

THE EXISTENCE OF THE ENEMY AS A VITAL FACTOR IN THE GROWTH OF RADICALISM

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ABSTRACT

Having an enemy is one of the factors that every political force can use as a tool in resorting to populist methods, as well as in propaganda actions, and in its effort to achieve legitimacy among dissatisfied people. It can even be used in reasoning to prove that the society is exposed to security threats, and most importantly, as a tool in the internal power struggle.

This is a very important factor in the Middle East, especially for radical currents that often are not able to continue to survive if they do not have "enemies". The leaders of the radical currents understand that this kind currents can grow, expand, and become powerful if they can convince the people that the sacred values have been subjected to violation by "the enemies". The leaders gain popularity, at least among a part of the deprived people by provoking their hatred and encouraging them to resort to violence.

Leaders of such currents also know this well, that if they do not have the "enemy" they must create at least one "enemy" to their followers.

Keywords: *enemy, radicalism, Islamic radicalism, power struggles, the Middle East Region, Shiite, Iran, Sunni, Iraq, Syria.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, in the realm of power struggle and efforts to gain power, the existence of at least an "enemy" can help a lot in how "we" keep our "own" political identity alive, how we position ourselves in relation to important events, how to choose what approach, how we try to maintain our forces and supporters, and even how to attract new forces. A state can use the "enemy" to create a "security atmosphere" in the country within a short period of time. It can even go toward war to advance its hidden intentions and deliberately intrude into the political climate within the country and even its own region to be tense.

Political radicalism cannot be an exception to this historical experience. It is essentially aggressive in its nature and uses naturally also radical methods to achieve its goals. Therefore, the "having enemy" can be one of the essential requirements of radicalism in any of its forms.

This paper focuses on the role of this "enemy" in the development of a kind of well-known today's radicalism, Islamic radicalism.

Radicalization is not something new, but it has always existed in the history of political relations and power struggles at the whole. Thus, the today's so called Islamic radicalization can also be considered as a sort of the radicalization that humans have experienced. However, there is a question on what is the new today?

As all radicalizations have the same nature and same soul the most tangible feature of them are their external characteristics of the actors, the distinctness of this current Islamic radicalization compared to others is its actors. Islamic extremist currents are currently the most debatable and well-known radicalization thought in the world. It has the most active actors, in any case in the Middle East Region.

In this paper, it is aimed that not the actors, but one of the most vital factors of its

formation, which play a significant role in the emergence and strengthen of radicalization through its process, are under focus.

It will be a point to two cases for show whether "the other" in other words the external factors are decisive to development and strength a radicalization process within a society, a movement or power circle.

2. PRIMARY CONRNERSTONES OF A PROCESS

Internal contradictions, which emerge due to the power struggle, can bring a movement, a political trend or from an organized thought in the direction of radicalization (El-Said, 2015). Even primary supports from regional or international interest-owners behind that movement or organization, later, can face with problems in the case of a continuing support.

In each of these two cases, an Islamic state in its establishing phase could draw popular broad supports. These two states – the one, a Shiite state in the wake of the revolution in Iran in 1979 and the other, a self-declared Sunni state in parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014 – took gradually step towards in the direction of radicalization, and step by step expanded applying violent non-usual methods in their actions.

The radicalization process in its primary phases and compared with the later stages can be mild and subtle. This process has an inverse relation with the process of popular supports. However, the more a political current becomes radicalized, it gradually sees itself needless to widespread popular supports, but its reliance more and more is placed on a limited but more loyal force. When the more offensive factions feel that they are strong enough, through a further radicalization they begin to eliminate their competitors and increase their power.

In fact, this process is the result of the internal power struggle between factions, groups, and persons within the movement or broad supported organization. Those who are more radicalized, take their competitors out of the field by accusing them as moderations, compromises, etc. This process can continue, and even in the central core of the power the "more radicals" reject the "fewer radicals",

and finally overcome them. The process continues its way.

3. THE CASE ONE – THE IRANIAN SHIITE RADICALISM

The Shiite radical movement in Iran in the wake of the 1979-revolution is a clear example of how decisive role a "good enemy" as an external factor may have in a strengthening of the fundamentals of a political current that chooses to stabilize itself using extremist ways.

In a time, which a part of "the revolutionaries", who were trying to consolidate power, needed to establish their pillars, and feel a relative stability and confidence to guarantee their power in future. They continued their offensive methods, and by this way, they removed many of their strong competitors.

They were aware of that the best way to weaken their rivals was to make "the enemy", to enlarge it and to scare people out of it. Therefore, they have been fully or partially active in creating events in the direction of constructing "the enemy".

