Qom - , December 21st 2016

Radicalization of Muslim youth in European Society: Is it a ...
Clash of Civilisations?
Clash of Religions?
None of them?

Unfortunately, one can indeed only observe a steep increase, especially during the last decade, of tensions and conflicts between Muslim youths in the West (first, second and third generation), most of them living in the deprived neighbourhoods of the urban areas and cities, and the so called autochthonous or native population represented by the established authorities.

We can say that a majority of these youths, leaving beside the more recent phenomenon of the large influx of refugees from the Middle East, are historically of North African and Turkish origin and more specifically from Morocco with most of them being, although largely quite illiterate and ignorant about their religion, calling themselves Muslims. A large proportion of them are under the influence of Wahabi teachings.

Denying the existence of this problem would be turning a blind eye to an extremely volatile situation.

Does this conflict represent a clash of civilisations? A clash of religions? To my opinion and observations calling this problem a clash of civilisations or a clash of religions is merely a stereotype and, by widely spreading these stereotypes, this serves to hide the real origin of the problem which is the social deprivation, poverty and lack of opportunities for large segments of the population.

The conflict has in essence nothing to do with religion. It is not a clash between Islam and Christianity but on the contrary, it has everything to do with a growing inequality between an elitist economical or capitalist upper class and a growing social layer in society of the unprivileged to which these Muslim youngsters belong.

In this presentation I will bring a short and simplified description of a classification of internal and external factors leading to radicalization followed, very briefly, by presenting the relationship between radicalization and Islamophobia.

Internal and external factors of Radicalization:

The phenomenon of radicalization in this context can be attributed mostly to two different sets of factors, internal and external ones.

Internal factors of radicalization:

Failed integration, social deprivation, feelings of humiliation and estrangement with other parts of society and the ruling authorities who represent these other parts of society and furthermore, there are enormous problems with regard to identity issues... . These Muslim youngsters go through an identity crisis.

The lack of equality in the Western world is one of the main causes of radicalization which we are witnessing now. Not only with regard to Muslim youths but also other segments of the native society which are the victims of this increasing economical inequality. The native population tend to move politically or to the extreme right side of the political spectrum or contrary to the far left.

Muslim youths, even now the second and third generation, don't feel home in this society and become increasingly frustrated. These young

people are searching for their identity and they are searching for it more and more outside of the society in which they are living.

Push elements of radicalization

Push elements of radicalization consist mainly of unfavorable social conditions in which a youth person finds himself in, including:

>discrimination and lesser chances on the labour market;

>less or lesser-quality educational opportunities;

>social exclusion and under-privilege;

>poverty;

>humiliation;

>injustice;

All these elements push these Muslim youths towards radicalization and psychological problems. For example drug-related problems and criminal activities.

Pull elements of radicalization

Pull elements include the presence and the provision of radical ideas or radical ideologies which the young Muslim generation can find both online and offline.

There are numerous websites distributing radical, hateful and violent content. For example persuading young Muslim people to travel to Syria to join terrorist groups and providing them with tips and practical information to carry out terrorist attacks.

Radical groups often strongly refer in their propaganda towards injustice inflicted upon Muslims by "infidels". Infidels defined by these groups as everything and everyone not only non-Muslim but also non-Wahabi. In their propaganda every Muslim who is not Wahabi is also defined as the ennemy. Islamic State (IS) e.g.

publishes very professionally printed and audiovisual materials to appeal specifically to these Muslim youths living in the West.

Offline it can be a Wahabi imam or a mosque where extremist ideas are disseminated or a group of radicalised people in their neighborhood who are appealing to this young Muslim people suffering from an identity crisis, providing them with stories of other young Muslims who are leaving or have already left for Syria and are represented as heroes and martyrs.

External factors of radicalization:

--> The impact of the imperialist discourse of major Western powers on the process of radicalization:

The impact of the imperialist discourse and actions of major Western powers is still underexposed. We, especially in the West, tend to underestimate the tremendous impact of the geopolitical component on radicalization considerably. And here the keyword is injustice.

