from us. We are often scared of those with a disease or those who physically look different from us. When I was in India, I didn't embrace the lepers because I was all by myself in my early twenties and I was scared that I may become a leper. Yet, what I was really scared of was the fear of the unknown. Many white Americans are fearful of

people from different countries, races and religions. From Muslims to Asians, people from other countries are often called "foreigners, "distancing them from the white masculine norm. We are afraid of those whom we do not know. Subterranean fears prevent us from taking the bold and risky step to embrace the Other.

Third, it takes energy, time and commitment to embrace people. Embracing is not a verbal proclamation. It is not a simple act of getting to know another. It requires more than that. It requires patient and persist love. It requires one to get to know them, accept them and then take the erotic step to embrace them with our body, heart and soul

Fourth, we need to open ourselves to Spirit God who moves within us to move us to embrace those who are different from us and to embrace the Other. Jesus sent the Spirit as "the helper" to lead us as we seek to love and be reconciled with the Other (John 14:6). The work of reconciliation is fundamentally spiritual work. Spirit God transcends culture, race and religion and is the wellspring of healing and hope. As we recognize that the Spirit is in the Other we will be more vulnerable to share our whole soul with the other. It is through the presence of the Spirit that the wounds between women and men can be healed and new prophetic partnerships can be forged. While the Spirit is mysterious, it helps us overcome our deepest fears, enabling us to take a risk to open ourselves to be intimate with the Other. Our openness to the Spirit is crucial in our step towards embracing the stranger, the foreigner, the outcaste and the marginalized. Spirit God empowers us to embrace, love and welcome the Other.

Miroslav Volf discusses the complexity of embrace in his theological classic, Exclusion and Embrace[6]. His first describes what exclusion is to gain a deeper understanding of embrace. Volf states that "exclusion can entail cutting of the bonds that connect, taking oneself out of the pattern of interdependence and placing oneself in a position of sovereign independence."[7]Volf believes that Christ's work involves not allowing an enemy to remain an enemy but rather tries to create a space for the enemy to come in. "Having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in-even our enemies."[8] As we offer hospitality to the enemy, allow them to come into our lives, we are doing the difficult work of moving toward embracing the Other.

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[6]**Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).**
[7]**Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace 67.**
[8]**MiroslavVolf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 129.**

Volf reminds us of the critical need to embrace others, since the Other is in us. We must recognize the other in ourselves and as such, we need to move towards embracement. Volf writes "There needs to be a desire for the other. We need to have an inner warmth and movement to move towards the goodness to making change in the other person. An embrace is one of the engagements needed to move forward to make a change for the better of society. Without this engagement, it becomes something shallow and non-committal."9 Embracing the Other demands deep existential commitment and persistent love to achieve reconciliation, justice and peace.

From my perspective as a Korean American feminist theologian, I pose three challenges to Miroslav Volf's theology of embrace. First, the work of reconciliation begins with our wounds that affect the deepest areas of our heart. If we are to work for justice and reconciliation, we need to have the courage to enter the places of our greatest pain in order to be instruments of peace in the world. This will mean a deeper account of the psychological effects of trauma on the victims of disaster, war and sexual violence. Second, we have to tap into the dark abyss of our erotic power in order to claim our power as public leaders who seek to be agents of reconciliation, healing and hope. Erotic power produces both conflict and resolution in relationships between women and men. Open acknowledgement of the erotic dimensions of our relationships will foster the conditions for channeling our Chi toward deeper intimacy and the struggle for the common good. Third, we need a sharper analysis of the structures of exclusion in our neo-liberal global capitalist regime, where women of Asian descent are often objectified and commodified in sex trafficking rings and sweat shop factory work and domestic work abroad. It is the "han" or unjust suffering of this trans-national Asian sisterhood that I feel in my heart and soul and why I am committed to a power analysis that unveils the power differential between women of Asian descent and men of European descent as integral to the work of reconciliation and embrace. With a clear analysis of the power of patriarchy and racism in North American society, we will be in a better position to channel our erotic energy toward deep interpersonal healing and systemic transformation[9].

Spirit God energizes both women and men to have conflict resolution conversations where we courageously go to the places of deep division and traumatic wounds. Embracing the Other entails talking about the issues with non-violent empathetic listening, mutual understanding and heart-felt prayer. Spirit God connects us to each other, opens us up for an

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[9]**Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 141**

exchange of hearts, heals the curse between men and women that goes back to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14-19), and isa source of perpetual soul repair and bodily renewal as we love into a deep and disciplined spirituality that can sustain the movement to incarnate God's justice and shalom, on earth as it is in heaven.

God took the first step to embrace us. We ought to do likewise. The Spirit of God which dances in our lives, connecting us, challenging us and comforting us, asks us to treat those who are different as ourselves. The Spirit of God teaches us to join the divine dance of love.

Transforming the World

Institutional racism and sexism have been so well integrated into our culture that they often go unnoticed. Society ignores their destructive realities and therefore does nothing to dismantle them. It becomes our Christian responsibility to work towards eliminating the structural evil that exists in our society, community, and churches. This can be achieved first by recognizing and then dismantling the white supremacy and patriarchy that have loomed over our Christian tradition. Connection is the basic power of all existence. All that is comes to be by virtue of connectedness. The Spirit-led life helps us to stay connected to God and the Other in deep solidarity as we engage in the work of social transformation.

As we struggle for systemic justice, we need to be mindful of restoring broken and lost relationships. Lutheran theological ethicist Cynthia Moe Lobed understands the importance of healing in social and environmental ethics. She states: The mystery of creation "is the indwelling of God within it." We "mud creatures "are home to One who breathes through creation, healing, making whole, undoing injustice, and restoring right relationships, so that all might have life and have it abundantly. Having received God's subversive love, we are bearers of it.[10]

The Spirit is the source of "restoring right relationships" The Spirit keeps theological interpretations of life open for the future as well as sustaining the dangerous memories of the past. This cosmic understanding of a communion between the living and the dead has been central in Asian, Latin American, and African religions, in which ancestors have significance

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[10] Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 133.

for the present. Since the Spirit works in memory to access both the past and the future, both need to be treated not as predictable but as open to the mystery of God's transforming work. The memory as well as the future continuously offers thresholds for the Creator to pass over into creation. The Spirit interprets how we experience the anticipation of God's coming and the historical experience of remembering the God who has come. It becomes a gift flowing from the past and into the future, transforming our present reality.

Spirit God energizes us for the work of healing in the world. Christian theology has many resources that are vital to the work of healing. In the Gospel of John the Holy Spirit is described a Comforter and Healer (John 14:26; 16:7-15). It is the Spirit of God that is the source of our power to heal. All people are made in the image of God; we are called to love our neighbor. Since we are created in the image of a God who loves us completely and eternally, no matter who we are or what we do, we are called to love all people with that same extravagant, inclusive love.

Conclusion

Spirit God is the source and destiny of our longing. The power of Spirit God empowers us to be instruments of love, peace, harmony and justice. Our Spirit-led energy inspires us to work for justice where there is no justice and to bring love where there is no love.

We need to recognize the mystery of the Divine and embrace the living experiences of broken bodies of women who have claimed the erotic power of Spirit God. God's Spirit is a healing balm restoring the broken bodies of women into the body of Christ, broken for our healing and redemption (1 Corinthians 11:24). As we cry out from our places of deepest sorrow and sadness, God hears our cry and brings healing and hope (Psalm 18:6; 34:17).

Many Asian American women experience psychological isolation through their silenced pain as victims of racism and sexism. Yet, as they surrender themselves to the Spirit, the Spirit intercedes to God on their behalf (Romans 8:26).

Embracing the mysterious grace of the Living God offers a pathway for possibility. A more just and sustainable world is possible, if we have the courage and creativity to join God

in making it happen. As we open ourselves up to our erotic power, may we take each other's hand, delight in our differences, dance in harmony and share Spirit God's open, all-embracing movement of love to the ends of the earth.

This understanding of God within us as Spirit will not only comfort us but will empower us to take steps in working towards a just society, a society which will not favor one gender over another or one ethnicity over another. Embracing Spirit God who embraces all humanity can lead to the flourishing of all people and can especially transform the lives of Asian American women.

A prophetic theology of the Spirit will free us from oppressive notions of God and allow us to recognize the Otherness and holiness in God and in each other. The Spirit lends itself to a movement toward the decent ring of cultures of oppression, moving us toward equality and justice for all. It is the Spirit of God who will give us life and sustain us as we maneuver through the complexities of immigrant life and embrace the foreign women in our midst. This is not only a liberating theology for Asian Americans who have experienced racism, prejudice, and subordination, but for all people who deal with estrangement in their own unique ways.

God's Spirit is within us and is empowering us to work towards the emancipation of all God's children. Embracing the understanding of the Spirit God will move us toward articulating a more inclusive Christian theology that speaks to our growing global community. Spirit God is making a difference in the lives of communities, congregations, and individuals, building healthy ecologies of relation with and among each other. Spirit-led Christians need to become courageous prophets and lead the walk towards social justice, go to the mountain top, and share the good news that Spirit God dwells in us all. As a sign of living God and our neighbors, we need to reach out to the marginalized poor and oppressed, sharing God's mercy through embracing the Other. Now is the time for us to love and embrace each other as people of the Holy One, so that the all-embracing love of God can be experienced by all God's children.

Towards a Religious tolerance Contemporary Dialogue between Christians and Muslims: Western Ukraine

Martynyak Iryna[1]

Abstract:

The interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Ukraine is at an early stage now. The recent political situation in Ukraine has created a space for inter-communication and collaboration. Western Ukraine is quite conservative region with convincing majority of Christians. We have haven't needed any dialogue up till now. The situation has changed since the last years because of difficult political situation. My native city Lviv (Western Ukraine) has accepted more than two thousand Crimean Tatars. They have found new homes, but they still wish to back to the Crimea. Lviv is the spiritual center of Christianity. As closed and conservative society, we have never had to deal with so many Muslims. Religious organization, in order to avoid misunderstandings and stereotypes, have begun conducting round tables, master classes and cultural events with the participation of the Crimean Tatars and the inhabitants of Lviv.

Presentation

Islam is the fourth largest religion in Ukraine after Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism. Muslim community as a religious minority of the country belongs to the group with a long and rich history. Referring to the theme of the Islamic presence in Ukraine, researchers mostly mention the Crimean Khanate, which lasted for more than three centuries and encompassed not only the peninsula itself, but also a significant part of southern Ukraine. Nowadays Islam is associated with the south-east of our country, since the largest Muslim communities remained in the annexed Crimea, as well as in the Donbas, and even migration to other regions has not changed the situation radically. The number of Muslims in Ukraine is

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between 600 thousand to almost 2 million (0.6%–0.9% of the population)2 mostly they are Crimean Tatars and Tatars of Volgograd province, immigrants from Asia, as well as from Arab countries and small percent of converts among Ukrainian.

Although Muslims in Ukraine mostly lived in the southern and eastern part of the country, In my study, want to write about the presence of Islam in the territory of western Ukraine. I would like to mention some historical events and moments and to emphasize the present status of Islam in my region.

First of all, we have a unique historical experience of the Tatar settlements in the Western-Northern Ukraine region of Volyn. Due to the research of Ukrainian translator and scholar of Islamic Studies Mykhaylo Yakubovych, we know a lot about the cultural heritage of the so-called "Lithuanian Tatars" (Lipka Tatars). This ethnic group lived on the territory of modern Lithuania, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine in the XV century. There is a reason to believe that this ethnic group, traditionally professed Sunni Islam, formed mainly out of the Crimean Tatars and Nogais. In Western Ukraine, one of such "Islamic enclaves" was Yuvkivtsi village (now it is a BilohiriaRaion of Khmelnytskyi region), which historically belongs to the so-called "Great Volyn"3.

There are no mosques in the territory of Western Ukraine although geographically this territory is the center of Europe. In the past, a small part of Western Ukraine belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Since then, we know that the church, built in 1375, was transformed into a mosque in the years 1672-99, when Kamyanets (town in Khmelnytskyi region) was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. The Catholic attribute was removed, and a minaret was built on the western facade. After returning city to the Commonwealth of Poland the Catholic temple was restored. The mosque in Ostroh was built in the 16th century on the orders of knyaz (prince) Konstantin Ostrozky for the Muslim Tatars (Lipka Tatars) who were in his service. Another mosque was built inside the Khotyn fortress during the Ottoman rule in 1713-1806. None of them has survived to this day.

[2]Sociological survey - Religion: Believers, which churches do you consider yourself to adherents of? Razumkov centre (in Ukrainian). 2006. Archived from the original on 8th April 2014. Retrieved 27 May 2016.
[3]Mykhaylo Yakubovych: Islam as a tradition religion of Volyn http://islam.in.ua/en/islamic-studies/islam-traditional-religion-volyn-yuvkivtsi.

On the territory of western Ukraine, we have Muslim burials. The Ottoman Empire joined the First World War on the side of Germany. In total, from August 1916 to August 1917, the 15th Ottoman Corps lost about 25 thousand people in battles with Russian troops. At least six cemeteries of Ottoman soldiers have survived on the territory of Ivano-Frankivsk region.

Many facts connected with the history of Islam in Ukraine are related to Lviv - the main and the largest city of western Ukraine. This city was acquainted with Islam and Muslims during the late Middle Ages, in particular, information about the Tartar community was reported by the local political figure and historian Yuzef Zimorovich (1579-1677), the author of the chronicle Leopolis Triplex" (Triple Lviv).4 The full translation of the Quran in Ukrainian (based on the German translation of the Quran made by Max Henning (Leipzig, 1901), performed in 1913-1914 in Lviv, and was typed in Latin, not Cyrillic letters. The Quran was translated by polyglot and graduator of Lviv University Alexander Lysenetsky. Unfortunately, the text was remained unpublished. Lviv Museum of the History of Religion and library archives contain many valuable Arabic manuscripts.

Despite these historical events, Islam in this region was almost unknown. The situation has changed radically over the last five years. The reason was a difficult political situation in Ukraine. We haven't had any dialogue up till 2014. The recent political situation in Ukraine has created a space for inter-communication and collaboration. The interreligious dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Ukraine began from practice, not from theory. We had a really good example of inter-religious dialogue on the Independence Square in Kyiv as well as inter-religious prayer marathon, which began in March 2014 in Donetsk, when the representatives of different religions met to pray for peace in Ukraine every evening in the city.

I want to draw your attention to the Crimean Tatars. They are a Turkic ethnic group that formed in the Crimean Peninsula. They formed the majority of Crimea's population from the time of its ethno genesis from 13th-17th until mid-19th century. They have a great culture and long history of tradition, but they have suffered a lot over the last hundred years, especially the last four years. Deportation in May, 1944, the USSR State Committee ordered

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[4] **БартоломейЗіморович. «ПотрійнийЛьвів. Leopolis Triplex», Пер. з латин. Н. Царьової; Наук. комент. І.Мицька; Відп. ред. О. Шишка. — Львів: «ЦентрЄвропи», 2002. — 224 с.**

the eviction of all of the Tatar population from Crimea - by trains and boxcars to Central Asia. Some of them were allowed to return to Crimea. Near 50,000 Crimean Tatars fled to Mainland Ukraine when the Ukrainian territory of Crimea was annexed by the Russian Federation on 18 March, 2014. Shortly after Russia by forth took control of the peninsula, Lviv has accepted more than two thousand Crimean Tatars which have found new homes. At a time when migration in much of Europe has become a hot-button issue, across Ukraine, Crimean Tatars have been welcomed with open arms. The last Ukrainian revolution known as Revolution of Dignity focused Ukrainian values on human rights and the freedom to assemble, expanding acceptance to groups historically discriminated against but seen to share those values. Crimean Tatars stood up for their right to assemble and be heard by protesting seizure of Crimea and became seen by many as the truest of Ukrainian patriots.[5]

Lviv is the spiritual center of Christianity. As closed and conservative society, we have never had to deal with so many Muslims. Different organizations, in order to avoid misunderstandings and stereotypes, have begun conducting round tables, master classes and cultural events with the participation of the Crimean Tatars and Lviv inhabitants. To introduce Crimean Tatars to the local people, they held educational and cultural projects, the Crimean Tatar culture festival with master classes, workshops and handmade products. When a large number of Crimean Tatars moved to Lviv, some of them started discussions about building a mosque. However, this question was not even supported among all Muslims. All unanimously decided that before building a mosque in Lviv, Crimean Tatars should organically integrate into a new environment in order not to cause tensions among the local population and to show that although the Crimean Tatars have a different religion, they are the same Ukrainians.

In connection with the annexation of Crimea, in particular, Muslims increased and it has accelerated the outstanding event - opening Lviv Islamic Cultural Centre in June 5, 2015. The first Islamic Centre named not after the Organization situated in it, but after one of the most influential European Muslims of the 20th century who was born and raised in the city. Muhammad Asad (name at birth — Leopold Weiss) has made a great input in evolution of Islam all over the world. German journalist, prominent Islamic scholar and writer, thinker, diplomat, representative of Pakistan in the UN at the beginning 1950s, translator of the Quran

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[5]**Ian Bateson. As Islamophobia Rises in Many Countries, Muslims Find Unlikely Sanctuary in Western Ukraine**
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/muslim-sanctuary-ukraine_us_57d1d915e4b00642712ca9f0

in English, son of a Jewish lawyer, after he converted to Islam, took the name Mohammed Asad. As for the last name, it seems that he tried to preserve his Lviv origin in it (Ukr. "Lviv" — "Lion's City", Ar. "Asad" — "Lion").6 One of his most famous works is "The Road to Mecca (1954) autobiography covering his life from 1900 to 1932. Grand mufti of Ukraine, sheikh Said Ismagilov said in his complimentary speech that they named the ICC after Muhammad Asad in order to memorialize the name of that prominent Muslim public and religious figure. Muhammad Asad is known in many countries, and there's a Square named after him near the UN Headquarters in Vienna, Austria. At the same time, unfortunately, hardly anyone knows about him in the city where he was born and raised.7 The All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organisations "Alraid" and Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine "Ummah" decided to correct that historical injustice.

New Islamic centre includes prayers hall, library with various data storage devices, Sunday School of Arabic Language and Oriental culture. One can also hold the ceremony of nikahand janazah prayer. Before the center was built, there was the local Muslim community "En-Nebras", which was mainly consisted of foreign students who had started coming to Lviv through exchange programs.

At the opening ceremony came almost two hundred people. Non-Muslims were about the half of them, which was notable. People of other religions came to share this moment of joy, both from Lviv and other regions of Ukraine. Christian clergymen arrived as well, including representatives of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and different Protestant denominations. They noted that having Islamic Cultural Centre on the same street with several Christian centers was a great opportunity to unite the representatives of these two religions. Across the street from the Muslim center there is a monastery and a church. Lviv's Muslims, in gratitude to the Greek Catholics who came to share the joy of the solemn opening of the Islamic cultural, did not delay their visits to their neighbors. They became friends soon. So, with the approach of Ramadan, the Muslims invited the priests and the people with special needs that the priests take care of them to divide the Iftar. The Muslim leader also said that Muslims in Ukraine have good relations with Christians, especially with representatives of the Greek Catholic Church and the Kyiv Patriarchate, and asked not to

6Lviv Muhammad Asad Islamic Cultural Centre, http://www.arraid.org/en/lviv-icc.
7 Islamic cultural centre named after Muhammad Asad opened in Lviv, http://islam.in.ua/en/ukrainian-news/islamic-cultural-centre-named-after-muhammad-asad-opened-lviv.

judge all Muslims for the actions of terrorist groups that are marginalized in the Islamic world. Imam of the new Lviv ICC mosque Murad Suleimanov: "The dialogue between Christians and Muslims has become popular. In Lviv, we are assisted by various Christian organizations. These things open and converge religions, destroying stereotypes".8

Lviv Islamic Cultural Centre works closely with the Center for the Inter-Confessional and Interreligious Dialogue "Libertas". This is a non-religious and non-profit non-governmental organization which was founded in 2012. The goal and purpose of the center is to develop an academic and theological dialogue between churches and religious communities. In the academic field, the center organizes conferences, seminars and lectures, with the aim of studying interreligious subjects and issues and familiarizing them with society. At the practical level, the center's representatives implement social projects involving representatives and members of different denominations and religions for the purpose of implementing common human values, spiritual culture, respect, tolerance in society. "If we see ourselves in every person, our Ukrainian society will be able to overcome the whole post-Soviet syndrome of disrespect, prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes" says Taras Dzyubansky, Director of the Centre for Interfaith and Inter-religious Dialogue.9

Due to the unexpected increasing number of Muslims, a Muslim community of Lviv is facing many new challenges such as housing, job opportunities, place for gatherings and prayer. Libertas Center for interreligious dialogue organized a special platform at the Lviv City Council where Muslim and Christian authorities could address some of the critical issues.

The events organized by the Libertas Center for interconfessional and interreligious dialogue gathered representing various religious organizations, OSCE monitoring agents, NGO representatives, and the City Council's deputies and promoted interreligious dialogue in action.

Here I would like to pay attention to some of them:

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[8] *МурадСулейманов* «Діалогміжхристиянамитамусульманамирозкриває і зближуєрелігії, руйнуючи стереотипи»http://islam.in.ua/ua/intervyu/murad-suleymanov-dialog-mizh-hrystyyanamy-ta-musulmanamy-rozkryvaye-i-zblyzhuye-religiyi#.WWc44Qz9E5s.facebook.

[9] http://velychlviv.com/taras-dzyubanskyj-yakshho-u-kozhnij-lyudyni-my-budemo-bachyty-sobi-podibnogo-nashe-ukrayinske-suspilstvo-zmozhe-pereboroty-uves-postradyanskyj-syndrom-nepovagy-uperedzhen-dyskryminatsiyi-ta-stereoty-2/.

- April 2014 - International Conference dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Vatican II Declaration "Nostra Aetate", which refers to the attitude of the Catholic Church to non-Christians.
- December 2014 - the interreligious round table dedicated to the Christian-Muslim dialogue and the Crimean Tatars sponsored by the Center for Interreligious Understanding. Symbolically, this round table was held on the International Day of Human Rights. The participants had a chance to watch a short video about what local people in Lviv know about the Crimean Tartars. The video was prepared by the members of the Protestant community of Lviv. At the end of the round table the participants read a common prayer together.
- February 2015 - round table "The Actual Problems of the Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Ukraine: the Lviv Aspect", organized by Ukrainian Catholic University.
- September 2016 - interreligious symposium "The marriage as a union of men and women in Christian and Islamic traditions". The event was held in Lviv with the support of the Institute of Family and Matrimonial Life of the Ukraine Catholic University, as well as the Center for the Inter-Confessional and Interreligious Dialogue "Libertas".
- March 2017 – interreligious round table "God: the nature of manifestation and it's perception" with the purpose of introducing a systematic inter-religious theological dialogue between the representatives of the main religions at the academic level.
- First half of 2017 in the city was initiated inter-religious school of journalism. For three months, the school participants could attend lectures about religious journalism and interreligious dialogue, problematic challenges and perspectives of communication in the XXI century.
- December 2017 – interreligious round table "Human dignity in Christianity and Islam" organized by the Department of Theology of the Ukrainian Catholic University in cooperation with the Center for the Interreligious and Interreligious Dialogue "Libertas", the Ivan Franko Lviv Literary and Memorial Museum and the RAMU "Ummah".

