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Many believe that religious revival and political radicalism among Muslims who reside in the West reflects the traditions and conflicts of the Middle East or the wider Muslim world. But Islamic Salafism (fundamentalist religious radicalism) is above all a consequence of the globalization and Westernization of Islam, and of the decoupling of culture and religion more generally.

All forms of religious fundamentalism rely on the notion of a "pure" religion independent of cultural variations and influences. Today's Islamic revival shares the dogmatism, communitarianism, and scripturalism of American evangelist movements: both reject culture, philosophy, and even theology to favor a literalist reading of sacred texts and an immediate understanding of truth through individual faith.

Recent books published in the West reflect this, with titles like *What is Islam?*, *What Does It Mean To Be A Muslim?*, and *How To Experience Islam?* It is easy to fast during Ramadan in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Egypt, even if one does not want to. But a Muslim living in Europe is confronted with the necessity of objectifying the religion. *Ulemas* (religious scholars) are useless for believers who must search for purely religious criteria that are no longer linked to a given culture.

The real issue is not a theoretical question about Islam, but concerns the religious practices of Muslims. The forms of religiosity in Islam today are more or less the same as those found in Catholicism, Protestantism, and even Judaism. Contemporary adherents insist more on personal faith and individual spiritual experience. Such "born again" believers rebuild their identities through their rediscovery of religion.

One of the unexpected consequences is the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. There is in France a thriving protestant evangelical church (led by pastor Saïd Oujibou) which recruits exclusively among second generation immigrants from North Africa. They are based in Trappes, which is also the stronghold of salafi groups (they live in the same neighbourhood and have been in school together^o; the map of newly built evangelical church overlap with the map of the recent mosques in France. There is also a recently established evangelical church in Morocco and Algeria.

With Islamic fundamentalism, too, we are not witnessing a traditional religion asserting itself against the Christian West. When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1996, they initially had excellent relations with the Americans, and Westerners could travel freely in Afghanistan between 1996 and 1998.

The Taliban were not fighting Western culture, but traditional Afghan culture. Why forbid owning songbirds? Why ban kites? The rationale is common to all forms of fundamentalism: this world exists to prepare believers for salvation. The state's role is not to ensure social justice and the rule of law, but to create opportunities - even through coercion - for believers to find salvation.

The Taliban's argument was simple: if your bird starts singing while you are praying, you will be distracted and your prayer will be nullified. If you are a good Muslim, you will start again from the beginning. But, because we are unsure that you are a good Muslim, it is easier to forbid owning songbirds, so that they cannot jeopardize your salvation.

Similarly, kites get tangled in trees, and if you climb the tree to free it, you might look over your neighbor's wall and see a woman without her veil, which would put you in sin. Why risk burning in hell for a kite? Better to ban them.

Fundamentalism is thus not a protest by original cultures under threat; it reflects these cultures' disappearance. So it is a grave mistake to link modern forms of fundamentalism with the idea of a clash of civilizations. Young people do not become fundamentalists because their parents' culture is ignored by Western civilization. Fundamentalist religiosity is individual and generational, a rebellion against the religion of one's parents.

Of course, religious fundamentalists of whatever stripe often emphasize similar codes, norms, and values. When Pim Fortuyn in Holland decided to wage a campaign against Muslim influence, he was defending sexual freedom, not traditional Christian values. But on this subject and others - say, family and abortion - religious Muslims in Europe side with conservative Christians.

Nevertheless, such commonalities do not explain political and radical Islam. Osama Bin Laden is much more the expression of deracination than of a tradition of political violence in Islam.

Muhammad Atta, Zacharias Moussaoui, and Kamel Daoudi were "born again" in Marseilles, London, and Montreal, not in Egypt or Morocco (and they all broke ties with their families).

Moreover, young radicals go to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, or Kashmir rather than in their countries of origin, because they do not regard the Middle East as the heart of a Muslim civilization under siege by crusaders. They live in a global world; they do not perceive themselves as Middle Easterners.

The irrelevance of traditional culture explains the growing number of converts in all the recently discovered radical networks. The members of the Beghal network in France were roughly one-third converts. The French police arrested a German citizen with a Polish name in connection with the terrorist attack on the synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia. Richard Reid, who tried to blow up a British

airplane, José Padilla, accused of plotting a "dirty bomb" attack in the United States, and John Walker Lindh, the American Taliban, are all converts.

In Europe, conversion is typically confined to underprivileged neighborhoods, populated by young people with no job prospects who generally live in an underground economy of delinquency. The radical and violent left in Europe today has abandoned these zones of social exclusion. Radicals used to learn to handle a Kalashnikov and hijack planes with the Palestinians. Now they learn to handle a Kalashnikov and hijack planes with Al Qaeda.

Their quest for mythic, messianic, transnational movements of liberation remains the same, as does the enemy: America's imperial colossus. They are the product not of Western or Middle Eastern history, but the fusion of all histories, of globalization. They are at home in a homeless world.