

RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
International scientific meeting almanac

RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

(Thematic conference proceedings of international significance held in Srebrno jezero (Veliko Gradiste), May 19 and 20 of 2017)

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY:

FOREL – Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

Centre for sociological and antropological research,
Institut of Social Sciences, Belgrade

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PUBLISHER:

Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

Department of Education and Culture,

Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Branicevo, Pozarevac

PUBLISHER IN-CHIEF:

Dr Goran Basic, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

Dr Zlatko Matic, Faculty of Orthodox Theology,
University of Belgrade, Belgrade

ISBN 978-86-7093-198-5

RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

(Религия в современном обществе)

International scientific meeting almanac

Nataša Jovanović

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy
University of Belgrade

Vladimir Mentus

Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

CLASSICAL ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM AS RELIGION OF WARRIORS – THE IMPLICATIONS OF WEBER’S INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC DOGMA

Abstract: Max Weber, one of Europe’s most influential social thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, characterized Islam as a warrior religion. As the pillars of Islamic religious ethos Weber saw the warriors from the Arabian Peninsula. The implication of such perception of the social history of Islam, among others, is also emphasizing the militant attitude of Muslims towards members of other religions, as well as the necessity of sacrificing in the religious war to ensure after-death salvation. In this paper the basic postulates of Weber’s interpretation of Islam are presented. Also, we presented the possible (oriental, romantic and realpolitik) causes of this perception. Consequently we exposed data on the attitudes of Europeans towards Islam today, i.e., it was shown that such a (traditional) simplified perspective fits into modern postulates. In the second part, in the context of Weber’s conception, therefore, the attention was paid to attitudes of residents of European countries, primarily Germany, Great Britain, and France, on the potential threat of Islam to their security, and on their perception of Islam, in general.

Key words: Weber, Islam, religious tolerance, Western Europe, violence.

Introduction

Max Weber (1864–1920), taking consideration of the basic postulates of *Verstehen* (interpretative understanding¹), studied the religious dogma, not

¹ According to Weber’s opinion, interpretative understanding is one of the main tasks of sociology. In the definition of Weber’s sociology he refers that sociology is the science that is willing to understand and interpret the social interaction and thus illustrate what is causal in its course and its consequences (Вебер, 1976: 3). It should be borne in mind that for Weber’s understanding is not merely hermeneutics

as a unconditional givens, but as a result of transcendent spiritual needs of a particular social stratum in a particular historical moment (Hamilton, 2003: 257).

Cognitive revolutionary hypothesis, which emphasizes that the content of mythology and symbolism is conditioned, among other things, by a class basis, has been the subject of various disputes and debates even today. The study of cohabitation between the Protestant ethic and the capitalist logic is probably the most famous example of his research on the conjunction between religious dogma and economic system (Weber, 2011).

Implementing both the diachronic and synchronic comparative studies, Weber also without doubt dealt with the Islamic religion. Although he did not complete a separate monograph on Islam (as he had intended), we can reconstruct some basic conclusions that this sociological classic drew on this youngest monotheistic religion (Bashier, 2011; Turner, 1998, Salvatore, 1996; Јовановић, 2016a, Јовановић, 2016b). Weber defined Islam as a religion of warriors and it, as such, certainly does not come into the corpus of religions of salvation (Вебер, 1997: 203). This interpretation of Islam allows us to understand that (militant) dimensions and interpretations of Islamic ethics (which, of course, is very important), but nevertheless, that kind of perception is not only simplistic, but entails serious realpolitik consequences.

In this paper we shall first shed light on some of the basic premises of Weber's understanding of Islam, then, in the second part we shall look at the contemporary implications of such perception. Therefore, the paper will discuss, at least implicitly, how the classic sociological heritage is also reflected in attitudes towards Muslims today.

