

Muslims have become the new scapegoats in Europe: historian

→ 1 Attacks on Muslims and Islam in contemporary Europe represent a “typical” maneuver on the part of political demagogues who seek to avoid taking direct responsibility for political problems they are unable to constructively resolve. Hence, they seek to blame those who are ethnically or religiously “other.” They incite a “politics of fear.” And as we have seen in the past, during periods of political and economic uncertainty, populations are especially susceptible to fear-mongering. In the West, we have seen these tactics at work before: for example, during the 1930s, when European fascist regimes also searched for a scapegoat to blame for the social disequilibrium that accompanied the Great Depression of 1929. At the time, political demagogues like Hitler blamed the Jews. Today, there are few Jews remaining in Europe; consequently, Muslims have become the new scapegoats.

One aspect of the scapegoating of Muslims that is especially regrettable and unfair pertains to the unwillingness to acknowledge the legacy of European colonialism in the Middle East (West Asia): colonialism’s brutality, its racism, and the legacy of political misery that engendered. What I am getting at is that the West has a special responsibility in light of its colonial past to reconcile with the peoples and religious groups it has wronged.

What are the roots of Islamophobia in Europe and the U.S.?

The legacy of European colonialism also helps us understand the roots of contemporary Islamophobia. Much of the contemporary opposition to Islam represents a continuation of prejudices that originated during the heyday of European colonialism. Of course, since 2015 and the escalation of the Middle East (West Asia) refugee crisis, European Islamophobia has had a new “excuse” to whip up anti-Islamic sentiment. At the time, what was needed was compassion and acceptance with respect to refugees who, through no fault of their own, were forced to flee a war zone.

Amid this sorry picture, the one bright



spot in my view was German Prime Minister Angela Merkel’s decision to accept over 1 million Syrian refugees. Although Merkel acted compassionately, she was unfairly punished for this decision by the German electorate.

In the U.S., the sources of Islamophobia are someone different; in part, they correspond to different historical experiences as well as differences in geography. Most American Muslims are “middle class” and well-integrated within American society, which significantly diminishes the chances of any “real” threat, rather than “imagined” conflict.

As I see it, American Islamophobia also derives from American provincialism, by which I mean American insularity and a lack of familiarity with other cultures and other ways of life—the deficiency that, in part, is geographically conditioned; but geographical isolation should not be used as an “excuse” in light of the fact that, after World War II, as Iranians well know from their own historical experiences, the United States assumed an interventionist

role in world affairs in response to the onset of the cold war.

Do you think that we are in a phase of clash of civilizations, as Samuel Huntington had said?

I have always thought that Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis was very dangerous and that it risked becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the dangers of making such generalizations is that they tend to neglect or suppress important details and specifics. For example, as you well know, prior to Donald Trump’s disastrous presidency, Europe and the United States seemed to be moving toward rapprochement with Iran, as indicated by the anti-nuclear treaty that was signed under the Obama administration. I think it is safe to say that Donald Trump knows nothing about Islam or about the pros and cons of the nuclear deal virtually. (Throughout his presidency, he showed that he had a horror of expertise.) What’s clear, therefore, is that Trump sought to whip up anti-Islamic sentiment for purposes of political gain. This goes back to

the problem of political demagoguery that I mentioned in my earlier answer.

Do you think that conflicts and behavior of governments are inevitable historical fate?

I believe in enlightenment and truth, although I am aware that different cultures have different belief systems and therefore define truth in different ways. Nevertheless, all cultures use the word “truth,” so, at the base, there must be a common meaning.

All of this is to say that because I believe in enlightenment and truth, I do not believe in fate, if by “fate,” one means that we are powerless to change the historical circumstance. I am not naïve; I am well aware that historical circumstances can be very powerful and very difficult to alter. At the same time, usually, if one looks hard enough, prospects for meaningful historical change can often be found.