In propaganda materials from, among others, ISIS, al Qaeda and other radical factions, the extensive referring to and highlighting of the geopolitical context is a decisive factor in many cases of winning the hearts and souls of young vulnerable Muslim youths.

Of course, mobilising against injustice and imperialist aggression is not a bad thing by definition but what these extremist groups really do is not mobilising the crowds for a just cause but hijacking the consequences and suffering resulting from these dark policies to further their own hideous agendas. One can call it a form of political deception.

A clear example of such a tragical historical injustice is the occupation of Palestine and al Quds (Jerusalem) by the Zionist entity which is politically, militarily and economically supported not only by the U.S. but as well by most European countries. Other examples are the wars on and destruction of Iraq (2003), Libya (2011) and the

ongoing war in Syria (2011 - ~) which is probably one of the biggest disinformation campaigns in modern history. These Wahabi extremist groups appeal to the uneducated socially underprivileged Muslim youngsters to join them fighting against these injustices. But is this really and sincerely their agenda or do these Wahabi groups have a hidden agenda? I think you know the answer.

The position and role of Western governments towards the Islamic countries and the actions resulting thereof has also a direct causal connection with the phenomenon of revolt against the "host country" of these Muslim youngsters - by which I mean the countries in which they live but where they feel themselves as being second class citizens or even outsiders - which, on its turn, also leads to a mental state of making use of violence acceptable.

Many Muslims wonder why there is widespread outrage over the terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, Madrid, Brussels, etc ... but not over Western military interventions in for example Iraq and Libya which resulted in total destruction and the dead of hundreds of thousands innocent people, directly and indirectly.

--> Economic hardship because of a collapsing capitalist system:

Another external factor having a major influence on the radicalization process of Muslim youths is the increasing economic hardship and unemployment which are also affecting other sections of the population too as a result of a gradual collapse of the capitalist system as we know it since the last century. Or, the perception which lives under the underprivileged sections of the native society that the free movement of goods, services, capital but also people have led, in their minds, to large parts of the labour market been taken over by these newcomers. "Newcomers" also including Muslim youths of the second and even third generation which are objectively and technically speaking not newcomers but subjectively by many natives considered as. This whole process is leading to one population group blaming another group for their economic difficulties and hardship. Or... the public is, as it has always been in history, searching for the "black sheep" and this gives room to radicalization of public opinion also within the native population and the emergence of far right-wing

political parties, ideas and ideologies.

The continues mental stress of being designated as the "black sheep" of society for everything which goes wrong and the related difficulties such as discrimination and social exclusion but also ignorance make these Muslim youths even more vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

--> The cultural factor and Islamophobia:

We can see more and more in Europe that Islam and Muslims are characterized as a "problem" and as a "threat".

The stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims and the associated generalising and focusing on so-called cultural differences fit into a wider pattern of introverted culturalisation.

The general feeling and perception within the native population is that the original native social cohesion going back to the times before the crucial wave of modern immigration in Europe, let's say the period of the fifthees and the first half of the sixties of the last century, has been totally affected, in a very negative way, by too much cultural diversity.

Slowly but surely, the attention of the general public shifts more and more to Islam as a threat to national security and as a threat our own native cultural roots.

In policies and debates, Muslims are presented as a problem, an issue to be dealt with. This is done on the basis of an unilateral, without any dialogue, stigmatising definition of Islam that magnifies in perception all negative clichés living in the minds of the native population, mostly ignorant about Islam, placed into sharp contrast with an idealistic and utopian image of the autochthonous Western culture and values where the latter is deemed superior.

Conclusion:

In summary we can state that there is indeed structural Islamophobia present in Western society and, as a consequence, this is also part of

the context in which radicalization takes place.

The ideology and true application of extremist ideas of these militant groups appear to be attractive to young Muslim people who feel constantly under threat in the debate on Islam in Western media, politics and the negative experiences in their own everyday lives. These young Muslim people lost their way and are searching for a new certainty and identity in their lives. Hence, and tragicly, these people are looking in the wrong places and are easy victims of the well known extremist and barbaric criminal groups and organisations.