Apart from meetings organized at the official level, we have many projects that spontaneously appear among people who want to learn more about Islam. For instance, students of the Lviv University launched an interesting project "Let's Talk About Religion", which involves studying various religious movements through communication with believers. They studied Islam at their university, and therefore applied for assistance to representatives of the Lviv Islamic Cultural Center. The Muslims gladly responded to the proposal. With the same goal the Islamic Center was attended by students from the Leadership Academy and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, where students study Arabic language and culture of Arab countries. Taking into account such interest in Islam the Muslims from Lviv Islamic Cultural Centre organized last year the "Open Door" program which included:

- familiarization with the ICC itself;
- lectures on Islam as such and on the peculiarities of the appearance, dissemination and consolidation of this religion in Ukraine;

- numerous exhibitions (including Crimean Tatar masters) introduce visitors to samples of fine and artistic and applied arts of Muslims;
- the guests of the Center also learned about the traditional clothes of peoples who profess Islam;
- women had the opportunity to take part in the master classes with the painting henna-mehndi and the binding of a scarf (element hijab) in the Muslim style.

The organizers of the Open Doors provided a great entertaining program for children, since traditionally such events involve the participation of entire families.For the last six years, starting in 2012, there is a summer school of Islamic studies in different cities of Ukraine. The goal of the Summer School is to provide young scholars with in-depth knowledge of Islam and Islamology, sources of Islamic sciences, the present state of Islam in Ukraine and in the world. The program includes discussion with scholars, meetings with representatives of Islamic religious and public organizations, intellectual games about Islam, as well as excursions to places of Muslim culture. The plan of the Muslim community of Lviv is to hold this summer school in Lviv.

Latest events clearly demonstrated that Ukraine in not only a Christian State, but Muslim as well. City Mayor, Mr. Andriy Sadovyy emphasized that Lviv has always been an ecumenical and interreligious city, a crossroads of cultures, religions and faiths.Lviv has always been a strong spiritual center. A city in which over 100 active churches, where different religious traditions are intertwined, has become the center of inter-religious dialogue[10]. With different programs, lectures, and conferences aimed to develop and establish interreligious dialogue we all can give an example of being a city open to dialogue with the other.

Understanding of this concept has always been only a statistical figure; but today people of different confessions unite and cooperate as never before in order to provide peace and welfare for our common Homeland. We can see this tendency on an example of recent development of Islamic institutions in Western Ukraine. To compare to the situation five years ago, now Lviv is inter-religious city with the large number of inter-confessional and inter-religious events. In the religious discourse of the city there are not only Christian denominations now but also other religions. Lviv is neutral platform and intelligent cell that create all opportunities to spread the idea of tolerance.

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[10]У Львові відкриють центр міжконфесійного та міжрелігійного діалогу «Лібертас» https://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhlivo/20814-u-lvovi-vidkriyut-centr-mizhkonfesijnogo-ta-mizhreligijnogo-dialogue-libertas.html

Concept of 'Religious Tolerance' in the Socio-Religious Construction of Islam: A Critical Study of Prophetic Era

Bilal Ahmad Malik[1]

Abstract

The identification of intellectual flaws in the doctrinal construction of other faiths has become a dominant theological discourse among the religions. Theoverwhelmed practice of proselytization, motivated by a typical 'superiority ' psyche, has steered one religious identity to supplant the 'other' (al-akhar).Consequently, this scrimmage of ascertaining dogmatic and intellectual 'supremacy' over the other has mechanized a feeding womb for the upbringing of the unwanted phenomenon called as 'religious intolerance' or 'religious extremism'. Imbibed in its very foundations, 'religious intolerance', as a result, has divided the entire human race into 'watertight compartments' with least possibility of interaction and exchange. Being primarily incompatible to the philosophy of coexistence and multiculturalism, it further operates into the mechanism of 'exclusivism'- a tendency to disown the other. Many societies, particularly of the West, erroneously believe that Islam, as a driving religious ideology, has strong receptivity towards violence, intolerance and extremism. Consequently, it guides its followers to challenge the existence of discordant 'other' and fight with them for the 'divine cause' of religion. In this context, the present paper would be an attempt to examine the correlation between Islam, tolerance and extremism in the light of its 'theological' and 'ideological' underpinnings. While giving emphasis on the formative period of Islamic thought, it will also discuss the contemporary relevance of this 'formative model' as a source of coexistence, interfaith dialogue and equally a significant tool against all radical manifestations.

Introduction

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The contemporary world has turned out to be a phase of diverse conflicts and ideological confrontations. People are turning pugnacious for a number of reasons varying from socio-political and economic domination to intellectual and religious indoctrination. In its latest report on religious freedom, the US State Department concluded that year 2013 saw the largest displacement of religious communities in recent memory with millions of individuals from all faiths forced from their homes on account of their religious beliefs in 'almost every corner of the globe' (Limon, Ghanea and Power; 2014). Though, the ever fast advancement in communication technology and social media has largely empowered people, of diverse geographical, cultural, ethnic, and religious upbringings, with a constructive perception of 'global living' and embracing the 'multiple origins'. However, there are obviously certain miscreant religious traits, not following the essence of religion, which are concomitant to aggravate 'differences' by misconstruing and fabricating the meaning, application and scope of religious doctrines. These traits are sometimes 'reactionary'[2] but mostly 'implanted' for 'specific and motivated' political interests and sectarian purposes.[3] It is from here, the unsolicited phenomenon of 'extremism 'takes off its journey. Instead of linking such activities with a particular 'mis-knowledged' group, the whole mechanism is mistakenly made relevant to the fundamental teachings of any particular religion without even knowing what the 'original religious text' has to say about. Furthermore, it culminates into a state of 'indifference' in one's 'individual' and 'collective' conscience about that particular religion.

Among all world religions, Islam alone has become centripetal to all Eastern and Western criticism. Today, more than ever, the fundamental 'war doctrines'[4]of Islam are being deliberately distorted by some 'mis-knowledged' extremist tendencies, from within and outside, as a means to achieve the 'other ends' which are mostly unjustified and even anti-

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[2]For example in case of Al-Shabab (Somalia) and Taliban (Afghan), the atrocities and persecutions brought upon them are also to be condemned but it doesn't justify their 'hate' and 'reaction' against innocents and state.

[3]The formation of ISIS in Middle East, Boko Haram in Nigeria, TTP and Hizb Al-Ahrar in Pakistan and Indian Mujahedeen in India are such examples. The mainstream religious scholars like TaqiUthmani (Pakistan), Al-Qaradawi (Qatar), Abdul Aziz Al-Shaikh (Saudi Arabia), Shaikh Ali Gomaa(Egypt), and Syed Jallal-ud-din Umari (India) and Islamic organizations like Jamati Islami, Deoband, TableeghiJammat, and Ikhwan-ul-Muslimoon have vehemently criticized their 'extremist' religious philosophy. Such extremist tendencies have been categorically referred as un-Islamic because of their self-styled interpretation of Shari'ahrulings and clear deviation from the methodology of Jumhoor Ulama(majority of Ulama) and Salaf al-Saliheen (righteous predecessors).

[4]The conceptualization of 'war doctrine' in Islam is based on those God's commandments (Qur'an),Prophetic traditions (Hadith) and Fiqh(Juristic) elucidations which describe the nature and scope ofwar in Islam.

Islamic in nature. Therefore, Islam in many occurrences seems to be simply 'hijacked' and disconnected from its essential qualities such as love of God, love for His creation, love and respect for whole humankind, peace and harmony within one's own soul and with his or her surrounding, social and economic justice, inspiration for various artistic expressions and other noble qualities which are fundamentally engrossed in its socio-religious construction. What has turned out of this wretched conundrum so for, is an overwhelming wave of anti-Islamic discourse called as Islamophobia.[5] The bulk of literature produced after the 'unsolved' incident of 9/11 about Islam, particularly in the West, intensified the Islamophobic mindset. Though, it would be right to claim that most of the writings produced about Islam vis-à-vis extremism, terrorism and intolerance are unsubstantiated and equally biased. However, it would be a 'rosy approach' from Muslim intelligentsia if the odd episodes, which of course should not be used as 'reference point' as they are being, produced at the hands of 'mis-knowledged' extremist tendencies are ignored and out rightly nullified.[6]

Tolerance: A Conceptual Discourse

The word 'tolerance' generally entails "to recognize and respect" the 'other', in word and practice, without merging. In the declaration of principles of tolerance, UNESCO defines tolerance as "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human".[7] In his book, 'Theory of Justice', Rawls, a prominent Western thinker, has provided pragmatic elucidations regarding the conceptual framework of tolerance. While discussing tolerance and its boundaries, he formulates an opinion that apolitical establishment must entail pluralism including religious diversity. If Rawls theory of liberalism is compared with Ottoman Empire's Millet system[8], which canbe called as a 'pre-modern model' of religious pluralism, one finds both are practically close to each other. This type of political structure emphasizes that thereis

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[5]Literally translated as "fear of Islam", Islamophobia is one of the most contentious terms that have emerged in recent years. Chris Allen, the author of Islamophobia has rejected this 'sponsored' thesis onthe grounds that accepting it (Islamophobia) tantamount to legitimizing indolent stereotypes like equating all Muslims as terrorists, which actually is not the reality.

[6]Abdullah Faliq, Head of research of Cordoba Foundation and editor of Archives Quarterly, admits the same reality and writes in editorial message, "Conversely, the Muslim civil society has to accept responsibility for its part in contributing to the rise of Islamophobia", in "Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hatred: Causes and Remedies" fourth volume of Archives, published in 2010.

[7]The 1st Article (Meaning of Tolerance) of UNESCO's 1995 Declaration of Principles of Tolerance.

[8]The Millet system, developed by Ottoman's, was a somewhat improved version of Islamic Zimme system. They introduced it in order to create a more effective rule over a multi-religious empire. Under Millet system they placed the non-Muslims under the direct authority of the leading church officials, namely Greek Orthodox, the Armenian patriarchs, and Jewish grand rabbi.

possibility of coexistence and creation of a natural form of religious tolerance. Today, this structure of governance is used in its varied forms in different countries of the world like Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and USA etc. The governance based on this form of system accentuates that the primary duty of a liberal state is to protect the individual's basic liberty and rights which obviously include the right to religious affiliation as well.

Another political philosopher, Michael Walzer has explained the significance of tolerance in the political perspective of 'regimes' and defines it as an institutionalized arrangement of social coexistence. What makes Walzer's social philosophy of tolerance different from the other explanations is his uniqueness in the examination of tolerance and its applicability. According to Walzer, tolerance doesnot only mean harmony and respecting the other but it also means lower classes cancompete and they can move forward (Walzer 1999). Rainer Forst, a contemporary scholar, explains tolerance with much clarity and defines 'toleration' as a virtue of justice and a demand of reason. According to Forst, tolerance plays an imperative role for the safe existence of cultural and minority groups in the current clash of civilizations. In his article 'Toleration, Justice and Reason', he describes about the pattern of tolerance through four attitudes; Permission conception, co-existence conception, Respect conception, and Esteem conception (Forst 2003).

Now coming back to actual side of the discussion, that is conceptualizing the nature of relation between tolerance and Islam. Here one has to be very scrupulous about the application of terminology because what generally people do, they treat Islam and Muslims as synonymous and mutually interchangeable terms, often saying Islam where they ought to say Muslims and vice versa. This misusage of terms in media and literary discussions about Islam has created a lot of controversy and hasadded 'blood and flesh' to slogan of "Islamic terrorism".[9] Hence, to know what Islam has actually said about the tolerance, intolerance and extremism, one has to objectively research its roots in the formative period of Islamic civilization. When we read Qur'an thoroughly, as objective researcher, we definitely come across a number of 'sacred' testimonies encouraging the recipients of its divine message to

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[9] **Any action or statement coming from a Muslim and found in ratification with the socio-political applicability of the sources i.e. Qur'an and Sunnah is genuine to be called as Islamic. If the case is otherwise, then it is merely a 'misguided' and 'mis-knowledged' disposition wrongly attributed to Islamic credentials.**

develop the culture of coexistence. It unambiguously talks about the diversity of faiths and advocates the philosophy of takreem-i-adamor dignity of man.[10]According to this principle, all human beings, irrespective of their religious affiliation, must be given due respect and honour. Embracing the nature of diversity, Qur'an equals the renunciation of rights of others, to hold beliefs not compatible to Islam, with the denial of God's absolute wisdom-Who Himself willed the diversity to prevail. As is mentioned in the Qur'an:"If your Lord had so desired, all the people on the earth would surely have come to believe, all of them; do you then think, that you could compel people to believe?(Qur'an, 10: 99)"

Affirming the God's absolute wisdom in allowing divergent views about the relation of man (creation) with God (Creator), Qur'an declares:
"And had your Lord so willed, He could surely have made all human beings intoone single community: but (He willed it otherwise, and so) they continue to hold divergent views (Qur'an, 11:118)."

Both of these, authoritative, verses establish the principle of 'freedom of belief' and determine its scope in the socio-political philosophy of Islam. In the concluding part of the first verse (10: 99), even the Prophet is directed to adopt this principle in his dawah (inviting people to Allah) methodology. He is told for not being 'over-enthusiastic' in convincing people to accept Islam and abandon their ancestral religion. Through the divinely inspired Prophetic channel, the fact is impressed upon the whole Ummah, that the difference in beliefs and religions is not an accidental manifestation. Instead, it is the God's 'divine will' which has qualified human being with the capacity of 'acceptance and rejection' in the matter of religion. This unique quality to express and determine a particular choice makes human race ahsan al-khalaq (perfect creation) otherwise in many biological characteristics we are same as animals. Furthermore, it categorically invalidates the human being's claim of powerlessness and makes him/her accountable for his/her actions and statements in this world and world hereafter.

The Qur'an fundamentally emphasizes to cultivate a peaceful, stable and patient human psychology. To realize this objective, it inculcates a specific quality of tolerance

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[10]**Allah mentions this principle in chapter Bani Isr'iel(17:70). It says, "Indeed we have honored the children of Adam…and conferred on them special favours". This principle of 'human dignity' is universal in application and its violation on the name of religion is nothing except maltreatment to Gods' word.**

called as beautiful tolerance (sabrunjameel) in its followers against all odds. One of the ideological 'odds' for a Muslim is outright rejection of his/her message, that is, if his/her invitee or a society, where he/she lives, doesn't support and believe Islam as a revealed religion. In that case, the reflection of beautiful tolerance is required from both individual as well as society. That is why, while discussing the proper balance in behaviors to reach the correct path, Muslim society, as a collective force, is being advised to stand moderate in all walks of life. In this regard Qur'an says:"We have made you a moderate nation (Qur'an, 2: 143)"

The use of word 'wast' or moderate in this verse is general and encompasses the concept of balance ('adlormeezan) in all spheres of a Muslim society; its ideology, culture, worldview, war, peace and finally its relation with the 'religious other'. When Prophet started his dawah work in Mecca, of course he had to face a severe kind of 'ideological contrast' with the prevailing socio-religious construction. As a foremost remedial measure, to avoid any direct confrontation, God revealed to him that to indulge in such affairs in part of his noble mission. Hence, he is advised to deal with the people of other religions with 'constructive neutrality'[11] or in other words 'live and let to live' policy. The very basis of this policy can be best described in the verse of the Qur'an, which says:"To you be your religion, to me be mine (Qur'an, 109:7)"

One of the fundamental truths established by the sacred text is that no one can be compelled to accept Islam against his or her choice. Because, being a universalistic message, Islam never believes in philosophy of coercion-'end matters not means'. Its target is not body but heart and heart never accepts what is forced on it. Though, dawah is imperative on all Muslims but it must not involve any form of extremism, violence and harm. Among many decisive statements in this regard are the following. God says:"Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth has been made clear from error(Qur'an, 10:99)" . At other place, God says:"So, if they dispute with you, say 'I have submitted my whole self to God, and sohave those who follow me.' …But if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the message. And in your God's sight are all of His servants (Qur'an, 3: 20)."

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[11]**By writing 'constructive neutrality' I mean that Prophet never compromised to keep silence on the prevailing social evils like female infanticide, social discrimination, lending money on interest, exploitation of 'weaker' sect of society and so on.**

It is worth to mention that these verses were revealed at Medina when Islam was are cognized political authority and Prophet as a well-accepted statesman. After coming across these and similar authoritative statements, some people may start thinking that if Islam indeed advocates such a tolerant philosophy, then what is all this we hear about Jihad[12] The simple answer to this complex question is that Jihadin Shari'ah (Islamic law) can be waged for a number of reasons such as corruption, injustice, oppression, social evils and so on, but compelling people to accept Islam isnever one of them (Mawdudi, 1996, p. 23-46; Bashir 2015).

Taking such unequivocal references from the sacred text, contemporary Muslims scholars have evidently mentioned the responsibility of Muslims to promote the culture of religious tolerance, interfaith dialogue and mutual existence in a violence hit world. For example, Ghazzali, in his book. On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam, questions the criteria in differentiating belief and unbelief (kufr)in an intolerant way. He holds the opinion that theology functions as a category of exclusion which in other words means that conflicting theologies can coexist basedon mutual recognition (Ghazzali 2004). Ghazzali's description of theological coexistence provides a room for tolerance as well as religious diversity. To counter mis-knowledged' radical elements, Fatullah Gulen, a Turkish Muslim modernist, emphasizes liberal, tolerant and moderate views of Islamic epistemology and proposes to use reasoning in Islamic issues which actually is similar to Ghazzali's view. According to Bulent Aras, Gulen has advocated 'Anatolian Islam' as model to promote tolerance and pluralism as means to exclude fanaticism in socio-religious structure of Islam in the modern times. Gulen proposes to keys to provide peace in society: tolerance and dialogue. He says:"We can build confidence and peace in this country if we treat each other with tolerance (qtd. in Bell 1995)."While, explaining tolerance metaphorically, Gulen says:"We all live in this world and we are passengers on the same ship (qtd. inErol2012)."To conclude this theoretical discourse, I would prefer to quote Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of Hassan al-Banna (founder of Egyptian Islamist Muslim Brotherhood),

Who describes tolerance and pluralism as a condition of humility and a mode ofprotection against potential excess? Ramadan, like Ghazzali, agrees that appropriateapplication of reasoning in Islamic issues helps one to become reasonable. He argues that, diversity and equality are the prerequisite for respect, as he says: "If I can tolerate and suffer the presence of what I do not know, I cannot respect others without trying to know them. Respect, therefore, calls for an attitude that is not passive but active, and proactive, towards others; Being curious of their presence and their being and attempting to know them after recognizing the Tolerance can reduce the others to the simplicity of his presence; respect

[12]**From the Lexicographic point of view, the word Jihad is derived from root word jahd, which means "to struggle, to put efforts". Technically, Jihad refers to any action, including war against those who try to demolish Islam and wage war against Muslim territories, performed to seek benevolence and mercy of Allah. Prophet has defined many levels of Jihad and fight against one's own nafs (ill desires and ugly temptations) has been declared as the higher quality of Jihad. Today, misconceptions about jihad have got exacerbated by those who claim to be engaging in global Jihad while committing acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. Although such acts are completely at odds with Islam's basic principles and even with the fundamentals of jihad itself but still the claims of perpetrators have led many less-informed to non-Muslims understand jihad as an antagonist approach to 'dialogue' which actually is not true.**
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opens us up to the complexity of his being. As in a mirror, it means recognizing the other to be as complex as oneself: He is the equal, the mirror, the question; the other in me and myself in him (Ramadan 2013)."

Tolerance in Practice: An Example of Prophetic Era

It is obligatory on all Muslims to follow the supreme model of the Prophet in all walks of life. His Sunnah is described as an indivisible reality from the Qur'an, for it is the living interpretation of the Qur'anic text[1314]. As it is mentioned in Qur'an:"You have indeed in the Prophet of God a best example" (Qur'an, 33: 21); "Allah Showed great Kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them fromamong themselves to recite His signs to them, purify them and teach them the Bookand Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided" (Qur'an, 2:164).

In light of the above Qur'anic verses, any methodology developed pertaining to dawah would be baseless until it is not in concordance with the foundations of dawah laid by the Prophet himself during his khair al-kuroon, the blessed period. From different historical narratives, it is established that Prophet right from his childhood would think of peace and reconciliation between ruthlessly fighting Arab tribes. For example, before proclamation of his Prophethood, he played a significant role in the historical 'inter-tribe' peace agreement called as Hilf al-fudul to take fighting tribes out of perpetual war, which had already destroyed thousands of innocent lives (Mubarakhpuri 1988; Haykal 2009). Though the pages of history reveal many glorious examples of tolerance practiced by the Prophet during his thirteen years stay in Makkah, after proclamation of Prophethood, it may be incorrectly understood that this character was merely a 'emotional display' to raise the profile of the Muslims and the social status of Islam in general. Thus, to critically analyze the Prophets' exemplary model of tolerance, one must look into the period in which Islam had formally developed into a state with its own specific laws laid down by the God and further explained and implemented by the Prophet himself.

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[14]**Once some companions approached Hadrat Ayesha (mother of believers) and questioned her about Prophet's character. In reply she said, "His khuluq (behaviour) is Qur'an".**

The Constitution of Medina and 'Coexistence'

If we study the development of philosophy of coexistence, we find the Charter of Medina (Methaqor Sahifat al-Medina) as a remarkable constitutional document describing the borders of a pluralistic society (Akram 1995). Chronologically, it predated the English Magna Carta by almost six centuries and was executed for 10years (622-632 A.D.). After migration to Medina, Prophets' extraordinary statesmanship was relatively ostensible and under his capable leadership new laws of governance were being drafted for a 'joint society' to ensure harmony, stability and peaceful coexistence (Haykal 2009). His objective was to safeguard Medina against all odds by simply providing political governance to society comprising of different religious identities. To achieve this goal, the Prophet documented the historical 'Constitution of Medina' consisting of 47 clauses, detailing the responsibilities of all parties residing in Medina. All parties were to obey what was mentioned therein, and any breach of its articles would be regarded as an act of treachery. It protected fundamental human rights for all citizens, including equality, cooperation, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion (Kurucan& Kasim2012; Yildirim 2006).

