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Liberalism Versus Fundamentalism: The Ideological Conflict Between Tocqueville and Qtub

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Introduction

For centuries, the East and the West have clashed ideologically, socially, and politically, reaching peaks of contention during wartime, particularly during the Crusades, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Iran-Iraq War, and America's continued presence in the Greater Middle East (G.M.E.) after the attacks on 9/11. Throughout history, theological, religious, and political thinkers have emerged both in the United States (U.S.) and in the G.M.E. that have shaped the beliefs of those under their influence. Diverging in opinion and thought on most aspects of Western civilization, two of these thinkers, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805 – 1859) and Sayyid Qtub (1906 – 1966), illustrated their unique views and perspectives through their writings. As a result, while differing in their views on freedom and liberty, freedom of religion, separation of church and state, and man-made laws, but agreeing on the negative effects of materialism, Tocqueville impacted American society by promoting values that facilitated the American idea of freedom, while Qtub inspired the radicalization of Islam by joining the Muslim Brotherhood and calling for jihad by all Muslims to discredit the values supported by Tocqueville. As a result of the persistent threat of terrorism stemming from the G.M.E., the U.S. must develop solutions for enhancing its engagement with the Muslim world to combat violent extremism and support peace and stability in the region.

Research Question and Hypothesis

This paper seeks to conclude whether Qtub has successfully discredited the values supported by Tocqueville to draw more Muslims to support an increased role of religion in society, and to influence the majority of Muslims to conduct violent jihad. It is hypothesized that Muslims agree with Qtub that Islam must be increasingly influential in society, but the majority do not seek to increase its role through, or for the purposes of, violent jihad. To fully understand Qtub's beliefs and influence, one must first determine the significance of Islamism and Muslims' desire to increase the role of Islam in society.

What is Islamism?

Propagated by the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic in the 7th century, Islam is a world religion that calls for a devout surrender to the will of Allah. An aspect of Islam, Islamism seeks to achieve strict sociopolitical objectives and “attempts to revive Islam's political legacy after the end of the Caliphate of Constantinople in 1924.”¹ With the end of the Caliphate refuting the close union between religion and politics in society, this break is considered by many Muslims as disturbing and an issue that must be reversed. As a result, many violent and extremist groups have sought to restore the unity of religion and politics and increase the influence of religion on state affairs, ultimately seeking to create a new caliphate. This caliphate would be obedient to the laws of the Qur'an and have a global agenda supporting a “worldwide fight against the West and

¹ Hansen, Hendrik, and Peter Kainz. “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qtub's Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism.” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (March 2007): 56.

all unbelievers”² using violence. This desire to restore the caliphate is demonstrated in the life of Islamist Sayyid Qutub.

Sayyid Qutub and Alexis de Tocqueville: Biographies

Born in Egypt in 1906, Sayyid Qutub was an author and educator who became a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Highly educated within a secular environment, Qutub spent an abundance of time in America that heavily influenced his ideology, particularly his abhorrence of “Americans’ racial attitudes, materialism, indifference to the majesty of nature, and disregard for the sanctity of death.”³ In his view, “Americans lived for the almighty dollar, had no sense of beauty, and were fundamentally estranged from nature and religion.”⁴ Qutub fulfills the model for many extremists today, as many emerge from modern and secular societies rather than from those strictly adherent to Islam. A devout Islamist, he fought to turn Islam into a political movement with the goal of creating a society devout to ancient Qur’anic principles, as well as overthrowing the Egyptian government that he viewed as insufficient and undevout to the standards of Islamism. Qutub ultimately serves as an example for many Muslims who believe in strict compliance to Islamic Law, or Sharia Law, and who seek to wage violent Jihad against those they believe are not fully living under the law of God.

Alexis de Tocqueville was born in France in 1805 and became an influential statesman, politician, and philosopher. Between 1831 and 1832, Tocqueville travelled to America to study prison conditions.⁵ Resulting from these travels, Tocqueville wrote one of his most prominent writings, *Democracy in America*, that influenced political thought “as the first philosophic and comprehensive view of [American] society, institutions, and destiny.”⁶ Viewing the world through “a legacy of classical, biblical, and Enlightenment thought,”⁷ Tocqueville’s influence has helped to preserve those American institutions and ideals that have persisted until today, which as hypothesized by Huntington, clash with Qutub’s Islamist beliefs.

The Clash of Civilizations

Coining the term “Clash of Civilizations” in 1993, Samuel P. Huntington believed that as the West and non-Western civilizations further interact, and as the world enters into a new phase of world politics, “the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.”⁸ Huntington cited multiple reasons for this division. Maintaining basic

² Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutub’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 57.

