Marco Demichelis (Hg.)

Religious Violence, Political Ends

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Religion and Civil Society

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Religious Violence, Political Ends
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Religious Violence, Political Ends

Nationalism, Citizenship and Radicalizations
in the Middle East and Europe

Edited by Marco Demichelis

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Foreword

This book is a mirrored study on the conceptualization of violence in Middle Eastern and European contemporary geography through a theoretical inter-religious and gender background, thanks to work on specific case studies.

In the last twenty years, both the narrative of the "Clash of Civilizations" in the Western world and, previously, the building process of a national identity in the Middle East's post-colonial phase, developed and impacted on both geographies, emphasizing our inability to live in a plural society. However, as this work will clearly show, behind a detrimental attitude towards religious minorities, there is a political purpose capable of strengthening prejudices, conflicts and new fascisms.

Furthermore, in these essays the investigation is biunivocal: on the one hand, violence is regarded as the expression of an autocratic domination in a Middle East as seen through the case studies on Egypt, Iraq and Iran, and on the other hand, violence is symptomatic of a democratic European geography, France and Italy in particular, sparking off damaging reactions.

Introduced by an essay focused on the Orientalist-Occidentalist narrative of violence within Islam as a peculiarity from the beginning of its history (Ed. Said, 1978, 1981/Baruma-Margalit, 2004) and that in recent decades has been emphasized by the motto of "Islamic Supremacism", this work is an in-depth part of a contemporary dynamic of inter-religious confrontation.

This juxtaposition, although having its roots in the debate of inter-religious conflict, has remained far from being able to deal with complex religious issues; on the contrary, the differentiation of religion assumes an ideological connotation to support discriminatory policies based on national and identity issues that have nothing to do with real differences in belief.

In recent decades, religious minorities or gender issues have become an important field of comparison between the "Western" and the Islamic world, narratively supporting autocratic desires.

More specifically, thinking about the case studies analysed before Western democracies and Arab autocracies supported a further fragmentation of Middle East (from 2003), women and religious minorities (Christians of different churches, but also Yazidis) were discriminated in relation to the ideological perspective of the modern nation-state narrative and the devolution of distinct nationalistic- religious projects:

The figure of Fatima (the Prophet's daughter), for example, as a symbol of purity and religious commitments within a new ideological perspective for Iranian women after the Revolution of 1979.

Mubarak's political need to obtain support from the Copts for his anti-terrorism policies but also to create a magnificent image of interreligious harmony, which allowed Coptic independence in community affairs, but without a real and concrete political representation in the country's institutions.

The Arabization and Ba'athification of Iraq's Christian minorities under the secularized regimes, which preceded and proceeded during the narrative of Saddam Hussein's personality cult, giving him the image of an autocratic inter-religious figure (like Hafez and Bashar al-Assad in Syria) able to preserve the unity of the country's plurality but more specifically to preserve a Christian presence in those areas.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, violence against religious minorities, in this case, whether Muslim citizens or not, is certainly less impactful, but no less dangerous, in particular in relation to the preservation of a democratic system. The radicalization process of young foreign fighters in France cannot be univocally attributed to the difficulties of integration into a secularized –highly ideological society, or, on the contrary, to Kepel's exceptionalist vision of Islam and Salafism.

The *malaise* under examination is that of a state in which the presence of a secular-republican ideology is particularly strong, but also that of some areas, parts of France, where the state is completely absent. Jihadist radicalization cannot be considered a generalized European problem if there are countries where foreign fighters are nu-

merically predominant. It is clear that there are specific French factors which have emphasized a radicalization within its no-state areas, a national "hidden" violence which has accelerated in specific parts of the country (the *banlieues*) and that shows a huge contrast with the revolutionary motto: *Liberté, Egalitè, Fraternité*.

The Italian case, on the contrary, is less studied, difficult to interpret and curiously still free from terrorist attacks. The key to understand the Italian case is the "amateurish" political level of violence against minorities still lacking integration and rights.

It is a keg of gunpowder, but Italians are blissfully unaware of it. The lack of Italian citizenship for children born in the country to parents who are recognized and integrated in the state, will produce evident identity difficulties in future decades; the Islamophobic attitude of the Italian media, on the other hand, will clearly risk increasing the "acceleration" factor previously seen in the French case, increasing, as is already evident, the citizens' fearful approach to inter-religious and inter-cultural dynamics.

Finally, Italian political instability and the inability to find social-political continuity in the party coalition programmes, in particular concerning topics related to minorities and migrants, have clearly developed an ineffective capability to find coherent solutions.

The debate remains open, on the contrary: the possibility of preserving the Christian religious minorities in the Middle East and of limiting extremist right-wing and neo-fascists' political deviances in Europe is related to the capacity to properly understand these sets of problems.

These chapters were presented for the first time at an International Workshop organized with the ICS (Institute for Culture and Society) of the University of Navarra in October 2017.

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Islamic *Supremacy*, The early "Islamic" century and the violence against the Other. A historical-religious perspective
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1. Introduction. Arab or Islamic conquests? Whose Supremacism?

The decrease of religious praxis in Western countries partially coincided with the advent of the "New Age"[1] and the end of the Cold War –overlooking the increasing role played by the Gulf States in the internal policies of Arab countries, shaping the "Global Jihad" approach with the support of the United States during the final confrontation with the Soviet Union (Soviet-Afghan war 1979-1989).

In parallel, the weakening of Arab-Islamic[2] university curricula as well as hermeneutic religious understanding in the contemporary world[3] clearly emerged at the same time with a major political and economic pressure pushing Islam and political leaders to play an increasing ideological role, shaping it as a form of "Political Islam".

This became a phrasal idiom overemphasized in the media which is not that different from S. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations".

However, the main risk of contemporary religious violence in the Middle East and Europe, like the inability of the media to properly interpret the on-going situation, stimulated a "standardizing" representation of Islam and "oriental" geography as perennially at war, barbaric and without any possibility of "redemption".

The absence of Western discernment of the recent events which have affected this area has increased an Islamophobic attitude based

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1 By "New Age" I define all the artificial versions and practices of distortion of non-Western religious tradition served up in particular from the '80s to a European or North American audience, usually unable to fully understand it: Native North American spirituality, Islamic Sufism, different forms of Yoga, Buddhism etc. These are just a few examples in which Western marketing speculation in the sphere of spirituality and religion has been able to bring to Western society the "dangerous" idea that all, even intimate aspects, are easily comprehensible and reproducible even though they come from a thousand year-old culture and civilization.

2 H. Djait, *Islamic Culture in Crisis: A Reflection on Civilizations in History* (London: Routledge, 2011), Ch. 4; A. Allawi, Ali, *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp.109ff., 229ff.