The first article of the constitution was that all the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were 'one nation' (Ummatun wahidah). The fact that the article applies the word 'Ummah'[15] which implies that all parties would coexist peacefully and in pretext of 'otherness' no party shall be abandoned of its rights. Through the adoption of this article, people of all faiths were considered equal and 'participatory citizens' of the reformed Medinian society. Since the upper hand was with Muslims, the Prophet paid due consideration to the protection of religious status, lives, and wealth of the followers of other faiths. The Prophet is reported to have said:"Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise. Verily, its fragrance can be found a distance of forty years of travel (Sahih Bukhari, Kitab-ud-diyat).""Whoever hurts a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys God (Sahih Bukhari, Kitab-ud-diyat)."He strictly warned against any

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[15]**The word Ummah is phenomenal to Islamic worldview which actually not only promulgates 'mutual support and service' of world-wide Muslim community but also determines their political consolidation. Applying the word 'Ummah' within the given context, it describes that all the parties under agreement were prompted to cultivate the culture of 'inclusion', co-operation, and mutual trust in their relations through active process of interaction and social involvement.**

maltreatment of people of other faiths, in this regard he said:

"Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment (SunanAbu Dawud, Kitab-ul-jihad)."

In its 25th article, the constitution states, 'the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs' which unequivocally outlines that anything other than 'coexistence' would not be tolerated. This article guaranteed free practice of different religious beliefs without any state interference (Lecker 1998). The 42nd article states, 'If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and His Messenger.' Recognizing Prophet at higher level of authority was central to this article but for individual tribes who were not Muslims, to refer to their own religious scriptures and their learned men regarding their own personal affairs was also approved which in modern day judicial philosophy developed as 'Personal Law'.[16]

In contemporary times, the critical analysis of 'Constitution of Medina 'would obviously bring new insights in the politico-legal philosophy of Islam(Sachedina 2001). In short, the Constitution of Medina serves an example of finding resolve in a dispute where peace, tolerance and pluralism were not achieved through military successes or ulterior motives rather through respect and acceptance. That is why, in praise of 'constitution' Mark Graham writes:"It was a treaty and city charter between Arabs and Jews of the city. All groups(Muslims, Jews, and non-Muslim Arabs) pledged to live in civic harmony, governed by mutual advice and consultation This amazingly foresighted document was revolutionary step forward in civil government. Despite the ultimately tragic end of Muslim and Jewish cooperation in Medina, this blueprint of interreligious tolerance would serve Islam and its subject peoples well in the future (Graham 2006)."

Prophet's Dawah Methodology: Letters Sent to Kings and Emissaries After the treaty

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[16]**For example, Muslim Personal Law in India saves the rights of Muslims in legal family matters like divorce and inheritance.**

of Hudaybiyya[17] in 628 A.D. which itself is a great illustration of peace and tolerance, the Prophet of Islam, decided to send ambassadors to various rulers around the Arabian Peninsula as a part of his Dawah strategy. Different historical anecdotes reveal, about 25 letters were sent by the Prophet to various rulers and tribal leaders. Among those who were sent to the Christian rulers and tribes, we see the following names: Dihyah al-Kalb sent to Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantine; `Amr bin Umayyah Zamrī to the Negus, the King of Abyssinia; Hāťibbin AbīBaltā'asent to the Muqawqis, the King of Egypt; and the tribes of Ghassan and Ĥanīfah (in northern Arabia). The characteristic feature of all these Prophetic letters is their similarity in content and orientation. For example, in his letter to Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, the Prophet Muhammad wrote:"Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. I invite you to accept Islam. Accept Islam and you will prosper and Allah will give you double rewards. But if you refuse, then the sin of your people also will fall upon your shoulders. O People of the Scripture, come to the word common between us and you that we shall not worship anything but Allah, and that we shall not associate anything with Him, nor shall some of us take others for lords besides Allah. But if you turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims (qtd. in Haykal 2009)."

In another letter to the Negus, the King of Abyssinia, the Prophet Muhammad wrote:"Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. Praise be to Allah besides whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Preserver of Peace, the Keeper of the Faithful, the Guardian. I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary, is indeed a spirit of God and His word, which He conveyed unto the chaste Mary. Hecreated Jesus through His word just as He created Adam with His hands. And now I call you to Allah who is one and has no partner and friendship in His obedience. Follow me and believe in what has been revealed to me, for I am the Messenger ofAllah. I invite you and your people to Allah, the Mighty, the Glorious. I have conveyed the message, and it is up to you to accept it. Once again, peace be upon him who follows the path of guidance (qtd. in Khan 1998)."

In the letter sent to the Muqawqis, the King of Egypt and a Coptic Christian, theProphet

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[17]**Since the Prophet wished to avoid war at all costs, he strove to bring about a peace agreement him and the Makkans called as treaty of Hudaybiyya. During this important meeting, Makkans insisted on a number of extremely provocative acts. For insistence, the agreement mentioned the Prophet's name as"Muhammad-ur-Rasullulah (Mohammad, the messenger of Allah)". They insisted to replace it by "son of Abdullah". Similarly, they made the condition that if they could lay their hands on any Muslim they would make him a hostage, but if the Muslims succeeded in detaining any non-Muslim, they would have to set him free. The prophet accepted peacefully and deleted the appellation.**

Muhammad wrote:"…Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. I invite you to accept the message of Islam. Accept it and you shall prosper. But if you turn away, then upon you shall also fall the sin of the Copts. O' People of the Scripture, come to a word common between us and you that we shall worship none but Allah and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him and that none of us shall regard anyone as lord besides God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims (qtd. In Margoliouth 1905)."

The methodology celebrated, in the Prophetic text, to address the invitees, principally architect a 'choice based' approach and not a single evidence of coercion could be brought against it. This configuration of Dawah, totally left against individual's psychological response to 'accept or reject', is actually central to Prophetic methodology. The instantaneous transmission of Prophetic principles, in thought and practice, helped the early Muslim civilization to produce a way forward for 'peaceful dialogue' with the people of other faiths. It enabled Muslims of that period to maintain a 'patient psyche' which could qualify their manifestation ofIslam of being universal and tolerant irrespective of unwanted response from their invitees. The context of these letters highlights the fact that Prophet never used his missionary efforts as a war-tactic to subordinate the existence of other religions. Instead, he wanted to develop a clear and comprehensive understanding of Islam among those who were not known to it. In other words, it was a kind of pre-modern 'sensitization' project about Islam in a dominant culture where there was no scope for discussing and practicing Islam. Thus, the Prophetic methodology of Dawah, purely based on 'dialogue', is totally in contradiction with all those 'individual' and 'organizational' tendencies, which are directly or indirectly promoting the notion of perpetual war and 'forcible conversion'. Moreover, it categorically denounces all means of 'violence and hate' used against the people of other faith or culture. Had there been any scope of intolerance towards the people of other faith than Prophet would have never said "I have conveyed the message, and it is up to you to acceptit" which simply carry forward the message that every single individual is free to decide his or her religious affiliation. This statement is an open verdict to all contemporary missionary organizations that they must avoid 'judgmental statements' and should not indulge in affairs of violence, intolerance, and hates peeches.

The above mentioned letters were from Prophet to Kings; now let's take another case, where Prophet writes to his own emissaries. For example, while writing to his emissary to the religious leaders of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai called as 'Charter of Privileges', the

Prophet has emphasized on the protection and realization of certain fundamental human rights. He has stressed upon the protection of religious sentiments and religious institutions of the people who are in the protection of Islam. In spite of all religious differences, the Prophet orders his emissary to promote a sense of 'belongingness' among the non-Muslim subjects and not to treat them with a state of 'socio-political otherness'. They should not be kept away from day-in and day-out social engagements which other way would give them a sense of inferiority. It is much appropriate to put it in exact Prophetic words[18]:

"This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I holdout against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and havemy secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are declared to be protected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world) (qtd. in Ahmad 2010)."

This charter consists of several clauses covering almost all important aspects of 'minority rights' including freedom of worship, freedom to adopt legal and judicial perspectives, and freedom to own and maintain their property, exemption from military service, and the right to protection in war. It appears quite strange when non-Muslims living within Muslim states as minorities discuss their plight situation hrough media and literature. Under the effect of such fundamental teachings of Prophet, non-Muslim minorities such cordially feel a sense of 'belongingness' with the Muslim majority. While analyzing the scope of 'Charter of Privileges', the Western Islamic scholar, Marmaduke Pickthall,

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[18]**If the content of this letter could have been made a reference point than many sad episodes like destruction of historical standing Buddha's of Bamiyan17 at hands of Taliban would have never happen. Rather they would have protected it and allowed the Buddhists to make it as religious pilgrimage site**

comments as follows:"The charter which Muhammad (saw) granted to the Christian monks of Sinai is a living document. If you read it, you will see that it breathes not only goodwill, but also actual love. The story of his reception of Christian and Zoroastrian visitors is on record. There is not a trace of religious intolerance in any of this (Pikhtall 2004)."

Delegation of Najran and Prophet's Exemplary Tolerant Attitude

In the 9th year of Hijrah, Prophet of Islam received a delegation of sixty Christians from the region of Najran, then a part of Yemen, in Madina. Amongst the Christians were their main chiefs and they stayed with the Prophet for three days as guests. During this time, they held frequent discussions with the Prophet about the position of Jesus. The questions like whether Jesus was really God?, the divine son of God?, or a Prophet of the God? Were intellectually discussed. Not only the Christians debated with Prophet they also performed their religious practices in the mosque and faced the direction of east during their prayer. Some Muslims tried to prevent them from doing this but Prophet stopped them and said, "Let them pray". This example stands as a 'torchbearer' for today's Muslim in the promotion of coexistence and acceptance.

It is worth to mention that Christians eventually didn't come to an agreement with the Prophet, concerning matters of faith. They held to their Christian beliefs, but a treaty was made with the Muslims. The Prophet gave them the accord:"The people of Najran and their dependents shall remain under the protection of God, and Muhammad, the Messenger of God. Their persons, their religion, their lands, their possessions and their churches shall remain safe. This treaty holds good for all people of Najran, whether present or not. No bishop shall be removed from his bishopric, no monk from his monasticism and no devotee from his devotions. Whoever fails to follow these rules will be violating God's treaty and opposing His Messenger. No Jizya (poll tax levied on dhimmis (people living under a dhimma, protection of Islam) shall be collected from priests, clergy, people who dedicate themselves to prayer, monks, or those who occupy themselves with worship in isolated places and mountains… No Christian shall be forced to convert to Islam; …'Do not dispute with the People of the Book except by what is best.' They shall be treated with compassion wherever they are, no harm shall come to them… If a Christian woman joins (marries) a Muslim man of her own accord, the Muslim husband shall consent to her Christianity, allow her to fulfill

her religious duties and shall not forbid her to do so. Whoever fails to do this and exerts pressure on her regarding her religion will be violating God's promise and His Messenger's treaty and he is a liar before God… If they (Christians) need help from Muslims with repairing their churches, monasteries or any other religious or worldly business, Muslims shall help them without placing them under any obligation; help and support for their religious needs shall be provided out of abiding by the promise of God's Messenger, as a donation and as God's grace (Ibn sa'd 2009)."

The treaty of Najran is an illuminating proof of how Prophet unreservedly conferred upon the Christians not only religious freedom but also granted them the power to decide their own civil matters through establishing judicial autonomy which was not only pertinent to personal status but also covers civil and penal affairs. It laid the foundation of a true confederacy which had constitution through which people of different religions became an integral part of a political arrangement by means of a social contract. The integration of non-Muslims in the political life through becoming real contributing players marked a milestone in the history of human rights. It is under impact of such clear references that even non-Muslim scholars like Stephen Humphreys were impressed upon to admit: "Christian theologians under Muslim rule were free to pursue their debates without concern for imperial favor or disfavor or for that matter, fear of evidence from rival sects (qtd. inJhon 2010)."

Interfaith Dialogue: an Antidote to 'Extremism'

Interreligious or interfaith dialogue[19] is not something to be invented but something to be revived. It is not mere communication, rather it a meeting of heart and mind between the followers of different religions. The philosophy of dialogue is frequently associated with particular socio-religious goals, such as 'cultivating new 'and improving 'old broken' relations between different religions. It is a natural manifestation of our humanness that we, as human beings, love to live in peace, tranquility and brotherhood without having conflicts and confrontations (Cf. Arinze1990, p.332, Humaid, 2010 p.25). Both, the text of Qur'an and seerah (life and ideology) of the Prophet have shed enough light on the realization of this natural manifestation. Apart from the verses mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the

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[19] **The two Arabic words used in the Qur'an to convey the dialogue are Hiwar (positive dialogue) and Jadal(negative dialogue). The former involves clear intention to correct mistakes and rebut specious arguments. The latter is based on ill intention to overcome the other even if the argumentation is not convincing.**

Qur'an at many other places has mentioned about the fundamental oneness of all human beings and comprehends their ethnic, geographic and linguistic plurality as a means of understanding an identifying one another. It says:"O, People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another..." (Qur'an, 49:13).

The inherent value of interreligious dialogue becomes perfect once the whole creation is recognized as intelligible, demanding to be responsive to it and to engage with it materially, intellectually and spiritually. As Said Nursi stated: "Beauty and fairness desire to see and be seen. Both of these require the existence of yearning witnesses and bewildered admirers (Nursi 1993)."

The dealings and interactions that are purely motivated by racial superiority, or civilizational supremacy or cultural dominance aren't part of dialogue. The contemporary Muslim scholars like Al-Habash, Al-Qardawi, Al-Alwani, Jamal Badawi, Wahid-ud-din Khan, Javid Ghamedi, and Tariq Ramadan etc. recognize interfaith dialogue as the only opportunity to talk to and listen to each other, getting to know and learning to understand the 'other'. Their general perception about dialogue is that it inculcates spirit of tolerance, sincerity, love, and mutual respect without persuading the 'other' to accept one's own beliefs or ideas.[20] While considering the practice of dialogue from Islamic perspective, the first question arises whether or not it is necessitated by the fundamental doctrines of religion. Because mere scholar's 'socialized' opinion can't treated as enough, until it is extracted from sources of Islamic law. The answer to this question as is obviously a big 'yes' because Qur'an has put a lot of references to affirm that dialogue, not conversion, is a religious duty for Muslims. The following are a few examples of those verses: "People, we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware" (Qur'an, 49:13) say: 'People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords" (Qur'an, 3:64) : "We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one

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[20] **Freedom of religion involves the four elements of freedom to believe in any religion, to practice its values, to communicate them to others, and to associate and organize with one's fellow believers. Freedom of religion obtains only where and when all four elements are in place. The lack of one of those elements in any country means that there is a lack of freedom of religion there.**

community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about" (Qur'an, 5:48)."[Believers], argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, 'We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God is one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him" (Qur'an, 29:46).

The verses concerning difference of faith encourage a Muslim; (i) to accept that some individuals and groups will not believe in your faith however much you may desire them to; (ii) to live with the resulting differences in compassion and acceptance; and (iii) to explore each other's faith and religion with respect and in an attempt to understand one another. Consequently, today when issues like Islamophobia, radicalization and Islamic terrorism have polluted the original construction of Islam, the process of 'interfaith dialogue' appears to be the only way to challenge stereotypes, correct misconceptions and denounce 'hate' culture. The Qur'an's 'positive dialogue' engagement with non-Muslims on the basis of justice, kindness, civility and courtesy and similarly examples from the Sunnah of Prophet encourage Muslims to engage in peaceful relations with other groups, not limited to only Semitic religions.

Today, the biggest hindrance in the way of dialogue is wrongly constructed theory of global Jihad, which has everything except Islam. The 'unsolved' 9/11terrorist attack on World Trade Center, emergence of Islamic State (ISIS) and recent Paris attack have enthralled media and civil society to look into Islamic theology, especially its 'war doctrine' called as Jihad, with suspicious eye. These inhuman incidents, unfortunately involving word Islam, even dismantled the textual 'peace culture' of Islam. People in the West started to think Islamic Law at odds with their liberal and democratic values. It advocated a 'new rationale' that Islam promotes perpetual war with 'non-Muslims' and teaches a belligerent sense of supremacy vis-à-vis the other. Obviously, if the Qur'anic verses and Prophetic deliberations pertaining to practice of jihad will be discussed out of specific socio-political context than jihad merely remains an indiscriminate armed struggle against non-Muslims. Such absurd application of Jihad is a clear contradiction with theological legitimacy of dialogue.[21] However, it is a gross misconception of jihad, which needs to be corrected and for

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[21]**For example, Joseph Schacht, in his book An Introduction to Islamic Law describes Jihad as "The basis of**

that there is dire need to revive 'formative model' of tolerance and dialogue developed by the Prophet.[22]

Conclusion

The roots of 'tolerance' and 'interreligious dialogue' are fundamentally engrossed in Qur'an and Sunnah- the basic sources of Islamic law. Thus, in the development of this paper many passages, from basic sources, have been critically analyzed to answer the question, whether Islam promotes religious fanaticism or religious tolerance? In considering the sources, both at theoretical (Qur'anic injunctions) as well as practical (Prophetic practice) level, it becomes evident that Islam is primarily based on the principle of peace, tranquility and tolerance. Nevertheless, some 'misknowledged' extremist elements, by their words and actions, have maligned the'socio-religious' construction of Islam to meet their political, economic and other material ends. In such a scenario, Muslim scholar's, theologians, academicians, and politicians share the fundamental responsibility to present the world an authentic framework of Islam. It is the right time, when Muslim intelligentsia , both at regional and global level, should come forward to rescue Islam and Muslim societies, especially the growing youth bulk, from the evil clutches of 'misknowledged' extremist tendencies like ISIS, Boko Haram, TTP and others. They must take a unanimous stance against all forms of prejudice, hatred and intolerance and advocate peaceful resolutions of conflicts both within and outside the Muslim communities. In spite of all odds, Muslim policy makers should develop relevant institutions and associations to facilitate active engagement with other religions through sustained 'dialogue' and 'interaction'. This would in turn permit each group to understand the deep meanings, associations, and implications of the prevailing clash of symbols. It is only by the means of active engagement that one could understand and recognize the true expressions of human religiosity and protects him/herself from the politics of manipulated symbolism. Those Muslims who really don't want to be misrepresented by terrorists groups like ISIS must come up with 'Prophetic model' of religious tolerance and speak out loud and clear. The mainstream Muslim organizations must

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the Islamic attitude towards unbelievers is the law of war; they must be either converted or subjugated or killed (excepting women, children and slaves". Similarly, Salman Rushdie's most controversial novel "The Satanic Verses" is an apt example, wherein he obviously quoted many 'war verses' out of their historical context.

[22]I must say it clearly that even a large number of mainstream Muslims are confused about meaning and application of Jihad. Sometimes they call civil wars as 'jihad', for example in case of Syria. Sometimes the (violent) reactionary approach against despotic governments including civil society is labeled as Jihad, for example in case of Tarik Taliban of Pakistan (TTP).

introduce a kind of institutionalized 'intellectual protest' through conducting conferences, seminars, and workshops against all those who have simply hijacked the peaceful message of Islam and are using it as 'tool of violence' to meet their personnel interests. They must play significant role in denouncing all suspicious interpretations of Jihad, in light ofseerah(life) of the Prophet. Because the wrongly branded Islamic Jihadists like ISIS, TTP, Boko Haram and similar organizations apply this misinterpreted 'theory of jihad' to justify their killings. As Prophetic character is central to Islamic worldview, his 'tolerant psyche', both as a preacher as well as a statesman, should be inclusively and extensively exposed to public through literature and media. By referring to his model of tolerance, Muslims will be successful in eradicating the ignorance that leads to negative stereotyping of Islam and enmity between Muslims and people of other faiths.

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Freedom to believe and not to believe as a human right in Croatia

AnkicaMarinović
And
Ivo Josipović

Religion in Croatia: historical remarks and main characteristics

In most Eastern and Central European countries one religion has dominated through history till today, especially in the new born countries after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. Most of the population of former Yugoslav countries belongs to one of the three dominant religions –the Catholic, the Orthodox or the Islamic[1]. Croatia is a country in which Catholic religion is dominant, with a small percent of minority religions.

As a part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia[2], Croatia was one of the former Communist Eastern and Central European countries in which, during 45 years of their history, religion and religious communities were systematically suppressed.

However, it needs to be underlined, Yugoslavia was a country outside of the Soviet-influenced countries and outside of the "Iron Curtain". And that fact was one of the origins of the specific path Yugoslavia took in general. In comparison to the countries behind the "Iron Curtain", Yugoslavia had a more liberal policy in general and also towards religion and religious communities, especially from the mid of the 60s.

In spite of more liberal politics, it should be said that, during communism in Yugoslavia, religions (covering both religious communities and religious

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[1]Bosnia and Herzegovina was (is) characterized by significant presence of all three confessions.
[2]Croatia proclaimed independence on June 25, 1991.

people), as well as many other social spheres, lived in a double reality: the one that guaranteed religious freedom and autonomy of religious communities, and another one that favored the non-religious worldview"[3]. The group of authors stresses that "the communist state never abandoned its atheist stance, although that was not so fiercely implemented in Yugoslavia as in some other communist states"[4] and "believers were never entirely equal with nonbelievers"[5].

Catholic theologian Marasović wrote that "in spite of theoretical ambushes and practical harassments, the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia was largely free (bishops appointments, pastors ordinance, free acting of church schools and monk communities, gradual freedom of religious press, permission to study at foreign universities, permission to organize religious education and events etc.).[6] Some other authors write "about two basic phases in Church and state relations in Socialist Yugoslavia: the conflictual one, particularly severely implemented after the World War Two[7], and the cooperative one, from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s"[8]. Sociologist of religion Mardešić (as an active participant) underlined successful dialogues between believers and nonbelievers at the end of 1960s and in 1970s. He wrote: "We were invited from abroad to testify that miraculous harmony of former political opponents before the Western Catholics".[9] Religion and churches (mosques) did not disappear from people's personal and family lives during socialism. Research showed that the prevailing type of religiosity in all republics of former Yugoslavia was similar,

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[3] Siniša Zrinščak, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, Ankica Marinović, Branko Ančić, „Church and State in Croatia: Legal framework, religious instruction, and social expectations", in Sabrina Ramet (ed) *Religion and Politics in Central and South-Eastern Europe: Challenges Since 1989,* (New York, Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 133.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Marasović. Crkvaidržavauko munistčkim društvima, in: Crkvaidržavaudruštvimautranziciji (ur. Ivan Grubišić), Split: IPDI – Centar Split, 1997, 33.

[7] Partly, negative approach of thegoverning Communist party arrived from the position of Chatolic Church duringthe World War Two and after, supporting pro-nacipupet state named Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska) and pro-naciUstasha movement.