Are political behaviors by governments mostly reasonable? Why radical views and far-right narratives are usually dominant in our world.

To answer this question, I would need to return in part to my earlier response about the challenges of globalization and neoliberalism. The social and economic dislocations these approaches have provoked all over the world have produced record levels of inequality and existential insecurity. As more wealth accrues to those who are better off and to a handful of extremely powerful corporate actors, the life conditions of average citizens have badly deteriorated. This situation has forced “average citizens” to cast their lot with authoritarian leaders who, theoretically, might be able to take matters into their own hands and, thereby, remedy the excesses of the financial sector and oversized corporate actors.

The problem, however, is that, as we know, these authoritarian political leaders are often self-interested and corrupt; therefore, as we have seen in the cases of Trump and Bolsonaro in Brazil, they end up making a bad situation much worse.

Staggered cooperation in a competitive environment between major powers

By Professor Zhang Yuan

In the high-level strategic dialogue between China and the U.S. in Anchorage, Alaska, which ended on March 19, China and the United States showed a very frank and full of difference attitude. The Biden administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance recognize China as the top strategic competitor America faces and a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. To the pessimists, the Biden administration did not immediately bring a reboot of friendly relations between the U.S. and China after the strained Sino-U.S. relations during the Trump administration. However, disputes and disagreements among major powers do not mean the loss of the international environment that promotes transnational cooperation, much less a simple analogy to the Cold War of the last century. Strategically searching for different cooperation content and partners in a competitive environment may be a useful idea to solve the dilemma.

Facing up to differences between major powers but abandoning Cold War mentality

China does not subscribe to the law of the jungle. China is not, and has no desire to challenge the current international order. Instead, China is a defender and active participant in the current international order, and is a member of almost all major global organizations. China is highly integrated with the global economy. China has benefited greatly from opening up to the outside world, from international cooperation, and from globalization. Every rational country would recognize that avoiding any form of Cold War is a good thing for the world.

Unfortunately, the U.S. foreign rhetoric in recent years has been full of Cold War mentality shaping non-existent threats and creating enemies. Not only on the China issue, but also pressuring Iran and intensifying conflict with Russia, the U.S. has shown a pattern of urgency to divert domestic attention, suppress public grievances, and conceal domestic incompetence in internal affairs. The flag of multilateralism advocated by the United States is actually limited multilateralism, which is confined within close alliances and focuses only on the interests of the core country occasionally taking into account the interests of some other allies. Biased multilateralism is essentially an extension of U.S. unilateralism and hegemonism front.

Competition does not mean giving up cooperation

The Biden administration has explicitly claimed to be in long-term strategic competition with China, but even so, the crossfire of public opinion does not mean that all willingness to cooperate has disappeared. The U.S.-China high-level strategic dialogue is ostensibly controversial, but the very act of engaging in high-level dialogue implies that there is a willingness to communicate. The dialogue releases the effort to find potential areas of cooperation. The Biden administration does not deny that it needs to cooperate with China in fighting against the epidemic. But of course,



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international cooperation should not stop at stressful cooperation on a single issue.

At present, it is relatively easy to reach a consensus on cooperation between major powers in areas such as climate issues, poverty eradication and the fight against epidemics, while there is a need for continued in-depth exchanges and communication in areas such as the management of new technologies, maritime security, the cessation of tariff wars and the establishment of strategic mutual trust. Staggered cooperation means, first, broadening the field of cooperation; second, expanding the scale of cooperation; third, deepening the depth of cooperation with friendly countries; and fourth, finding new patterns for cooperation.

In the past, even if there were competitive relations between governments, it did not mean that cooperation at the civil level stopped. Regrettably, although civil exchanges have a non-negligible positive role in advancing cooperation at the official level, it is true that to some extent business travel, tourism, and study abroad have all been restricted due to the epidemic, hindering interactions at the non-governmental level and laterally contributing to the current misunderstanding and misjudgment between countries.