³ Chaput, Charles J. “We Renounce the Old World: Charles J. Chaput.” *First Things*. Institute on Religion and Public Life, March 27, 2018.

⁴ Mahoney, Daniel J. “Our Friendly Visitors.” *City Journal*, August 12, 2016.

⁵ “Biography of Alexis De Tocqueville.” *Great Thinkers*. The Foundation for Constitutional Government Inc., n.d.

⁶ Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America* (version Project Gutenberg EBook of Democracy In America). Project Gutenberg. Accessed January 21, 2006.

⁷ Chaput, “We Renounce the Old World: Charles J. Chaput.”

⁸ Huntington, Samuel P. “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-49. Accessed March 9, 2020, 22.

differences, civilizations “differ in their history, language, culture, tradition, and religion.”⁹ Differences in the advances of communication technologies and overall globalization also create distance between cultures despite increase societal interactions. With the convenience of open communications between peoples of all cultures, the high frequency of travel and movement of people groups, and the interconnectedness of global economies, the world seems to shrink in size as borders and distance become obsolete. Simultaneously, just as communication is separating people from local identities, so are the “processes of economic modernization and social change.”¹⁰ This weakens the nation state and forces religion to fill the gap in the absence of the state as a unifier, ultimately leading to fundamentalist movements which are appalled at the disappearance of traditional culture. The division is also exacerbated by the tendency of non-Western civilizations returning to their roots while the West is at its peak in power in societal advancement, pitting differing ideals against each other. Another reason for tension results from the difficulty of compromising on cultural characteristics, as political and economic differences are easier to accept. Finally, economic regionalism strengthens the culture within a region by strengthening regional pride, particularly in the East as the region hopes to reduce its economic dependency on the West. Relying on regional unification to be successful economically, it ultimately separates a region from other societies and magnifies their societal differences. As this paper discusses, Tocqueville and Qtub “represent a stark divergence...between certain Western and Islamic political traditions”¹¹ and “illuminate clashes...over the role of religion, the nature of liberty, and sources of spiritual and cultural vitality.”¹² Just as Huntington predicted, Qtub envisioned this upcoming battle between Islam and the West through the use of jihad, as the West was the epitome of *jahiliyyah*.

What is *Jahiliyyah*?

Qtub illustrated the clash between Islamic and secular societies in his abhorrence of any degree of *jahiliyyah*. Defined as “the domination of humans over humans rather than submission of humans to God,”¹³ *jahiliyyah* describes societies’ reversal of moral order. This term was first applied to describe the pre-Islamic period before the Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad when the world lived in ignorance and barbarism, as titled the “Age of Ignorance.” Taken from the Qur’anic tradition, Muslims believe the “Age of Ignorance” began after Christians destroyed the covenant, “turned away from God as the sole legitimate legislator,”¹⁴ and believed Jesus is the Son of God, only ending after the Prophet Muhammad arrived and restored the covenant. Today, *jahiliyyah* refers to a “society not governed by Sharia Law”¹⁵ that ignores God and submits “to

⁹ Ettoualy, Mustafa. “The Western-Islamic Divergence: The Clash of Civilizations.” Morocco World News. Morocco World News, June 30, 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Peterson, Ben. “Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul.” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14, no. 1 (March 24, 2016): 90.

¹² Ibid, 97.

¹³ “Jahiliyyah.” Oxford Islamic Studies Online. Oxford University Press, n.d.

¹⁴ Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutbs Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 60.

¹⁵ Shepard, William E. “Sayyid Qtub (1906—1966).” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d.

man-made laws and conforms to man-made ways.”¹⁶ To Qtub, there is no in-between; societies are either fully Islamic or fully *jahiliyyah*. This intensifies the clash between the Western and Islamic societies, as “Islam cannot accept any compromise with *jahiliyyah*.”¹⁷ Believing that “the Sharia of Allah will prevail,” Qtub contended that “Islam must dismantle the West from its position of authority.”¹⁸ His disgust with any society he viewed as *jahiliyyah* influences his abhorrence of American society and values.