Weber's vision of Islam in martial attire

Using a comparative method, Max Weber identifies different historical and social contexts of the establishment of religions. He, for example, shatters the modern prejudice that Christianity is a religion of peasants and that farmers are the most pious class of society. In fact, because the daily life of peasants is closely tied to nature, and because their existence depends on the climate and other biological conditions, the rural sections of the population are practicing different magical and animist rituals² to 'tame' external factors. Christianity, on the other hand, is the urban religion. The Christian *ethos*

(as in the example of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) in whose theory we also come upon this term) but here we deal with a sort of scientific knowledge (Ђурић, 1964: 72).

² Weber explains the basic dichotomy between magic and religion. Under the magic he means ecstatic, current, orgy-like, contemplative entity, while religion implies a general, systematic, chronic and to everyone readily available spirituality. In magic the rationality is missing, while in religions it is present on the different level (Вебер, 1976; Вебер, 1997).

is compatible with suffering of underprivileged classes of European cities that needed after-life consolation and salvation from sufferings in this life (Вебер, 1976: 405). In the Far East, Buddhism has emerged as the religion of the intellectuals, while Confucianism is the religion of Asian bureaucracy. If we go back a little closer to the European continent, i.e., the Middle East, or, more precisely, to the Arabian Peninsula, we shall be able to see how the Islamic dogma came into being with the ethics of warriors led by the political, state, and religious leader, Prophet Muhammad (Вебер, 1976: 400).

Warriors, both in ancient times, and in the Middle Ages, as a rule, were inclined to embrace the decorations and enjoy the glory and honour of the battles won. Praises for which soldiers crave, no matter to what historical, geographical or cultural context they belong to, have always been of secular character, i.e., they do not come after death, but they receive them during lifetime. Moreover, from the viewpoint of a brave warrior, submission to the Prophet or Priest is unworthy of their behaviour (Вебер, 1976: 399). As Weber argues, the only exception to this general rule is precisely Islam and within its dogma was constructed the idea of a *holy war* as a link between the desire for recognition in this life and salvation in the *post mortem* horizon. Weber states that: "This concept implies exclusivity of a universal god and moral depravity of infidels as His enemies, whose uninterrupted existence provokes his justified anger. Therefore, this concept did not exist either in ancient times or in the West or in any of the Asian religions of Zoroaster; thus, there is no direct connection between the struggle unbelievers on one hand, and religious feelings of the other. The real creator of this connection is the Islam" (Вебер, 1976: 400).

Because the daily practice of religious rites is not, in Weber's opinion, the way to salvation and Islam and because there does not develop *chronic religious habitus*, rationalization had not permeated the Islamic ethics. Islam is therefore a religion of warrior stratum whose gravitational point is *jihad* (holy war)³.

One of the problems with Weber's interpretation of Islam is that he perceives this religion as a monolithic system, without going into any kind of

³ Jihad can be translated as "the overall effort to improve, spread and defend Islam, including the 'holy war' (Танасковић, 2010: 350). Jihad, in most interpretations, is not considered the sixth pillar of Islam, and yet today there are many theologians, lawyers and followers who consider this institution essential for the realization of the Islamic mission. This term is mentioned in the Qur'an 41 times and with different connotations. This is why we often talk about the distinction between jihad which is primarily a spiritual effort to overcome all challenges and jihad as a struggle (against the infidels) (Танасковић, 2010: 172). From this very brief statement, we can conclude that Webber did not make an error by accenting just the combat aspect of Islam, because this is certainly one of the most important elements for the understanding of Islamic dogma. However, Weber's 'missed' all other aspects of Islamic ethics (unlike other religions that he analyzed in a more detailed and comprehensive way) and in it lies the basic problem of his interpretation of Islam.

religious-legal diversities that exist in Islam (and which were also known in the nineteenth century). He only separates Sufism⁴ (Islamic mysticism) from the rest of Islam, but he didn't emphasize the difference between the Sunni and Shia, and furthermore, he fails to recognize the fractional and all legal varieties. Precisely because of such perception Weber's analysis of Islam was 'blind' to all those other elements and different interpretations of Islam beside this, extremely militant interpretation which he advocated.

