

Tuesday, 28 May 2013

## Letter from London: Radicalism is a Muslim problem



While Mr. David Cameron, the British PM was enjoying his second day of a sunny holiday in Ibiza, the exotic Spanish island, London was also enjoying a warm Bank Holiday Monday. Yet, the political climate is not as calm or enjoyable, mainly with regards to the aftermath of last Wednesday's savagekilling of British soldier Lee Rigby, near an army barracks, in broad day light. Many words have since been said and written that condemned the vicious crime, correctly so. Many prayers have been cited for the comfort of the lost soul, his family and loved ones, rightly so. The south east London suburb, Woolwich, used to be a very normal district, going on with its everyday life, or was it?

### A sharp wakeup call

Anyway, not anymore. Before the horrible crime, there was what may be called an "on and off" debate about the radicalization of young Muslims in the UK. Such a debate became louder and hotter only after some sort of terrorism related events, such as so called shoe bomber, or the more deadly 7/7/2005 crime.

However, very little serious work, if any, has been done to face up to the dangerous extreme ideology that is being preached, whether in some mosques or online, which plays the hardcore roll in manipulating the mindset, brain washing, and consequently succeeds in forming the thinking of young Muslim men, and women, all over the United Kingdom, and beyond. In my view there are two serious elements that are overlooked in this debate. First, to consider it as a problem that faces western governments only is a mistake. Secondly, the danger of cultural radicalization has been underestimated for many years.

### Taking responsibility

Indeed, it is far away from complete accuracy to say that the Muslims have nothing to do with the extremism among their young generations, in the west as well as back home. If Muslim institutions in the Muslim world have been up to the job of standing up to extremism, surely the danger would be less. For its part, the western institutions, governments as well as media, think tanks, universities, local social authorities, and others, have underestimated the problem for a long time. The signs of a widening gap between communities of immigrants and the main society were there. They were ignored. No reason could excuse the Woolwich killing. Yet, some British politicians and media commentators did point to the effects of British foreign policy and mainly the military role in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps one can't dismiss that element totally, but to use it as a ground to condone such a crime is surely beyond any logic. It seems there are more hard times ahead of us all. And it does sound out of touch to hope that there is a near end to the going bloodshed under the umbrella of religion, and in the name of Islam in particular, not only in the streets of London, Paris, or any western city, but deep in the heart of many Muslim countries, as we all can see. However, despair should never be allowed to prevail. Muslim cultural institutions in the Muslim world and the west should really do more to confront extremism among young generations. Western governments, and all NGOs who have a great share of the same responsibility, should do the same. Will the Woolwich killing serve as a wakeup call to deal with the rooted reasons that are used as an ideological recipe for brain washing and turning young Muslims into terrorists across the globe? Let us hope so.

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