3 O. Roy, *La Sainte Ignorance. Les temps de la religion sans culture* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2008); R. Bettini, *Religione e Politica. L'ibridazione Islamica* (Roma: Armando Editore, 2013); H. Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

on false prejudices, clichés and a regrettable dread of diversity that has exploded in parallel with the concern over an invasion by sub-Saharan emigrants.

The "Islamic attitude to supremacy" that short story writers and journalists have also already foreseen and depicted referring to Islam as the future majority European religious community after 2050,[4] is a fictional speculation not only un-supported by statistical data,[5] but detrimental of a concept of Islamic "*Supremacy*" which emphasized a narrative of fear, particularly evident after 9/11.

E. Said on the one hand, like A. Margalit and I. Baruma on the other, have already analyzed and described how the Old Continent and the USA have adopted since the 19th century a representing "narrative" to define the Others in order to produce an image of the "Orients" built up through our cultural stereotypes and most intimate weaknesses.[6]

The attitude of religious and violent Islamic "Supremacy" is one of these and in the following pages it will be discussed using a historical and a religious methodological approach.

The first one tries to clarify the "*Supremacist*" early Arab conquering campaigns as dissociated from a real and already concrete new Islamic religious identity.

Over the last forty years the historical comprehension of the first century of Islam has been deconstructed and analysed in a more interdisciplinary way; different sources: archaeological, numismatic, inter-religious etc., have greatly reshaped a previous understanding which is bringing early Islamic history towards new insights.

Historians and experts in Islamic Studies and History such as J. Wansbrough, P. Crone, U. Rubin, G. R. Hawting, F. Donner and R.

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4 M. Houellebecq, *Soumission* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015); O. Fallaci, *La Forza della Ragione* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2004); Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Nomad. From Islam to America: a Personal Journey through the Clash of Civilization* (New York: Free Press, 2010); S. Gouguenheim, *Aristote au Mont S. Michel. Les Racines grecques de l'Europe Chrétienne* (Paris: Ed. Du Seuil, 2008).

5 http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/europe/ [Last access: 20.07.2018].

6 E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); A. Margalit, I. Baruma, *Occidentalism: the Western in the eyes of the enemies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

Hoyland[7] have contributed, since the 1970s, to showing a new imagery of early Islamic history, inasmuch reformulating it within a more inclusive monotheistic *milieu* than a clearly identified and structured new religion (Islam).

For the first time, the advent of Islam was not described as an extremely fast experience which coincided with the extremely rapid conquering campaigns that in a century brought a huge geographical area from the border of the Indian Subcontinent to the Iberian peninsula under "Arab" control.

For the first time, the two historical events were divided and analysed separately.

To the fairly "common" question: how was it possible for the Arabs of the Peninsula to conquer this extended empire in such a short time?

R. Hoyland's reply is quite convincing:

> The Arabs' victories were certainly stunning and their progress was much faster than that of settled powers like the Romans, but it is comparable with armies comprising a high proportion of nomads.[8]

This is historically clear, uni-vocally considering nomadic populations such as the Mongols of Genghis Khan, the Turk-Mongol hordes of Timur, Attila's Huns and the Hephthalite. It is also significant to highlight that they had tremendous conquering capabilities, even though more limited in preserving an effective state control. For this historical reason, it is important to make a major distinction

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7 J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); P. Crone, M. Hinds, *God's Caliph. Religious Authority in the first centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism. The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); U. Rubin, *Muhammad the Prophet and Arabia* (London: Routledge, 2011); U. Rubin, "Al-Ṣamad and the High God. An Interpretation of Sura CXII", *Der Islam*, 61, 2 (1984), pp. 197-217; U. Rubin, "Quran and Tafsir. The case of 'an yadin'", *Der Islam*, 70 (1993), pp. 133-144; F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam, tr. Italian, Maometto e le origini dell'Islam* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi ed., 2011); R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others saw it. A survey of evaluation as Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997).

8 R. Hoyland, *In God's path. The Arab conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 3.

between the Arab conquests from the concrete and inner elaboration of a new form of religiosity with Abrahamic roots called Islam.

Can we think about a Christian religion after Jesus' ascension? Or do we need to wait until we understand how the Christians differentiated themselves from Pharisaic Judaism? Can we talk about Islam immediately after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632? Or do we need to wait until some clear differences emerged between this new form of religiosity and previous Abrahamic traditions?

This is the main reason why we cannot talk about "Islamic conquests" from the beginning; we probably need to wait until the first/second decade of the 8th century to start identifying the leading political rulers of this extended empire as the Caliph of a new religious community "in progress."[9]

The first half of the 8th century is a historical phase in which the Arab conquests were already ending, as was the first Arab empire in history, the Umayyad empire (661-750).

What historiography has always shown is a paradigmatic date, usually adopted to distinguish different periods: the Fall of the Roman Western Empire in 476 has a great meaning for European historiography, but is quite limited in relation to the eastern part of the Mediterranean where late Antiquity merged with the early Islamic age. Historical passages are usually not so catastrophic, but need time to be absorbed.

This is also clear in relation to "oral transmission" and "religious revelations" which for many reasons –historical, linguistic, geographical and logical– do not follow the common "collecting traditions" that are usually attributed to them. The 'Abbasid Islamic narrative which historically clarifies how the third *Khulafa al-Rashidin*, 'Othman ibn 'Affan (d. 656) gathered the early *Mushaf* (today's meaning: collection) from seven or nine versions into a canonical one, shaping three or four copies which were sent to the cities of Damascus, Basra and Kufa, while one probably remained in Medina, can be properly considered as a real fact with difficulty and even if it were

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9 A. Fuess, J.-P. Hartung, *Court Cultures in the Muslim World. Seventh to nineteenth century* (London: SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2011), pp. 21-90.

true, a few copies of God's revelation cannot make a new religion already rooted within a new extended geography.[10]

The complexity of this topic cannot be discussed here in full, as the interdisciplinary multi-factorial analysis would be too complex. However, a few logical and non-literary aspects need to be briefly considered to introduce the main reasons for this scepticism:

1. Archaeological and numismatic findings (such as tomb-stones), at least until now, have clarified that we need to wait until the Marwanid phase (684-750) in Ummayyad history and more specific-ally the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (685-705) to discover a "complete" profession of the Islamic faith (*Shahada*) with the full declaration: "*There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God*" with the Muhammad's allusion also appearing on Umayyad coins, tombstones of "believers" and religious buildings.