Xenophobia is not in the public interest

Hegemony, the law of the jungle and chauvinism are not in the global public interest. The development of a responsible great power is not to deprive other countries of development opportunities, but rather to enhance the chances of global peace and stability with cooperative and win-win development. China adheres to the path of peaceful development.

Exchanges and cooperation obviously help countries increase understanding and mutual trust. And cooperation among major powers should be conducted under the premise of mutual respect and control the disagreement

without expansion. Compared to the previous administration, the current U.S. is beginning to return to the arena of international cooperation and is placing greater emphasis on close relations with traditional allies.

Biden’s view of international cooperation is obviously deliberately exclusive. It is a manifestation of a strategic cooperation view that strengthens cooperation between allies with similar ideologies and stigmatizes competitors. However, international cooperation that excludes key powers, including China, would only be an unbalanced and incomplete multilateralism.

Indulging in unnecessary competition would worsen the symbiotic domestic social environment. The recent occurrence of violent hate crimes in the U.S. is an externalized manifestation of internal racial discrimination. International xenophobia can metastasize into domestic xenophobia, backfiring on domestic governance.

Behind the malicious interpretation of the goodwill of other countries is a deep-rooted cultural discrimination and is a means of covering the lack of domestic governance capacity and diverting public discontent. International cooperation relies on following principles of equality and mutual respect among countries. Mutual respect means respecting the distinctive culture of each country, respecting the choice of development paths and not interfering in internal affairs.

Economic recovery in the post-epidemic era cannot be achieved without cooperation between major powers

Human beings are living in a community of shared future. Major powers should provide global public products to promote the common development of mankind and jointly maintain world peace in particular.

China attaches great importance to both cooperation with other countries on the platform of international organizations and maintaining friendly bilateral cooperative relations with countries. Taking the bilateral relations between China and Iran as an example, 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Iran. Over the past 50 years, bilateral relations have developed soundly and there are many consensus in cooperation. A five-point initiative on achieving security and stability in West Asia proposed by Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to the six West Asia count, the Iranian nuclear issue and resuming compliance with the JCPOA was specifically addressed.

China’s domestic economy is currently recovering with remarkable vigor. Take the movie market as an example, during the past spring festival season, China’s box office hits record high (over \$ 1.2 billion within 7 days). China is willing and capable of cooperating with other countries to achieve global economic and social recovery. Putting aside the so-called disputes over values, working together with a tolerant and open attitude, communicating actively, pursuing mutual benefit and complementarity to boost the economy is the priority in the coming post-epidemic era, rather than forcing the countries to choose side between so-called competing great powers.

U.S. pulls three Patriot anti-missile batteries from Persian Gulf region

→ 1 According to Washington-based conservative defense policy think tank the Jamestown Foundation, “Yemen’s established and emergent elites are more willing than they have been for years to set aside old grievances”.

“The driving force behind these moves to reinvigorate political processes is the recognition that the Houthis (a.k.a. Ansarullah) are not going to be defeated militarily. Thus, the Houthis’ influence and grip on northwest Yemen must be dealt with politically, if it is to be dealt with at all,” it wrote.

Since 2015, outside powers like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have armed and funded proxies in their battle against Yemen’s resistance forces because they viewed kinetic military action as more expedient than politics. The flow of funds and weapons from foreign powers has helped sustain a war economy and fed the growth of armed factions in Yemen.

In June 2019, the UAE began withdrawing most of its forces from Yemen. Tensions with Saudi Arabia, international fallout from the UAE’s involvement in Yemen, and changing regional dynamics all contributed to the UAE decision. While the UAE remains involved in Yemen as a key supporter of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), the country’s leadership has adopted a lower profile role in the war and reduced the amount of money and materiel that it provides.

Dozens killed, many trapped after Taiwan train derails in tunnel

At least 48 people were killed and over a hundred injured after a packed express train derailed in a tunnel in eastern Taiwan on Friday morning, the country’s Central News Agency reported, in the worst train crash on the island in at least 40 years.