Tocqueville’s and Qtub’s Assessment of the United States

Tocqueville and Qtub each visited the U.S. at pivotal points in their lives and later wrote about their experiences in American society, greatly influencing generations in Western and Islamic societies. “Perceiving in America leading indicators of social change,”¹⁹ Tocqueville and Qtub developed opinions about new changes and how they impacted nations around the globe, particularly their home nations of France and Egypt. In correlation to how both Tocqueville and Qtub viewed America and its values, the term “positive” is utilized to portray a positive view America and the particular value discussed, while the term “negative” is utilized to portray the opposite viewpoint. Tocqueville viewed America as a prosperous nation, with the “equalizing of political rights and material and intellectual conditions.”²⁰ In contrast, Qtub viewed America’s liberal and *jahiliyyah* society as an inhumane way of life that threatened the “spiritually rich culture of the East.”²¹ Some areas of American society that cause conflict between Tocqueville and Qtub are freedom and liberty, materialism and capitalism, freedom of religion and separation between church and state, democracy, and man-made laws.

Freedom and Liberty

Although both Tocqueville and Qtub supported freedom and rebellion against tyrannical rulers, they diverged on what they believed to be “true” freedom. Despite liberty being his foremost passion, Tocqueville understood that an abundance of freedom would create instability and prevent the making of a virtuous society. Favoring “liberty for everyone within the limits of the law,”²² he believed that humans are responsible for their fate and have the ability to govern themselves through self-assertion and self-restraint. Writing on his love of liberty in 1856, Tocqueville explained people’s attraction to freedom by stating, “they loved it because they love the pleasure of being able to speak, to act, to breathe unrestrained, under the sole of government of God and the laws.”²³ Liberty feeds the desire of “citizens to improve their condition and

¹⁶ Loboda, Luke. “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub.” Ashbrook Center at Ashland University. Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, n.d., 4.

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸ Ibid, 4.

¹⁹ Peterson, “Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul,” 89.

²⁰ Ibid, 89.

²¹ Ibid, 89.

²² Glendon, Mary Ann. *The Forum and the Tower: How Scholars and Politicians Have Imagined the World, From Plato to Eleanor Roosevelt*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 162.

²³ “Tocqueville on the True Love of Liberty (1856).” Online Library of Liberty. Online Library of Liberty, n.d.

benefit themselves,"²⁴ which ultimately improves the society as a whole as citizens seek productive lives and hope to improve the conditions under which they live and govern.

In contrast, Qtub did not believe humans are fit to govern themselves. Rather, he believed all societies must be governed by Sharia Law to ensure "true" freedom under God. Qtub believed that any society that supports freedoms not governed by Sharia Law represents *jahiliyyah* and the loss of liberty, as "freedom can only be guaranteed if all human beings submit to God's authority."²⁵ Ultimately, Qtub did not support any freedoms absent from Sharia Law and abhorred any society which allows for its citizens to dictate their own freedoms, such as the U.S.'s creation of the Bill of Rights. Qtub's negative view of freedom influenced his view on the freedom of religion and the separation between church and state evident in the U.S.

Freedom of Religion and the Separation Between Church and State

Though Tocqueville and Qtub both saw religion as vital for the preservation of morals and values, they differed on how it should be integrated into government and discovered opposite findings from their travels to the U.S. regarding the role of religion in American society. Tocqueville admired religion as the "clearest strength of American democracy."²⁶ Although vital to society, he approved of the separation of religion from the state as "a means of preserving Christianity's reign in the intellectual and moral realm and its enduring influence in the social and political order."²⁷ Without separation, Christianity would be unable to retain influence in society and would be guided by rules that limit its ability to be discussed and exercised. Thus, the separation ultimately frees Christianity to shape American morals without the influence of government restricting its influence. Tocqueville also noted that the separation of religion and state preserved Christianity from the consequences of democracy, including materialism that destroys the soul, as later discussed. Ultimately, despite its separation from political life, he believed religion instructs morality, directs the customs of communities, and regulates the state through its influence over everyday life in American society, including within the affairs of the government, the workplace, and the family.

In contrast to Tocqueville, Qtub championed an all-encompassing integration of Islam into society. Just as Tocqueville was influenced by Christianity's role in the U.S., Qtub's call for an Islamic revival in the East and later the West was a response to "what he saw as an imported, Western approach to politics and society characterized by secularism."²⁸ He viewed Christianity's "detachment from the vicissitudes of politics [in the U.S.] as its chief shortcoming,"²⁹ describing it as a dangerous element of *jahiliyyah* where Americans are devoid of morality and spirituality. Despising the separation between church and state in America, Qtub

²⁴ Kraynak, Robert P. "Tocqueville's Constitutionalism." *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 4 (1987): 1186.

²⁵ Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qtubs Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism," 59.

²⁶ Nolofoff, Nicholas R., "The family in Tocqueville's "Democracy in America": Understanding difference in the age of equality" (2007). Master's Theses and Capstones. 1.