This initial absence suggested that Muhammad's importance was not so great, probably for different reasons starting from the non-believers' contribution to the Arab conquering campaigns, or the milit-ary support for the Sufyanid Umayyad dynasty (661-684) offered by the Arab Christian confederation (Banu Kalb, Banu Ghassan) in the Syrian area.[11]

2. The early Arab conquering campaigns were certainly led by Caliphs such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, generals such as Khalid ibn al-Walid and 'Amr ibn al-'As, prominent figures in the community of the "believers". However, two outstanding aspects, that are not usually considered, need to be discussed: (1) part of the con-quering forces were members of semi-nomadic populations and

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10 Th. Nöldeke, Fr. Schwally, G. Bergsträßer, O. Preztl, *The History of the Qur'an,* ed. and tr. by Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 209ff.; Th. Nöldeke, *The Qur'an: An introductory essay,* N. A. Newman (ed.) (Haytfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1992); A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, M. Marx, *The Qur'an in context. Historical and literary investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 255ff., 281ff., 407ff.

11 J. Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Islam: the first seventy years", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 46, 4 (2003), pp. 411-436; Younis al-Shdaifat, Ahmad al-Jallad, Zeyad al-Salameen, Rafe Harahsheh, "An early Christian Arabic Graffito mentioning Yazid, the king", *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy,* 28 (2017), pp. 315-324; A. Elad, "Why did 'Abd al-Malik build the Dome of the Rock? A re-examination of the Muslim Sources", *Bayt of Maqdis, 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem,* Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 33-58.

Bedouin fighters who had not yet been Islamicized, who a few months earlier had fought in the Ridda wars (632-633) against the Hijazi tentative to make them respect the agreements previously signed when Muhammad was still alive.[12] (2) In the first phase after the Prophet's death, and probably when Muhammad was still alive, the early community of the believers was not hierarchically structured as described by the Islamic narrative in the following centuries: Muhammad was an eminent member but with strong connections with others important figures as Abu Bakr, ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, Khalid ibn Saʿid, Uthman ibn Mazhum etc. in a sort of polycentric community in which relevant decisions were more based on consensus and arbitration. This is probably also one of the main reasons why the "religious" figure of Muhammad did not emerge immediately after his death in 632, but important policies were implemented in contrast with previous conclusions.[13]

3. The Arabian Peninsula confederate clan system was partially already absorbed in the Byzantine and Sasanian empires in the same way as the "German" populations were in the Western Roman empire at the end of it; at the same time, both empires had important urban areas (Damascus, Antioch, Edessa, Jerusalem, Ctesiphon, Nineveh, Gaza, Caesarea etc.) surrounded by countryside that was already inhabited by Arabs (but not only by them). It is important to imagine that in the 6th century, as well as during the devastating Byzantine-Sasanian war (602-628), a part of the northern Arab confederation tribes of the Peninsula, many of them monophysite Christians, were fighting each other as "*Foederati*" in the armies of both empires. The war ended in 628 with a Byzantine victory under Heraclius, but after that the Persians had previously conquered Palestine, Syria, Egypt and part of Anatolia in 613-615, with a huge destruction of urban territor-

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12 F. Donner, *The early Islamic conquests*, pp. 96ff.; *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam*, pp. 139ff.

13 R. Hoyland, *In God's Path,* pp. 56-65; F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* pp. 98-110; *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam,* pp. 41ff.; G. M. Morony, "Religious Communities in Late Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 17, 2, (1974), pp. 113-135; M. Haddad, "ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab and the Meccan Aristocracy", *Chronos,* 6 (2002), pp. 163-170; Al-Madani, M., *Nazrat fi Ijitihadar al-Faruq ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafaʾis, 1990).

ies. This highlights the state of uncertainty of the entire region of Mesopotamia and Bilad al-Sham after 628, including probably the part of Arab confederate system that survived.[14]

The points above partially emphasize some of the main reasons why at the beginning of the "Arab" conquests (633- 656), in particular in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates plains and the Syria-Palestine region, the focus on a new religious identity of the conquerors was not clarified or supported by new local governors. To define them as "Islamic conquests" would be a way to highlight an "Islamic religious identity" which was fairly non-existent at least at the end of 'Abd al-Malik's caliphate (705) and of the second Fitna, when, the political clash between Umayyads, the Alid party and the followers of 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr (d. 692) greatly increased an anti-Umayyad propaganda detrimental to their real religious identity.[15]

This is the main reason why, when in contemporary times western media but also academia began to "elaborate" a narrative on an "Islamic Supremacist" attitude emphasizing how from the beginning this Abrahamitic religion supported "conquering" attitudes, it would have been more relevant to highlight that the first century of "Islamic" history is so complex and so partially illustrated that we should be more cautious in supporting certain statements about the Jihad "state" and similar positions.[16]

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14 Abd al- Raziq, *Al- Khilafa wa-usul al-hukm* (Cairo: 1925); Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan,* tr. by Ph. Hitti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 2 vols.; Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Sirat 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Aziz,* ed. Ahmad 'Ubayd (Beirut: 1965); Jawad Ali, *Al-Mufassal fi Tarikh al-'Arab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut: 1978), pp. 24ff.; Kh. 'Athamina, "The pre-Islamic roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: the emergence of Abu Bakr", pp. 1-32; Ph. Wood, "Christians and the Arabs in the sixth century", G. Fisher, J. Djiskra, *Inside and Out: interactions between Rome and the people of the Arabian and Egyptian frontiers in late antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters 2014), pp. 353-368.

15 G. Rotten, *Die Umayyaden und die zweite Bürgerkrieg (680-692)* (Weisbaden: Steiner, 1982); F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam*, pp. 185ff., 204ff.

16 D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Oakland: California of University Press, 2005); Kh. Yahya Blankinship, *The End of Jihad State: The reign of Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the collapse of the Umayyads* (New York: Suny Press, 1994); A. G. Bostom, *The Legacy of Jihad* (New York: Prometheus Book, 2008); D. Hayden, *Muhammad and the Birth of Islamic Supremacism: the War with the Jews 622-628 A.D.* (New York: Bird Brain Production, 2012); L. B. Jackson, *Islamophobia in Britain: the Making of a Muslim Enemy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.

2. The historical debate in recent decades: revisionists and reformists

The words that I have used to define the dual scientific approach that affected Academia in recent decades considering the early century after the death of the prophet Muhammad (d. 632), are "*revisionism*" and "*reformism*": the first highlights an innovative scientific approach which is added to those previously used, but also a theoretical outcome that usually goes beyond the real investigative result; the second, on the contrary, emphasizes a clearer attention on what can be verified using the same interdisciplinary methodological approach, but without any kind of excessive revisionist attitude.

This duplicity does not want to favour an internal clash showing a clear preference; both are necessary and the former usually puts forward an interesting thesis which is partially confirmed by the latter; however, clear differences persist in identifying *reformists* as more engaged in preserving a less revolutionary historical attitude, while the *revisionists* are often more likely to innovate without real support from the sources, but with a greater capability of insight.

A. Noth's *Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*, published in 1970,[17] played a relevant role, even though it was not translated into English until many years after its German edition, because for the first time it considered a textual critical analysis of "Islamic conquests" and the first Muslim century using studies of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Gospels.