When we leave dogma and move to the level of social history, we can name at least a few controversial points regarding the Weber's interpretation of Islam. German sociological classic, in fact, completely neglected the importance of trade and trade class for the formation and expansion of Islam. It is a great cognitive failure when there he entirely disregarded the importance which trade had for the emergence of Islamic ethics as well, which is especially significant for the spread of this religion. Thus, it is not that Weber incorrectly described the specifics of the Islamic holy war and its role both in the historical moment and in the Islamic dogma generally, but here it means that by mere stressing only that aspect, all boils down to the ultimate reductionism. "We would say that here we actually deal with two sides of the same coin. The significance of the armed conflict and belligerent social stratum is indisputable, if not for the emergence, then certainly for the spread of Islam. However, this is only one dimension. The other side of the coin offers us a picture of a peaceful atmosphere in early-Islamic cities where there is coexistence of people, regardless of religious affiliation, and where people primarily traded. The whole town atmosphere reflected the fever for money, joy and suffering due to business successes and failures, which is why the town centers the Arabian Peninsula represented the then-modern version of the Stock Exchange of today" (Јовановић, 2016a: 110).

We should not forget the conclusion of the famous social anthropologist, Ernest Gellner (1925–1995), that Islam is a complete way of life, that it is far more the religion of *praxis* than the religion of dogma. This is, according to Gellner's opinion, the result of the existence of a comprehensive and highly obligatory legal system (*Shariah*) (Gellner, 1981). If we only look at the five pillars of Islam and how they not only psychologically and spiritually, but also physically engage every believer, one gets the impression that Islam is just one of the religions that develops *chronic religious habitus* of which Weber writes in detail. Although the interpretations of Islam are indisputable under which only the *mujahedeens* (fighters in a 'holy war') go to *jannah* (paradise), the absence of the analysis of Islam as a holistic religion that determines the life of the believers from prenatal to post-mortem phase is a great intellectual and scientific oversight.

⁴ "Tesavuf (*tasawwuf*) is the Arabic word for Islamic mysticism, Sufism. It literally means to be a mystic, Sufi" (Vukomanović, 2008: 129). Sufism implies both a speculative philosophical path and institutions, i.e., brotherhoods and tariqats (Vukomanović, 2008: 129).

If we look at what are the possible reasons why Weber only emphasizes warrior *ethos* in Islam, we can think in at least three directions. Namely, to Weber's analysis of Islam most commonly is stuck the label of Orientalism (Salvatore, 1996; Turner, 1998). Weber, according to these interpretations, as an apologist of modern, rational, bureaucratic and predominantly Christian West, searched for *Others* in relation to which the West would construct its own identity. Also, according to this, constructivist logic, making comparisons with the backward, patriarchal, traditional and militantly determined Orient, Occident shows his civilization's superiority. Following the logic of Edward Said (1935–2003) (the founder of the concept of Orientalism), Weber is just one of the thinkers who fell into the trap of Western-centricity (Said, 2008). Authors who rank Weber among the classics of Orientalist discourse in European science are mutually opposed by whether they sharply 'judge' him for such descriptions of Islam (Turner, 1998), or are, however, somewhat milder and justify his conclusions by the general intellectual climate at the end of the nineteenth century. In the second case Weber, therefore, failed to distance himself from the general perception of the Orient as a subjugated colonial territory (Bashier, 2011: 130).

The second direction, which is, of course, marked Weber's creativity in general is the German Romanticism in which we can reconstruct a specific (and compared to the previous description a different) attitude to the Orient as a corrective of just that cold, insensitive world and also far remote by its character by Western standards. Consequently, criticizing English and French concepts of *civilization* as superior to *culture*, the German intellectual elites often in links of the German spirit with oriental sentiment saw not only the nucleus of distinction, but also domination over technically defined *civilization* (Korać, 1990: 324). Precisely because Germany had no colonies there developed, according to some authors, a different attitude to the Orient which reflected the relationship of mutual understanding rather than hierarchical relationship (Pollock, 2000: 305). Some authors go so far that they assign Weber among the greatest theorists who criticize the rational Western, such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Adorno and Horkheimer (Gandhi, 1998: 37).