One of unique opportunities they could exploit was the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran. Encyclopedia Iranica states, "the hostage crisis provided a golden opportunity for the regime to suppress and even liquidate the leftist organizations" (Encyclopaedia Iranica, Hostage Crisis). The event showed the fledgling regime's willingness "to exploit terrorism for political ends" (Crenshaw & Pimlott, 1997: 403).

The second event that could strengthen the new rulers of that time in Iran was the devastating war between Iran and Iraq (Riedel, 2013). It lasted Eight years, and during these years the country went towards a more backwardness and misery. Yet, as Ayatollah Khomeini, the time said the war was "a gift from God" to the fledgling regime (Sahimi, 2009).

The third event that may be considered as a new revolution to the new rulers in Iran, was the clash between the most radical currents within the revolutionary circles. This event that happened in June 1981 was a mega

important opportunity to the religious radical groups.

At that time, the Mujahidin-e Khalq organization was the most organized political force in Iran, but its traditional rivals could not tolerate them. These rivals tried to apply various methods to pull the MKO into a face-to-face battlefield. Ultimately, the Mujahidin-e Khalq entered the battle, which practically led to their military suicide and finally political defeat.

Much political analysts and even many of the Organization of Mujahidin-e Khalq earlier supporters believe that it was one of the best opportunities that the organization offered the regime.

Today it's obvious to many, who follow the Iranian political events in the post-revolution era, that the war statement from Mujahidin-e Khalq has been a godly present to the new Iranian ruler in direction of strength and stabilizing their power in Iran. The regime executed many of Mujahidin's members and supporters under the accusation of "enemies of God" (Abrahamian, 1989: 219).

Mojtaba Taleqani, the son of Ayatollah Taleqani, one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders who mysteriously died within the first year after the revolution, expresses that the main war after the revolution was between two military – religious organizations that was including the leadership of the Mujahidin-e Khalq (People's Mujahidin) and the most radical wing of the revolution (Rahe Tudeh, 2012). The first group in this war defeated, and the second group by the war could strengthen and consolidate its position in the country's leadership. A large part of rational intellectuals and popular secular revolutionaries were the victims of that extremely violent encounter.

By the event of June 19, 1981, the radical forces and the revolution's reactionary parts could ride the wave of events. It can be said that their main lever was "The Organization of Mujahidin-e Khalq's" leadership and their lack of experience.

The circle of the organization's leadership by incorrect analysis of the situation began to attack on June 19, 1981. They turned to armed struggle to overthrow the regime since

they illusionary thought about a victory, while its real consequences were unclear for them. Mahnaz Shirali believes that the Mujahidin paid the heaviest price to the radicalization of the Islamic regime in 1981 (Shirali, 2015). They staged a bloody adventure, and they failed in that adventure. The result of the failure was both the organization's severe weakening and the destruction of a large part of the revolution's forces, while it was a vital factor to save the Shiite radicalism and fundamentalism, and their strength in Iran.

4. THE CASE TWO – THE IRAQI/SYRIAN SUNNI RADICALISM

Certainly, the radical Islam tendencies have had rooted in Iraq in a long time, and have existed in much before the recent 15-20 years of political changes in Iraq. However, Islamic extremist groups earlier did not have practical opportunities to grow. Especially under the time of Baath Party dominance in Iraq, this kind groups didn't have a possibility to be visualized in political scenes, while the Baath regime had the radical Sunni groups as a card in the hand to use in appropriate situations (Zeits, 2015).

However, after the Saddam's fall the alliance forces headed by US offered the most extremist Islamic currents in Iraq this possibility, though despite many warnings from some of political leaders and those who had knowledge about the Middle East "that the war would have unpredictable, disastrous consequences for the Middle East" (Hinnebusch, 2007: 20).

When the Alliance forces came to the region to expelling the Baathist army from Kuwait the Islamic extremist groups criticized hardly the region's governments for their allowance to that the "infidels" set foot on the Islamic soil. After the arrival of the U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia some religious circles believed that "the Kingdom was, in effect, an occupied country" (Lacey, 2009: 213).

Since that time these groups accused the most Islamic governments of being incompetent to fight the "disbelievers". In the direction of this "anti-enemy" approach even some religious leaders claimed that "bringing male

and female disbelievers is a danger to the Muslims, their beliefs, their morals, and the upbringing of their children, so it should be forbidden" (quoted in Prokop in Aarts, 2005: 71).

The extremist groups used opportunities of the situation created by the Saddam regime's vacuum, and the internal chaos in Iraq to strengthen their positions. They not only did not want a better society free of violence for their people, but even their gift to those people was hate and violence more than the past. Amin Saikal a professor of political science at the Australian National University gives the Alliance forces headed by the Americans blame and states that they are still proud to overthrow Saddam Hussein, "but that has proved to be a very small gain compared to the terrible and bloody legacy that they have created" (Saikal, abc.net.au, 6 Jan 2014).