In parallel, G. Lüling in *Über den Ur-Koran* (Erlangen, 1974) assumed as many other Western scholars did, that the Qur'an was not only the word of God, but more drastically the elaboration of Muhammad's own life and thought and tried to understand it in the context of the standard Islamic biography, the *Sira al-Nabawiyya*. Lüling's work was deeply criticised for its unfounded and arbitrary thesis, such as that the Prophet was a Christian at the beginning; how-

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184-185.; R. Spencer, *Confessions of an Islamophobe* (Brentwood: Bombardier Books, 2017).

17 The essay in its second edition was subsequently translated into English by Michael Bonner, with the title *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition,* A. Noth, L. I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994).

ever, his methodological approach more than his theoretical outcomes persisted, being adopted to implement future investigation into Early Islamic History.

A stronger and clear revisionist formulation emerged in particular after the publication of J. Wansbrough's *Quranic Studies* and P. Crone-Michael Cook's *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World*. The former supports the idea that the Quranic text became a definitive canon of scripture only a couple of centuries after Muhammad's death, hazarding and this is more convincing, that the Prophet in Mecca did not try to found a new religion, but a "*milieu*" able to convince all the most important inter-clan confederations of the Peninsula. This is an idea which obtains increasing support with the Western Historiography of the Middle East, in particular in the writings of F. M. Donner and R. G. Hoyland.[18] In other words, in the first century, Islam was not Islam yet, but a more comprehensive and inclusive monotheistic creed with a praxis and doctrine that were still uncertain.

The latter, in continuity with a few previous essays, emphasized the use of non-Arabic primary sources only because they were increasingly suspected of being historically weak and apologetic, with manuscripts in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, old-Persian, Coptic and Hebrew of the 7th century, which could not ignore "prominent" conquering campaigns coming from the Arab Peninsula. However, Crone-Cook's revisionist narrative in some occasions emerged as a little too surprising, in particular concerning the idea that after the eviction of Jews by the Byzantines, many of them reached Muhammad's forces conquering the Holy Land, in particular Jerusalem, with the Prophet still alive and supporting the Arab campaigns.

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18 F. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The beginnings of Islamic Historical writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), pp. 132ff.; *The Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 251ff.; *Muhammad and the Believers. At the Origin of Islam*, pp. 214ff.; "The formation of the Islamic State", *JAOS*, 106, 2, (1986), pp. 283-296; "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests", *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, A. Cameron (ed.) (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995); R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others saw it. A survey of evaluation as Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), pp. 53ff.; "New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State", *BSOAS*, 69, 3, (2006), pp. 395-416; "Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity", *From al-Andalus to Khurasan. Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, AA.VV. (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 220-242.

This thesis is clearly related to the Emperor Heraclius' anti-Judaic stance after the insurrection in Palestine against the Byzantines during the Sasanian invasion of the Romans territories in the first phase of the war between Constantinople and Ctesiphon (602-628).[19]

Regardless of some indefensible theories, the "revisionist" works revitalized the study of early Islam and *Hagarism* remains an important essay for its multilingual methodological approach; at the same time, a less revisionist group of Scholars, "*reformists*", following Peter Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), developed a broadened perspective, reformulating the historical age of Late Antiquity and the use of archaeological and numismatic sources implementing the possibility of a better understanding of the early Islamic age.

Coins, Arabic papyrology and new archaeological findings closely connected with Byzantine or Sasanian studies, have started in recent decades to re-shape the historical comprehension of the seventh century, reformulating the understanding of this crucial period with a more solid basis.[20]

However, in this case too, some studies have favoured deeply revisionist theories which have developed fairly imaginative premises, like Volker Popp's[21] idea that the Byzantine defeat was a Sasanian post 627-628 counteroffensive[22] led by Christian Nestorians with local and rural anti-Constantinople discontent.

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19 Eutychius, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, ed. and trans. M. Breydy (Louvain: 1985), pp. 471-472, Sebeos (attrib), *Histoire d'Héraclius par l'évêque Sebéos*, trans. F. Macler, (Paris: 1904); R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others saw it,* pp. 540ff., Ch. F. Robinson, *Empires and Elites after the Muslim Conquests* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 23, 41, 56-57.

20 P. Pentz, *The Invisible Conquest. The Ontogenesis of Sixth and Seventh Century Syria* (Copenhagen: The National Museum of Denmark, 1992); F. M. Donner, "Visions of the Early Islamic expansion: from the Heroic to the Horrific", *Byzantium in Early Islamic Syria,* N. El-Cheick, S. O'Sullivan (eds.) (Beirut: American University of Beirut and Balamand: University of Balamand, 2011), pp. 9-29.

21 V. Popp, "Die Frühe Islamgeschichte nach inschriftlichen und numismaticschen Zeugnisses", *Die dunklen Anfänge. Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam,* K.-H. Ohling, G.-R. Puin (eds.) (Berlin: Schiler, 2005), pp. 16-123.

22 After Heraclius' victorious campaigns against the Sasanian-Persian, Paravaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire. The Sasanian-Parthian confederacy and the Arab conquest of Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp. 161ff.

Another one is Y. Nevo's hypothesis that the Arab confederation was strengthened against the Byzantines, whose increased religious fragmentation in Syria and Egypt favoured at the beginning their control in the area, being defeated by the Umayyad empowerment, also thanks to their major and historically rooted economic duty in the Damascus region.[23]

Notwithstanding, neither case is based on solid roots because they do not consider the historical background of internal Christians contradistinctions and the complexity of the inter-tribal relationship of the Arab clans; however, some intuitions should be reconsidered in relation to new evidence.

Many revisionist theories have the merit of having developed a concrete interdisciplinary analysis of this "obscure" historical period; however, the large amount of recently added information usually needs a certain period of "incubation" and a very broad analytical capacity able to appease and rationalize the plurality of this interdisciplinary understanding. This capability relates all singular historical events in connection with a literary understanding of it, a better comprehension of the Qur'an, a geographical and sociological ability to distinguish urban from rural areas and an aptitude to read events through a broad analytical spectrum.

The contemporary age of "religious nationalism"[24] in the Middle East, recently developed another analytical trend according to which Arab-Islamic expansion was more linked to a formative Arab national identity than to a real and new religious one,[25] while on the other hand, other scholars[26] have developed the idea that Islam was subject from the beginning to a strongly monotheistic impact and this impulse re-

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23 Y. Nevo, J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam. The Origins of the Arab Region and the Arab State* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003).

24 M. Demichelis, P. Maggiolini, *The Struggle to Define a Nation. Rethinking Religious Nationalism in Contemporary Islamic World* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017).

25 S. Bahear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997); R. Hoyland, *In God's Path: the Arab conquest and the creation of an Islamic Empire*, pp. 207ff.