[8] Siniša Zrinščak, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, Ankica Marinović, Branko Ančić, „Churchand State in Croatia: Legal framework, religious instruction, and social expectations",133.

[9] ŽeljkoMardešić, *RascjepuSvetome* (Zagreb: Kršćanskasadašnjost, 2007, 28).

despite confessional differences: the traditional, church-oriented, collectivistic one, with a high level of confessional and religious identification[10], firmly associated with the nation. It was a type of religiosity (with different emphasis depending on confession) mediated by family socialization, with usual elements: the sequence of rites, attending religious instruction, religious education within the family and at least occasional church (mosque) attendance[11].

Unlike the decades-long stable trend of the general decrease of church religiosity within society in the countries of the Western Europe[12], socio-religious research pointed that the opposite process has taken place in most of the former socialist countries since the 80s[13]: revitalization of religion and desecularization of society. These changes in Croatia became visible from the beginning of the period of transition (after the first democratic elections in April 1990, the formation of the new government in May 1990 and the implementation of these changes in the new Constitution) and through the period of war taking place in Croatia (1991-1995). The changed situation showed the significant increase in the number of religious and the decrease in the number of non-religious respondents, as well as the increase of the influence of the Catholic Church within society.

There are 54 religious communities officially registered in Croatia today. Besides the Catholic Church, there is a series of traditional religious

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[10]It should be noted that the relatively high level of confessional and religious identification in former Yugoslavia existed only in Croatia and Slovenia (and among Catholics in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

[11]Ankica Marinović Bobinac, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, "Religious Education in Croatia", in Zorica Kuburićand Christian Moe (eds) *Religion andPluralism in Education. ComparativeApproaches in the Western Balkans* (Novi Sad: CEIR &Kotor Network, 2006), pp. 39-71.

[12]Peter Berger *TheDesecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington D.C.: Ethic and Public Policy Center; Grand Rapids, Michigen: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 135); Grace Davie *Religija u suvremenojEuropi: Mutacijasjećanja* (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehničkaknjiga, 2005, 286); Danielle Hervieu–Leger *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000, 204).

[13]Paul Froese "Hungary for Religion: A Supply-Side Interpretation of the Hungarian Religious Revival". *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001); Miklos Tomka, "Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments?" Social Compass 53, no.2 (2006).

communities, whose members have lived in Croatia for centuries: the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Jewish Communities, the Islamic Community and the traditional Protestant communities: the Evangelical (Lutheran) and the Reformed (Calvinist) one. The rest of religious communities are the newer ones, of different provenances. In spite of the fact that most Croatian citizens belong to the Catholic Church, there is a diverse and dynamic alternative religious life – along with the smaller traditional communities, there are a lot of new religious communities and movements coming from different religious traditions, as well as different forms of post-modern spirituality. Last but not least, there is about 5% of irreligious people in Croatia.

The results of the last two Censuses are presented in the following Table.

Table 1
Confessional identification in Croatia 2001 and 2011

Confessions	Census 2001	Census 2011
Catholics	87.97	86.28
Orthodox	4.42	4.44
Protestants	0.27	0.34
Other Christians	0.24	0.30
Muslims	1.28	1.47
Jews	0.01	0.06
Oriental religions	0.02	0.06
Other religions, movements and worldviews	0.01	0.06
Agnostics and sceptics	0.03	0.76
Irreligious and atheists	2.22	3.81
Not declared	2.95	2.17
Unknown	0.58	0.29

It is visible from the results of both Censuses that the majority ofthe population declared themselves as Catholics, and more than 90% of the population declared confessional affiliation. Small categories of the Orthodox, the Muslims and the

Protestants did not change significantly in this period, as well as the adherence to other different religious communities.

The table shows a certain trend: a slight increase of confessional identification in all stated items. The small decrease is visible only among the Catholics (slightly more than 1.5%). In addition to the increasing trend of confessionally declared, the increase of agnostics, sceptics, irreligious and atheists is visible as well.

The results of the socio-religious research in Croatia showed a significant increase of religiosity from the 90s, according to all examined indicators[14]. The same results show that the Catholic Church has become present as an active protagonist in almost all aspects of social life in Croatia: political, social, economic, educational and cultural one[15].

Sociologist of religion Vrcan spoke about the process of revitalization and deprivatization of religion in Croatia through a regathering around religious institutions[16]. "As owners of significant "symbolical and cultural capital", religion and religious institutions, declare themselves as owners of universal knowledge and values, as owners of generally accepted human morality and common sense and as a factor of original national being"[17] and they built Berger's protecting *sacred canopy*[18], whose role in Croatia took over the Catholic Church. These changes, in addition to the reaffirmation of significance of religion and tradition, the stronger connection between religion and nation and the reaffirmation of presence of religion in social life, also affected the role of religion and religious institutions in the global society, state, political society,

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[14] Gordan Črpić, Siniša Zrinščak, „Između identiteta i i svakodnevnog života"; Dinka Marinović Jerolimov „Tradicionalna religioznost u Hrvatskoj 2004: između kolektivnoga i individualnoga".
[15] Siniša Zrinščak, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, Ankica Marinović, Branko Ančić, „Churchand State in Croatia: Legal framework, religious instruction, and socialexpectations".
[16] Srđan, Vrcan, "O suvremenim religijskim promjenama u optici političke sociologije religije", *Politička misao* 33, no.4 (1996): 191.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

even civil society[19]. But, despite a number of religious people and a very strong influence of the Catholic Church, two former presidents of the state who declared themselves as non-religious were elected by popular vote.[20]

Legal regulation of religion/irreligion in Croatia

In the new Croatian state the legal position of religious communities has changed as well. In this chapter we will briefly comment the relevant legal documents: *The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the four agreements signed between the Republic of Croatia and the Holy See and the Religious Community Act*.

The *Constitution* postulates equality, freedoms and rights forboth – religious and irreligious people, as well as for religious communities.Other mentioned documents relate to religious communities.

The *Constitution* guarantees all citizens enjoying rights and freedoms regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other characteristics - equality for all persons before the law (*Article 14*), freedom of thought and expression (*Article 38*), freedom of conscience and religion, freedom to demonstrate religious and other convictions (*Article 40*). These constitutional postulates are a good basis for promoting tolerance and understanding among believers and "potential area for spreading of equal and tolerant coexistence with citizens who are not believers"[21].

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[19]Ibid, 194.
[20]Stjepan Mesić (2000-2010), Ivo Josipović (2010-2015)
[21]Ivo Josipović, An Introduction to the Croatian edition of the book „Sveta Stolica i Republika Hrvatska (Holy See and Republicof Croatia) . Zagreb: Ministarstvo vanjskih i europskih poslova Republike Hrvatske and Libreria EditriceVaticana, p.12.

The Constitution postulates the general principles addressing the relation between Church and State: equality before the law, separation of Church and State (*Article 41*)[22].

The legal position of the Catholic Church, the biggest religious community in Croatia, is regulated by signing of four agreements between the Government and the Holy See in 1996 and 1998: the Agreement on Legal Issues, the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Education and Culture, the Agreement on Spiritual Care in the Military and Police Forces and the Agreement on Economic Issues. The position of other religious communities was regulated in 2002 when the Croatian Parliament reached the Religious Community Act which extended many of the rights previously granted to the Catholic Church to other religious bodies. "This opened space for strengthening the rights and freedoms of other citizens - believers and affirmation of other religious communities" [23] .The law envisaged the possibility of signing agreements between the government and other religious communities on issues of mutual interest[24], the same key issues the Catholic Church had resolved a few years prior to that: spiritual care in the military and police forces, religious education in public schools, some legal issues (especially the right to validity of church marriage) and some economic issues (financing from the state budget). The Croatian Government signed such agreements with 16 religious communities.[25]

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[22]**Ustav Republike Hrvatske /** *ConstitutionoftheRepublicof Croatia* **(Narodne novine/ OfficialGazette No. 56/9, 1990).**

[23]**Ivo Josipović, 11.**

[24]**Zakon o pravnom položaju vjerskih zajednica /***Law on legal status ofreligiouscominities* **(Narodne novine br. 83, 2002/** *OfficialGazette No, 83/2002***)**

[25]**The agreements were signed with the Serbian Orthodox Church (2002), the Islamic Community (2002), the Evangelical Church and the Reformed Calvinist Church (one agreement, in 2003); the Evangelical Pentecostal Church (with joint members the Church of God, the Alliance of the Pentecostal Churches) (one agreement, in 2003), the Christian Adventist Church (with joint member the Reformed Movement of the Seventh Day Adventists) (one agreement, in2003); the Alliance of the Baptist Churches (with joint member the Council of Christ's Churches) (one agreement, in 2003); with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Croatian Old-Catholic Church (one agreement, in**

Violation of religious/irreligious rights and freedoms in Croatia: two cases

Case one: Minority religious communities and state: David against Goliath

Three minority religious communities of protestant provenance - Protestant Reformed Christian Church, Full Gospel Church, and Word of Life Church submitted in 2004 a request for signing an agreement on "issues of mutual interest" with the Government of Croatia, under the same conditions that 14 religious communities had already signed. In the meantime, the Government adopted a new document which was a supplement to the Religious Community Act, with the newly set conditions the community should meet in order to be eligible to sign the agreement. The intention of that document was the prevention of further agreements because it was impossible for any of the remaining religious communities to accomplish these conditions[26]. Moreover, most of religious communities, which had already signed the agreements, did not fulfil them. Therefore, three communities were rejected by the Government. After the rejection, they sued the state, first to the Administrative Court, then the Constitutional Court because of discrimination, but both courts rejected them. In 2007 the communities brought a lawsuit against the Republic of Croatia to the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg due to discrimination and in 2010 they won the case against the state. That case enabled the rest of religious communities to apply for their rights and it positively influenced the state of religious rights, religious freedom, social justice and the rule of law in Croatia.

2003). Also, two agreements were signed with two Jewish communities: the Jewish Religious Community Bet Israel (2008) and the Coordination of Jewish Communities in the Republic of Croatia (2010).

[26]1. That the given community has been active on the territory of the Republic of Croatia on 6 April 1941 and continued its activities without interruption and in legal succession, having at least 6.000 members according to the last census; 2. That it is one of the historical religious communities which belongs to the European cultural circle (meaning the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the Islamic Community, the Jewish Community).

Case two: Irreligious people in fight for their rights[27]

On the basis of the Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Education and Culture, signed between the Croatian state and the Holy See, confessional religious education was introduced in public schools in 1991. A lesson on atheism from the textbook for 8th grade of primary school provoked a series of reactions. Parents, scholars, media, civil associations and even the Ombudsman for children reacted due to discriminative contents concerning atheists. According to the lesson, from the Catholic point of view,atheism is completely unacceptable. It is situated in the context of extremely negatively connotated notions, as spiritism, blasphemy, simony, curse, damn, perjury and sacrilege are. The authors highlight the importance of evangelization in cases of atheism and during contacts with atheists. The association for protection of rights of non-religious persons and promotion of non-religious concept of the world - Protagora sent a notice to the Minister of science, education and sports and to the Ombudsman for children, due to discrimination of atheists. The Ombudsman for children reacted immediately. She considered the controversial lessons unacceptable and recommended to the Ministry to inspect the textbooks and take measures to decline the contents opposite to the principles of democratic order related to the protection of human and minority rights, fundamental rights and freedoms of man and citizen.

In its answer, the Ministry informed the Ombudsman that its administration responsible for textbooks together with the Croatian Catechetic Office will examine disputable allegations and arrange possible changes in the textbooks to eliminate all misunderstandings indicating the promotion of intolerance of

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[27]That issue is broader elaborated in: Ankica Marinović, Analysis of Catholic Religious Instruction Textbooks in Croatian Primary Schools: How Do They Teach Atheism? Ognjenović, Gorana and JasnaJozelić, eds. *Education in Post-Conflict Transition, The Politicization of Religion in School Textbooks* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

anybody. Nevertheless, till today, the same religious instruction textbooks with controversial contents have been in use.

Conclusion

Croatia has developed a model of relationship between state and religious communities which privileges the Catholic Church, accepts and cooperates with some other traditional religious communities, but occasionally discriminates some other religion, and people with different religious and irreligious convictions.

Religious freedom (to believe and not to believe) is guaranteed by the Croatian Constitution. But there is a gap between legal provisions and political practices. This paper considered two cases of discriminative practice. During different periods of modern history of Croatia, in spite of visible discrimination of smaller religious communities and non-believers generally, Croatia has positive trends in developing multi-religious and tolerant society. The most important tendencies and political positions defining development of position of religious communities are:

1) recognition of religious rights and freedoms as a part of democratic society;

2) religious communities are equal and important actors of social life;

3) ecumenical and interreligious dialogue for building of tolerant and dialogical society is necessary element of democracy in Croatia.[28]

Finally, it should be noted that the awareness that religion can be a source of commitment to the common good, reconciliation, solidarity, tolerance and

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[28]One of the authors of this paper, former president Josipović, declared agnostic, during his mandate (2010-2015), had close cooperation, not only with the Catholic Church and three „politically "significant religious communities (the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community and the Jewish Community), but with all minority religions. He pointed out the right to believe as well as the right to not believe, having affirmative relationship towards spiritual traditions of all religious in Croatia.

development is especially needed in the all multi-confessional societies in the world (especially in the post-communist and post-conflictones). Therefore, the thesis, "that citizens - believers should bring their vision of a good life in the public sphere together with the people of different humanisticworldviews with whom they live "under the roof of a single state", is universally acceptable"[29].

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[29]Ivo Josipović, Preface to Miroslav Volf's book Javna vjera (Publicfaith). Rijeka: Ex Libris, 2013.

Applied Interfaith through Cultural Interaction and Education: The Case of International University of Sarajevo

Mesut Idriz[1]

Abstract

As the years 2015-2016 commemorates the 20th year of the ended war in Bosniaand Herzegovina, the International University of Sarajevo (IUS) since its inception in 2003 has played an important role in creating bridges not only between Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but beyond this. In its 12 years of age, it has managed to bring students from all the world continents, from 55 countries at the present. In addition, the academic staff is another reflection of this significant move where ithas gathered experienced and qualified people from 27 countries. IUS as a higher learning institution has managed practically to bring together the "I" with "US", without any religious preconditions. This young yet dynamic institution has been identified to be a unique in the Balkan Peninsula. In this presentation, we will try to elaborate on how all these steps have been achieved and what is awaiting IUS in the future.

Sarajevo Revisited

Before proceeding with our subject matter as it is explicitly stated in the title, we should briefly shed the light on the city of Sarajevo, which has been not only the administrative capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina but also the spiritual and intellectual capital of the central Balkans. In addition, it is impossible to discuss almost anything about Sarajevo without referring to the history of establishment of the city of Sarajevo. Therefore, in the following we will shortly review three important issues regarding Sarajevo, before giving further elaborations, and they area) Ottoman history and heritage; b) history of interfaith; and

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c) unique form of coexistence.Firstly, under the Commander of Isa Beg Ishak who was the first Ottoman Governor of Bosnia and founder of the city of Sarajevo, the Ottomans conquered the central region of the Balkans beginning from the early 1460s. During the early days, Is a Beg resided in the township of Vrhbosna until he laid the foundations of today's Sarajevo as a Waqf. After the conquest of Bosnia, a new borderland of the Ottomanswas established, and it was called Bosansko Krajishte or the Bosnian borderline. Certain buildings that still exist today in Sarajevo are the testament of it. It is highly significant to mention here the Decree (Ferman) issued by Sultan Fatih Mehmet, called Ahdname which can be translated as 'social contract,' was given in Fojnica, a region in Bosnia, in 1463 by the Ottoman Sultan himself to Franciscan Christians in order to protect them and their religion against the others. There are some claims that this is 'the first human rights declaration in the world'. Thanks to the Ahdname, Franciscan Christians lived in their region with their own belief under the protection of the Ottoman Sultan.

Secondly, it is well-known that after the withdrawal of the Ottoman from Bosnia in the second half of the 19th century Austro-Hungarians ruled Bosnia until the eruption of the World War One. In both Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian eras due to economic development, trade, migrations and other activities, people from various ethnic groups and religions settled in the region. Hence you could find a Catholic Christian living next to Orthodox Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, without any ghetto between the neighborhood, particularly in the city of Sarajevo. Again thanks to the social policies of both the Ottomans and the Austro-Hungarians.

Thirdly, the city of Sarajevo experienced in the past and it still ongoing experience, other than the period of brutal war that took place in Bosnia between 1992-1995 and the Sarajevo Siege between 1992-1996 by the criminals of Yugoslav Serb leaders, a unique form of coexistence that is not found in any European cities. Jews, Muslims, Roman Catholics, Serbian Orthodox, and all forms of secular, a- religious, non-religious, agnostics and others form the fabric of this beautiful city of Sarajevo. Due to these different communities living in harmony and cohesion from the time of Ottomans until the present, major commentators commonly referred to Sarajevo as "The European Jerusalem" (or Jerusalem of Europe). In this context, it is perhaps significant to refer to the message of peace and reconciliation of

Pope Francis during his recent visit to Sarajevo on the 6th June 2015. The Pope said: "I am pleased to be in this city which, although it has suffered so much in the bloody conflicts of the past century, has once again become a place of dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina have a special significance for Europe and for the whole world. The mix of distinct religious, ethnic and cultural groups has led some to call Sarajevo 'The Jerusalem of Europe', representing crossroads of cultures, nations and religions, a status which requires the building of new bridges, while maintaining and restoring older ones".[2]

The above brief survey is highly considerable for any kind of theoretical and practical framework of any modern city of our time, where Sarajevo though it is as mall yet a distinctive place as well as a city where lessons can be learned and taught to the others. Now we shall proceed with the role of educational institution in fostering the interfaith activities through cultural interaction and earning knowledge where the case study will be the International University of Sarajevo (IUS).

International University of Sarajevo beyond Borders

After having briefly mentioned the "meaning" of Sarajevo from socio-cultural and religious perspectives, we may proceed with our case study of the International University of Sarajevo (IUS), its historical background, vision and mission as well as its interdisciplinary exposure with the focus on cultural, ethnic, racial and religious elements.

IUS was established in the year of 2003 and students began officially to be enrolled in 2004. And yes, it is not a public university but private. The distinction here is that IUS, although it falls under the private higher learning institutional status, is based on the long historical tradition of waqf, i.e. foundation/endowment, especially being within the context of continuous and perpetual Ottoman flavor. In order to protect it rights and any kind of future "threats," IUS was legally designed to be under the registered foundation, namely SEDEF Foundation for Education Development Sarajevo.[3] What are the reasons that underlie the

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[2] http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/06/europe/bosnia-pope-francis-visit/ [Accessed on 20th December2015].

[3] SEDEF Foundation for Education Development Sarajevo was founded in Sarajevo in 2001 as a non-governmental organization with characteristics of endowment as it stated in the Law of Bosnia and

establishment of a university in the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina? To answer this question, as it was indicated earlier, it is important to consider the various social, cultural, religious and political contexts in which the decision to establish a university in Sarajevo was made. Being situated in a city unique for the special character of its heritage, city of peace and understanding where Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish traditions have coexisted for centuries despite persistent attempts to destroy this harmony, IUS as a higher learning institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed to provide exceptional conditions for developing research and educating students in the fields of various social and applied sciences. In addition, as the meeting place of different civilizations, it was aimed to help enlarge the knowledge and the values of our global heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since its establishment, the vision and mission of IUS was and still is to inquire of becoming one of the largest educational projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkan region at large. At the very beginning, as a relatively young academic institution, IUS managed to create an open, tolerant and international environment for its students, where young people have the opportunity to acquire new and exchange the existing knowledge and experiences with their fellow students and professors from around the world. Within a decade, as higher educational institution, it made possible to offer education to local and foreign students at the world standards, in both undergraduate and graduate study cycles. The University developed intensively throughout the years, and became among the first in Bosnia and Herzegovina who adopted the European standards of teaching. As a result, during the Academy of "Day of Europe", which was held on the 7th May2014 in Sarajevo, European Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina in recognition of successful individuals and institutions the International University of Sarajevo was awarded as "European University and Employer of the Year" in the region of Western Balkan. A year later, IUS for the second time received the similar prestigious award from the same above-mentioned movement in the District of Brcko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the 29th June 2015. In addition to the stated ones, IUS was distinctively received various awards on different scales, both locally and internationally.

Needless to mention about its programs offered in the university, IUS major role was to bring together students from various countries, ethnic groups, world continents, as well as with different religious backgrounds with the aim of equal treatment towards all. In a very small country, it reached to gather more than 2100 students from all around the world of 55 countries at the present status. In addition, the academic and administrative personnel consist of 27 countries, ranging from the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and North America. Students and academic staff enrolled and employed at IUS come from all the religious and non- religious backgrounds without any kind of restriction whatsoever. There are students and staffs belong to religions of Islam (both sects of Sunni and Shi'i), Christian, Jewish, as well as atheist, theist, agnostic, etc. All enjoy IUS as a meeting point of the East and the West, where Sarajevo has already been as a place of co-existence. Hence it is understood that IUS, from an educational perspective, has been and committed to play its role as the melting pot of colors, faiths, beliefs, ethnicities, etc.

It is very significant to mention that IUS did not stop with the above mentioned achievements. From 2012 onwards, it began to break-the-ice of traditional culture departmental/areal teaching forms and norms, IUS began to be engaged in as well as promoting local and international activities, establishing and offering various teachings, such Leadership and Entrepreneurship Center (LEC), IUS Life Long Learning, Balkan Studies Center (BSC), as well as IUS Student Center and IUS Student Cultural and Sports Activities (SCASH) catering more than 20 student clubs in various activities. In addition, IUS through its International Relations Office (IRO) has played among the most important role in promoting highly attractive and prolific programs to internal as well as external students and staff (academic and administrative). It is significantly important to mention that IRO, besides other activities, for the first time introduced a tradition, perhaps for the first time in the Balkan countries, the so-named "Ambassador Talk", where the ambassadors of accredited countries in Sarajevo began to come to IUS, deliver a talk on an agreed topic to the students mainly and the staff. IRO of IUS also began to be involved in promoting various international activities such ERASMUS+, MEVLANA Exchange, and other exchange programs. IUS through IRO also introduced an award giving certificate to various internationally known figures such as Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, and Dr. Ahmad

Mohamad Ali, President of Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Through this office of IUS, it is aimed to continue presenting awards to other personalities who contributed to humanity from all kind of religious and applied aspects.