²⁷ Peterson, "Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul," 90.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 89.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 90.

hoped Islam would define society and that mankind “would live under a government that uses the Qur’an to create a fully Islamic social order”³⁰ and affect all areas of society. Ultimately, he inspired many to believe that Islam must be intertwined with government to direct and inform political decisions, matters of the family and community, and influence what is taught in educational institutions. This would prevent freedom of religion in these forms of societies, as Islam would be the only tolerated religion. Just as Qtub despised the separation of church and state, he was also displeased with its consequence of leaving societies governed by earthly laws.

Man-Made Laws

Tocqueville and Qtub have drastically different views on the rule of law and the governing of society by man-made laws. Supporting a constitutional theory where men are able to govern themselves, Tocqueville believed in a democratic society where citizens “recognize that laws are voluntarily self-imposed and may be changed if they are harmful.”³¹ This was greatly evident in his visit to America, where he witnessed the elected creating laws that would impact their nation, their communities, and their families. Giving man greater discernment on what would better the nation, the making of man-made laws “requires people to govern themselves in accordance with divine law, frees them from the enslavement to their...selfish passions by making them accountable to a higher law, and teaches citizens to subordinate their private selves to the public good.”³² A fervent supporter of liberty and Christian values, Tocqueville believed that laws are able to be man-made as long as they prescribe to the high moral virtue as espoused by Christian teachings. Romans 13:1 states: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established; the authorities that exist have been established by God.”³³ Tocqueville ultimately applied this principle by supporting a democratic government that seeks to promote law and order to those governing and those being governed, while Qtub manipulated the meaning of this verse by inciting violence against all who he believes are not fully submitted to God.

A rival to Tocqueville’s thinking on man-made laws, Qtub rejected any man-made law as immoral, irreligious, and detrimental to Islam. Viewing the West as a society that forces the religiously devout to abandon their morals, Qtub’s hatred for the West grew. In this society where “some people are lords who legislate and some...are slaves who obey,”³⁴ Qtub believed he was a witness to oppression and absence of dignity resulting from individuals turning their backs on God. He equated the obedience to man-made laws as submitting to tyranny, “worshipping” those who enact them, and establishing false Gods, which in the U.S. are the “President, Congress, Supreme Court, and the Constitutions which empower them.”³⁵ Qtub declared that this obedience would result in Muslims having to turn their backs on their God, as witnessed in their inability to fully live according to their faith, worship publicly, share their faith within the government and workplaces, use public means to convert others to Islam, and

³⁰ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 8.

³¹ Kraynak, “Tocqueville’s Constitutionalism,” 1186.

³² Ibid, 1185.

³³ Romans 13:1, *NIV*

³⁴ Berman, Paul. “The Philosopher of Islamic Terror.” *The New York Times Magazine*. March 23, 2003.

³⁵ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 7.

implement and hold others accountable to Sharia Law.³⁶ In order to redeem society, Qtub desired the implementation of Sharia Law globally by all governments. Meaning “the clear, well-trodden path to water,” Islamists believe full obedience to Sharia Law is the only way to live according to God and be liberated from enslavement by man. “Based on divine authority,”³⁷ Sharia Law ensures the full submission to the will of God and the rejection of tyranny and oppression. In 2011, a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center studied support among Muslims for Sharia Law. In Qtub’s home country of Egypt, this study concluded that about seventy-four percent of Egyptians supported Sharia Law as the official law in their country, a possible indicator of Qtub’s influence on his nation.³⁸ This overwhelming support for Sharia Law may greatly weaken the ability of moderate Muslims or others in the West to reduce the rise of radicalism in the East. Ultimately, Qtub sought to implement Sharia Law in Egypt and throughout the globe. Along with his severely negative views on man-made laws, his attitude towards materialism was synonymous.

Materialism

Although maintaining diverging opinions on the previously discussed topics, both Tocqueville and Qtub view materialism as a negative influence on morality, as the quest for wealth and abundance is prioritized over religion and faith. Often describing himself as a “new liberal kind,” a part of Tocqueville’s “distinctive liberalism...rests on the...criticism of modern materialist philosophy...for neglecting the needs of the soul.”³⁹ As humans are often “consumed by the prospect of more and an immoderate desire for wealth, fickleness, and constant need for change,”⁴⁰ both Tocqueville and Qtub saw humanity as fallen in nature and plagued by desires that can never fully fulfill one’s soul, as they believed only God can in both Christianity and Islam. A supporter of a democratic governmental order that would recognize the needs of the whole person, both “body” and “soul,” Tocqueville understood this sinful reaction takes place when “the great majority of humanity...concentrates solely on the pursuit of material goods.”⁴¹ A government that only fulfills the “body” aspect of man would result in humanity moving away from their realization of human value, and rather focus on how each person can materially benefit the country. Devoting his life to creating harmony between liberty and religion, Tocqueville sought “to animate and restrain souls as the only real basis for man’s true grandeur.”⁴² Without some restraint, humanity would diverge from their morals and seek to benefit only themselves through money and material wealth, rather than working to improve their communities and nation as a whole. Attempting to prevent this pattern, Tocqueville believed mankind must devote itself to the morals of religion that promote selflessness, the good