26 J. Waardenburg, "Towards a Periodization of Earliest Islam according to its relations with Other Religions", *The Qur'an. Style and Contents*, A. Rippin (ed.) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 93-115; Y. D. Nevo, Z. Cohen, D. Heftmann, *Ancient Arabic Inscriptions from the Negeve* (Jerusalem: IPS Press, 1993).

cognized in previous Prophets (*Anbiya'*) and Messengers (*Rusul*) (Moses and Jesus specifically), a Unitarian background (the *hanifiyya*) with a still unclear Islamic identity: this thesis, with the passing of the decades, is becoming more convincing.[27]

In parallel, all the lucubrations of the revisionists as well as those of the reformists cannot be properly considered without understanding the genesis of the Qur'an as the historical information contained in the revelation.

The lack of critical editions of the Qur'an which affected for many centuries western and Islamic geography, like the clear delay in its study, has been only partially remedied by Nöldeke-Scwhally-Bergsträßer-Pretzl, *Geschichte des Qoran,* as well as by R. Bell's revisionist attitude.

The works published after the discovery of the old Qur'an manuscripts in the Great Mosque of Ṣan'a' in 1972, like those following Prof. G. Bergsträßer's and O. Pretzl's archive microfilms and photo collections of the Qur'an, reappeared a few years ago and were given to Prof. A. Neuwirth. They have remained fairly miraculous, but particularly relevant in trying to get answers about the origin of the Islamic religion, its revelation and its initial socio-political structure.

The relationship between early historical and Quranic studies is clearly prominent. Every historical revisionist and reformist hypothesis needs a major understanding which possibly is confirmed or can be confirmed not only by numismatic, archaeological and non-Arabic literary sources, but also in the hermeneutic comprehension of the Muslim revelation, in particular if the discovery of early manuscripts is going to change the scriptural version of God's word.

All the questions related to the early Arab conquering campaigns, the primordial Arab-Islamic state and the empire as the inter-religious relationship within it, could drastically modify their answers, with a great impact on early Islamic studies.

3. Western "Supremacism" and the race debate

All the above studies, like their interdisciplinary methodological approach have deeply affected Western academic works on Early Is-

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27 F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers. At the origins of Islam*, pp. 204ff.; R. Hoyland, *In God's Path*, pp. 207ff.

lamic history in recent decades. However, in parallel, a previous academic tradition had elaborated from the 19th century, a first "Orientalist" early understanding of Islamic culture and history as deeply imbued with post-Enlightenment and positivist European values and attitudes.[28]

This Western "Supremacist" attitude did not come to an end with the de-colonization phase, but has continued through a different methodology and tools in which the first use of the mass media also increased the impact of political and religious propaganda.

For the vast majority of Islamic countries as for the Arabs more specifically, the phases of post-colonialism (1946-1991) and the post-Cold War (1991-today) have not identified a concrete improvement in institutional solidity; in any case the failed "Arab Springs" (2011) increased the anarchy in previously stable autocratic states. The Middle Eastern[29] conflicts which erupted from the beginning of the decolonization process highlighted internal economic, political and religious clashes which usually assumed an increasing class fragmentation linked to internal and external reasons.

Assuming a general overview, all the Middle Eastern countries were involved in the Cold War (1946-1991). However, the real peculiarity of this historical phase was that the Arab world passed from being an auxiliary of the Soviet Union until the end of the 1960s, to opening their economy to the free market (*Infitah*) so as to decree a clear independence from the Seven Sisters in the hydrocarbon- energy market as well.

The failure of Pan-Arabism and the Arab socialist ideologies which emphasized secular culture as well as religious reformists atti-

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28 A. Hourani, *Islam and the European Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 54ff.; B. Lewis, *What went wrong? The clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003); Z. Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East. The History and Politics of Orientalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2ed., 2009).

29 Geographical terms are usually significant to identify countries and areas. In this work the term "Islamic world" identifies the entire area in which a majority or minority Islamic community is established, from South East Asia, the Philippines to Paraguay; the term "Middle East" is comprehensive of the Arab world, plus Turkey and Iran, finally, the Arab world, inclusive of the Maghreb, the Mashrek and the Arabian peninsula is to be considered in its entirety, from Syria to Yemen and from 'Oman to Mauritania.

tudes, coincided with, quoting Oliver Roy: "[…] a re-inculturation of Islam within an ongoing globalizing world, secularized *de facto*".[30] This "Islamic revanchism" emphasized the conservative attitudes of Islamic culture in contrast with the opening of the internal market as the ulterior exploitation of the masses which on one hand had been deeply re-Islamicized, while, on the other, they were losing every chance to shape a welfare system. The same system that at the beginning, in the 1930s, the Muslim Brotherhood association would have like to improve.[31]

The great majority of Arabs were convinced of being stricter and more conservative Muslims while they were losing, decade after decade (from the 1970s to the 1990s), the possibility of achieving a more balanced social and economic society.

This "trapping" system was not only particularly useful for prolonging autocratic control and regimes with the "Democratic" support of the United States and EU, but emphasized the creation of an ideological Islamic "supremacist" attitude nurtured by the petro-dollar Emirates simply by updating the most exclusivist and violent praxis and ideas that every religion has shaped within a long historical formative process.

In parallel, they identified in Western "Orientalist" narratives their *alter ego*, exploiting and defining an "Orientalism in reverse" among Islamists which produced a mixture of anti-Christian and Judaic literature with Classical Ḥanbalite authors such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328/728) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/751) as with clear "Occidentalist" *cliché*: the non-religiosity of the West, the lack of Western moral values, previous European anti-Judaic Semitism etc.[32]

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30 O. Roy, *La Sainte Ignorance*. *Les temps de la religion sans culture*, pp. 233ff.

31 A. Belkeziz, *The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought. A Historical Survey of the Major Muslim Political Thinkers of the Modern Age* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 128ff.; M. Zahid, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's succession crisis. The Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 39ff.; M. Campanini, *L'alternativa Islamica* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2012), pp. 94ff.

32 B. Tibi, *Islam's predicament with Modernity. Religious Reform and cultural change* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 209ff.; I. Buruma, A. Margalit, *Occidentalism: the west in the eyes of its enemies* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); W. B. Hal-

The lower and middle classes were easily convinced of it, in parallel, the academic crisis of the Humanities, like the anti-democratic US foreign policy in the region, in particular after the terrorists attacks of 9/11, boosted the theory of a "Clash of Civilizations".

Huntington's premise, although methodologically abstruse, followed a twofold Islamic religious attitude, which emerged in particular after the failure of Arab left-wing ideologies: the political ideology of the religious and the denial of the plurality background in Islam.