It may also be mentioned that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is not only a Sunnis' effort to gain power in Iraq but that a religious radicalization trends in Syrian have also been associated with what was taking shape in Iraq (Byman & Williams, 2015).

In the beginning of the protest movement against the Assad regime, and this regime's violent clash with the protesters, many of the region's states and international powers had assessed such that the "Arab Spring" was also coming to Syria. Each of these actors tried to be involved in an acceleration of the process of "the Arab Spring" in Syria so that they overtook each other. Governments like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey had a keen interest in playing a role and therefore tried to "supporting the opposition, and worked through different networks to accomplish their goals" (Lynch, Foreign Policy, May 3, 2013).

It led to the collapse of the internal order, and the regime lost its control over major parts of the country. The result was that after a short time the government lost control "of roughly two-thirds of its pre-war territory" (Mackinnon, The Globe, and Mail, June 23, 2015).

To contrary to the expectation of the regional and global powers the events process didn't lead to what happened in Egypt, Tunisia, or Libya. It's maybe because Syrian has different conditions than other Middle Eastern countries in that "the Assad regime had always conflated its identity with that of the Syrian state" (Darwish, 2014: 12).

After all, numerous armed groups in Syria emerged, and a radicalization process grew up and accelerated within the "anti-Assad" struggle. This process was shaped, while the more radicalized currents of the struggle used the gained opportunity of the boundary vacuum between Syria and Iraq, and expanded their range of influence until they finally declared an Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria. Only when the danger gradually was felt, some of the involved governments begun to accuse each other.

Regarding how this Islamic State is organized, it can be said that "Jemaat al-Towhid va al-Jahad" was the primary cornerstone of the state, which later was called as the Islamic State (Guid re, 2012). This organization has acted as the Iraqi Al-Qaeda (NBC News, 10/18/2004). At that time, the most important factor to the growth of this organization was its opposition to the coalition forces in Iraq. The organization's actions took place in the name of resistance against "the enemies of Islam" (Ibid, 10/18/2004).

The roots of this state can be connected to one of the most radical sorts of interpretation of Islam; an interpretation that has closeness and common features with Salafism (Bunzer, 2015). Originally, a specific interpretation of Islam, which mainly takes place based on the Wahhabism and Salafism thoughts, has been the essence of the ideological way of thought in organizations such as "Jemaat al-Towhid va al-Jihad".

Abu Masaab Zarqawi, the founder of the organization, had an extreme fundamentalist interpretation of the concept "Takfir" (Rosen, 2006). He had fought against the Russians in Afghanistan, but in 2003 after the arrival of the coalition forces and the Saddam's fall, he came to Iraq to fight against the "infidels" (BBC, 27 October 2004).

The presence of the coalition forces was a decisive factor in this organization, which in the name of the struggle against "the occupiers" gradually gained broad supports among the Sunni people, especially among the young Sunnis.

In the wake of this process one of the most radical "ulema" among the Saudi "ulema", Suleiman al-Alwan supported Abu Masaab Zarqawi and his actions in Iraq (Sulami, 2013). He was a prominent radical personality, who from the beginning of a war in Iraq in 2003 urged the Iraqi people to fight against the Americans (A-Shishani, 2011).

5. CONCLUSION

It's not always such that a radical group can emerge, grow, and become stable, without to have an "enemy". The "enemy factor" in many situations is necessary to growth and stability of groups with radical tendencies so that this factor can be called as "the good enemy" (Kamari Majin, 2014).

This paper's discussed actors are individuals and groups that use extremism as a political tool in the internal power struggle and to overcome the rivals. The paper has tried to show that what these individuals and groups have in their reasoning reserves to tell people is only a small part of their political credentials. It is not focused on an analyze of the "main actor" but on the role of the "enemy" in the feeding and growth of "radicalism", in the present case a kind of radicalism.

Most of speeches and allegations of the "main actors" are based on finding or constructing an "enemy", putting the "sacred" beliefs of the people in front of that enemy, instigating and persuading people to confront it, and finally sitting in ambush for a mistake of the enemy.

The radical currents often take the opportunity to consolidate their power, when "the good enemy" attacks them. These currents use the attack as a factor to legitimate themselves and remove other competitors from the power battlefield. By doing so, they are more rooted and wider. Therefore, many radical groups or regimes with radical political identities go so far in the radicalized

way as they are not able to return from the one way.

They have just one way, and that is to escape forward!

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