With reference to the above contexts, perhaps it is relevant to cite an article by Michael Birnbaum entitled "In Bosnia, Turkey brings back a gentle version of the Ottoman Empire," which was published in the Washington Post, where he mainly refers to IUS and its activities in the sphere of "cultural exchange."Significantly, a photo accompanying the article was taken from the IUS canteen wall, in which five large photos that decorate the wall are directly adjacent to each other, one from Istanbul, one from Paris, one from New York, and two from Bosnia and Herzegovina[4]. Right at the center is the photo of Sarajevo taken from a famous monument of Sebilj (in Arabic, Sabil) located on the old town of Bashcarshija and it is a fountain that is considered as a symbol of harmony, where people from all the folks would be able to drink water for free. Birnbaum further asserts that cultural exchange is attractive to students, because the "classes are held in English, and there is a Western curriculum heavy on practical subjects such as business and engineering." However, he further states that "students say that part of the attraction of the school is the cultural exchange that takes place."

It is though social interaction and intercultural communications that relationships are formed and stereotypes are dispelled. If a person goes through the academic calendar of IUS will definitely notice that besides national days, religious days of each religion are observed as Non-Working Day(s). It is suffice with the background of IUS in the area of applied intercultural engagement through education. Now we shall proceed with an important ongoing issue that is IUS Center for Religious Studies.

Establishing IUS Centre for Religious Studies: A Prescript

Since its establishment, IUS has made the major world cultures, their rich traditions and contributions to human knowledge – an important part and focus of its heritage, research

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[4]**The Washington Post, 24 March 2013**.

focus and academic inquiry. Today, as we strive to prepare our students (both undergraduate and graduate) as well as young academic staff for active citizenship in the world in which borders are not important, cross-cultural communication, understanding as well as cooperation is needed, we recognize that the imperative to open a productive dialogue as well as research among world founding civilizations is growing and its importance and urgency is needed in order to foster peace, security and prosperity. Therefore, IUS as leading research-based foundation university can and has to play significant role in deepening intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

In this endeavour studying the religion is an important pillar. Formation ofall of present civilizations was inspired by major world religions, and it has enormously contributed to the human knowledge in all areas of scholarship in every part of the world. Almost 90% of world population identified themselves as religious, and more than 55% belong to one of the Abrahamic religions, namely Christianity, Islam or Judaism. Despite Sarajevo's cultural, social and traditional richness in religious pluralism, misconceptions about religions, religious peoples as well as religious pluralism continue to abound in social and political landscapes. These misconceptions form the popular perceptions but also influence public policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. Societies, worldwide have reached a critical point in dialogue that could and should be shaped by academic understanding of religions. Various universities in the English-speaking world have also risen to the challenge of promoting genuine dialogue and understanding by creating centres for the study of religions. Based on its current strengths in research and teaching, IUS has a pivotal intellectual leadership role to play for Bosnia and Herzegovina, region and the world in advancing scholarship in religious studies.

While some faculty and department-specific programs already play prominent roles in their respective disciplines, to fully realize the transformative potential of these disparate faculty and programs, it is critically important that the University create the institutional capacity to bring them together in a sustained, integrated, and multi- directional intellectual home dedicated to the study of religions. The creation of Centre for Religious Studies (CRS) will support research across all relevant departments and faculties at International University of Sarajevo. Following that, the primary mission of CRS will be to enhance religious studies research at IUS by helping to train religious studies researchers in advance and innovative

research methods; encouraging high-quality interdisciplinary research across departments and faculties; supporting grant proposals that effectively promote scientific research; and disseminating research findings that address significant challenges in the Bosnia and Herzegovina, Balkan region and the rest of the world.

CRS will be modeled as other similar religious studies centres in the Balkan region as well as in the world, but tailored to the particular challenges confronting religious studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, CRS will focus on multidisciplinary approach of studying the religion, its impacts, correlation and significance within the society. IUS already has an advantage which is several faculty members whose core expertise directly or indirectly related to the field of religious studies or whose research interests are closely related to the religious studies.

Leveraging the strong educational programming already in place across the University, the Centre for Religious Studies would focus primarily on research and outreach, creating a coordinated program of activities to provide a focal point for scholarship on the religions worldwide, advance understanding about religions in society, inform public policy, and raise the profile of the religious studies endeavors' at IUS. The primary mandate of the Centre for Religious Studies would be to foster advanced research by nurturing an interdisciplinary, collaborative community of religious studies scholars. The Centre would also be an important resource for various sectors of society—government, civil society and the general public—and inform the legal and policy community at all levels of government, non-governmental agencies and organizations. It could formulate or be commissioned to undertake research projects around topical matters.

The CRS would make the breadth of scholarship activities at the University visible and accessible both within the institution and externally. The Centre would develop a web portal to showcase religious scholarship and teaching across the University. The portal would serve both as an electronic resource and provide information on Centre events, including links to the rich set of activities in other academic units across the campus. The site would also include links to the programs and faculty of the many units engaged in religious studies. It would create both a physical and virtual space where IUS scholars can meet, as well as organize conferences and seminar series. In the longer term, the Centre would sponsor distinguished visitorships, exchanges and fellowships.

Consequently, it is proposed to establish the CRS as an extra-departmental unit with its own budget. The Centre would not offer academic programs nor make primary faculty appointments, as it is critical that all faculty members have a base in disciplinary and professional IUS units. Standards of scholarship and teaching should be at the level demanded by those units. The head of the center would be responsible for all activities of the centre, under the approval of relevant upper bodies. Responsibilities include the general operational and financial management of the centre and its initiatives. The head's mandate also includes responsibility for consulting collegially with relevant communities of religious studies scholars within IUS. Part-time administrative personnel would support the operations of the centre; additional administrative staffing may be considered in the future based on the needs of the centre's activities.

The International University of Sarajevo would serve as the lead administrative home for the proposed unit. Following which, the head of the CRS would report administratively to the chief office the International University of Sarajevo (or designate) for financial and administrative matters. Yearly report will be prepared for the University authorities by the head of the center. Other committees and activities would be organized as needed with other academic units and events at the University.

The IUS Center for Religious Studies would be the first institution in the Balkan regions conducts the above-mentioned activities. However, the major obstacle faced by the university is financial funding. Since the idea and ultimately the proposal was put into the proper format and endorsed by the university authorities during the late 2015, it has yet to strive to seek funding from both local and/or international organizations at all levels.

NO FUTURE WITHOUT TOLERANCE

Bob Roberts

And

Mohammed Magid

People often criticize the word tolerance and want to trade it in for respect. They mean well, what they are going for is something deeper than I'm just going to "tolerate" who you are. You don't have to like or respect someone to tolerate them. But that is precisely the point! If we don't know someone, we don't naturally respect them until we come to know them. I cannot know everyone, I cannot understand every movement or group. What mechanism within human beings is present to allow for freedom to exist or believe what they do even if I don't understand it or even more so, don't agree with it. It has to be tolerance. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines tolerance as sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own [1]. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, "Tolerance recognizes an important fact about moral life. Morality requires autonomy. To be moral I must do what I believe to be right. Autonomy, or self-legislation, is the precondition of any virtue. Therefore, a tolerant society - one that gives maximum liberty to individuals to do what they think right - will be more moral than one that imposes conformity." [2]

We drive on freeways shared by all and built by all kinds of people. We don't stop people from driving on a freeway that look different than us. There are things that regulate all of us, so we don't hurt ourselves or others like how fast we drive or when we can change lanes. There is no Muslim or Christian lane on the roads, just lanes. My respect for someone on the road has nothing to do with anything other than we are all following the same laws regulating traffic. My respect for someone on the road is tied to how they follow the laws. I can deduce that people from rural Texas drive slow and from New York they drive very fast and from California they drive all over the road - but no driver drives a particular way just because they are from Texas, or California, or New York.

What do you do when someone doesn't obey the laws and puts everyone at risk? You shouldn't judge everyone who has the same state license plate by that one person, but often we do. Even worse, based on a story we heard from someone else we avoid and come to believe what others would say about drivers from a particular place because of a single incident on the road. Today in

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[1] Merriam-Webster, Dictionary, Merriam-Webster.com, tolerance
[2] Jonathan Sacks, The Home we Build Together, Continuum, London, England, 2007, page 196

America people are killed from road rage. Someone doesn't follow the rules, and the result is uncontrolled emotions take over the road and when that happens lives are lost. At the core we are talking about society-building. Sacks writes, "We need to reinvigorate the concept of the common good. Society is where we come together to achieve collectively what none of us can do alone. IT is our common property. . . . It is our shared project, and it exists to the extent that we work for it and contribute to it."[3]

Since 2014 Bob Roberts, the senior pastor of Northwood Church in Keller, Texas, a suburb of Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas and Imam Mohammed Magid of the Adams Center Islamic Center in Sterling, Viriginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. have been having retreats of evangelical pastors and imams from the United States and all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Al Naimi and DICID we held our first retreat in Doha, Qatar between pastors and imams of the United States with pastors and imams of Pakistan. Since then we have held over 15 retreats and it continues to grow in the United States and around the world. Here are nine lessons we have learned together.

First, live your faith to it's fullest. Instead of using the word interfaith, we use the word multifaith. Many evangelicals will not be involved in interfaith events because their perception is that they are forced to water down what they believe if they start meeting with others. This is not true. We use the word multifaith to signify that you don't have to water down or compromise your faith in the least. Every faith teaches that we are to treat others with respect. In Christianity we believe every person is created in the image of God. That means we are to treat others with respect even if we disagree with them. Multifaith also means other faiths will be present and neither will they have to water down what they believe. Only when we are honest about what we believe and don't judge one another is there any hope of building relationships. Multifaith allows us to live our faith to the fullest while making room for others to do the same. "If religion is not part of a solution, it will certainly be a part of the problem."[4]

Second, live your faith focusing on common virtues and values of all humanity. There are certain values and virtues in all religions like love, mercy, justice, servanthood, etc. Let's build community based on those values. There has never been a time in all the history of the world where migration has not been more active. All religions are now all places and all people are all places. This isn't bad. It's actually good if we can learn to live together. It's an opportunity for us not to live in suspicion or fear of others. There is a concept that Edwin Wilson of Harvard has written about called convergence. When multiple forms of knowledge and technology come together there is an explosion of knowledge for all. Each of us brings unique things to the table that should be a blessing to all. These issues go far beyond religion, but religion has the ability to move them forward and build a constructive society that the world has never seen. Religion sadly also has the ability if clerics are not taught properly to speak negatively to their congregations about others. The whole world is

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[3] Sacks, Ibid., page 5

[4] Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference, Continium, London, England, 2002, page. 9

coming of age. There are more millionaires in India now than any country in the world. There are more evangelical Christians in China than America! We are truly a polycentric world. It is an opportunity to build a healthier world. Karen Armstrong in her book, <u>Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life,</u> writes that we all live by similar virtues. " . . . compassion is natural to human beings, that it is the fulfillment of human nature, and that in calling us to set ego aside in a consistently empathetic consideration of others . . . the three monotheistic religions would arrive at similar conclusions, and the fact that this ideal surfaced in all these faiths independently suggests that it reflects something essential to the structure of our humanity."[5]

Third, live your faith by building relationships with people of other faiths. The best way to understand a faith is to ask questions of someone who practices that faith. Let others define their faith, not a pundit or someone who is not of that faith who feels they are competing with another faith. When you have friends, you can ask them hard questions, and they can also ask their own hard questions. Over and over again what I hear from evangelical pastors who become friends with imams is, "They are really great people - I don't know why I believed all the stuff I heard?" I hear imams say the same things about the pastors. If anything, you learn what you believe and why you believe it. Many times those of us in our faith don't think a lot about what we believe, we just believe it because it has been handed down to us. Being forced to explain your faith to someone else, makes you think about what you are saying and how it sounds.

Fourth, live your faith by learning to speak one conversation. Often we will say one thing to our tribe when we are alone, and something else when we are with people of another tribe. If we can learn to say the same thing in both places it will be better for all. Last year Imam Magid came to Northwood Church in Keller, Texas where I pastor and actually explained the five pillars of Islam. He then taught for two hours what Muslims believe. Our people loved it. Obviously we don't agree with certain things but there was no sense of disrespect for us and only a desire for us to understand what Islam is. I have spoken in many mosques and Islamic events and I've never had someone tell me I couldn't talk about Jesus and what we believe. The key is share our truth in love and kindness even when we disagree. One conversation forces us to be honest and also kind.

Fifth, live your faith mindful at all times you are in the public square. Just fifty years ago, the public square was a few intellectuals from various disciplines of government, literature, philosophy, science, etc. that would meet and discuss where they saw the world going if not try to guide it. That isn't our world anymore. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and all social media is the public square now, and everyone is present - not just intellectuals. Ethics and foreign policy are now won not behind closed doors but in the public square of public opinion on social media every single day. When I preach, there are people that listen to my sermons all over the world now - and not just Christians - but Muslims in Saudi Arabia and communist in Vietnam! I must think about what I say

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[5] Karen Armstrong, Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life, Random House, New York, 2010, page 11

and how I say it. President George Bush has just died and he made a statement, "Just because you are political opponents doesn't mean you have to be enemies. Politics does not have to be mean and ugly. He was blazing a trail for the future." If we don't have leaders like Bush 41 that were willing to work with opposing parties and views, then we won't move forward. If wind up with leaders of a winner-take-all mindset, we will wind up warring and divided. We must build a public square of hope and a future, not fear and hate. Evangelical pastors are amazed at how much they have in common on social issues with imams. This is an opportunity for us to work together, not tear one another apart. Citizenship must be core to all of our global faiths. OsGuiness writes, "Without freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, the escalating culture warring that we already see in many advanced modern countries could spread. We may see a plague of global tensions that could wrack the world and block any progress toward a wiser future for humankind."[6] It is critical in this new public square that everyone has space.

Sixth, live your faith by challenging people in your faith when they are wrong or do not want to give minorities their rights. It is the responsibility of the majority to stand up for the minority. "A compact between religion and state that works to the benefit of both, and to the benefit of all citizens, including religious minorities, will be critical for the transition of mere democratic procedure into stable self-government."[7]When people from another tribe try to critique another tribe - it generally is met with anger and arguing. I can't speak to your tribe nearly as well as I can speak to my own! Israel's prophets spoke first and foremost to Israel about what she should be doing. We should learn from this. I tell young pastors all the time, "Never, never, never vilify another religion." If the strength of your faith is based on you tearing down another religion or another person, you have a very weak faith. All of our faiths need critiquing regularly both inside the faith and outside the faith. They greatest thing you can do for peace in the world, is when you hear people from your own tribe say wrong things about another tribe, speak up! It can be painful and hard, but there is a responsibility we have in our faiths to speak the truth. Many pastors have had to challenge their members that what they have heard about Muslims and Islam is wrong.

Seventh, live your faith by serving together. Most interfaith relationships are build on head, heart, and hand. That's where it doesn't go very far - we never are going to agree with our head with one another on various issues. Start with the hand, work together or sweat together. Once you sweat together you become friends. Then you can have those heady conversations. Magid and I have experienced this very thing. Our job has been to get evangelical pastors and muslims to get along and build bridges. I've grown to love him as I've seen him reach out and be non-judgmental and even warm with others. It makes me trust him, so I ask him hard questions and he does me as well. My view on Islam used to be one shaped by media and fear mongers from my own tribe. Not anymore - it's by people like Imam Magid. Right now we are working on a project to bring together

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[6]Os Guiness, The Global Public Square, IVP Books, Downers Grove, Ill., 2013 p. 31
[7] Thomas Farr, World of Faith and Freedom, Oxford University Press, New York, New York, 2008, P.80

Muslim and Christian doctors and teachers to work in the Rohingya refugee camps. So much is possible when we learn to work together. "People bond when they do something together."[8]

Eighth, tell the stories. I used to tell the stories of me and Imam Magid and how we worked together, but now pastors and imams are telling their own stories. We need new stories of working together. We need new stories of how we can get along. I'm about to facilitate a group of Middle-Eastern pastors who were Muslims and became Christians and ultimately pastors with a group of Anglo-American imams who were Christians and became Muslims and ultimately imams! Instead of being angry, why don't we listen to one another as human beings and respect their decisions. I've got a feeling we've much more to learn from one another.

We have two options. One is to see one another adversarial and the other is to see one another created in the image of God. I opt for the latter.

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[8] Sacks, The Home we Build Together, p.173

The Challenge of Christian Clerical Radicalism and an Opportunity for Robust Interfaith Cooperation: Georgian Muslim-Christian Case Study

MalkhazSongulashvil[1]

Abstract

There are very little studies done about the influence of radical Christian clergy and Christian politicians on contemporary youth in general. In my paper I am going to take up a case study from Georgian context and analyze the radical messages coming from Christian clergy and politicians in Georgia and find out what nurtures such radical discourse. From local Christian context we can address global issues of Islamophobic influences among Christian clergy and Christian politicians.

Rise of Religious Nationalism

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990th marked dramatic changes in our region. Instead of one large, seemingly homogeneous country, we got fifteen independent nations. Georgia was one of those independent nations. One of the main things that kept the Soviet Union together was one common religion for all fifteen republics, numerous autonomous republics and autonomous districts – the religion in fact was the Irreligion, the state sponsored atheist ideology. In 1985 old gerontocracy of the Soviet politburo started to change. Younger generation of people, with the leadership of Michael Gorbachev, Iakovlev, and Shevardnadze, came to power. The Soviet state gradually changed its hostile policy towards religions that had been suppressed for more than seven decades. With the revival of various religious traditions in the Soviet Union the Irreligion declined and ultimately became irrelevant. The death of the Irreligion paved the way to the collapse of the Soviet state.

Out of the fifteen newly emerged countries two were Protestant Christian(Estonia and Latvia), one Catholic Christian (Lithuania), four Eastern Orthodox Christian (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia), one Oriental Orthodox Christian(Armenia), six Muslim (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan). In all these

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countries both nationalism and religions had been suppressed. With the rise of the new fifteen countries almost in every single country religion and nationalism were merged and instead of the ideology of Irreligion we received religious-nationalism. The degree of religious nationalism varied from country to country, but it was noticeable everywhere.

During the Soviet past all religions were under the control of the state ideology and therefore there was a sense of solidarity among all religions. With the dissolution of the Soviet state the sense of solidarity was sadly lost. Religious groups which used to be suppressed by the dominating authoritarian ideology, once they found themselves in majority position, started suppressing religious minorities. This was a usual development with exception of a few former Soviet countries. Some of those countries have already been comfortably incorporated into the European Union. Georgia where our case study is based has not escaped the trap of religious nationalism.

Georgia

Georgia is one of the oldest Christian nations in the world. Christianity came to Georgia as early as the first century CE and became the state religion in about 326(this is the traditional date of the conversion which has been contested by some scholars). The Georgians had to live on the cross roads of Christian and Muslim civilization. After the fall of Constantinople the country found itself completely surrounded by Muslim nations. In East Georgia the Royal family decided to seek the protection of the co-religionist country of Russia which understandably upset our Muslim neighbors Iran and Turkey. Nobody wanted Russians in their neighborhood. By seeking friendship with Russia the Georgians lost sympathy of Muslim neighbors and never gained genuine friendship with Russia. Between 1801- 1810 all Georgian kingdoms and principalities were annexed by the Russian Empire. Georgian statehood was completely abolished, independence of the Georgian Orthodox church was abolished and the Georgian language became unofficial. After the Great Revolution in Russia Georgia became independent again but her independence was short lived. In 1921 Georgia was invaded by the Soviet troops and the country became a part of the USSR.

When I was growing up in Georgia we were taught that Tbilisi was the capital of Georgia and Moscow the great capital of ours. Presently 83 % populations Orthodox Christian and 9.9 % of population is Muslim (in Georgian Sunni Muslims, in Azerbaijani Shia and Sunni Muslims and in Chechnya and Dagestan Sufi Muslims)[2].

The independence that came into being with the dissolution of the Soviet Union was welcomed by all citizens of Georgia. It was seen as chance to build a country based on

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[2] **2002 Census Report, p. 132.**

democratic values of good governance and in respect of human rights. But soon after the establishment of the new Georgian government both Christian and Muslim religious minorities realized that they were looked down by the representatives, clergy and politicians representing majority religious group. Georgia as an emerging democracy failed to create new national narrative based on citizenship. The narrative, which would comfortably accommodate representatives of various ethnic and religious groups or people of no faith, rather unfortunately in the new narrative was seemed to be a mere replica of mediaeval narrative when Georgianess was equated with Orthodox Christianity. This was an invitation to the national disunity and fragmentation.

At first it was the suppression and even persecution of the small Christian groups (Roman Catholics, Armenian Apostolics, Baptists, Pentecostals and Jehova'sWitnesses, etc). Then it moved to a large scale Islamophobic campaign. The primary target of attacks, suppression and humiliation became ethnically Georgian Sunni Muslims. Although ethnically Azeri Shia communities, they were not left without suppression either. Agents of suppression have been both government officials and radical Christian clergy.

Here we might need to have a definition of the word "radical" in this context. The term radical applies to the members of clergy who have been influenced by exclusivist and isolationist theologians and propagate among laity anti-western, anti-non-Orthodox, anti-Muslim ideas through preaching, manipulation of politicians, ordinary faithful and the youth. Recent studies have indicated that their share in propagating hate, xenophobia and Islamphobia in media is rather considerable.[3]

Ethnically Georgian Muslims

The South Western region of Georgia, which has been known as Ajara, has always been ethnically and culturally Georgian. In 1547 this region became a part of the Ottoman Empire and came back to Georgia in 1878 as a result of Ruso-Ottoman wars. By that time most of Ajarians had become Sunni Muslims.

Bishop Gabriel Kikodze of Imereti welcoming the return of Ajara to the Georgian land maintained:"We Georgian Christians, will always be the protectors of your faith [Ajarian Muslims] ... Nobody will ever infringe upon your faith, family, rules or traditions."[4]

Bishop Gabriel's contemporary, Georgian thinker and writer Ilia Chavchavdze also very famously declared:

"Faith does not determine nationality - a Georgian always remains a Georgian

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[3]T. Kintsurashvili, Hate Speech, Media Report 2014-2015 (Tbilisi: Media Development Fund), p. 54.
[4]Bishop Gabriel Kikodze, Mitsa, No. 10, 1920.

whatever his religious orientation."[5]Both Gabriel Kikodze and Ilia Chavchavadze have been canonized by the Georgian Orthodox Church, but this does not stop certain representatives or radical Christian clergy to ignore their admonishments.

Despite Bishop Gabriel's hopes and expectations Christians failed to become "protectors" of Muslim faith in contemporary Georgia. Georgian NGOs voice their concern about "systematic religious persecution of Muslim community" and call the Georgian authorities "to stop religious persecution."[6]

Discrimination of Georgian Muslims

The NGOs are right in making reference to the "systematic" nature of violation of the rights of Muslim community. The Most conspicuous cases of the human rights violation in relation with Georgian Muslim Community have taken places in Nigvziani, Tsintkharo, Tsikhidziri, Chela, Kobuleti, Mokhe.