The former aspect was clearly emphasized to promote a better political control of society so as to give the impression that religious praxis was again in the lead;[33] the latter accentuated the inter-religious fraction highlighting a "Supremacist" attitude as an anti-democratic approach.[34]

The main problem, as argued by B. Tibi is that:

> The overall inner-Islamic debate on the self and authenticity remains under the influence of an Arab word that generates valid standards for the prevailing attitudes that shape Islamic civilization. […] Thus, the embracing of pluralism between religions by Muslims, as a cultural requirements for placing the non-Muslim other on an equal footing, is flatly rejected by Islamists and Salafism alike.[35]

If B. Tibi includes the Islamic *supremacist* attitude in the contemporary debate on democracy, religious and gender equality and human rights, the deconstruction of this aspect is particularly relevant

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laq, *Restating Orientalism: a critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

33 M. Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a radical age, religious authority and internal criticism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012); G. Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt. The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: California of University Press, 1985), pp. 103ff.

34 Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude, where civilizations collide* (Madison, NJ: Fairleight Dickinson University Press, 2001), pp. 201ff.; *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleight Dickinson University Press, 2005); *Europe, Globalization and the coming of Universal Caliphate* (Madison, NJ: Fairleight Dickinson University Press, 2011); *Understanding Dhimmitude* (New York: RVP Press, 2013); *Le Dhimmi: Profil de l'opprimé en Orient et en Afrique du Nord depuis la Conquete Arabe* (Paris: Editeur Anthropos, 1980); *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam, from Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Madison, NJ: Fairleight Dickinson University Press, 1996).

35 Ibid., p. 229.

because artificially shaped, starting from a non-Islamic matrix conceptualization, but clearly linked to a Western social and cultural background.

I. Baruma and A. Margalit in *Occidentalism* also highlighted the way in which European anti-Semitism was culturally absorbed within Islamic anti-Judaism and anti-Zionism;[36] the use of the term *Supremacism* has nothing in common with Islamic history or thought but again with the Western one; in the 19th century, during colonialism, the "White's man burden" was usually identified in the Anglo-Saxon world with the moral obligation of bringing "civilization" to other societies, justifying *de facto,* all imperialist policies as a noble endeavour.[37]

The Scotsman Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in his historical work on the French Revolution,[38] argued that European *supremacist* policies were justified because they provided a better benefit for the "native" populations; however, his approach to the employment of a "supremacist" attitude had nothing in common with a concrete religious awareness of superiority, as emerged in his following essay entitled: *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*.[39] In this work, he compared a wide range of different kinds of heroic figures from Odin to Muhammad, from Oliver Cromwell to Napoleon, passing through Martin Luther, John Knox, Dante and Shakespeare and he gave particular attention to the Islamic Prophet describing him as a reformist figure, able to transform the Bedouin Arab tribes' lifestyle into a deeply civilized nation in a limited period of time.

In this case, the figure of Muhammad is understood and appreciated in relation with his historical and reformist capability, like those of religious figures such as Martin Luther and John Knox, in the following chapters,[40] showing how Carlyle's "*Supremacist*" formulation is not connected with a "religious" sense of belonging, but more a racial-anthropological one. Heroes are those who confirm themselves within

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36 I. Baruma, A. Margalit, *Occidentalism*, pp. 91ff.

37 S. C. Miller*, Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 5.

38 Th. Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1837).

39 Th. Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841), pp. 41ff.

40 Ibid., pp. 112ff.

a life process, accepting its cruelty as necessary and as part of its evolution. For them bravery is a more valuable virtue than love; heroes are noblemen, not saints, emphasizing a clear dissociation from a religious approach, which is probably one of the main reasons for Nietzsche's appreciation of this work. Muhammad is recognized as a great Man and Hero not because he brought a new religion into existence, but for his important role as a Prophetic figure, a vital reformist who brought light into the darkness of the Arab nation.

In the following decades, the meaning of *Supremacism* assumed a more evident racial understanding. Before the United States' Civil War, the Confederate states of America founded a constitution that implemented the segregation policy as the clear superiority of white people over "Negroes". In the *Cornerstone Speech* (21 March 1861)*,* Alexander Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President, declared: "Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition." This was an assumption that after the Civil War continued to be patronized by the KKK secret society, which had the main aim of restoring White *Supremacism* during the reconstruction period.

We need to wait until the beginning of the 20th century for the foundation of the second KKK in Atlanta to consider "White Supremacism" ideology as not only related with the "racial factor", but with the religious one, in particular the flourishing of an "One hundred per cent Americanism" theorization against Catholics, Jews and other religious minorities. Their "Supremacist" positions were directly linked with the newly arrived southern European emigrants, such as the Italians, or catholic Irish, who were becoming numerically visible in the main urban areas of the USA.

On the contrary, as a racial-religious reply, we need to wait until the 1960s and the debate on the "segregation" status in the southern United States to consider the establishment of a "Black Supremacist" ideology as well as a Black theology of liberation for

African-Americans, approached by the philosopher Cornel West "*au rebours*" from the side of the oppressed.[41]

In spite of this, during the 20th century, different racial "Supremacist" attempts came into being during which a state or an ethnic ideological propaganda highlighted the superiority of a race over those in the same geographical area: the German myth of the Aryan race adopted by Nazism was specular to the Empire of Japan's long-standing concept of *hakko ichiu* which declared the superiority of the Yamato race over all those conquered in south East Asia during its military campaigns before World War II. The South African apartheid system is historically considered one of the last "White supremacist" regimes in the contemporary world which considered itself part of a superior race with a deep impact on the legislation of a state system.

At the same time, "Arab Supremacism" in particular in Africa is historically related with the relevant function that slavery played since early Arab-Islamic domination in the regions of Mauritania and Sudan from the 10th century[42].

However, it is important to clarify as shown above, that the conceptualization of "Supremacism" did not assume a religious identity in recent centuries, as the contemporary attribution to Islam seems to emphasize.

The term under examination started to be adopted in the 19th century, continuing into the following one, but in a clear racial and ethnic "milieu".

Its adoption and attribution to Islam, in recent decades, is more related to Islamophobia than to a real "Religious Supremacist" attitude, at least in relation to a Western geography in which statistical projections underscore how the European Muslim population will remain under a percentage of 15% for 2050.[43]

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41 C. West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times: Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993).

42 P. E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2ed. 2000).

43 http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/europe/

4. Conclusion. Western colonialism, Islamic Supremacism and Religious minorities

Baruma and Margalit also highlight in *Occidentalism* the adoption of racist and anti-Semitic positions in the Islamic world as an expression of Western colonialist and post-colonialism cultural influence; the idea of a religious "Islamic Supremacism" is again the expression of a conceptualization shaped in the 19th century Anglo-Saxon western world without, at least, until the 20th century, a concrete religious background.