Also, we should not forget the fact that Weber extremely respected the military spirit and advocated the development of militarism as a lifeline for Germany after Bismarck's rule. This element is our link with a third possible explanation of Weber's accentuation of warrior spirit in Muslim societies, in the former and latter ones. Namely, out of ultimate realpolitik reasons, Weber (as someone who engaged immensely in practical-political domain) could search for potential partners of Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the potential partners could also be the 'The Bosphorus patient', i.e., the former Ottoman Empire. Compatibility of Prussian warrior honor (which German sociological classic highly admired) with Muslim warrior *ethos* is another of the viewpoints from which

we can observe Weber's understanding of Islam as a whole (Turner, 1998: 122; Radkau, 2009: 450).

The scope of this study does not allow us a comprehensive analysis of Weber's understanding of Islam, his great contribution to the understanding of this religion, but also some oversights. Also, we cannot go into the causes of potential explanations of just such an analysis. Brief introduction to Weber's perception of Islam as a religion of warriors only provided the exposure to the modern interpretation of data on the relationship between Europeans (especially Western) against Muslims and Islam in general. We believe that the continuity of the classical heritage is a very important indicator for understanding contemporary social phenomena. We do not, of course, claim that we found direct causality, but we consider that we can identify conceptual continuity.

Contemporary attitudes towards Islam among Europeans

Recently there has been significant research about attitudes towards Islam within populations of European countries, especially Western. These results make it possible to analyze whether, and to what extent Weber's conception of Islam is embodied within contemporary attitudes among Europeans. We do not claim that there is direct causality between Weber's understanding of Islam and the contemporary perception of that religion, but we show that in Western societies there is a continuity of understanding of Islam as *a priori* religion of warriors.

Many of these studies are international. One of them was conducted by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, using nationally-representative samples consisting of 1 000 respondents from several Western European countries. It shows that about half of Germans, British, Dutch, and Italians think that Islam is a religion of intolerance. Nearly half of the British believe that many Muslims perceive terrorists as heroes, as and more than quarter of them that the majority of Muslims find terrorism justifiable. Only 17 percent of Germans and 27 percent of Italians think that the Muslim culture fits well into their country and Europe (Islam Surveyed, 2015a).

Also, even 69 percent of Italians have unfavourable view of Muslim in their country (Wike et al., 2016). Approximately the half of Germans considers Islam to be a threat, and that Islam does not fit in Germany. 60 percent of the Spaniards and 50 percent of the Swiss consider Islam as being dangerous (Hollstein and Peters, 2013). According to YouGov data from the survey in May 2015, 40 percent respondents from Great Britain have fairly or very negative impression of Muslims, just as 36 percent from Germany and Sweden, 40 percent from France, 45 percent from Denmark and Finland, and 37 percent from Norway (YouGov, 2015). 69 percent of Germans perceive Islam as dismissive of Western values, 61% as fanatical, 51% as submissive, and 38% as violent; similarly, 62% of French perceive Islam as dismissive

of Western values, 57% as fanatical, 49% as submissive, and 34% as violent (IFOP, 2010). Only 7% of Germans associate Islam with openness, tolerance or respect for human rights, as and 83% with discrimination against women, and 68% with intolerance towards other faiths. Two thirds of French think Islamic values to be incompatible with those of French society, 73 percent view Islam negatively, and 74 percent consider it intolerant (Murray, 2013).