³⁶ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub.”

³⁷ Peterson, “Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul,” 92.

³⁸ Lipka, Michael. “Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 9, 2017.

³⁹ Yarbrough, Jean M. “Tocqueville on the Needs of the Soul.” *Perspectives on Political Science* 47, no. 3 (April 4, 2018): 123.

⁴⁰ Chaput, “We Renounce the Old World: Charles J. Chaput.”

⁴¹ Peterson, “Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul,” 98.

⁴² Yarbrough, “Tocqueville on the Needs of the Soul,” 123.

of the community, and satisfaction as children of God rather than how much they have materially.

Similar to Tocqueville, Qtub greatly focused on the destruction caused by ignoring the needs of the soul. Agreeing with Tocqueville, Qtub emphasized that “without faith acting as the defining aspect of social order, society forces itself into [this] materialist system of life”⁴³ that ignores God’s plans and prevents citizen’s true devoutness and full surrender to God. Just as Tocqueville believed that materialism ignored human value, Qtub declared that it led to a “qualitative reduction of human life”⁴⁴ and loss of the sense of belonging. Disapproving of this materialist philosophy as it “approves of any action as long as it results in material gain,”⁴⁵ Qtub saw that morals then became relative. Qtub’s disgust with materialism culminated when he visited the U.S. Witnessing Western materialism incarnate, he viewed American society as “an inhumane way of life based on science and productivity, threatening the spiritually rich culture of the East.”⁴⁶ He believed this materialism and “complete reversal in the God-given order”⁴⁷ stemmed from the European tradition of divorcing religion from everyday life, which ultimately led to America to become a society plagued by *jahiliyyah*. His Islamist views rejected this society, leading him to participate in organizations and groups that promoted full surrender by rejecting any form of materialism. Although Qtub and Tocqueville believed that society must consider religion, Qtub radicalized this belief by calling on all Muslims to commit jihad.

What is Jihad?

Commonly defined as “holy war,” both internally in the spiritual struggle of a faithful Muslim and externally against non-Muslims, the concept of jihad is introduced in the Qur’an Chapter 4 verses 74 to 75:

“Let them fight in God’s cause- all who are willing to barter the life of this world for the life to come. To him who fights in God’s cause, whether he be slain or be victorious, we shall grant him a rich reward. And why should you not fight in the cause of God and the utterly helpless men, women, and children who are crying, “Our Lord! Deliver us from this land whose people are oppressors, and send forth to us, out of Your grace, a protector, and send us one that will help us.”⁴⁸

This passage “offers a reward to all those who fight in God’s cause,”⁴⁹ for they are called on by those living in oppression. Also citing Chapter 2 Verse 193 of the Qur’an which calls on Muslims to fight until oppression is gone, Qtub taught that “Muslims are commanded to fight those who do not submit to one God.”⁵⁰ Acting as the ultimate clash between *jahiliyyah* and

⁴³ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 11.

⁴⁴ Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qtub’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 59.

⁴⁵ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 12.

⁴⁶ Peterson, “Tocqueville and Qtub: Religion, Democracy, and the Needs of the Soul,” 89.

⁴⁷ Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qtub’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 58.

⁴⁸ Qur’an 4:74-75

⁴⁹ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 18.

⁵⁰ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 18.

Islam, jihad rejects the perceived slavery of Muslims. Qtub believes it must be waged at all times through preaching and nonviolent movements by able Muslims, as it is “an unending state of war because truth and falsehood cannot-co exist on this earth.”⁵¹ Traditionally, this call for jihad has not always required violence and could be interpreted as missionary work or peaceful conversions of non-Muslims, as supported by Qtub. Today, however, the definition of jihad has been manipulated by Islamists and terrorist groups to justify violence against infidels.