This "Islamic Supremacism" propaganda shows us that a "Clash of Civilizations" ideology is clearly winning, even though many differences emerged between Egypt and Indonesia for example, or between Tunisia-Morocco and Saudi Arabia, in particular if we consider the reforms in recent years.[44]

One of the main difficulties of inter-disciplinary contemporary studies is the inability to promote an analysis "*au rebours*" able to clarify the passages which brought the ongoing situation as antithetic with the previous state of affairs.

Moreover, academic-scientific incongruence becomes evident when high impact revolutionary events accentuate new discernment of interpretation, shaping popular understanding as worsening human relationships and plurality. This is the case of the 9/11 terrorists attacks.

If previously, relevant as well as questionable works such as Bat Ye'or essays[45] highlighted and theorised the "fragile" status of *Dhimmi* in Arab lands, her more recent works, like those by A. Bostom, K. Yahya Blankship and D. Cook on *Jihad*, have favoured the "false" understanding that religious- violence within Islam was a common practice from its expansionist and conquering campaigns of the first century (7th-8th centuries).

Their theoretical perspective is clearly rooted in the "inter-religious violence" in the Qur'an, in the Traditions of the Prophet, concerning the early Islamic treatises of *Jihad* like the famous Ibn al-Mubarak (d. 797) *Kitab al-Jihad*, one of the first published on the ar-

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44 T. Bassam, *Islam's predicament with Modernity*, p. 236.

45 Bat Ye'or, *Le Dhimmi: Profil de l'opprimé en Orient et en Afrique du Nord depuis la Conquete Arabe* (Paris: Editeur Anthropos, 1980); *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam, from Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Madison, NJ: Fairleight Dickinson University Press, 1996).

gument, like those by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (d. 805),
Kitab al-Siyar al-Saghir and Abu Ishaq al-Fazari (d.804) or on Ibn
'Omar al-Waqidi al-Aslami (d. 823) *Kitab al-Maghazi* and *Kitab al-
Futuh* (properly attributed to a pseudo-Waqidi author).[46]

   However, if concerning violence in the Qur'an, in particular
against non- Muslims, the analysis needs a specific comprehension in
a hermeneutic study also in relation with the "creation" of a Quranic
"milieu", the ongoing debate on the complete collection of this
Revelation is still at the beginning, according to the historical sources
which already clarify low- intensive intra-religious fighting activities
during the Arabs' *Futuh* (conquering campaigns).

   On the contrary, the *Sunna* shows a huge analytical range
between condemnation and approval which is established in a historical
Islamic period of great confusion and artificial creation of singular
Hadith which scientifically and partially disempower their credibil-
ity.[47]

   The contemporary debate on the authenticity of the Islamic Tra-
dition shows us one of the major inconsistencies between reciprocal
Western and Islamic academic comprehension, at least, since the be-
ginning of the 20th century.[48]

   In spite of this, the historical-theoretical approach which identi-
fied a *Jihadist* Islamic attitude from the beginning must still be proven
and clearly supported, also because Ibn al-Mubarak's *Kitab al-Jihad,*
and all the above texts were thought out and written in the second half

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    46 A. Ibn al-Mubarak, *Kitab al-Jihad* (Beyrut: Dar an-Nur, 1971); M. Khadduri,
The Islamic Law of Nations, Shaybani's Siyar (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press,
1966); F. Hammada, *Kitab al-Siyar li-saghir al-Islam Abi Ishaq al-Fazari* (Beirut:
1987), pp. 13-86; Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1984); J.
Wellhausen, *Mohammed in Medina. Das ist Vakidi's Kitab al-Maghazi in verkurzter
deutsher Wiedergabe* (Berlin: Reimer, 1882).
    47 Racha el-Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance: classical Mu'tazilites
on ḥadith", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies,* 71, 2, (2012), pp. 231-256; E. Dickinson,
The Development of early Sunnite Ḥadith criticism (Leiden: Brill, 2001); S. C. Lucas,
Constructive Critics. Ḥadith literature and the articulation of Sunni Islam (Leiden:
Brill, 2004); G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition, Studies in Chronology, Provenance
and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
    48 D. F. Womack, "The authenticity and authority of Islam. Muhammad
Rashid Rida's response to Twentieth-century Missionary publications", *Social Science
and Missions,* 28, 1-2, (2015), pp. 89-115.

of the 8th century, during the early 'Abbasid period, when the phase of the first "Islamic conquests" was completely over.[49]

Bat Ye'or's approach has already been deeply criticised by historians such as R. B. Betts and by the main expert of Semitic Studies, S. Griffith. However, an evident merit of Ye'or's thesis is the criticism of an excessively naive "*convivencia*" understanding of the Islamic World, that as well as her hypothesis on *Dhimmitude* haphazardly assumed quite ideological positions.

Moreover, after 9/11, the subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA have concretely emphasized an Islamophobic attitude through which it has been easy to achieve a deep sense of rejection and disdain towards a world that is usually not known and of which it is easy to have only a rough understanding. The passage to identify Islam as a "Supremacist" religion historically rooted from the beginning in violence, and forced conversions[50] is really effortless, in particular if framed by the concept of *Jihad*.[51]

Nevertheless, the historical reality is quite different: the Crusades, the *Reconquista*, Colonialism and post-Colonialism underline how, if the religious-political concept of *Jihad* has existed from the II century of Islamic age as expressions of personal internal struggle of every believer on the path of God (*Jihad fi sabili-llah*), we need to consider that it was profoundly restored from the 1950s assuming a most violent offensive anti-colonialist and aggressive connotation[52].

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49 The battle of Talas (751) fought between an Abbasid army with the support of the Tibetans against a Chinese Tang army in what is today Kyrgyzstan, like the battle of Poitiers/Tours of 732 challenged by an Umayyad army against Charles Martel and Odo, Duke of Aquitanie's men, are historically considered the concrete conflicts which at least for the next three centuries were to set a limit on the expansion of the Muslim armies (Indus River on the eastern side like Pyrenees on the Western one).

50 All historical sources agree in highlighting how for the first couple of centuries, in the "Islamic" empires, the "Muslims" remained a religious minority until at least the end of the 9th century, the beginning of the 10th. A. Hourani, *A History of the Arab People* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), pp. 41-48; H. Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: from Double standards to mutual understanding* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 126-131; I. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 200-201.

51 N. Massaoumi, T. Mills, D. Miller, *What is Islamophobia? Racism, Social Movements and the State* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), pp. 35ff.

52 S. Qutb, *Milestones,* A. B. el-Mehri (ed.) (Birmingham: Maktabah Publishers, 2006); S. Khatab, "Hakimiyyah and Jahiliyya in the thought of Sayyid Qutb",

Very different is the concrete Islamic "Supremacist" attitude assumed against religious and ethnic minorities in the Muslim majority countries in the last decades of the 20th century. In this case the debate is quite significant, in particular if we compare the plural and inter-religious society of the last Islamic empires-Ottoman, Safavid and Moghul-before the contemporary period, with the European religious wars in the 16th and 17th centuries.

