

An Advocate for “Muslim Rights” in Europe Cries Foul!

By [Jacob Thomas](#)

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Early this year, a regular contributor to the Arabic-language *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* online newspaper was incensed at what he considered the growing “**maltreatment**” of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe. So he contributed a vitriolic article with this extremely provocative headline:

A New Year’s Slap in the Face: European Muslims are Facing a “Loyalty Test”!

Here are some excerpts, which I will follow with my analysis and comments.

“A “Loyalty Test” is the latest expression of the insults hurled at Muslims living in Europe. On New Year’s Day, I learned that the German State of Württemberg has decided to require Muslims living within its territory, to submit to a “Loyalty Test” when applying for German citizenship.

“Now to require applicants for citizenship to go through eligibility tests, such as their educational and linguistic abilities, is a normal procedure everywhere. However, the German state has added an oral examination consisting of thirty questions to be convinced of the “loyalty” of a Muslim applicant. According to the British newspaper, the Daily Telegraph, some of these questions included the applicant’s views about polygamy, women’s dress, wife-beating, and sex.

“It is quite evident that the standards used in this examination of Muslims for citizenship are intended to make the applicant willing to accept Western values. In other words, a Muslim would not be eligible for citizenship unless he forsakes his religious values, and is ready to melt within German society. Furthermore, asking the Muslim applicant to submit to this specific citizenship test implies that he belongs to a special race well-known for its extremism, violence, and unwillingness to accept the ‘Other.’ While this new set of requirements for citizenship eligibility is limited to one German state, it is quite likely that this test would become universalized within Germany.

*“Muslims are being placed before a choice: **you either become like us or you have to leave.** This is exactly what happened to Muslims after the fall of Andalusia --- about 500 years ago ---*

*They were told: **either become Christian, or face expulsion!***

“This Islamophobic phenomenon should not be isolated from a serious mental condition that has afflicted European security agencies after the bombings in Spain and England. These crimes inflicted limitless damages to Islam’s reputation as well as on the immigrant Muslim communities. But we had hoped that those terrorist acts should not have been blown out of proportion; however that was not the case. Two factors have contributed to the increase in the intensity of this Islamophobia. One is related to the European sensitivity vis-à-vis Islam that lies underneath the surface of the European mind ever since the Crusades. The second factor is to be located in those attempts by some in the informational media to agitate against Islam.

*“Now, several influential voices are being heard warning of the coming Islamic menace, emanating from the forty-one million Muslims living in Europe. They warn of the continuing influx of Muslim immigrants, and point to the fact that the demographic growth among Muslim immigrants is three times higher than that of the Europeans. This has led some to claim that by the end of this century, Muslims would have become a numerical majority. As an example of this thinking, we may refer to one of the chief Western enemies of Islam, the **British Bernard Lewis**.*

*“Another voice is that of **Tony Blankley**, one of the most conservative intellectuals and editor of the **Opinion Page** of the **Washington Times** who expressed a similar opinion about the so-called Islamic menace that is threatening Europe.*

*“Actually, it is the Western countries, under the leadership of the USA and Britain, that are putting forth great efforts to blockade and weaken the Arab and Islamic countries; as it is already happening in the ‘new’ Iraq and the ‘new’ Sudan, and with varying degrees in some other Arab countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Palestine. It is reported that the **Neoconservatives** had prepared a secret report for the American officials immediately after the Iraqi invasion, dealing with this question: “**Should Islam be the religion of the New Iraq?**” They wanted the Constitution to be secular, and with no role for Islam in the drafting of its articles. This would lead other Arab countries to follow the Iraqi example.*

*“The West is doing its utmost to weaken Islam. Do we need a more concrete example? Listen to their threats to cut off all aid to the Palestinian Authority should Hamas win the elections. They are very busy doing all that, while issuing warnings about the Islamic menace to the West! **Really now, who is threatening whom?!**”*

The analysis

I had to work very hard to lower, and abbreviate the “**voltage**” of this ultra-critical article that greeted me early this year. I trust the readers will understand that I am not exaggerating the intensity of his feigned outrage against the West. Thanks to the archives section of the daily, I looked at the titles of our author’s other contributions during 2005. A good number dealt with similar issues. He must have a special propensity for bemoaning the “maltreatment” of his fellow Arabs and Muslims who have settled since the 1950s in Western Europe.

His first violent reaction dealt with the decision of the State of Württemberg to have Muslim applicants for citizenship answer some specific questions about their readiness to become German citizens. For him, that was tantamount to requiring them to forsake Islam. This request, according to him, is discriminatory, since all other applicants for citizenship, such as Chinese and Indian immigrants, are not required to submit to similar tests. Another claim was that the impact of the Islamists’ bombings in Madrid and London has been blown out of proportion!

Still another preposterous claim was that Europeans suffer from an inherited historical sensitivity latent in their consciousness since the days of the Crusades. Another example of his vituperation was the way he dismissed the claim of Western writers about the existence of “**a Muslim Menace**” threatening Europe. He singled out with vehemence Bernard Lewis, conferring on him the pejorative Arabic title of “**ahad min shyoukh al-‘ida’a lil-Islam**” (one of the sheikhs [leaders] of enmity to Islam!)