The Development of Jihad and Radical Ideology

The transformation of jihad into a widespread radical ideology has occurred over many centuries, even since before the fall of the Caliphate of Constantinople. Emerging in the Arab world as a response to “social injustice, rejection of traditional mores, and acceptance of foreign domination and culture,”⁵² the “Islamic Awakening” brought about fundamentalist movements that sought the re-Islamization of society through the implementation of Sharia law and jihad. One of the primary characteristics of these movements has been a desire for unity, with Islam uniting earth and heaven into a single system that encompasses the “spiritual and material, religious and worldly”⁵³ realms in entirety. Before the 1980s, these movements focused inward on apostate Muslim governments and societies, but after frequent meetings with the West, “Western superiority was viewed as the result of Muslims having forsaken the teachings of the Prophet”⁵⁴ Muhammad and “the jihad went global.”⁵⁵ As believed by the leader of al Qaeda since 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the U.S. has historically achieved its interests “by spreading oppression and terrorism at the hands of its [Islamic] allies.”⁵⁶ The Soviet Union’s involvement in Afghanistan also played a pivotal role in the transformation of jihad to a violent practice. Remaining in Afghanistan for ten years, the “Soviet invasion...revived the concept of participation in jihad to evict an ‘infidel’ occupier from a Muslim country as a ‘personal duty’...for every capable Muslim.”⁵⁷ This emphasized the necessity of Muslims within invaded countries to join the jihad and quickly became viewed as a sixth pillar of Islam that must be followed by all Muslims. Ultimately, the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan in 1989 and the U.S.’s involvement in the Greater Middle East (G.M.E.) “renewed jihad against the infidel world at large and the apocalyptic war between Islam and heresy.”⁵⁸ By fighting in the jihad, the faithful Muslim believes he “overcomes his own fear of death”⁵⁹ and purges society of evil, such as the

⁵¹ Qtub, Sayyid. *Milestones*. Islamic Book Service, 2006, 53.

⁵² Bar, Shmuel. “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism.” Hoover Institution. Hoover Institution, June 1, 2004.

⁵³ “Does Tocqueville Offer a Solution to Islam's Internal Conflict?” Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Intercollegiate Studies Institute, April 14, 2015.

⁵⁴ Bar, “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism.”

⁵⁵ Mamdani, Mahmood. “Whither Political Islam? Understanding the Modern Jihad.” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 1 (2005): 150.

⁵⁶ Lahoud, Nelly. “The Strengths and Weaknesses of Jihadist Ideology.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, October 2010.

⁵⁷ Bar, Shmuel. “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutb's Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 61.

U.S., while purifying the jihadists themselves. Qutub himself was greatly supportive of jihad and participated in groups that fueled the desire of Muslims to wage war against non-Muslims.

The Impact of Qutub's Radical Ideology

As will be seen below, Qutub's thinking has had an immense impact on the development of terrorist movements, the increase of Islamic activity in the political realm, the rise of violent jihad, and the increasing oppression of Christians by Islamists. As a result, the West must evaluate its past and current policies within the GME to be better equipped in defending against terrorism in the future.

With the instigation of Islamists to fight a global struggle against Muslims, terrorist movements have emerged. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in reaction to Western dominance over Egypt. Qutub joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1950 after returning to Egypt from the U.S. The Muslim Brotherhood has an ambitious and ideological political agenda that seeks "greater integration of Islam into the fabric of society and government."⁶⁰ Becoming the "first mass-based, overtly political movement"⁶¹ opposing the rise of secular ideas in the G.M.E, the Muslim Brotherhood advocates this return to Islam to combat the "ills that had befallen Muslim societies,"⁶² particularly Western involvement in the region. Believing that Islam is the solution, its main goal is to reclaim the Islamic Caliphate. As former head of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohammad Mahdi Akef stated, the group calls for the strict adoption of and adherence to Islam, and for its members to operate internationally according to the written charter that states that "jihad is the only way to achieve [its] goals."⁶³ To politically revive Islam, the Brotherhood works "within the existing political system for the advancement of its goals."⁶⁴ This is witnessed in their alignment with parties to gain access to political systems, seeking to be recognized as a legal party in Egypt, and achieving representation and influence in nongovernmental associations that would allow them to influence Egyptian politics. As a result, their impact has been far-reaching.

The Impact of Qutub and the Muslim Brotherhood

Qutub's involvement in the Muslim Brotherhood and the group as a whole have had lasting effects. Although the Muslim Brotherhood was originally inward-looking and sought to alter Egypt's and other Muslim societies, its influence has allowed it to look outward on the shortcomings and failures of other *jahiliyyah* nations, particularly those in the West or those modernizing and adopting Western principles and values. The Brotherhood has had a wide scope of influence politically and ideologically since its founding, spanning more than seventy countries and inspiring other terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, and the Islamic State of

⁶⁰ Casper, Jayson. "The Goal of the Muslim Brotherhood." Columbia International University. Columbia International University, n.d.