In the western Georgian village of Nigvziani in the predominantly Christian district of Guria on the 26th October 2012 the Christian-majority villagers demanded that their minority Muslim neighbors stopped praying in their own prayer room. According to Levan Sutidze "those demands were accompanied by physical and verbal abuse."7Allegedly local Christians shouted at Muslims: "Tatars can never pray in Guria!"; "What gives followers of some foreign religion the right to pray in a Christian country?!"; "You will never be allowed to build a mosque in Guria!"8

In November 2012 conflict erupted in the village of Tsintskaro. There were three cemeteries in the village equally used both by Christian and Muslim villagers. Several years ago cemeteries were fenced and crosses were installed on the gates of all three cemeteries but Muslims did not want to make fuss about it. The conflict started when some strangers removed crosses from one of the cemetery gates. Muslims were blamed for it. Christians started suppressing Muslims. Christians "forbid us to pray but we will not obey"[9]Muslims complained. Christians attacked Muslims and the bloodshed was barely avoided.

On the 14th of April 2013 in a Black Sea village of Tsikhisdziri a group of drunken military policemen physically and verbally abused local Muslims after having checked that they were not wearing crosses on their chests.

In August 2013 another conflict erupted in the village of Chela, in southern Georgia over a minaret that was dismantled by the government forces. It was a full scale military operation with troops in balaclavas, guns, cars and a helicopter. This led to a conflict between Muslim and Christians, where they used to live in friendship for decades.[10]

On the 10th of September 2014 in the Black Sea resort town of Kobuleti a group of local Christian faithful in opposing to the opening of a Muslim school in their neighborhood,

[5]Ilia Chavchavadze, Works, Vol. 15.
[6] Common Declaration of NGOs concerning dire violation of Muslim rights in Mokhe, 23 October 2014.
[7]Levan Sutidze, "Nigvziani Spiral", Tabula, Friday, March 22, 2013.
[8]Levan Sutidze, "Nigvziani Spiral", Tabula, Friday, March 22, 2013.
[9]NatiaDanelishvili, "Orthodox Christians Opposed Muslims in Tsintskaro",05.12.2012
http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=15985&lang=eng.
[10] "Pig's Head Nailed to Planned Muslim School in Kobuleti", Civil Georgia, March 23, 2013.

slaughtered a pig at the entrance of the school building and nailed pig's head to its door.10 These are only some of the most well-known cases. But there are more cases that deserve attention both by the authorities and the wider Georgian society.

If we go upstream of Islampophobia and fear of otherness in our cases we will sadly discover that radical Christian clergy play a regrettable role in stirring up faithful against Muslims and poisoning minds of young people with fears and hatred. The director of the Tolerance Center at the Public Defender's office has recently maintained that since 2012 there have been 150 cases of religious violence motivated and supported by radical clergy.[11]

Desmond Tutu, the former Archbishop of Cape Town and a Champion of Justice and Reconciliation movement in South Africa has stated that "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in it."[12]

I can't agree more with Archbishop Tutu. On the one hand we need to do our best to support all the victims of religious violence. We need to pull the "people out of the river", as so to speak. On the other hand we need to find out what nurtures these wild expressions of hatred and irrational fear. It is necessary to find out "why they are falling in" the river of hatred and fear.

How to Pull People Out of the River?

In the above mention cases of Islamophobia the authorities were reluctant to of ferrobust steps either to duly prosecute the violence or to take necessary preventive measures. It the case of the Chela minaret the authorities themselves were responsible for the violence.

Along a number of NGOs voices that came to rescue the victims of religious violence in Georgia there was a distinct voice of a group of Christian clergy who gave whole hearted support to the suffering Muslim brother and sisters.

Bishop Rusudan Gotziridze, the first female bishop of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia representing a tiny Christian minority group, was the first Christian clergywoman to speak up in solidarity with Muslims of Georgia. Bishop Rusudan spoke at the 6th UN Forum on Minority Issues on 26 November 2013. As it was reported:

"Her intervention raised the issue of recent discrimination and attacks on religious minorities in Georgia and the failure of the authorities to provide adequate protection."[13]

Bishop Rusudan and I then as the Archbishop of the Church were found ourselves fully engaged in advocacy work for Muslims of Georgia. We were soon supported by prominent clergy from various parts of the world. There was Bishop Stephen Platten, the member of the House of Lords in Great Britain who came and visited Muslim communities in

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[11] **BeqaMindiashvili, "The Enemies of Orthodoxy are those are involved in violence," Tabula 14January2016.See:http://www.tabula.ge/ge/verbatim/103637-mindiashvili-martlmadideblobis-upirvelesi-mteri-isaa-vinc-dzaladobs.**

[12] **http://www.azquotes.com/quote/916110.**

[13] **"Georgia: Bishop Rusudan Gotsiridze speaks at the 6th UN Forum on Minority Issues." See at:http://www.minorityvoices.org/news.php/en/1540/georgia-bishop-rusudan-gotsiridze-speaks-at-the-6th-un-forum-on-minority-issues#sthash.Z0gyo8E6.dpuf.**

Georgia in 2011. There was a group of American Baptist women led by then the General Secretary of American Baptist Churches, Dr. Roy Medley, who is pastoral and administrative leader of the 1.3-million-memberdenomination with over 5200 congregations who met with Georgian authorities and expressed their explicit concern for Georgian Muslims.[14]

Donald Reeves, an Anglican priest and the Founder and the Director of the Soul of Europe, visited the village of Chela where the minaret was dismantled by the authorities and gave a clear signal to the Georgian authorities that the humiliation of Muslims was not compatible to the European value to which Georgia is aspiring. A Lutheran pastor from Finland, the Very Reverend Johan Candelin of the First Step Forum was most instrumental to raise awareness about the humiliation of Muslims in Georgia both with the Georgian authorities and in Europe.

Symbolic actions in support of the Muslim Community were also very important. In 2011 in the aftermath of the first attacks on Georgian Muslims I went to Ajara and took with me twenty Christians with me: men and women, English Anglicans, Georgian and American Baptists. We stayed at Muslim families. That was the first time for the most of Christians to be hosted by Muslims and Most Muslims to host Christians. Owing to this encounter within two days Muslim perspective of Christians and Christian perspective on Muslims dramatically changed! Strong and durable friendship was established between the representatives of these Abrahamic legacies.

I personally found it important to give a sign to the Majority Christian population that persecution of Muslims by Christians was betrayal of Christian faith values in 2013 when Muslims were beaten up by Christian policemen for not wearing crosses on their chests I felt strongly that I had to take a symbolic step to point to the devastating nature of the incident. I took off my encolpion, which is a symbol of episcopal office, and pledged not to wear a cross or the encolpion in Georgia as long as Muslims are being humiliated by Christians.

In the village of Samtatskaro where Muslims were not allowed to pray theirFriday prayers I went with my Muslim friend, Tariel Nakaidze, on one of the Fridays and together with him prayed in the local Mosque upsetting a lot of Christians and encouraging Muslims not to give up praying together.

There are some good tidings about our struggle in solidarity with Muslims. The Minaret in Chela is back, even though neither the authorities nor representatives of radical clergy have ever offered their apologies. The struggle continues. Now were alizes that Christians and Muslims have to stand together to combat the violence.

Why People are Falling into the River of Hatred? There are two main reasons: narrowness of the national narrative and ignorance of Muslim faith tradition.

National narrative

Georgian national narrative is deeply rooted in Georgian nationalism and identity.Adrian Hastings, in his monograph on the construction of nationhood, is insistingthat

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[14]See at: http://www.abc-usa.org/medley/.

nation-formation and nationalism have nothing to do with modernity and they became a part of modernity, 'almost accidentally'.[15]He also argues that: "The nation and nationalism are both characteristically Christian things which…have done so within a process of Westernization and of imitation of the Christian world, even if it was imitated as Western rather than as Christian."[16]

He is convinced that the more influential religion was in the construction of nationhood, the more nationalism is likely also to influence every expression of the religion; whereas a nation whose basic construction owes little to religious factors is far less likely later to generate nationalism with a religious character to it.[17]

Contemporary Georgian National Narrative is heavily influenced by its culture, identity and national heritage. To sum it up: Georgia is a country of Georgians who have been chosen by God by allotting her to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus they are special people. Georgian language is special, at the great judgment Christ will judge the living and dead in this language. Georgia has suffered a lot under Muslim enemies when one Georgian was to confront ten Muslims. Georgia is a country of beauty music, poetry, and dance. It has produced Shota Rustaveli, Vaja Pshavela and other poets.

To claim your belonging to this narrative there are certain preconditionsrelated to ethnicity and religious affiliation. Of course none of these are encoded inthe Georgian Constitution but they are a part of oral 'Torah' ('Torah sheba'al pe')as so to speak. These preconditions often nurture xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia and discrimination of religious minorities. Without expanding the national narrative which will be wide enough accommodate all the citizens of the country, regardless religious, ethnic and other difference, there will always be people "falling into the river".

Humility and mutual understanding

Christian clerical radicalism is primarily nurtured by ignorance. It is almost universal that very often Christians and Muslims have extremely vague or caricaturist understanding of each other's faith traditions. Kenneth Cragg was apioneer in the domain of bridge building efforts between Christians and Muslims. Cragg, affirming both Christianity and Islam as missionary faith traditions, wrote:

"Mission, from whatever quarter, respects convictions and exists to commend its own. But commendation today has to coexist with that of others. The unresolved question today has to coexist with that of others. The unresolved question is what that does for our convictions. It can be resolved only in mutuality and in humility…A faith, such as Islam or Christianity, that is denied if not commended, cannot be satisfied merely to coexist. Yet only in coexistence can it pursue its commendation."

Key words in this statement are mutuality and humility. Humility is about offering our gifts and our spiritual treasures to each other without faintest notion of coercion. Mutuality is

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[15]A. **Hastings, Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.205.**
[16]**A. Hastings, p. 187.**
[17]**A. Hastings, p. 186.**

about recognizing values, Holy Scriptures and spiritual practices of each other. On the way to resolution of this question with mutuality and humility there are monumental misunderstandings on either side that should be some how removed. This is not easy but not impossible. Determination, patience and good will should be our food if we decide to embark on this road. Because we do not talk to each other as often as needed or do not talk to each other from equal footing, we do not understand each other and in our imagination have rather caricature views of each other[18].

Because of the lamentable lack of understanding we as Muslims and Christians, often hurt each other's religious feelings. For instance Christians in my part of the World often call Muslims Mohammedans without ever realizing that terms like Mohammedanism and Mohammedan are completely unacceptable. To Muslims their faith means living in accordance with the will and pleasure of God and thus God, and not the Prophet Muhammad is the center of Muslim religious life and spirituality. Christians never recognize that for Muslims Prophet Abraham/Ibrahim is regarded as the "First Muslim"18 not Muhammad. As Christians we fail to understand that for Muslims the Prophet Muhammad is a 'universal messenger.'[19]

Religious feelings of Christians are also hurt when their belief in Oneness ofGod is questioned by Muslims. Trinitarian language of Christian theology should not be interpreted as our allegiance to three Gods. Muslims should not think that Christians believe in more than one God. In the words of Prof. Paul S. Fiddes, Trinitarian theology is an attempt to understand "relationships of love in God and world, since 'God is love.' We can know these relations, not by observing them or examining them, but only by participating in them as God calls us to share his life."[20]

We should first recognize that the religious diversity is the will of the creator. And more than that religious diversity is a precious gift. Otherwise we should consider Judaism, Christianity and Islam as mere accidents of human history. We may not completely understand why the gift of religious diversity is so valuable or how this gift is to be used in our lives and relations, but humility and mutuality inspired by each other's love should enable us to see and understand its significance.

The Qur'an offers most beautiful affirmation of religious and cultural diversity:"Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth in their entirety would have acknowledged. Would you force the people to make them acknowledge?"[21]

This means that had the Lord wanted everybody to be Muslim, than every body would be Muslim. The Qur'an goes even further affirming various religious communities of the time of Prophet:"Those who believe [in the Qur'an] and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures],and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."[22]

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[18]**Al-Hajj 22:78**

[19]**An-Nissa 4:70.**

[20]**The Baptist World Alliance Response to the Common Word document. See at:file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/ACommonWord-Baptist-World-Alliance-Response.pdf.**

[21]**Yunus 10:99.**

[22]**Al-Baqarah 2:62**

Or another fascinating statement:"Say: "We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaak, Jacob, and the Tribes, and [in the books] given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will [in Islam]."[23]

The Qur'an also affirms wider cultural diversity:"O men! Behold We have created you all out of a male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold God is all-knowing, all aware."[24]

Our religions are meant to bring us to God and to each other. Jesus offers us a fascinating definition of religion. "People were not made for the good of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for the good of people."[25]If we seek for a more meaning based translation of the verse we can render it the following way: "People were not made for the good of the religion. The religion was made for the good of people."

What is the point of religion which separates people from God and each other!?Rabbi Heshel rightly noticed that: "Religion is a mean, not the end. It becomes idolatrous when regarded as an end itself. Over and above all being stands the Creator and the Lord of History, He who transcends all. To equate religion and God is idolatry."[26]

If we honestly recognize that religious diversity is God's will, then we should also admit that it is God's gift. Arguably we need to find out what shall we do with this gift. Because of our allegiance to God we need find a common ground where we can explore this gift of religious diversity and make good use of it. Theologians both from Muslim and Christian background should help us in this matter.

Conclusion

In the Talmudic tradition there were discussions between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Zoma as to which was the most important line in Torah. Rabbi Akiva argued that itwas "Love your neighbor as yourself". Ben Zoma argued that it was "these are the generation of Adam" that was most significant. This rather boring line is a starting point of the genealogical list of descendants of Adam. Akiva ultimately had to admit that Ben Zoma's line was far more significant that the one he had suggested. They agreed that it is not sufficient "to love other people as yourself" because this is dependent how much you love yourself. Self-hating and self-depreciating people therefore must be exempt from loving others.[27] Ben Zoma's choice has to always remind us that all human beings whomever they are, whatever they believe and not believe, since they are all related to Adam who was created in the image of God, they all deserve love, respect and acceptance.

[23]Al-'Imran 3:84

[24]Al-Hujurat 49:13

[25]Mark 2:23-27-28, Luke 6:1-).

[26]Rabi Heshel, No Religion is an Island, 1991.

[27]P. Morgan and C. A. Lawton, Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions (Edinburgh: Ediburgh University Press, 2010), p. 192.

Clergy and laity of the Abrahamic tradition can learn a lot from this story. The radical ideology of Christian clergy or clergy from other faith traditions should be handled through the inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. Much has been done in this direction. But more work is to be one on the grass root level. I do understand that these sorts of activities are bound to be costly. For instance, this week according to an article the Illinois college began to make that decision, recommending the termination of Larycia Hawkins's professorship, saying that a post on her Facebook page last month violated the college's statement of faith. Professor Hawkins's post announced that she would wear hijab as an act of Advent devotion: "I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book" she posted on Dec. 10. "And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God."[28] She is an inter-faith heroin. People like her deserve universal support and encouragement.

In the past inter-faith dialogue various levels of academic and society life used to be

a matter of luxury. Nowadays, bearing in mind political and ideological

developments in the Middle East, it becomes the necessity of highest importance.

Muslims and Christians taken together make more than a half of world's population.

Unless they develop ways of meaningful and sustainable cooperation between them,

the future of the planet earth will be endangered. Time has come for Christian and

Muslim leaders and theologians to act more strongly, to advocate reconciliation and

mutuality between these two great faith traditions.

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[28] Harry Bruinius, "In Treatment of Professor, Wheaton shows split among US Evangelicals," ChristianScience Monitor, January 7, 2016.

Tolerance: The Victim of Human Nature

MohammadAlnahas

In *The Crossing Point* (1973), the artist and poet, M.C. Richards, writes, "One of the truths of our time is this hunger deep in people all over the planet for coming into relationship with each other". How far is this statement from our current reality? Was this merely a figment of her imagination, which neglected to take into account human whims and prejudices?

A distant relative of mine has recently had her family torn apart, due to the constant arguments breaking out between herself, a Sunni Muslim, and her husband, a Shi'ite Muslim. She vehemently declares, "I'll remain faithful to my principles and beliefs, even if that costs me my marriage". Such a lack of tolerance – or lack of acceptance, as I will clarify later - has always been an issue of great concern to numerous writers, scholars and renowned clerics, who have attempted to address this problem in various ways, albeit to very little avail. Although the concept of the 'global village' is now accepted on a large scale worldwide, the lack of tolerance amongst people of different beliefs seems to have become a virulent disease – a serious, pressing issue that requires our attention. Asking questions, but the right questions, will therefore help us find some answers. As the old Arabic adage goes, "Once you know the reason, you are no longer surprised…"

So, what could possibly be the factors causing some people to have very little, or zero tolerance towards others, and even to sacrifice their family and friendships for the sake of 'sticking to their guns'? Moreover, does Islam promote intolerance, as it is sometimes suggested? And how viable is the suggestion that intolerance could be unlearned?

1-What is 'tolerance'?

Before looking at what leads to a lack of tolerance, it is worth investigating what exactly is meant by the word. This will involve examining its objective and subjective meanings, as well as its implications, in an attempt to understand the underlying concepts.

Is the word 'tolerant' positive or negative in its implications? To put it differently, is it good to be tolerant? This might be an odd question to ask in starting such a debate. However, on looking up the dictionary definition of this word, my suspicions were confirmed, even validated, as I encountered some interesting examples; potentially implying something quite different from what I had imagined. The verb, 'to tolerate' is derived from the Latin, *tolerare*, meaning 'to endure pain' (Oxford English Dictionary). The Oxford English Dictionary goes on to explain that 'tolerate' means "to allow the existence, occurrence of something that one dislikes or disagrees with". For instance, if one person says to another, "I'll tolerate this movie if you insist we should watch it", the implication is that the person making the suggestion does not like the movie, but is prepared to watch it for another reason, namely pleasing the other person. This echoes Krishnamurti (2002), who states that tolerance stems from a lack of mutual understanding and love,

> When there is true brotherliness, friendliness, when there is love in your heart, then you will not talk of tolerance. Only when you feel superior in your certainty, in your position, in your knowledge, only then do you talk of tolerance.

Therefore, I find it difficult to ignore the fact that the application of the word 'tolerance' differs slightly from its intended meaning in English, at least where religious tolerance is concerned. Although it might initially appear similar, the word 'acceptance', in my view, has a more positive connotation than 'tolerance', implying 'accommodation' on the part of the speaker, who is in a sense 'happy' to accommodate the other person's thoughts and beliefs, rather than merely 'tolerating' them. Living in harmony with people from different religions is better expressed through the terms, 'acceptance' and 'cooperation', rather than 'tolerance'.

To expand on this further, Ury (1999) notes that "tolerance is not just agreeing with one another or remaining indifferent in the face of injustice, but rather showing respect for the essential humanity in every person". In other words, tolerance can also be synonymous with respect, which is a necessary component for building relationships. This is another dimension of the term, implying, according to

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Ury, that an absence of tolerance indicates a lack of respect. However, it would appear that whether or not tolerance is linked to agreement is a different question entirely. Are we really agreeing with others when we are being tolerant, or are we merely calling a temporary, albeit long-standing, 'ceasefire' or 'truce'? This is an idea worth contemplating.

In Arabic, the notion of acceptance and accommodation with regard to the views of others – apparently the intended meaning in this context – is expressed in the word, *tasamuh.* A number of meanings are suggested here, such as forbearance, forgiveness, and turning a blind eye (to other people's mistakes), aside from the notion of tolerance that is communicated in English. The word, *tasamuh* (تسامح) comes from the root, *samaha*(سمَحَ), literally meaning 'to allow', 'to forgive', 'to make easy', 'to accept' and 'to be generous' (Lisan Al-Arab Dictionary). In light of the above, I believe it is necessary to adopt an expression that encompasses these values, if we are to convey the message more accurately.

2-The Factors Promoting Tolerance in the Human Race

Each one of us could come up with an example from our own lives that demonstrates either tolerance or the lack of it. Our very existence is likely to be brimming over with situations that reflect people's tolerance or intolerance to different things and each other.

A. The environment: A personal experience.

Environment plays a pivotal role in creating the fabric of society as well as cherishing certain values. Levels of personal tolerance are greatly influenced by one's culture (lifestyle), which is in turn usually determined by the environment. To put it differently, those who grow up in an atmosphere of religious bigotry are likely to have a predilection for intolerance towards others with different beliefs and religious affiliations. Similarly, a child raised in a family that promotes chauvinistic nationalism is likely to be heavily influenced by such an environment, thereby developing intolerance towards people from other countries.

Nevertheless, the question remains, what are the components of an environment that promotes intolerance? What is the source of these negative undertones? There are a number of possible reasons, which can be traced to one's education, or to one's understanding of the relevant religious (or other) texts - the way in which these texts are interpreted. From my personal experience, one of the primary causes of intolerance is this misinterpretation of texts, as in the case of religious texts.

To elaborate on the above, while living and working in Qaseem, Saudi Arabia in 2003, I felt somewhat ostracised for my own interpretation of the Islamic faith, although I have been a Muslim since birth. This was due to the fact that the Islamic traditions of that region are very strictly observed. For example, smoking is prohibited in public, while women are not allowed to show their faces outside the home and must be covered from head to toe. Moreover, everyone has togo and pray at prayer time. A group calling themselves the 'The Commission of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil' would knock on my door to wake me up for the dawn prayer. One of my neighbours was evicted from his flat because hehad frequently failed to wake up at five a.m. for dawn prayer.

Aside from this, amongst many of the religious people living in the area of Qaseem, it was frowned upon for a man to shave his beard, as it was considered to be a deviation from what was considered to be the 'right path'. I personally received criticism a number of times for being clean-shaven or having a very short beard.

One day, I struck up a conversation with someone who was giving me a lift in his car. We started discussing the current political situation, which at that time involved the US invading Iraq. While having hard feelings towards the American government at that time was understandable, my associate subsequently made some utterly dismissive remarks that left me completely at a loss for words, such as his aggressive comment on the Saudi government: "our government is 'Kafir' [meaning infidel] and we are mandated to fight them because they have close ties with the 'Mushrikeen' (polytheists) – our enemies", referring to the Americans.

Having grown up in Syria, before moving to Saudi Arabia, I had always attended numerous speeches and sermons, but had never heard such extremist views, which were to my mind, baseless deviations from the true values of Islam. When I

expressed my sheer astonishment and total disapproval of his opinions, my associate emphatically declared: "That is the only way, brother" and to my chagrin, proceeded to misquote verses from the Quran. The outburst left me wondering where he had received his education and what type of environment, he had been living in.