The data from the French Institute of Public Opinion revealed that 47 percent of respondents from the United Kingdom, as well as 44 percent from the Netherlands, 40 percent from Germany, and 42 from percent France believed that the presence of a Muslim community in their country represented a threat for their country's identity. Also, most of respondents within the same survey believed that there's been a failure in integrating Muslims into society – 77 percent of Dutch, 75 percent of Germans, 68 percent of French, and 65 percent of British. The primary reason for that, according to respondents, is because Muslims refuse to integrate, while economic and social causes are much rarely considered as the main reason (La Croix, 2012). Pew Research Center recently found that the share of people believing that "refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism in our country" was, among others, 46 percent in France, 52 percent in Britain, and 61 percent in Germany (Macdonald, 2016).

According to Populus opinion poll in 2011, 52 percent of respondents from United Kingdom agreed that Muslims created problems in their country, which is far more comparing to other religious groups. Further, Survation and YouGov both found in 2015 that more than half of the British believed the values of Islam were incompatible with the values of British society. On the other side, according to both polls only about one fifth of the population think that they are compatible (Hasan, 2017). Another survey conducted by Institute of the Public Opinion survey in 2016 found that 47 percent of French people felt that the Muslim community posed a threat to national identity and nearly two-thirds of them felt that Islam had become too influential and visible (ibid.).

A Survey by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2015 found that 57 percent of Germans considered Islam very much or somewhat of a threat, which is an increase of 4 percent in relation to 2012. Second, 61 percent of them believe that Islam is incompatible with the Western world, which is an increase of 9 percent in relation to three years before. 40 percent of non-Muslim respondents feel like foreigners in their own country because of Muslims, and nearly one quarter of them agree that Muslim should not be allowed to migrate to Germany (Agency France Presse, 2015). Also, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung conducted an opinion poll in 2012, according to which 77 percent of Germans think that Islam is a literalist religion, and 70 percent that is associated with radicalism and religious fanaticism. Also, 64 percent of respondents believed that Islam is ready for violence, 60 percent for hatred, and 56 percent for political influence. Further, 53 percent

of respondents believed that serious conflicts between Christianity and Islam would develop, and 47 percent did not see Muslims as a part of Germany. On the other hand, results from the same survey revealed that only 13 percent of Germans associate Islam with love for neighbours, 12 percent with charity, and only 7 percent with openness and tolerance (NSS, 2012).

Researchers at the University of Leipzig surveyed 2 420 Germans in 2016, and showed that more than 40 percent of respondents thought that Muslims should be forbidden from coming to Germany. This was much higher than in 2009, when just one-fifth thought the same. Also, because of Muslims living in Germany, about half of the respondents said they sometimes felt like foreigners in their own country. In 2009, there was about 30 percent of them, and in 2014 about 43 percent (Copley, 2016; Reuters, 2016). Approximately 60 percent of Germans believed that there was no place for Islam in Germany (Reuters, *ibid.*). Finally, 57 percent of Germans fear the Islamisation of their country (Perring, 2016). Only 5 percent of Germans think that Islam is tolerant (Zeit, 2010).

More than two fifths of 1 000 French respondents from Ipsos survey in March 2017 said that Islam is incompatible with their society, which is much more compared to Catholicism or Judaism. Until the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, this percentage was falling, and has been constantly growing afterwards (Pleasance, 2017). Another French Institute of Public Opinion survey revealed that 43 percent of French considered Muslim community as a threat to their national identity. About 43 percent are opposed to building more mosques, while in 2010 there were 39 percent of them. 60 percent believe that Islam is “too important” in their county in terms of its influence and visibility, while two years before there were 55 percent of them. According to the same survey, two thirds of French think that Muslims are not well integrated into French society. Among them, 68 percent blamed lack of integration on Muslims’ refusal to integrate, while nearly half of them said they believed it was a result of insurmountable cultural differences (Flynn, 2012). Another Ipsos research showed that 74 percent of French think that Islam is intolerant and incompatible with social values in their county. Further, about 80 percent of them believe that Islam tries to impose its views on others, 10 percent think a majority of Muslims are fundamentalists, while another 44 percent think that many but not all Muslims are fundamentalists. However, most respondents did not know how to define fundamentalism (ANSAméd, 2013).

