

Editorial

In the context of inter-religious debates, both from atheistic and from agnostic positions, religious doctrines have sometimes been sweepingly accused of showing a “fundamentalist”, “extremist” or “totalitarian” tendency. However, it would be a mistake to thus ignore the double-faced nature of the “religious”: the belief in God in its manifold ways may on the one hand work as a “power of peace and unity”, on the other hand, however, it may as well work as a “superior power in the midst of which there is deadly destruction”.¹ For the third Abrahamic religion, Islam, this seems to hold even more than for its monotheistic predecessors. At least, the global history of political terrorism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has to a considerable degree been written by violent-oriented groups whose fighters declared war on every “infidel” (including those Muslims who are not “orthodox”) and whose “martyrs” were dreaming of a bright future in Paradise.

At least concerning its extreme variants, which conceive state and religion as one monolithic entity, political Islam is different from those political movements which led to “totalitarian” regimes in Russia, Italy and Germany. Based on well-grounded arguments, the latter have been interpreted as being “secular” or “religions belonging to this world”, and they have been characterized – not in all their variants, but mainly – by having an instrumental-sceptic or hostile attitude towards religion and Churches.

Nevertheless, after the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the “new totalitarianism” formula spread like wildfire all over the world. On the one hand, this was an expression of the extent of the apparent threat of the “jihadist” interpretations of political Islam for the “free world”. On the other hand, it pointed out to the structural common grounds suggesting themselves by a comparison to the totalitarian “predecessors” of the 20th century. The political scientist Bassam Tibi from the University of Göttingen, who claims the copyright for this formula and proudly pointed out to the fact that it was so positively received by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in his speech at Princeton in November, 2003, referred to Hannah Arendt’s “Origins of Totalitarianism”, going as far as to stating that “all criteria given by Arendt for such a movement” were met by “Islamism”,² whatever he exactly meant by saying so. The New York columnist Paul Berman in his book “Terror and Liberalism”, which was published even before Fischer’s speech, avoided such far-reaching claims but agreed with Tibi at least on one crucial point: Many of that what the generation of “Hannah Arendt, George Orwell, Albert Camus, Sidney Hook, C. L. R. James, Alejo Carpentier,

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- 1 See Hans Maier, *Das Doppelgesicht des Religiösen. Religion – Gewalt – Politik*, Freiburg i. Brsg. 2004, p. 9 f.
 - 2 Bassam Tibi, *Der neue Totalitarismus. “Heiliger Krieg” und westliche Sicherheit*, Darmstadt 2004, p. 74.

Czesław Miłosz, David Rousset, Arthur Koestler, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Richard Wright”,³ after having overcome their initial focus on the danger of right-wing extremism, had identified with Stalin’s Communism and subsumed by the term “totalitarian” could also be recognized with those ideologies and strands which had intellectually motivated the attack on the towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Since then there has been no end to the debate on totalitarian features of political Islam/Islamism. The freedom-threatening effects of Islamism, particularly of its radical variants, have stayed on the worldwide agenda even after and indeed due to the “Arabellion” and its consequences. It is difficult to decide if the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan has lastingly weakened international Islamist terrorism. At least, further attempts at politically establishing jihadist powers in Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, the North of Mali, in Syria and in Iraq have become a failure. However, we are not at all safe to say that their mobilisation power has been broken for good. Furthermore, both Iran and Saudi Arabia, no matter how pragmatic both states have appeared foreign politically in recent times or since long, make attempts at influencing things in a way which – to different degrees and by fierce mutual defensive struggle – aim at melting politics and religion into one. All this cannot be without effect on the democratic constitutional states for whom the violent strands of Islamism are a security problem.

This special issue brings historical considerations and analyses of the current situation together. On the one hand, once again the question is raised about the structural common grounds of the various strands of Islamic extremism and the regime-forming movements of Communism and Fascism/National Socialism, and that is by way of historical-genetic and ideology-critical-systematic analysis. On the other hand it is about the current hazard potential for Germany’s home security.

The historical-genetic relation between political Islam and the regime-forming movements in Russia, Italy and Germany is in the focus of the contribution by Mehdi Mozaffari, long-years Director of the “Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation” of the University of Aarhus in Denmark. He emphasizes the common context of origin, the borrowings from the pan-movements (Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Islamism), the fall of the empires (Tsarist Empire, German Empire, Habsburg Empire, Ottoman Empire) as well as the striving for new ones – under different ideological signs. Furthermore, he works out mutual relationships, in particular between the various Fascist systems and the Muslim Brotherhood, giving evidence to mutual inspiration.