After leaving Saudi Arabia and travelling to the UK to embark on my postgraduate studies, I began to look back and think that having lived in that environment for six years, I was slightly influenced by the retrogressive thinking of some of my peers. For instance, back in Saudi Arabia, I remember finding heated discussions between a husband and his wife objectionable, as I was told thatwomen should only listen to their husbands, as mandated in strict traditions adopted by some societies. This mindset eventually adversely affected some of my relationships during that period. Additionally, urged by some of my colleagues, I started to distance myself from one of my friends, just because he was Christian, although I liked and trusted him. I was then told that it would be an indication of devotion and solidarity with my fellow Muslims. Some Friday sermons I was attending in varied places in Saudi Arabia were also clearly adopting such unaccommodating, unfriendly attitude towards other people who hold different beliefs, conveying the message of 'we are right and good; others are wrong and bad'.

Therefore, as the above examples illustrate, the environment could play a predominant role in both enhancing and diminishing tolerance in people's lives. Needless to say, however, dealing with the impact of the environment requires delving deeper into the sociocultural issues that potentially give rise to intolerance.

B. Political circumstances.

In contrast, the causes of intolerance can be political, as is the case in Burma (Myanmar), where tens of thousands of innocent Muslims were executed or displaced in 2017. In fact, the persecution of Muslims in the Buddhist majority country of Myanmar is far from new.

Claudia Diaz at the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect writes:

> What I have heard and witnessed in Cox's Bazaar is a human tragedy with the fingerprints of the Myanmar government and of the international community. The scorched earth campaign carried out by the Myanmar security forces since August 2017 against the Rohingya population was predictable and preventable.

She continues:

> I am perplexed by the denial of the widespread commission of serious crimes that has characterized the response of the Myanmar authorities. I urge the international community, in particular the United Nations Security Council, to consider different accountability options. The world needs to show that it is not ready to tolerate such barbaric acts.

Diaz adds in another article that she has written to the United Nations, briefing them on her account of events in Myanmar. However, there have been stories that the action taken by government forces was merely a reaction to what was allegedly an attempted rebellion.

In short, it would seem that tolerance, as well as the lack of it, is sometimes inextricably linked with power and the process of maintaining it, or with the ego and its desire to preserve itself. If the story stands that a group of Muslims was in revolt against the government, then crushing the movement so ruthlessly has but one goal, namely, to maintain power.

3-Do Islamic Teachings Promote Intolerance?

On examining the Islamic texts, one can find a myriadquotes in the Quran that emphasise the value of human life and promote tolerance, understanding and forgiveness (*tasamuh*). Here are some examples:

The Qur'an clearly states that religion cannot be forced on anyone, claiming that "There is no compulsion in (accepting) the religion (of Islam)…" (Chapter 2; verse 257)

Elsewhere, the Quran states,

> O you who do not believe! I worship not what you worship, and you are not worshipping what I worship; nor am I worshipping what you worship; neither art you worshipping what I worship. Therefore, to you your religion; and to me my religion! (Chapter 109)

Consequently, it is evident that one has freedom of choice concerning one's personal beliefs, with no consequences.

Conversely, the Quran urges Muslims to be kind to their fellow man and demonstrate politeness, respect and benevolence towards others; indicating "Allah does not forbid you that you show kindness and deal justly with those who did not fight you in your religion and did not drive you out from your homes" (Chapter 60; verse 8). Therefore, Muslims must not act unjustly towards those who hold different beliefs.

In fact, according to Islamic teachings, the highest status and regard are awarded to those who display good conduct:

> O Mankind! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes so that you might [affectionately] come to know one another. Surely, the most honoured among you, in the sight of Allah, is the one who is the best in conduct. (Chapter 49; verse 13)

To explain this further, the best conduct in Islam is to treat other human beings with dignity, equality, fraternity and justice.

In a letter addressed to the monks of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in 628 A.D., the Prophet Muhammad wrote,

> This is a message from Muhammad, son of Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian it married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation of (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world). (As cited in Shah, 2003).

Evidently, the letter was calling for peace, cooperation and mutual respect. Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam, was the paradigm of ethics and noble thinking. Throughout his entire life, he promoted peace, forgiveness and mercy between

people of different creeds and religions. However, not only did he demand religious tolerance, he also laid down the foundations of legal and constitutional protection for the various religious groups that existed during his time.

Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), a Western Islamic scholar, commented on this letter, stating:

> The Charter which Muhammad (saw) granted to the Christian monks of Sinai is a living document. If you read it, you will see that it breathes not only goodwill, but also actual love. He gave to the Jews of Medina, so long as they were faithful to him, precisely the same treatment as to any Muslims. He never was aggressive against any man or class of men… The story of his reception of Christian and Zoroastrian visitors is on record. There is not a trace of religious intolerance in any of this (As cited in Khan, 2010).

When the Prophet Mohammad settled in Medina, he endeavoured to establish the first Islamic State, which was not only inhabited by Muslims, but also by three other Jewish tribes and diverse Arabs, who had yet to convert to Islam. The aim in this Islamic State was to maintain peace and harmony. In 622 A.D. (six centuries before the English Magna Carta was signed), the Prophet Mohammad consequently promulgated an agreement with all the non-Muslim groups residing in the city. The agreement became known as the Charter of Medina, and it was drafted to protect fundamental human rights for all citizens, including their equality, cooperation, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Clause 25 specifically states that Jews and non-Muslim Arabs are entitled to practice their own faith without any restrictions. In short, this was the first document in history to establish religious freedom as a fundamental constitutional right.

In light of the above, Islam clearly calls for understanding, tolerance and acceptance and even goes beyond that to stipulate the need to treat people with kindness, fairness and goodwill, regardless of their beliefs.

4-Is Change Possible?

The renowned writer and philosopher, Kahlil Gibran (1873-1931) once remarked, "I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers" (Gibran, 1923). As a result, there is widespread skepticism about the possibility of learning when it

comes to values as significant and deep-rooted as *tasamuh* or tolerance. Can intolerance be unlearned and then uprooted? How viable and realistic is this proposition? Can educators sow the seeds of *tasamuh*(understanding, acceptance, forgiveness and tolerance) within our societies?

It would be intriguing to explore whether people become more tolerant if they undertake certain programmes or attend specific courses. Perhaps studies should be conducted on how people's behaviour changes over time when they are under these conditions. My feeling is that the prospect of uprooting intolerance in society is a Herculean task. The possibility of unlearning intolerant, rejectionist concepts and replacing them with more accommodating ones that do not exclude others in society would in fact seem implausible.

Nevertheless, it is fair to suggest that the problem could perhaps be mitigated by raising awareness of diverse world views in various domains, especially in the media, and through exposure to those views, since the concepts of tolerance and acceptance need to be instilled in children as early as possible. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), declares that,

> …education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

In other words, education seems to play a powerful role; aligning with the words of Nelson Mandela (Mandela, 2003): "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can us eto change the world".

However, is it really feasible that conditioned minds can break away from their embedded thinking and gradually evolve a new mentality? The alternative to this would be people's minds remaining safe and happy in their comfort zone. It begs the question of whether peace and self-fulfillment lie in facing the challenges of tolerance and acceptance, thereby achieving a more harmonious and productive society, or whether we should take the lower road of maintaining the status quo, with all its divisions, prejudices and conflicts.

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Protection of Creation in the Catholic Church, Green Pilgrimage

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Abstract:

The nature is the heritage of mankind, it is the gift of God, the most Merciful.

God has created man on his Image. Our responsibility for our surroundings is equal, we have to care the nature, and keep it for our children. This is the teaching of God, this is the teaching of religions. In this paper I would like to introduce the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and the apostilic teachings of the popes of the Church. I also would like to introduce some example on the religional connection between people and nature. Pilgrimage is an ideal way of experiencing and contacting with nature. Green pilgrimage is a good practice, worth of spreading.

Keywords:

I.) Introduction - The Creation by God

The churches and religions of the world have an important responsibility to teach the society to preserve their created environment

I would like to cite Chapter 1 of the Genesis of The Holy Bible, 1st book of Moses:

"In the beginning, when God reated the heavens and the earth" (1)

Then God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. (3)

Then God said, "let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it" And so it happened.

27 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

So these lines are the first lines of the Book of Creation.
God entrusts the Creation to mankind, and places the responsibility on mankind to preserve creation.

In this paper, I would like to write about the approach of the Popes of the Roman Catholic Church on the preservation of Creation, and write about green pilgrimage, which is a good way to pray and make our self conscious of ecology at the same time.

II.) The teachings of the Popes of the Catholic Church to protect our environment, created by God

As I am a roman catholic, please let me introduce the approach of the Roman Catholic Church to the protection of Creation.

1.) Pope Paul VI
Octogesima Adveniens Apostolic Letter

"21. ... Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace - pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity - but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family.
The Christian must turn to these new perceptions in order to take on responsibility, together with the rest of men, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all."[1]

The Apostolic letter pays attention to the fundamental law issues of the world, with general social problems, among them we can find the protection of environment.

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[1] Octogesima Adveniens - Apostolic Letter of Pople Paul VI - Vatican 14. May 1971. - www.vatica.va

Pope Paul the VI calls the christian to cooperate with the whole world in order to protect the created environment, and that we have a common responsibility.

2.) Saint John Paul II
Centesimus Annus Encyclical Letter

In his Encyclical letter Pope John Paul II. calls our attention on the problems of the consumer's society, where we deplete our resources and destroy our environment. The pope also emphasized, that we are a co-operator with God in the framework of creation.
Pope John Paul II. also emphasizes the preservation of the biosphere, natural habitats of animals and species, which are threatened with extinction.

"37. Equally worrying is *the ecological question* which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. ..."[2]

"38. In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the *human environment,* something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried — though much less than they should be — about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, because they realize that each of these species makes its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, too little effort is made to *safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic "human ecology".* Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God's gift to man."[3]

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[2]John Paul II - Centesimus Annus Encyclical Letter - Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's on 1 May, the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker, In the year 1991, the thirteenth of his Pontificate - www.vatica.va

[3]John Paul II - Centesimus Annus Encyclical Letter - Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's on 1 May, the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker, In the year 1991, the thirteenth of his Pontificate - www.vatica.va

Beside all of these, the pope calls our attention, that our environment is a gift of God, and furthermore for this reason all people are gifts for other people. For this reason the question of protecting the environment is also a social-ecological issue.

Message of his holiness for the celebration of the World day of peace

In his message for the celebration of the World day of peace, his Holiness emphasizes, that the ecological crisis is also a moral problem. He mentions the advantages of technology and science, and the mission and responsibility given to mankind to preserve the environment.
He also emphasizes, that we cannot challenge the ecosystem, we must put enough attention on it to keep it for the coming generations.

"6. We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations"[4]

"13. Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its life style. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which these cause. As I have already stated, the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few." [5]

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[4] Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace 1 January 1990 - Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation - www.vatica.va

[5] Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace 1 January 1990 - Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation - www.vatica.va

3.) Pope Benedict XVI
Caritas in Veritate Encyclical Letter

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasizes the social importance and weight of the protection of our environment, and the importance of that we face a global problem. The preservation of the environment is so important as the elimination of poverty in the world.

"48. Today the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from *our relationship to the natural environment*. The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes. In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation."[6]

"50. This responsibility is a global one, for it is concerned not just with energy but with the whole of creation, which must not be bequeathed to future generations depleted of its resources. Human beings legitimately exercise a *responsible stewardship over nature*, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world's population."[7]

Pope Benedict XVI - Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace

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[6]Benedict XVI - Encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate - Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 29 June, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostoles Peter and Paul, inthe year 2009, the fift of his Pontificate - www.vatica.va

[7]Benedict XVI - Encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate - Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 29 June, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostoles Peter and Paul, inthe year 2009, the fift of his Pontificate - www.vatica.va

In his Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace the Pope emphasizes the importance of the role of the churches in the world, that the church must protect mankind from self-destruction.

" 12. The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of selfdestruction" **[8]**

4.) Pope Francis
"Laudatio Si" Encyclical letter on care for our common home

It shows the importance of the issue, that Pope Francis pays attention to the protection of environment in an independent encyclical letter, where he cites Saint Francis of Assisi. The starting words of the Encyclical letter are the followings:
"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".[9]
The Pope says, that "Saint Francis of Assisi was a mistyc and a pilgrim, who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to sociey, and interior peace"

Pope Francis chose the name of Saint Francis of Assisi for his papal title. Pope Francis says, that the reason for this was as well, that many people love Saint Francis also among christians and non-christians.

Pope Francis says, that climate is a "common good", which belongs to all of us. While the former Encyclical letter consider the protection of environment an important theme, among the other fundamental law issues, and global social challenges, Pope Francis enhances the

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[8]Message of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the celebration of the World Day of Peace - 1st January 2010. - www.vatica.va

[9]*Canticle of the Creatures*, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.

importance of protecting the environment, and attaches numerous important fundamental law questions to this issue, like the global inequality, or the access to drinking water.

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of our approach to the environment. It is not enough to consider our environment as a material object. We must consider it, as a gift of God, and it is our task to protect it.

III.) Green pilgrimage

From governments in the European Union, there is an existing ambition to develop green infrastructures across the countries. This initiative also exists on the level of local governments, and also on religional and EU level. Green infrastructure in this context means green ways, green corridors. Green ways are in many case founded by local communities, or local governments and civil movements. These ways are mainly for bicycle and pedestrian traffic, from one town to another town, from one village to another village.

Green ways are also important from the view of tourism, or for people visiting green parks, green heritages. Green infrastructure exists on the level of the European Union as well.

Please let me introduce some good practices of green pilgrimage from the European Union, where green ways were developed on long-time pilgrim routes, and where faith and environmental protection can meet together.

Good practices in the EU

Eurovelo bicycle network is trans-european network of bicycle routes, which connects regionial routes. Some of them already exists, but some of these routes are developed from EU funds, to connect the countries of Europe.

Eurovelo network was developed by the European Union and the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF)

Eurovelo 5

Eurovelo 5 bicycle route goes alongside a historical pilgrim route, which goes from Canterbury, Great-Brittain to Rome, Italy. The other name of this route is Via Romea Francigena.

In the 10th Centory the Archibishop of Centerbury, whose name was Sigeric, used this route to travel from Centerbury to rome, to take his mandation from the pope.

Now pilgrims, and tourists can use this way to travel through Europe. The route accesses Great-Brittain, Belgium, Luxemburg, France, Switzerland and Italy.
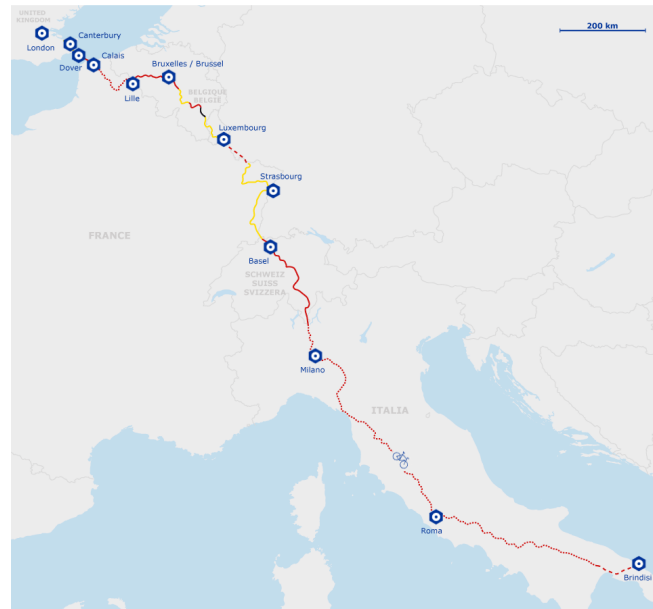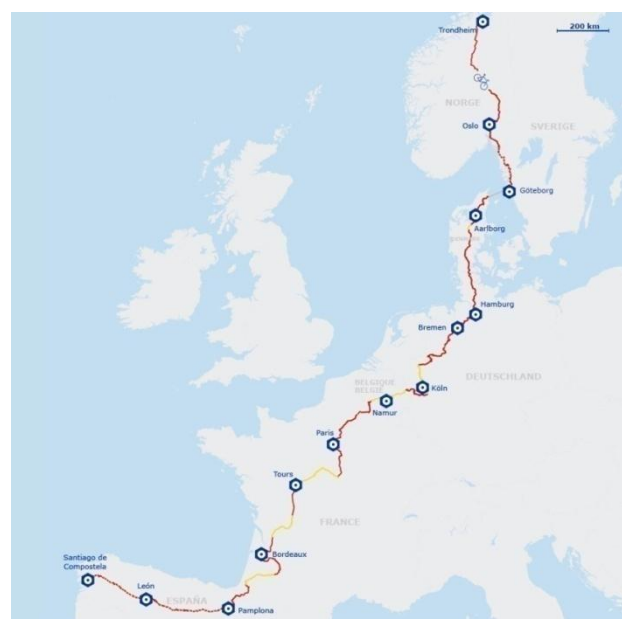

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Eurovelo 3

An other sample for a trans-european green-pilgrim route is the Eurovelo 3 route, which was built along middle-age pilgrim routes.

It starts in Trondheim, Norway, from the ways of Saint Olav, and ends in the way of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

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[10]Map of Eurovelo 5 bicycle route

The route access Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, France and Spain.

IV.) Summary

Summarized, I wanted to speak about the fact, that it is important for us, as religious people, who believe in God, that the world is entrusted on us by God, the environment included as well, which we need to preserve for the coming generations.

It is also important form religional reasons, and from the point of fundamental rights, because the protection of environment is more and more becoming a fundamental right and social issue as well.

For this reason I wanted to introduce the most important teachings of the Catholic Church, and some positive international practices in the EU, in the form of green pilgrim routes.

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[11]Map of Eurovelo 3 bicycle route

Inculcating Religious Tolerance

through Building Common Narratives

YasirPirzada

Abstract

The paper explores and reviews two major sources of information and value generation- education and mass media. Both of these sources have explicit and implicit messages that pass from one person to hundreds and thousands and to run in generations. The curriculum on the one hand in an educational institution and the discourse on print and electronic media on the other hand is encoded by the people who are not there in the classrooms or on screen; while decoded by the listeners who do not know who is making them think in a certain way. Education and mass media have influenced Pakistani society in past 7 decades; further identifies the challenge of the dominant discourses to be questioned. On the basis of detailed discourse analysis, it is concluded that there is no other option but to bring in multiple voices and narratives if we wish to inculcate religious tolerance.

Preamble

Social narratives are not built in a few years, rather they develop over longer periods of time; yet the generations go through various phases and experiences while they develop certain narratives. Pakistan since its inception to its independence and until now exhibits a clear example of "war of narratives". The struggle of independence was based upon the narrative of religious and values divide in the Subcontinent. Based on this narrative the freedom fighters won the case of having a separate state in the regions of Muslim majority. Since independence the narrative began to take another dimension; it was stated verbally and documented in every form that the country is made for Islam and Muslims. It is debated at various forums yet singular narrative is built so to enhance the significance of Islamic value system and its implementation. Up to this level there seems to be no major issue. But with the passage of time this narrative was interpreted and given new meanings by two major

communities of meaning- one in mass media and the other in education. For a longer period, singular dominating narrative was given voice and space while all other voices and choices were shunned. This tendency of the power pressure and creating hegemony remained so especially during the dictatorships, where the progressive, moderate and liberal narratives could never flourish. One after another dictatorship left behind the power structures which do not allow common people to speak up against the dominant and loud voices. The proponents of current dominant narrative do not allow promoting civic virtues among the common people and they do not need to have socially responsible, thoughtful and well-informed individuals; because that will challenge their power structures and elite position that they are enjoying. Pakistan's diversity of languages and cultures is intentionally concealed. Basic and fundamental requirements for citizenship are absent from the curricular and media's discourse such asknowing and respecting the law, preserving the natural resources and environment, health and hygiene, paying taxes, and any kind or form of social justice (UNDP).

ROLE OF MEDIA IN BUILDING NARRATIVES

> In a world dominated by print and electronic media, our sense of reality is increasingly structured by narrative. Feature films and documentaries tell us stories about ourselves and the world we live in. Television speaks back to us and offers us 'reality' in the form of hyperbole and parody. Print journalism turns daily life into a story. Advertisements narratives our fantasies and desires (Fulton, Huisman, Murphet and Dunn 2005, p.3).

We cannot deny the role of media in building narratives. Especially in the case of Pakistan. On the one hand Pakistan is known for a verbal culture and on the other hand electronic and print media has been the major source of information in the absence of research culture. People living in the remotest areas have been listening to Radio since ever, newspapers are read by fewer and heard by even those who cannot read themselves. There are almost no ethnographic or phenomenological studies which could produce grounded theories and evidence based social narratives. With the turn of new century Pakistan witnessed a rapid increase in private TV channels. Hence electronic and print media have been and still are considered the first and foremost reliable source of information. It was never so evident that media can have an agenda until the extremists' narrative became stronger in the country and some political parties were identified for using media to spread their message. The religious

extremist views and strong stance against the state were noticed in the recent years. After which the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority had to put restrictions on certain kind of discourse on the public and private TV/Radio Channels. Still the daily talk shows and news analysis brings about the dominant narratives along with the counter narrative. All news channels and newspapers are trying to include multiple dimensions. Yet not fully ready to resist the extremist discourse.

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN BUILDING NARRATIVES

Pakistan's public education system has an important role in determining how successful we shall be in achieving the goal of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan. A key requirement is that children learn to understand and value this goal and cherish the values of truthfulness, honesty, responsibility, equality, justice, and peace that go with it. Children's identities and value systems are strongly shaped by the national curricula and textbooks in Social Studies, English, Urdu and Civics from Class I to Class XII (Nayyer and Salim 2002).

There have been many content analyses conducted with similar research questions and it has been reported time and again that from 1980s until 2000 the content in the text books of social sciences and humanities at primary to higher secondary schools was only serving single purpose and that was radicalization towards single narrative construction while that only the dominant one. The researchers have highlighted and identified the content that contained twisted facts, and text materials which build aggressive narrative if not hate speech. Hence the children coming out of such schooling tend to build a narrative of confrontation and animosity. Some major findings in the report published by United States Institute of Peace (2010) are given here:

- Current education system does not prepare the students for complicated problem solving or to counter the prevailing, problematic narratives in society and the media; instead the education also strengthens them.
- A popular narrative of terrorism puts the blame on the United States and India. Another narrative describes the Taliban's' cause as religious one and hence a supportive attitude is developed on this basis.
- Classroom instruction does not include critical pedagogy and do not permit questions from the students. The curriculum needs to be reformed to meet international

standards and to develop critical thinking and to create tolerant citizens. Official textbooks need to be revised for including unbiased view of history.