At least 70 other people are also believed to be trapped in the wreckage.

The transport ministry also said some 40 injured passengers had already been sent to hospital with others in the process of being admitted. About people are thought to remain trapped, al Jazeera reported.

Emergency services earlier reported “multiple persons with no vital signs” of life.

The Central Emergency Operation Center said rescuers were trying to get to four carriages inside the tunnel that were badly damaged and difficult to access.

A brief video released by the centre from inside the tunnel showed rescuers arriving on the scene and a twisted carriage door.

Images showed an injured passenger being stretched out of the crash scene, her head and neck in a brace, passengers gathering suitcases and bags in a tilted, derailed carriage and others walking out of the tunnel on the roof of the train.

Al-Shabaab militants call for attacks on U.S., French interests in Djibouti ahead of country’s presidential vote

The al-Shabab militant group has called for attacks on interests of the United States and France in Djibouti, almost two weeks ahead of the presidential election in the East African country.

In a video released late Saturday, al-Shabab’s leader Abou Obaida Ahmad Omar told his followers to “make American and French interests in Djibouti the highest priority of your targets.”

He lambasted Djibouti’s President Ismail Omar Guelleh for turning the Horn of Africa “into a military base,” from which “every war ... is planned and executed” against the African nations in East Africa.

Guelleh has been in power since 1999 and is set to win a fifth term in April 9 elections in Djibouti, whose strategic location as a gateway to both Africa and the Arabian Peninsula has made it a sought-after destination for foreign military bases.

Being a former French colony, Djibouti is now home to France’s largest contingent in Africa -- around 1,500 troops. The U.S. has also a permanent base there, hosting some 4,000 troops.

Resistance News

Gaza protesters demand release of Hamas officials from Saudi jails

TEHRAN— Hundreds of Palestinians have staged a protest in the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip, urging Saudi Arabia to release two officials from the Hamas resistance movement who are imprisoned in the kingdom.

The demonstration took place with the participants chanting slogans against Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper reported.

They called on the Riyadh regime to release Muhammad al-Khudari, 83, and his son Hani, who are being kept behind bars in Saudi Arabia over the past three years.

Abdul Majid al-Khudari, a brother of the elderly inmate, told reporters during the protest that his family had repeatedly sent messages to Saudi officials demanding the detainees’ immediate release, but it had received no response, Press TV reported.

“Today, we gathered here to tell the world that there is a human being (Muhammad al-Khudari) who was subjected to oppression and is now in a Saudi prison. He is suffering from cancer,” he said, noting that his brother’s presence in Saudi Arabia was legal and coordinated with the kingdom.

Saudi-led war inflicted \$111bn in damage to Yemen’s agriculture sector: ministry

The Sana’a government’s Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry has enumerated the harm caused by the Saudi-led military coalition against Yemeni people, saying that the Riyadh-led aggression has, directly and indirectly, inflicted \$111 billion in damage to Yemen’s agriculture sector.

At a press conference released by Yem-

en’s al-Masirah news agency on Sunday, the Yemeni ministry said 172 governmental agricultural buildings and facilities, 204 non-governmental agricultural buildings and facilities, and 89 water facilities, including dams and water conservation projects, were destroyed in Saudi-led coalition’s airstrikes during past six years.

The ministry added that 2,314 agricultural warehouses, 75 markets, 45 agricultural unions, and 29 agricultural export centers and cold storage facilities were also demolished.

Elsewhere, the Yemeni Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry said 3,213 agricultural equipment and tools have been destroyed.

Agriculture Minister Abdul-Malek al-Thur said the damage done to the agriculture sector was very large and that more than 56 percent of those working in this sector had been negatively impacted.

Al-Thur said indirect damage in this sector includes loss of production capacity and alternative opportunities.