The young political scientist Mihai Murariu (University of Münster) covers an even wider historical period, by connecting Shmuel Eisenstadt’s history-socio-

3 Paul Berman, *Terror und Liberalismus*, Hamburg 2004 (original edition New York 2003), p. 42. See also already the systemic consideration by: Michael Whine, *Islamism and Totalitarianism: Similarities and Differences*. In: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 2 (2001) 2, pp. 54–72.

logical “Axial Age” culture to Erik H. Erikson’s development-psychological “Totalism” concept and interpreting Islamism as an attempt to re-establish cosmic totality which has been lost in the Modern Age. “Totalism” means a thought structure whose pillars are named after different authors as the representatives of specific totalitarian ideologies: „a superordinate system of thought which possesses an absolute, singular view of human existence and pursues the shaping of public and private spheres in accordance to its soteriological-simplifying principle, which is, in turn, explained and legitimized by its claim to a monopoly of interpretation”. Murariu demonstrates the consequences of totalitarianism by the examples of two symbolic figures of today’s (radical) Islamism: “The Mahdi” Muhammad Ahmad in Sudan and the most important thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb.

The extremism researcher Armin Pfahl-Traughber from Brühl systematically analyses Qutb’s political key works – apart from the writings of Indo-Pakistani journalist Sayyid Abu A’la Maududi – by applying a list of criteria worked out by ideology-critical and epistemological totalitarianism research. Apart from the “dogmatic claim to absoluteness” he discusses “essentialist interpretation monopolies”, the thus connected “holistic control interests”, the “deterministic concept of history”, “identity concepts of society”, “dualistic rigorism” and “fundamental rejection”. The concepts of politics developed by Qutb and Maududi aim at “total rule” and justify the use of violence as an “acceptable and necessary means in the fight for the victory of Islam”.

Apart from historical-genetic analyses there are three contributions dealing in different ways with the topicality and extent of Islamist/Salafist threat in Germany. The Orientalist and investigator Judith Faessler from Munich gives a broad overview, covering a long period of history, over the rather moderate and extreme variants of Shia and Sunni political Islam. However, she focuses on one aspect which may be supposed to become considerably more significant in the years to come: the relationship between Islamism and right-wing extremism. As the most important overlap she identifies anti-Semitism which makes it possible for the supporters of political Islam to understand “the Muslims” most of all as historical and current victims.

The Islam expert Klaus Hummel from Dresden in his contribution discusses Salafism – and he makes clear that simply focusing on the latter’s violent appearance, as it happens mostly in the media, does not do justice to the phenomenon and results in wrong equations. He considers “mainstream” Salafism in Germany to be characterized by connecting an exclusive claim to truth with “pragmatism”, which way a “social join-us movement” has developed which drives on “the building of its network professionally and based on the division of labour”. Quantitatively much less important, he says, are “purist”, “jihadist” and “Takfir” Salafism. While the first variant proves to be incapable of making alliances, due to its ideological rigidity, the second one is characterised by being strategically oriented at armed fighting. The third one shares its affinity to vio-

lence with jihadist Salafism while going even further towards being “ultra-radical” – they call even Bin Laden an infidel (“Takfir”).

The second variant is in the focus of the contribution by the political scientist Michail Logvinov from Dresden. Furthermore, he focusses on (mostly) young males having grown up in Germany and discovering the extreme variants of political Islam as their purpose in life while even being ready to die by the sword or the explosive belt– a phenomenon which is internationally known as “home-grown terrorism”. He considers the radicalisation processes of “German jihadists” to be closely connected to the wars “in predominantly Muslim countries or regions” and warns against a “radicalisation” of the “concept of militant democracy” in the sense of increasing repression which, in the sense of the “co-terrorism” thesis, might produce undesirable effects. It seems as if the development of suitable preventive approaches requires the best possible knowledge of the variety of Islamist-Salafist aspirations. Such approaches may contribute essentially to making the Federal Republic “neither a target nor an area of operations nor the ‘world champion of jihadist export’”.

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