Keeping in view the above-mentioned findings the educational planners realized and tried to filter the curricular text but have not been much successful, because removal of identified materials from the text books was labeled as treason from the national and religious priorities. Hence the progressive, liberal and moderate narratives were infused within the texts but the identified text which promotes aggression and hostility could not be removed. This has now made the curriculum self-contradictory at various levels.

THE TWO RESULTANT NARRATIVES

Since 9/11/2001 on the one hand Pakistan faced the bigger challenge of terrorism and on the other hand the "war of narratives" became stronger. The authors, speakers, columnists and analysts could be categorized clearly as the "right" or "left" wings' representatives. The right-wing speakers were playing the cards and selling the narrative of religious and patriotic through their out and loud slogans while the left wing was representing the silent majority of Pakistan who had never sent out their message. The opportunists and apologists were selling the idea that "extremism and Talibanization" is something implanted by the enemies across the borders and the war against terrorism is enforced on us. The religious intolerance in this narrative has been evident as the message given to common men is that world is against us because of our religion. We are at war with the Non-Muslims therefore they are trying to break our strength. The Muslims cannot be wrong by any means. War is not against terror, rather war is against Muslims. This narrative was countered by a smaller group of analysts and authors who were conveying this message time and again that the two issues of extremism and Talibanization are rooted down to our own mistakes at the deeper level. The political, bilateral and social processes and procedures that we adopted were not thought through and decisions were made by the dictators without people's opinion polls, hence resulted in these challenging situations. Now that the two democratic Governments have completed their tenures; slowly and gradually we have seen that in our text books as well as within the print and electronic media at least two opposite narratives are clearly visible. This can be a transitional stage where I see the emergence of counter narratives against the dominant narrative as a further step and I am optimistic about it because from here on we can move towards building common narratives of peace and tolerance.

BUILDING COMMON NARRATIVES FOR PEACE

Here I present my case that in a society like Pakistan where literacy rate has not crossed 60% yet and where people build their beliefs and behaviors upon the narrative of so called "educated" lot; we need to rethink the narratives building within education and mass media. The curriculum on the one hand in an educational institution and the discourse on print and electronic media on the other hand is encoded by the people in power and some pressure groups. These groups of people are not directly communicating in the classrooms or in media, but their influence is there as an implicit curriculum and hidden message between the lines. The text and verbal message given in the text books, teachers' lectures or in the discourse of mass media is decoded by the readers listeners who do not know who is making them think in a certain way. Now we have reached at the point where the narrative and counter narrative is present, visible and audible. But still the progressive, moderate and liberal or democratic narrative is not as strong as the aggressive one. In my view the best way to build common and peaceful narrative is if we work at three levels simultaneously– one at the curricular reforms; second training of teachers and media personnel and professionals; third at the filtration of text and speech going on air at electronic media or in print media. An additional effort is to bring people of different schools of thought together for true reforms. We rarely see any debate or discussion where various religious scholars or people from across the borders talk about the real issues. In the Pakistani curriculum we have mentioned the names of other religions but never allowed our children to learn how various religions give a common message of peace. The text books and the teachers have not been able to let the young minds get the idea of humanity first. They keep learning the radicalized curriculum and also get the messages of peace education spread out here and there within the text books. Now that we wish the education system to clearly work for interfaith harmony and peace; this is only possible when we bring more voices in and let more people have a say in the narrative building than specific power and pressure groups. I cannot miss to mention the social media and its influence on the mindset as well as its role in building common narratives. We can clearly see that digital world generally and social media specifically has added multiple dimensions to the current discourse in any corner of the world. Hence the narratives of 21st century would be built by multiple communities of meaning. In a classroom or in the conventional media the discourse is now influenced by the discourse at the social media. We cannot stop and deny anymore that multiple meanings are given to realities in social sciences

by the interpreters therefore it is better to include more and more voices and instead of infusing and enforcing one or two selected narratives, let the new generations build common narratives based on their own analysis and proliferation of multiple voices and perspectives. The religious tolerance to me will be an outcome of rich common narrative in which single dominant culture may not overshadow the voices of subgroups of population. Peace and harmony in any society are the bi-products of tolerance and acceptance of opposite opinion. Instead of portraying the world as antagonist, we need to develop the global citizenship based on humanity. We even need to enhance similarities rather than differences. Live and let live should be the human behavior in the era of connectivism. We cannot remain isolated and the new generations are already ahead of us in building connections. Therefore, we must take this as an opportunity instead of feeling threatened.

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Averting Islamophobia in Latin America:

The Media Coverage:

From Orientalism to New Fears

and Positive Counter-Constructions

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Abstract

This article deals with the media coverage of Islam and the Middle East in Latin America where up until recently, basically until 9/11, news from this region were almost nonexistent and little attention was paid to events happening in the Islamic and Arab world. Although not always a negative reporting, the picture that emerges is often mixed. Islam, as a religion, is still presented as a key element of conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. Hence, the article will suggest potential measures to enhance the task of the media by improving the knowledge and sensitivity of the presenters and editors towards specific issues and conflicts so as to avoid the "Us "and "Them" dichotomy.

Introduction

Current events in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region continue to attract significant attention from news agencies and media around the globe. However, lack of background information or pre- established stereotypes continue to play against adequate narratives on major conflicts involving complex situations such as the war in Syria or the rise of new groups that exploit religion and beliefs to pose a threat to security, both on a regional and international level.

As an academic that enjoys constant presence in the media at the national level in

Uruguay (South America) and internationally through frequent interviews with CNN, for example, I experience at firsthand how mainstream media works. I understand journalists, as well as presenters and analysts share a crucial role in shaping viewers' ideas. Hence they contribute constantly towards constructing an image based on their narratives. Thus, it is vital to have adequate and sufficient background information on their stories and they must address conflicts carefully, from an unbiased perspective, avoiding the temptation of simplifying complexities or conflicting narratives that can ultimately lead to either misinformation or leaving negative impression on their readership.

Background

Contrary to what happens in other countries in the West, mainly in Europe and the U.S. the media in Latin America has kept a different editorial line from that followed by the main international newspapers in which old prejudices about Islam and Arabs prevail. Despite being neighbors and after living together for centuries, the West does not fully understand Islam yet and there is still confusion about basic concepts such as Arab and Muslim identities.

There are different degrees of ignorance in Latin American countries in relation to Muslims and Islam. Ignorance contributes to a sense of unease especially against a background of increased alarms with regards international security. However, Latin American citizens are well aware of their own history of a colonial past and constant interference from their northern neighbor the U.S. in their sovereign matters. Thus, this helps against mainstream racism and xenophobia attitudes in the media. Although major newspapers in Latin America are not islamophobic, the representation of Islam and Muslims is not problem-free. As Akbarzadeh and Smith comment on Australian journalism (2005, pg. 36) journalists are shaped by their social environment and are open to a range of political and ideological influences, some of which are openly hostile towards Islam.

Qualitative Analysis

The coverage of the arrival of the first Syrian refugees to Uruguay in October 2014 and the news about their daily activities after that, revealed the lack of journalists' familiarity with Islam and professionalism. This situation repeated itself after the arrival of six former

detainees from Guantanamo in December 2014. News content went from stereotyping and inducing negative feelings towards the presence of these individuals in Uruguay to naive and basic representations of a monolithic Islam, failing to explain the diversity of the Islamic community. Old clichés and basic arguments were raised again to refer to the risks of Syrian women using their veil or hiyab in public and newspapers reproduced political debates about the suitability or inconvenience of building a mosque in Uruguayan territory.

In fact the media coverage of the situation in Syria and Irak, the "war on ISIS and terror" and the Paris attacks last 16 November 2015, finally had a negative impact on public opinion in Uruguay but also at the Government level. As a result of an increased sense of vulnerability towards the terrorist threat and unease in society, the Government of President Tabare Vazquez, who visited the Middle East in several occasions and established embassies in the State of Qatar and U.A.E. during his first mandate (2005-2010), decided not to continue with the implementation of the Program of Asylum and Refuge for Syrian refugees and declined bringing the second group of refugees from Lebanon as had been planned and agreed with international organizations such as the IOM (International Organization for Migration) and UNHCR (United Nations' Refugee Agency).

This is an obvious case in point of how the content of news and editorial stories about terrorism and radical interpretations of Islam is anchored in the shocking negativity of these events, and the senseless nature of terrorist attacks. Even informed journalists with a high sense of professionalism and a commitment to avoiding stereotypes find it difficult to escape from the negative impression that links Islam with violence and barbaric acts. Reputed Latin American journalists who contacted me after the Paris attacks tried to use careful language and avoided profiling Muslims in a conscious attempt to avoid linking well established Muslim communities in Latin America with terrorist groups that exploit Islamic jargon and faith to excuse their violence. Hence, major newspapers and media groups in Mexico and Colombia like "Excelsior" and "Caracol" or important radios from Venezuela and Bolivia could not be blamed after the Paris attacks last November for negative and bias coverage and their stories did not try to leave a negative impression on purpose. Yet, this happenednonetheless.

This was the case in Uruguay where society was already sufficiently bias against the arrival of more refugees from Syria and other Muslim countries after the first Syrian families

who arrived in late 2014 staged a very controversial protest in front of the Government offices in September 2015.

Research Findings

Having exposed the degree of ignorance about Islam and Middle Eastern issues in Latin America and its negative impact on news contents and coverage of Islam in the media, it is important to highlight that the relationship between most Latin American countries and Islamic nations, at both the diplomatic and commercial level, has changed over time. As countries like Brazil or Argentina and Mexico developed economically, so did their interest in exploring new markets.

Despite current political turbulences in Brazil, the Latin American giant enjoys great influence and power in the continent and under the rule of former President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva (alias Lula) Brazil attempted to play a bigger role in global issues such as trying to build bridges of understanding between Iran and the West. Although there was always great domestic and regional skepticism about the political relationship between a left wing and progressive Government run by a former syndicalist like Lula of Brazil and the theological Government of Iran, they shared a common interest and position about confronting the U.S. influence and narratives on Islam in their countries.

Once again, when President Dilma Rousseff arrived to power in 2010, a piece of news coming from Iran opened the door to a heated debate on the Brazilian media that finally paved the way for President Rousseff to stand up true to her gender condition and avoid a political relationship with a country such as Iran perceived as unfair to women. We are herein referring to the Sakineh affair. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian woman was accused of adultery and murder and she received a death penalty by stoning in 2006. An international campaign to outcry this type of legal decisions in Iran and other Muslim countries where Shari'ah is applied resulted in suspending the stoning sentence which is still pending.

Brazil has enormous potential for trade and commerce with countries that exhibit high purchasing power and investment capacity, like all Arab monarchies in the Gulf. Hence, a deeper and more solid knowledge about the history and political systems of countries like

Qatar or Saudi Arabia is much needed in this country. From journalists to businessmen and lawyers there is a need to offer University major degrees and diplomas to study current events in the Middle East from an academic, unbiased and well documented perspective with a multidisciplinary approach.

Most governments in Latin America are currently run by left wing parties which traditionally pursue a more objective analysis on events happening in the Middle East. In the age of globalization worldwide anti imperialism and anti US feelings have a direct impact on speech and opinion building. Citizens in Latin America in general mistrust the US media. It is also true to recognize that in most Latin American countries journalism was not considered a profession until recently. Hence it was a vocational option for many radio commentators and skilled editors. In fact, international journalism is hardly ever offered in most Communication majors at undergraduate level in all Latin America. Journalists wishing to pursue a career in that field must later follow a postgraduate study.

Hence, Latin America suffers still from an acute lack of professional journalists with an expertise on global issues, which results in articles and news that reproduce contents provided by international news agencies, often with a very ethnocentric vision of the tensions between the West and Islam. As said before, although in principle major newspapers and media outlets in Latin America cannot be categorized as islamophobic or bias against Muslims, they fall into this trap due to their lack of background knowledge on Islam and Middle Eastern issues.

Hence, it is important to improve educational programs at the High School level but also at University so as to avoid resorting to long standing stereotypes. Current events in the Middle East allow space for new prejudices and myths. Before, Arabs and Muslims in Latin America were traditionally called Turks. From Colombia to Argentina the adjective Turkish is well known. In Brazil they are called mascates and they used to travel from one city to the next on foot while selling door to door. This has been the traditional representation of Arabs and all migrants coming from the Middle East to Latin America from the early days of the XX Century to practically 11/9 and the subsequent launch of the "war on global terror" campaign.

However, nowadays the term "Turk" or "Turkish" has been left aside and instead one

hears adjectives such as "Taliban" or "jihadist". This type of irony or sarcasm employed in normal daily conversations unveil old clichés and renewed fears that reconfirm bias against a community of believers much misunderstood by citizens in Latin America, who are still influenced by the dominant religion Christianity, albeit the loss of centrality and power that the Catholic Church enjoyed once upon a time. In all Latin American countries there has been a de-privatization process by which religion is not monopolistic any longer. In fact, Pentecostalism is rising fast in all countries from Colombia to Chile, following the trend of North American protestant and evangelical churches.

Therefore, it is vital to address these new myths that are being created on a continuous flow of negative contents and oversimplified representations of Muslims in the news in Latin America, too. The traditional image spread in Latin American media used to be that of a witty, unclean and not very well educated salesman but basically a person with a good heart. Arab communities in Brazil or Argentina and Uruguay contributed greatly towards State and Nation building, especially in the fields of culture with press publications, and commerce, implementing revolutionary methods such as credit programs. Today we must add to these, other, more negative, perceptions such as social deviants and security threats. It is of the essence to address this situation rapidly and improve the background information that teachers and Professors have about Islam in Latin America so as to help them tackle these new stereotypes in a suitable manner, especially since most Governments in Latin America are truly concerned with implementing educational programs that avoid any type of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

Having better educated professors and teachers can only result in bridging the psychological wall that is being built by the impact of the media coverage and hence, avoiding falling into the trap of the "Us" and "Them" dichotomy again.

Arab migrants that arrived to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay formed the Mahyar movement that gave its title to a new type of literature genre: the literature of "exile". This movement was especially strong and influential in the U.S. too. Among its major representatives we can mention the famous Lebanese poet Gibran Khalil Gibran.

In countries such as Uruguay, which ranks high among the top countries of non beliefs, the overzealous defense of laicity, from the State first and society next, has played

against teaching students about the importance of religion, not with an aim to impose one faith over the rest or to indoctrinate but in order to explain ways in which religion and politics mix in many societies. Even religious citizens in Uruguay belonging to different faiths such as the Afro umbandan movements or Evangelicals understand there is a divorce between religion and Statehood. Hence they find it especially difficult to understand the interaction between religious beliefs and political ideologies that currently take place in many Muslim countries. As a result, they fall into the simplification process of blaming religion as the basic reason behind armed conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. News contents lack the depth and background information needed to explain all the causes behind these conflicts and some reputed editorialists still prefer to exploit sentiments against imperialistic foreign policies that drive major powers in the Middle East. Hence, Latin American citizens, regardless of their faith, adopt a paternalistic attitude and emphasize the need for Islamic societies to abandon religion at least at the public level.

It is desirable, therefore, to promote instances for debate and reflection between the three Abrahamic religions, which are indeed the basis of religiosity in Latin America, despite the growth of syncretic religions mixing ancient native practices with monotheistic beliefs in Brazil and other countries in Central America.

On the other hand it is important to remember that Latin America has focused in recent years, on overcoming its own wounds after the wars for independence from the Portuguese and Spanish Empires and more recently pursuing justice and truth after the return of Democracy and the end of Dictatorship in Chile, Argentina or Uruguay. On the academic and analytical level, this traumatic past has nourished a geopolitical approach by which the emphasis was always on the continent and the Latin American region. Nowadays, major faculties in State and private universities recognize the need to train more professors of History, Political Science and International Relations, to mention only a few disciplines, on Middle Eastern Area studies. In comparison to Europe, there are still very few academic associations that specialize in the study of Asia and Africa. Hence, it would be desirable to promote educational cooperation agreements between Latin America and Islamic countries in order to have exchange programs and start building a network of professors and researchers with shared interests. As much as I criticize the ignorance about Islam prevailing in our region, it is also true that the same happens in the Middle East with regards to Latin America.

Very few Muslims know basic facts about our region, except for clear exceptions like Brazil or Mexico, two major markets in the continent and the source of a continuous flow of news. Even then, the image of "latinos" is reduced to the representation that Hollywood movies offer of Hispanic immigrants, often linked to negative stories like narco-traffic, money laundering, rogue states and "guerrilla "movements.

International and Somestic Events

Scholars and other professionals in Latin America recognize the imperative need to abandon the ethnocentric vision of the world. At times when much is being written and disseminated about a new paradigm of international cooperation and financial aid, from a southern perspective, major countries in Latin America have the chance to build a relationship based on complementarities and away from imposed agendas by third parties, usually located in developed countries.

Some attempts have already been made. The highly advertized Alliance of Civilizations in which many Latin American countries participate or the more recent SPA scheme initiated by President Lula of Brazil in 2005 by which Arab countries celebrate summits where they meet all Latin American nations, are two examples of the above mentioned. However, it is regrettable that the news coverage of these summits is either too limited or nonexistent. Hence, a beautiful opportunity to explain to the Latin American readership about other relationship possibilities based on something different to violence, threats or economic goals is lost up until today.

Arab and Muslim nations are in need of redefining their image and perceptions at the international level. Hence, Latin America can become a more reliable partner since both regions can attempt to establish a more just and balanced relationship, given the common colonial past they share. Latin America is still very dependent on its commercial and political ties with major powers like the U.S. and the European Union and nowadays China, too. This is another similarity with major Islamic and Arab countries.

The recent arrival of TV stations like Al Jazeera and Hispan TV (from Iranian origin) to Latin America has opened the door for new sources of stories and different narratives. The latter is less known but it is important to emphasize the role it is playing in explaining to Latin American audiences the ordinariness of Muslim families and converts to

Islam in Colombia, Argentina or El Salvador. Hence, this type of documentaries satisfies a genuine public curiosity to learn about authentic Islam without stereotyping. It would be interesting to promote distribution of these programs through other state and private TV channels so as to educate in a multicultural approach, thus contributing to overcoming religious and racial tensions. This is especially important for countries like Brazil or Argentina since they receive a significant number of migrants from other Latin American countries but also from Africa and Asia.

This article summarizes research efforts to analyze the images and narratives generally used in Latin American media to refer to Muslims and Islam which finally affect the public perception of Muslim and Arab communities living in Latin American countries, especially after new arrivals of recent migrants like Pakistani and Iranian citizens in Ecuador.

The "war on terror" meant in fact a sort of waiver for journalists and media commentators to slip into prejudices and a process of essentialization of a preconceived Muslim behavior. Thus, assigning certain characteristics to all members of a group, regardless of their context. Essentializing advocates ultimately argue that these characteristics are permanent, unchangeable and eternal, even if they have not been expressed yet due to lack of opportunities. However, scientific research shows that human acts are not programmed in our AND. Rather, they are the natural consequence of our upbringing, education and social codes, on the one hand and our efforts to align our acts with the principles we have chosen in life, on the other. In sum, our genetics only provide us with the necessary biological tools to learn, decide and execute.

Positive Counter-Constructions

Stereotypes about Muslims and Arabs in Latin America are thus very similar to those in most Western societies. We can thereby draw the conclusion that they are built on a long standing orientalist tradition born out of the colonial processes lived in the MENA region.

I consider this stigmatizing discourse particularly dangerous given the current international situation and in light of efforts made by some countries in Latin America to approach both politically and economically Islamic countries in recent years. The local media faces the challenge of contributing with positive stories and narratives towards building a

culture of tolerance and coexistence with these "Others". Migrants from the Middle East and Asia continue to arrive to Latin America. Hence, it is vital to learn to adapt to other cultural realities perceived as very distant by any ordinary citizen in Latin America. In my capacity as Professor of Islam and Arabic studies but also as a regular analyst on international politics in the media I wish to continue with my efforts to fight recent episodes of Islamophobia. It is important that Latin America does not fall into the temptation of importing conflicts and tensions occurring in Europe, for example, where Muslim communities are much larger and hence experience other difficulties to adapt to the dominant society.

Conclusion

The conclusions inherent in this article point to the importance of balanced news coverage of events related to Islam. So far, the coverage of Islam in the Latin American media increased and gathered momentum only after the "war on terror" was launched by former President George W. Bush. In that sense news contents and narratives felt into the simplification of terms, essentialization of Muslim behavior and reproduced old fashioned clichés so frequent in Western media elsewhere.

However, not all editorial lines and programs can be faulted for disseminating negative perceptions about Islam and Muslims given the current situation in the Middle East and Africa where radical groups are also guilty of jeopardizing the Islamic language and beliefs to exploit sensitivities among alienated and radical youths in the Islamic world, as well as in the West. They are later categorized as "jihadists" in the media against a backdrop of increased security threats. The recent arrival of migrants from countries like Pakistan or Iran for economic reasons and others such as former Guantanamo detainees to Uruguay sparkled public debate and social unease about potential threats to domestic security.

The unsolved cases of terrorist attacks against Jewish and Israeli centers in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina in 1992 and 1994 nurtures a discourse on the side of Jewish communities in Latin America based on denouncing an increased presence of Iranian organizations charged with disseminating Shia ideology in the Latin American continent. Although intelligence reports from Latin American agencies minimize this risk, the coverage in the media capitalizes social fears and negative perceptions, hence contributing to a misrepresentation of all Muslims.

Besides, occasional reports from different newspapers and agencies in the U.S. contribute to stigmatize the triple frontier between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay as a nest of terrorists. This has been the case since 9/11 and until Bin Laden's death it was rather common for ordinary citizens in South America to refer to that frontier as a stronghold of Al Qaeda and other "sleeping Islamic terrorist cells". Today the security threat appears to be far more distant but bias analysts intentionally exploit current events to raise alarms about the possibility of ISIS recruiting combatants in Latin American countries currently undergoing economic and social difficulties and with a high level of social unrest.

It is widely acknowledged that the term fundamentalism does not exclusively address radical groups in Islam. In fact the term was first used by North American protestant churches in the 19th Century. Yet, journalists in the Latin American media lack the background information on religion and other social and historical aspects of Islam and other far distant cultures for that matter, such as the Indian or Chinese cultural traditions.

It is thus important to revisit educational programs at the Secondary education and University levels in order to obtain graduates with adequate knowledge and understanding capacities about Islam and Middle Eastern issues in the near future. Meanwhile, pursuing more careful narratives with a polished and selected language to avoid stereotyping and building new myths that could open the window for more negative perceptions is a good starting point. Professional and unbiased reporting can contribute significantly public education so as to avert Islamophobic feelings and inform the current debate on Islam and the future of Muslims in Latin America.

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