However, if the *Cuius Regio Eius Religio* doctrine purified Western European countries from internal religious dissent, the Islamic world, generally more "tolerant" until the contemporary age, during colonialism discovered the ideology of "state-nationalism" internally developing a clear fragmentation in which the religious minorities usually became the "sacrificial lamb".

Colonialism deeply affected inter-religious relationships in the Middle East: every internal reform (*Tanzimat)* was perceived by the Muslim majority as being an imposition of European countries which was clearly favouring the Christian minorities, rather than a requirement perceived by the people. This prominent passage needs to be better explored to properly understand the main reasons behind the failure of the concept of citizenship in the late Ottoman Empire. The most important cases can be broadly summarized as follows:

The Ottoman inability to equalize the *Berat* trade; as reported in the E. I., "[…] the *Berat* were originally distributed by the European diplomatic mission in abusive extension to their rights under the capitulations (18th century). Originally intended for local recruited consular officers and agents, they were sold or granted to growing numbers of foreign and local Christian and Jewish merchants to acquire a privileged and protected status." In return for a fee of 1500 piastres, the *Berat* conferred the right to trade with Europe with the same rights as European traders: fewer custom duties and more tax exemptions, thus making these merchants richer than their Muslim colleagues[53]. These grants enforced the Ottoman *Dhimmi* to compete on more or less equal terms with foreign merchants, creating a new richer and privileged class. The same privileges were not extended to Muslim merchants

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Middle Eastern Studies, 38, 3, (2002), pp. 145-170; S. E. William, "Sayyid Qutb's doctrine on Jahiliyya", *IJMES,* 35, 4, (2003), pp. 521-545; Abul a 'la al-Maududi, *Jihad in Islam* (Beirut: The Holy Quran Publishing, 1980); *Towards the Understanding of the Qur'an,* tr. and ed. by Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), 3 vols.

53 G. L. James, *The Modern Middle East. A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), tr. in Italian, *Storia del Medio Oriente Moderno* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), p. 126.

until the first half of the 19th century; however, those, who without external support, could afford to buy a similar right were limited, in opposition to a huge number of Ottoman Christian and Jewish subjects who received the consular privileges. It is clear to imagine how the Berat crashed into the internal trade relationship between the Muslim majority and the other religious minorities in the Middle East.[54]

At the same time as this socio-economic dynamic, Istanbul's decision to reform the traditional social-cultural and religious balances of power favoured the development of new understandings of the relationship between religious affiliation and ethno-political identity. Whereas before the 18th century the Ottoman administrative system allowed the universality of religious faith to prevail over ethnic and linguistic differences, although without destroying them, the "*reactualisation*" of the traditional "millet" system according to the institution of the religious community[55] opened the door to devastating conflicts. On one hand, the Great Powers intervened in Ottoman internal affairs, imposing their role (through renewed capitulations and *Berat*) as the protectors of non-Muslim religious minorities and supporting the evolution of new and stronger separatist movements (concerning the Armenians). On the other hand, reforming the millet system,[56] the formal abolition of civil disparities among Ottoman subjects, redefined the Empire's relationship with its non-Muslim population, without allowing Istanbul to re-impose its authority over the provinces and its subjects. A Western racial "Supremacism" ideology, like European Colonialism policies, shaped the basis for the development of an "*Islamic Supremacism*" which emerged as the expression of "Political-ideological" elaboration in Neo-Wahhabism, Turkish Kem-

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54 M. Demichelis, "Citizenship and Equity. An Excursus within the Nahda, Islamic Pluralism and Religious Exclusivism", in B. Airò, M. Zaccaria, *I Confini della Cittadinanza nel Nuovo Medio Oriente,* (Roma: Viella Ed., 2015), p. 23.

55 K. H. Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: the Roots of Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era", *Christian and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society*, B. Braude, B. Lewis (eds.) (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), vol. I, pp. 147-148; P. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeaster Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), pp. IX-X.

56 Since Mehmet II, the traditional millet system made it possible to take into account and rule over the various religious-ethnic groups that composed the Empire. K. H. Karpat, *Millets and Nationality*, p. 143.

alism and post-Kemalist ideology,[57] as in the thought of authors as Rashid Rida (d. 1935) and Shakib Arslan (d. 1946). In this case as well, the track is "*au rebours*", Western colonialist ideology of the "state-nationalism" has brought about the peculiarity of a new form of *Supremacism,* an Islamic-religious-nationalist one,[58] which in the last century has widely restricted the presence of religious minorities in the Islamic majority regions, while, in Europe as in North America, it is "populist" politicians and media that have performed a dangerous role-playing game in our democracies and our democratic beliefs.

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57 U. Cizre, *The Turkish Ak party and its leaders. Criticism, Opposition and Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 57; U. Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and Nation State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 13ff.

58 M. Demichelis, P. Maggiolini, *The Struggle to Define a Nation. Rethinking Religious Nationalism in Contemporary Islamic World*, pp. 1-15.

RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY ■

VOLUME 8

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Marco Demichelis (Ed.)   Religious Violence, Political Ends

Religious violence due to political reasons has been a common practice since ancient times: The massacres of early Christian communities, carried out by the Roman Empire, were rapidly replaced by equally harsh measures against non-Christian believers, being accused of abominable and polytheistic practises. The advent of the modern age, the homogenization of the religious sphere for political-economic ends, the annihilation of any kind of heresy and the emergence of Protestantism, Calvinism and Anglicanism restructured the conceptualization of the Western European States emphasizing the adage "one kingdom, with one religion and one nation".

The end of the religious wars (1648), the Westphalian sovereignty and the *cuius regio, eius religio* had an impact on the formation of Europe and other regions, the Franco-British colonialism imposed the same system on the entire Middle Eastern and Islamic World.

This volume thoroughly examines the usage of inter-religious violence, religious sectarianism and Islamophobia on a theoretical basis, linked with "Clashes of Civilizations" and "Religious Nationalism", and describes them as manifestations of precise political ends, aiming to preserve fragmentation and warlike states in the East as well as fear and prejudices in the West.

Der vorliegende Band widmet sich der Untersuchung von interreligiöser Gewalt, religiösem Sektierertum und Islamophobie auf theoretischer Basis, verbunden mit dem „Kampf der Kulturen" und dem „Religiösen Nationalismus", als Ausdrücken präziser politischer Ziele, mit denen die Erhaltung der Fragmentierung und der kriegerischen Auseinandersetzungen im Osten sowie das Schüren von Ängsten und Vorurteilen im Westen verfolgt werden.

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Nationalism, Citizenship and Radicalizations in the Middle East and Europe

Edited by Marco Demichelis

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