

Islam v The West:

Why Daniel Pipes is wrong – and a ‘clash of civilizations’ is *exactly* what it is.

by Peter C Glover

Middle East expert Daniel Pipes in his recent article [‘Making sense of the cartoon Jihad’](#), makes it clear that in his view ‘cartoon Jihad’ does *not* represent a ‘clash of civilizations’ between Islam and the West. Though I recognize all that Daniel brings to our understanding of Middle Eastern affairs, as someone who specializes in issues where politics and worldview inevitably overlap, I beg to differ.

In the article Pipes makes the case that the current ‘cartoon jihad’ is at its roots really a clash between radical and moderate Islam, and in one sense I agree with him. There *is* indeed tension between Muslim radicals and moderates. Both want the right to express the Islamic worldview to and in the modern world. But the fact is wherever Islam becomes strong in *any* society it is radical Islam which almost always represents its public face (albeit ‘offence’ and uneasy co-existence comes easily to most Muslims wherever Islam gains a foothold).

The prevailing myth among Western liberals and many moderate Islamists – a myth Pipes sadly propagates – is that moderate Muslims will one day succeed, as Pipes claims, in “modernizing the Muslim world.” The implication is clear enough. It is moderate Islam that represents true Islam - and will one day win through in reforming modern Islam. On the evidence of the past fourteen centuries however, not to mention worldwide confrontations today, such a claim seems more based on wishful, even perverse, thinking than a realistic appraisal. Consider the realities. First, conversion by the sword rather than by the word has led to its spread. Second, when we assess the roots of radical and moderate Islam it is the former, not the latter, that more truly represents itself as the keeper of the true Koranic-rooted faith.

Islam in its core teaching is a religion of both the ‘word’ and equally the sword or more precisely the scimitar, its chief symbol. In my experience most of those who believe moderate Islam represents the true faith are all too often ignorant of what the Koran *actually* teaches. For a start it specifically denies the ‘good’ Muslim the right even to befriend a non-Muslim *except* for the furtherance of Islam. How destructive is this of the popular notion of multiculturalism and peaceful co-existence? Even more significantly, the Koran instructs the faithful believer time and again to “kill the infidel wherever you find them” (Suras 2.191;

4.89; 5.33; 8.12; 8.65; 9.5). The infidel is identified as the non-Muslim, especially Jews and Christians.

And we have not even touched on the consistent Islamic theme of ‘dhimmitude’ – the subjugation of all other religions, cultures and peoples (e.g. Sura 9.29). How is all this to be achieved if not by ‘radical’ force? As ex-Shiite Islamist Reza F. Safa asks, “If Islam is peaceful, why are there so many verses in the Koran about killing the infidels and those who resist Islam?” Why indeed?

In the cold light of day it becomes simply asinine to believe or promote that Islam *at its roots and in its core teachings* is more faithfully reflected by forms of moderate Islam than it is by what we in the West insist on calling ‘radicals’ ‘extremists’ or ‘fundamentalists’.

As Thomas Madden has recently shown in his *A Concise History of the Crusades*, the crusades began life as Christian Europe’s increasingly desperate response to centuries of armed Muslim invasion and incursion. An Islam that consistently brought ‘submission’ (the meaning of Islam) by the ‘converting’ sword, not by the converting word. And all of this as a *natural* consequence of a divine Koran-driven mission – and not by any means a ‘radical’ perversion of true Islam.

History reveals to the objective observer that wherever Islam grows strong enough ‘non-moderate’ Islam prevails. Invasion, cultural and social domination and ‘clashes of civilization’ are the norm not the exception; not least with Islam’s greatest enemy, the specifically Judeo-Christian worldview.

As much as Western liberals might like to deny it, our Western ‘values’ are rooted in the soil of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Whether or not we individually articulate it as specifically Judaistic or Christian matters not. All the great leaders, including Churchill, Reagan and Thatcher, understood this, even articulating it in their speeches. They knew that the underpinning of the Judeo-Christian worldview was essential to the moral foundation of the West and its ‘civilization’. And most of us are prepared to admit that it is these very values that ‘radical’ Islam openly challenges. But it only does so because Koranic Islam does too. Though it might suit our tolerant Western sensibilities to maintain the fiction that ‘radical’ Islam is something of a perversion of Muslim truth, it can only be because we persist in remaining idealistic and not realistic.

Daniel Pipes insists, “It is a tragic mistake to lump all Muslims with the forces of darkness. Moderate, enlightened, free-thinking Muslims do exist. Hounded in their own circles, they look to the West for succor and support.” I do not deny it for a moment. And this brings him to his personal conclusion, “However, weak they may presently be, they eventually will have a crucial role in modernizing the Muslim world.” They might – but they would have to destroy entirely ‘true’ Islam *at its source* to achieve it.

So why does this Western idealism towards Islam persist in the face of the evidence? I believe that Western values, tempered as they are, with a long history of tolerance, are in denial at the inherently covetous and grasping belligerence and at the heart of the Islamic system. We inevitably hope for the best in all peoples and their belief systems.

But that that tiny letter ‘s’ at the beginning of ‘word’ makes all the difference between the two worldview moralities of Islam and the West. Islam knows well enough – the reason the sword

was added to the word to facilitate its spread – given a level playing field very few in their right minds would opt for a society with basic Islamic values. But, as history reveals only too plainly, without the sword, with a moderate Muslim leadership, Islam would not get very far. And should any of us need a final persuasive argument we could take a good hard look at almost any Muslim society worldwide to bring home the reality of what is at stake in the clash with Islam. This not only *is* a clash of two very different ways of life, it is a clash the West dare not lose

We can maintain the myth that ‘radical’ Islam is a perversion of true Islam’ all we like. But a juxtaposition of radical Islam and Koranic Islam under the worldview microscope reveals two that each have identical DNA. It is moderate Islam that is the real ‘bastard’ child. As Aldous Huxley once observed, “Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.” Mr Pipes might like to bear it in mind.

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