YouGov poll, conducted on 1 641 respondents, showed that 55 percent of British believe that there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society (Lips, 2015). Another YouGov survey based on a sample of 6 640 respondents, revealed that British public associate Muslims with terms such as “terror”, “terrorist”, or “terrorism” more than any other issue in 12 percent of cases. “Extremist” and “misogynistic” were also phrases most likely to be linked to the religion (5 percent) (Lesley, 2015). 63 percent

of people from Britain did not disagree with the statement "Muslims are terrorists", and 58 percent linked Islam with extremism (Siddique, 2010).

British Social Attitudes Survey in 2010 showed that 34 percent of British had negative feelings towards Muslims. In contrast, there were only 6–11 percent of them with negative feelings towards other religions (National Centre for Social Research, 2010). According to Exploring Islam Foundation survey, also in 2010, with sample of 2 152 non-Muslims from London, nearly one third of respondents agreed totally or to some extent that Islam is violent religion (Islam Surveyed, 2010). The Islamic Education and Research Agency in the same year showed that even three quarters of Britons thought that Islam had negative impact on British society. However, every four out of five respondents admitted that they had less than very little knowledge about Islam, and even 93 percent of them had very little knowledge or no knowledge at all about the Qur'an. Nearly one quarter of respondents strongly or slightly agreed with statement that Muslims are terrorists (Islam Surveyed 2015b). Populous poll found that over half of the British agree that Muslims create problems in the UK (Islam Surveyed, 2015c). Also, YouGov survey with 1 750 respondents from Britain showed that 41 percent of people would be more likely to vote for a party that promised to stop all immigration, and 37 percent that promised to reduce the number of Muslims in Britain and the presence of Islam in society (Townsend, 2012).

In 2013 between 50 to 60 percent of all religious hate crimes reported to police in Britain are perpetrated against Muslims (Wright, 2013). Incidents of anti-Muslim abuse and attacks in public areas of the United Kingdom rose by 326 percent in 2015 (Sherwood, 2016).⁵ Pew Global Attitudes Project survey in 2008 showed that nearly one quarter of respondents from Great Britain rated Muslims unfavourable, as well as 50 percent from Germany, and 38 percent from France (PEW, 2008). When feelings towards various religiously-defined groups were measured, using a series of 'thermometer' scales, ranging from 0 (warm) through to 100 (cold) towards particular groups – Muslims received the lowest mean scores of all religious groups (Clements, 2011). ComRes (2016) interviewed 2 012 British and showed that 56 percent of them did not think that Islam was compatible with British values. One out of three of them believed that Islam promoted acts of violence in the United Kingdom, and 43 percent of them that Islam was a negative force in their country.

One out of two Austrians consider Islam a threat to Austrian society and that Islam is attempting to change Austrian society, two fifths of them see Islam as a backward religion, 14 percent think that Austria's Muslims support Isis terrorists in Syria and Iraq, and 72 percent agreed that Austrians don't know what Islam really is (Salomon, 2010). According to a survey

⁵ However, nature and extent of these incidents is shown to be under-documented, under-studied and under-reported (Yasmin and Marković, 2016).

conducted by ÖGM, 58 percent of the 500 respondents from Austria said that they felt that more Muslims were becoming radicalized in their country, 62 percent of them that the coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims is not so good, and 72 percent said they were in favour of increased video surveillance and more monitoring of mosques and Islamic institutions (The Local, 2015). However, the survey was carried out after the shootings in Paris and Copenhagen, and the results are likely to have been affected by these events (ibid.; МЕНТУС, 2017).