⁶¹ Ehrenfeld, Rachel. "The Muslim Brotherhood Evolution: An Overview." *American Foreign Policy Interests* 33, no. 2 (2011): 71.

⁶² *Ibid*, 71.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 71.

⁶⁴ Abed-Kotob, Sana. "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 328.

Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Qtub has inspired Islamists and their actions, as his ideas have been “assimilated into the decisions of many Muslim leaders in Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Sudan,”⁶⁵ Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. His writings describing philosophical defenses for jihad and dislike for the West have influenced Islamist leaders, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, among others. Bin Laden studied at the Saudi Arabian University of Jeddah, “where as a student of...Qtub’s brother Muhammad Qtub, he was introduced to the political thought of the Muslim Brotherhood.”⁶⁶ This connection, along with many others that Qtub has influenced, has fed the fire of violent Islamists that target Western values, despite Qtub’s disapproval of violence. The Muslim Brotherhood itself has historically condemned violence to maintain their peaceful image, as Qtub supported offensive and nonviolent jihad to “free all men and liberate their countries.”⁶⁷ Even though not directly supporting violence, Qtub has inspired many to wage violent jihad. Through the employment of jihad, a war has been waged between Islam and Christianity for centuries.

Christian Persecution

In thirty-eight of the forty-four Muslim-majority countries in the world today, “Christianity is the largest religious minority,”⁶⁸ leading to active persecution, structural discrimination, and public passivity at the hands of the Muslim majority and extremist groups. Active persecution includes severe persecution “perpetrated by the governments themselves or non-state actors,”⁶⁹ structural discrimination is the restriction of Christians “living in Muslim-majority countries from robustly living out their faith,”⁷⁰ and public passivity occurs when many “at least tacitly support some of these forms of discrimination or...remain passive to the impact of the societal structures on religious minorities.”⁷¹ The Muslim Brotherhood has subscribed to conducting all three of these forms of persecution, as the group’s goals antagonize and target the beliefs and freedoms of Christians, particularly in Egypt, going against Tocqueville’s support for Christian values, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state. Because Qtub viewed Christianity as a part of *jahiliyyah*, he believed Christianity must be destroyed to free Muslims from the bondage of slavery that he declared exists. Although the Muslim Brotherhood in its entirety may not be directly killing Christians in Egypt and some Brotherhood leaders condemn violence, the group’s political and social aims stifle the ability of Christians to live freely in Egyptian society, and also influences other groups to directly incite violence against Christians and other non-Muslims. For example, Muslim Brotherhood group members and other Islamic groups “have torched and looted scores of churches and Christian property across”⁷² Egypt, as

⁶⁵ Loboda, “The Thought of Sayyid Qtub,” 3.

⁶⁶ Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qtub’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” 57.

⁶⁷ Stahl, A.E. “‘Offensive Jihad’ in Sayyid Qtub’s Ideology.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, March 24, 2011.

⁶⁸ Brown, Elijah M. “Persecution of Christians in Muslim-Majority Countries.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 2 (2016): 199.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 200.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 203.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 206.

⁷² “Egypt: Mass Attacks on Churches.” Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch, August 21, 2013.

well as killing them “for having converted from Islam or simply because they [are] Christian.”⁷³ This persecution is also witnessed in other areas of the G.M.E.

Christian persecution has been demonstrated in other areas of the G.M.E. Epitomizing active persecution, a “modern-day exodus [occurred] as tens of thousands of families fled the genocidal intent of the impending [Islamic State] forces”⁷⁴ advancing on the Nineveh Plains in 2014. The overall persecution of the Christian community in Iraq is also evident in the plummeting of the Christian population “from approximately 1,500,000 to under 300,000”⁷⁵ as a result of being displaced, fleeing the country as refugees, or dying at the hands of ISIL. Structural discrimination of Christian minorities in the Muslim world is conducted by policies that restrict religious freedom, and through interference during religious worship, limitations on public preaching, evangelism, and conversion, harassment and intimidation, physical abuse, imprisonment, and violence, among many others.⁷⁶ Public passivity includes the silence of the Muslim majority on issues relating to Christian persecution. Resulting from the majority of persecution stemming from the violent definition of jihad, Muslim religious leaders and policy makers should develop a path to return to a non-radical and non-violent form of jihad to bring peace among Muslims and reduce the clash between Western and Islamic societies.

