

## ISLAM, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

### An Essay on Stephen Coughlin's Book **Catastrophic Failure**

Perhaps the worse legacy of Muhammad was his insistence that the Koran was the literal word of God, and true once and for all, thereby closing the possibility of new intellectual ideas and freedom of thought that are the only way the Islamic world is going to progress in the twenty-first century. Ibn Warraq, "Why I am Not a Muslim," Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, 2003, p. 350.

Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached. A Byzantine Emperor on Islam as quoted by Pope Benedict XVI.

Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities, but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world. Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raised fearless warriors at every step; and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it had vainly struggled, the civilization of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilization of ancient Rome. Winston Churchill 1899

The Problem with Islam Is Aggressive Scripture, Not Aggressive 'Traditionalism.' Andrew C. McCarthy, National Review January 16, 2016.

It is very difficult to read Stephen Coughlin's book **Catastrophic Failure** and not to conclude as Churchill wrote about Islam that "no stronger retrograde force exists in the world" today. According to the book Coughlin "is an attorney, decorated intelligence officer and noted specialist on Islamic law and associated issues as they relate to terrorism and subversion." The book is dense, 600 pages of text, 145 pages of notes and 41 pages of index. The focus of Coughlin's book is on Sharia and how it relates to the Islamic threat we face in the context of political correctness that has infested academia, the media, our intelligence assessments, our government and the public sector. Coughlin is also, along the lines of the Israeli Middle Eastern specialist Martin Kramer, quite critical of the academic focus in the social sciences on modelling at the expense of analysis based on such things as relevant textual materials.

From the things I know from my other readings, I find Coughlin to be quite accurate in his statements and logic. But it is a deeply troubling book, especially in terms of the degree to which it makes clear the extent to which political correctness is making it extremely difficult to have honest discussions about Islam and the threat it poses to traditional values.

The following text of my unpublished November 18, 2015 letter to the Financial Times on its columnist Gideon Rachman's take on "the clash of civilizations" outlines some of the issues here with which I believe a Coughlin would be sympathetic.

November 18, 2015

Sir,

The statement by Gideon Rachman (The clash of civilisations revisited, Comment, Nov. 17, 2015) that "life in multicultural nations, most of which have large Muslim minorities, offers a daily refutation of the idea that different faiths and cultures cannot live and work together" should not go unchallenged.

As is well known in 1968 when Enoch Powell give his infamous Rivers of Blood speech on the perils of mass immigration he was labeled an extremist and racist very much in the politically correct style that has prevailed in the West to this day. Since then the UK has had large scale immigration with a large Muslim contingent and it has had blood in its streets perpetrated by people from the Muslim community. The same has been true now in Madrid, Paris and even on a street in Boston in my own own country, not to mention 9/11.

Clearly correlation does not necessarily imply causation. But when a concept like jihad is core to a belief system like Islam there certainly are grounds for believing that the relationship is causal and not just the result of Gulf Arab money radicalizing the Muslim world as Rachman seems to assert. On this score, I would simply cite an incident from the very early history of my own country.

After John Adams and Thomas Jefferson met with Tripoli's envoy in London in 1786 concerning the seizure of American ships in the Mediterranean they reported to John Jay: "We took the liberty to make some inquires concerning the ground of their pretensions to make war upon nations who had done them no injury...The Ambassador answered us, that it was founded on the laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledge their authority, were sinners; that it was their right and duty to make war upon them whenever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners; and that every Mussulman who was slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise." (The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States from the Treaty of Peace to the adoption of the Present Constitution, Vol. II, p. 342).

Given Surah 47 and other passages of the Koran on jihad and the Muslims' own account of Muhammad's life and sayings, it is simply disingenuous for Western politicians to assert that "Islam is a religion of peace" or that the nub of the problem does not lie in the core of Islamic ideology or beliefs.

In the face of a failure of our prominent columnists, top political leaders

and influential opinion makers in the West to fess up to the problem here, our best hope would seem to be the likes of a Nigel Farage and his UKIP, a Marine Le Pen and her National Front and a Geert Wilders and his Party of Freedom. If that won't work out, we are likely in the West to get a fascist solution and the total destruction of the positive liberal values that the West achieved with so much blood and tears

Sincerely yours,

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It is clear from reading Coughlin and from other sources I have read that Sharia is central to Muslim beliefs and practices. Sharia which covers not only personal behavior but also governance in Islam is based on strictures from the Koran and the words and deeds of Mohammed as recorded in the Hadith. Its codification is based upon four early Islamic schools of scholarship.

It is also clear that jihad-- which is a moral obligation for every faithful Muslim, especially every able bodied Muslim male, to carry out-- is a core part of Sharia. From what Coughlin and other sources relate it involves the promotion of Islam by persuasion, deception, lying, subversion and if necessary by what Coughlin labels as "knetic jihad", the spread of Islam by the sword or force.