Survey conducted by PEW from 2015 showed that 61 percent of Italians (and 56 percent of Poles) have unfavourable view of Muslims in their country. Despite the fact that 1,5 million of Muslims live in Italy and that Islam is the second largest religion there, it is not recognised formally as religion, and the country's Muslim population are served by just two official, purpose-built mosques, which makes many of them pray on parking lots, warehouses etc. (Gaffey, 2015).

In other Western countries the picture is similar. According to the Finnish Social Science Data Archive, the Finns felt most critical towards Islam in relation to all other religions, and only 6 percent of them see Islam in positive light (Ketola, 2011). Further, The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, and Department of Political Science from the Aarhus University in Denmark showed that nearly one third of Danes see Islam as a threat to Denmark (Nannestad, 2011), and 33 percent of Danes believe that Denmark is in war with Islam as religion, not just radicalised Muslims (The Local, 2016a). The potential problem is that only 13 percent of Danes believe that moderate Muslims and imams in Denmark do enough to distance themselves from the attacks in the name of their religion (The Local, 2016b). Finally, it should not be surprising that according the De Hond survey, based on a sample of 2 500 respondents from Netherlands, 43 percent of them expressed that they would prefer to see fewer Moroccan people in their country (Dias, 2014).

From this part we can conclude that throughout Western Europe there is a fairly large degree of negative attitudes towards Muslims and Islam. This relation often includes viewpoints according to which Islam could be designated as the dominant warrior religion.

Discussion

Although Weber wrote a long time ago, his views on Islam like a warrior religion are much alive even today. Of course, Weber was not the first who wrote about Islam in such a way, and today there are numerous factors that make such perception about Islam among non-Muslims.

This is especially visible after some important events; huge short-term fluctuations of attitudes towards Islam and Muslims that come to the fore

after major events that have Islamic connotation represent quite a good proof. For example, 24 hours after the murder of Lee Rigby of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the number of citizens of Britain who thought that conflict between groups was "largely inevitable" has risen by seven points to 40 percent, and agreement with the suggestion that there would be a serious clash between British Muslims and white Britons has also rose, from 50 to 59 percent (in relation to six months ago) (Goodwin, 2013).

As Zick and Küpper (2009) argue, anti-Islamic prejudices are less restricted by norms than other prejudices and devaluing Islam gains more open and blatant support. Political and cultural opinion leaders often devalue Islam by associating it with terror and stressing that integration of Muslims has failed. This enhances anti-Islam sentiments and legitimates prejudices which are often precursors of discrimination. The suspicion of terrorism leads to feeling threatened (*ibid.*). Also, media often present Islam in a negative view, and larger news exposure is associated with both increased anger and reduced warmth towards Muslims (Shaver et al. 2017; see also: Ментус, 2014). The relationship between media exposure and anti-Muslim prejudice does not reliably vary with political ideology, which supports claims that it is widespread representations of Muslims in the news that drives anti-Muslim prejudice, rather than partisan media biases (*ibid.*). When it comes to perception of Islam as the external enemy, the main focus concerns national security, terrorism, and cultural threats (Cesari, 2013).

Negative perception towards Islam could also be the result of the lack of personal contact with Muslims. Although people have even less contact with Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, all of which are seen more positively than Islam – the picture the media give of Buddhism or Hinduism is that of peace-loving religions, while picture of Islam is distorted and the stress is put more on its fanaticism and aggressiveness (NSS, 2013). Extremist groups are often shown, and frequently no distinction is made between religion and extremism, as when, after the Boston Marathon attacks, the bombers were said to be part of an "Islamic network" (*ibid.*).

Thereby, a simplistic perception of Islam that is represented by Weber among others today is very much alive among the populations of Western countries. There is not direct causality between Weber's understanding of Islam and contemporary perception, but as we have showed there are strongly rooted prejudices about Islam as a warrior religion in the West, even in classical heritage. Given the very deep roots of such perceptions, which is more or less constantly maintained, it is difficult to expect that in the foreseeable future this course would change.

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