Not to leave Americans without “honorable” mention, he referred to Tony Blankley, and the Neoconservative cabal in Washington, and their attempt to re-shape the cultural and political map of the Arab and Muslim worlds!

The Comments

I must confess that it has not been easy for me to deal with this article. I had downloaded and printed it on the fourth day of the New Year, and put it aside to deal with some urgent matters. But I could not leave it aside, and had to share it, as mentioned above, in an (attenuated) English version. It is normal for me, before keying in these words, to first respond mentally, and in Arabic. This well-known proverb came instantly to my mind: **“Darabani, wa-baka; sabaqani, wa’shtaka.”** Being interpreted, **“He slapped me in the face, and he cried; then, he went ahead and laid charges against me!”** In plain English, **“Attack is the best defence.”**

Why did he write, at the beginning of 2006, such an irresponsible article? Is this the most urgent need for the readers of this sophisticated Arab online daily? Why inflame them with misinformation and disinformation?

The article wanted to portray the State of Württemberg as treating Muslims applying for citizenship in a **discriminatory manner**. Here is the proof: this specific test, which includes an oral examination, is not required from prospective applicants if they happen to be Indians or Chinese. Wow! That is unacceptable to him! But doesn’t our esteemed writer realize that Muslims, no matter where they settle, carry in their baggage a **uniquely political and exclusivist conviction?** The authorities in the State of Württemberg know very well that Islam is not merely a religion, such as the Hinduism of Indians, or the Confucianism of the Chinese. **Islam is religion plus state plus culture, in one indivisible entity.** This has always been the case throughout the last 1400 years. All that the Württemberg authorities are requiring from Muslims seeking German citizenship is **to jettison the political component of Islam**. This component is inadmissible in any democratic country.

Then, to keep on harping on the continued influence of the Crusades upon the present thinking of Europeans actually reflects the extreme fascination of Muslims, and especially of Arab Muslims, with the Crusader wars. The same thing applies to resurrecting the events that followed 1492, when the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella finally united their country and brought to an end 700 years of Islamic colonialism! The underlying thought of the article is shocking, and must never be forgotten: **Muslims believe in their divine right of world conquest. And once a land comes into the sphere of Daru’l Islam, it must never be lost to the hated Infidels.**

I laughed a great deal when the writer dragged in Bernard Lewis, and conferred on him the honorary degree of **“Sheikh.”** Though in all honesty, I should add that this Arabic word has several meanings, and only in one of them, it has a pejorative sense; and this was the intention of the writer. Anyhow, I would never consider Mr. Lewis as the chief of Western sinners against Islam. Over the years, I have appreciated most of his writings; but he certainly has some serious blind spots in his historiography. For example, he continues in his denial of the Armenian Genocide before and during WWI that took place in the Ottoman Turkish Empire. And he remains silent about the infamous Ottoman institute of the **Devshirme*** that impacted the Christian communities in the Balkans for centuries.

Finally, I was pleased, very pleased, when I noticed that among the many responses to the article, two confirmed my own evaluation and criticism of the article, *“A Slap in the Face of Muslims.”* It was an over-reaction to the news from Germany, and contrary to the real facts of life as observed by certain honest and frank Arab residents in the West.

So, here are their comments. The first one comes from a resident of the United States, whose name indicates that he is Muslim by faith.

“The vast majority of Arab and Muslim immigrants in both Europe and America have no desire to belong to, or become a part of the countries whose governments have given them the privilege to live with dignity and prosperity. This is why we find that such crimes as counterfeiting and embezzlement, are rife among Arabs and Muslims in these lands. The most serious thing to observe is that an Arab or a Muslim who resorts to counterfeiting and embezzlement does not experience any pangs of conscience, and is not deterred by any moral or religious impulse. On the contrary, he considers these countries that had opened their doors to welcome him, as lands of the Infidel; thus he has the right to commit such crimes within their borders!”

The second response came from a Muslim medical doctor in Sweden:

“My dear teacher, you are expected to be an objective columnist, so why are you manifesting such a one-sided position impelled by purely emotional reasons?”

“It is perfectly within the right of any European state to investigate any person seeking its citizenship to ascertain whether he is committed to positions that threaten the welfare of these societies.

“For example, many a European Muslim while living in the country that has admitted him, given him social security, and looked after his children by providing them with food and free medicine; yet at the same time, he goes on bragging that he owes no allegiance to such a country, on the pretext that it is a non-Islamic land.

“It is within the right of these countries to require those seeking their citizenship to submit to loyalty tests. I would not even blame them if they demanded the applicants to submit also to lie-detection tests, prior to granting them citizenship.

“Now foreigners passing through Arab and Muslim lands are expected to show respect for our traditions and culture. Is it then too much to expect a Muslim seeking European citizenship to show more respect for the traditions of the societies that have given him shelter?”

“It is high time that we no longer imagine that any requirements such as those of the State of Württemberg are to be considered as a declaration of war against Islam and the Muslims.”

I trust that by sharing with you excerpts from the article of January 4th, 2006, I managed to reveal once again, the simmering and shocking animus toward the West, which is deeply embedded in the Arab-Muslim mind. Not a good prospect for peaceful relations to flourish between Islam and the West!

***For centuries, the Ottoman authorities in the Balkans forcibly took young boys from their families, Islamized them, and placed them in the elite army corps of the *Janissaries*.**