The use of deception and lying in propagating or promoting Islam makes it difficult for non-Muslim Westerners to get a clear understanding of Islam and its strictures and practices. A good example of this is the statement in Shura 2 verse 265 of the Koran that "There is no compulsion in Religion." That statement which is frequently cited by Muslims and Western commentators on Islam is clearly at variance with practices we see in the Islamic world such as apostasy being a capital crime or executions in Iran for "waging war against God." The argument that these don't represent "true Islam" is clearly based on deception or ignorance in that it ignores the doctrine in Islam of abrogation--"the Islamic practice of taking the latest passages as authoritative over earlier ones"--which is Koranic in origin. The statement about compulsion in religion seems to be related to the early Mecca years of Mohammed as opposed to the texts in the Koran from his later Medina years with their strident statements relating to infidels, Jews and Christians.

An example of Western ignorance in explaining Islam is surely illustrated by Obama's statement during his February 2, 2016 official visit to a mosque in Maryland. On that visit Obama is quotes as saying "The Koran says whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind." But what the Koran really says on this subject according to Robert Spencer (Jihad Watch February 4, 2016) in Surah 5 verse 32 is "Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land—it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one— it is as if he had saved mankind entirely." As Spencer observed this injunction strictly applies to the Children of Israel. In terms of "corruption in the land" it is followed by verse 33 in which it is stated according to the translation provided by Spencer that "Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land." From what I can determine from comparing Spencer's translation to that of Pickthall's, whose

translations of the Koran seems to be widely respected, Spencer's rendition appears to be quite accurate. As we know from the practices of ISIS and the Islamic Republic of Iran the notion of "corruption in the land" provides considerable justification for rather widespread killing based on religion.

An example of outright lying about Islam on the part of Muslims occurred in an interview I heard on the BBC with an Imam in Northern England. In the interview the Imam stated that the beheadings that were occurring in the Middle East were new to Islam, that they had not occurred earlier he asserted. Unfortunately, even though the Muslim historical record says otherwise, the BBC's interviewer never challenged that statement in the interview I heard either out of ignorance or political correctness. But in either case it certainly represented journalistic malpractice by the BBC.

In reading Coughlin's book it is difficult not to conclude that self-censorship and official censorship concerning Islam has become a serious threat to the liberal values and institutions of the West. For instance, as Coughlin points out organizations and structures set up for interfaith dialogue often operate as one way streets in which Muslim criticism of Christianity and Judaism is acceptable but the reverse is not. In the case of the Vatican, for instance, Coughlin cites the following excerpt from an official Vatican document:

Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence. (p.543)

For that to be true being "killed or crucified" and having "hands and feet cut off from opposite sides" and similar strictures in the Koran would have to be excluded from our definition of violence.

It is interesting that the above Vatican statement appeared seven years after Pope Benedict XVI's September 12, 2006 Regensburg lecture on Faith, Reason and the University in which he quoted the Byzantine Emperor's comments on Mohammed and forced conversion that led to "days of rage" in the Islamic world. In his introduction to the quote, Benedict referred to its "startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable." Coughlin makes a credible case that the days of rage are specifically choreographed to elicit the type of false statements by institutions in the West as represented by the November 2013 Vatican statement on Islam quoted above.

Coughlin argues in his book that both internationally and nationally Islamic organizations are engaged in a concerted effort to censor even valid statements about Islam which they consider to be offensive. The situation of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands is a case in point. As of this writing Wilders once again faces a Dutch court proceedings for his critical comments about Islam. In a previous court case, later thrown out, Wilder's "first selection of expert witnesses...intended to show that the statements of Islamic doctrine and quotes from the Qur'an he was being tried for expressing were true as a matter of fact and a matter of Islamic law" was thrown out by the court which clearly bought the following argument:

It is irrelevant whether Wilder's witnesses might prove Wilder's observations to be correct," the [Dutch Public Prosecution] stated, "what's relevant is that **his observations are illegal.**"

The summary chapter of Coughlin's book makes it clear that the situation here in the US is hardly any better. As Coughlin points out the claim made after 9/11 that the banner of Islam had been hijacked by extremists "was merely accepted as true as a conclusory assumption." As he points out "There is overwhelming evidence that sharia does in fact serve as the drive of the enemy's threat doctrine." Yet a US intelligence officer or national security official "can be fired for undertaking or even reciting such analysis." Coughlin goes on to state that "Today individuals with Muslim Brotherhood affiliations dictate who can and cannot work for the government on War of Terror issues. They also dictate what can and cannot be discussed." Coughlin also points out that "Our leaders apply government pressure to ordinary U.S. Citizens and residents who engage in actions completely within the bounds of First Amendment practices but outside the acceptable boundaries of Islamic law." He believes "we can turn things around only if the American people hold their elected and appointed officials accountable."

Those concerned about the future of our country and preserving its historic values of freedom and liberty need to read this book and disseminate information on it to others and to our elected officials. And we also need to think about reforming our political system so that it is more responsive to discussing candidly and honestly things like the nature of the Islamic threat we face.