Recommendations For:

Returning to a Non-Radical Definition of Jihad and Counter-Extremism

To combat the sectarian conflicts raging across the G.M.E and spilling into the West, some suggest that a Tocquevillian vision of religion and civil liberty should be adopted, a greater understanding of Islam by those in the West and an Islamic Reformation are both needed, a greater freedom of speech needs to be supported by Muslims, and a higher acceptance for Muslims in the West should be established. Recognizing that Americans successfully “merged the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion into a harmonious balance,”⁷⁷ Tocqueville’s legacy may support this balance in Muslim societies. This Tocquevillian vision would help deter radical Islamism in the East and “help Western Muslims maintain religious identity in pluralistic societies,”⁷⁸ reducing the appeal of militant Islamism. As the West does not always understand the fundamental differences between Western and Islamic societies and attempts to transfer Western values directly into Muslim societies, clashes continue to persist despite the West’s attempts to bring peace to the region. Therefore, Muslim and Western leaders must continue engaging in conversations that facilitate a heightened understanding of their differences and create compromises by respecting each party’s distinct culture. In doing so, the West must understand not all of its values and goals will be implemented into and supported by Eastern societies. Despite this, governments cannot solely be relied upon to answer the challenge of Islamism and extremism, leading to the necessity of an Islamic Reformation to reduce the divide

⁷³ Kishi, Katayoun. “Christians Faced Widespread Harassment in 2015.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, June 9, 2017.

⁷⁴ Brown, “Persecution of Christians in Muslim-Majority Countries,” 200.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 201.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 203-04.

⁷⁷ “Does Tocqueville Offer a Solution to Islam's Internal Conflict?” Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Intercollegiate Studies Institute, April 14, 2015.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

between Muslims and the West. As radical Muslims believe they serve a malicious God who seeks revenge upon infidels, a Reformation should emphasize a correct understanding of God within Islam, “not only...the angry, the vindictive, and the punishing God”⁷⁹ illustrated by extremists. As Christians view God as faithful and loving, this view must be adopted by Muslims. Improved freedom of speech may also increase tolerance for non-Muslims and dissuade Islamists from projecting violence around the globe, such as the attack on the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in 2015. Oftentimes those who are marginalized in society turn to extremism to seek societal approval. Particularly in the West and in the U.S., Muslims are often seen as outsiders and are resentful of the perceived presence of Islamophobia, especially if they have immigrated from Islamic societies.

This trend of marginalization is on the rise today, particularly as a result of the refugee crisis in the G.M.E, as 1,274,241 refugees from the region came to the U.S. in 2015.⁸⁰ With such an influx, it is difficult to prevent all clashes between Muslims and Americans and the radicalization of those who feel they do not belong in Western societies. Thus, terrorist groups seek to capitalize on those who feel disconnected from both “their heritage culture [and] the culture they are living in.”⁸¹ Creating propaganda and recruitment products that “invoke the humiliation and suffering of Muslims,”⁸² terrorist organizations “offer a sense of belonging, purpose, and the promise of recognition and status to anyone who works on their behalf.”⁸³ To combat this trend, the West must determine how to better include Muslims in society, and to further prevent radicalization and jihad against the West, the U.S. must alter its strategy towards the G.M.E.

A new U.S. foreign policy strategy should seek to build moderate Muslim networks throughout the G.M.E to encourage their governments to embrace civil society concepts. This cannot be done only through political and military means; it requires identifying the roots of Islamism and extremism in Muslim societies and improving their existing characteristics to reduce the desire of radicalization, rather than attempting to force Western ideals and systems upon these nations. Although the U.S. should form stronger ties with moderate Muslims, the promotion of secular liberal ideas, such as human rights, free markets, democracy, and many others, “is not a suitable response to extremist messaging because while most Muslims are not extreme, they are also not liberal.”⁸⁴ The U.S. “advocates separation of religion and state, while the majority of Muslims seek a greater role of religion in their public life; the U.S.’s characterization of the “good life” or “American dream” clashes with the beliefs of devout Muslims and raises expectations that cannot be met; and the U.S.’s promotion of liberal democracy disregards that the foundations needed for such regimes to thrive are missing in most

⁷⁹ “Who Must Lead a Muslim Reformation.” Hudson Institute. Hudson Institute, March 23, 2015.

⁸⁰ Pimienti, Maria, and Chesterfield Polkey. “Snapshot of U.S. Immigration 2019.” National Conference of State Legislators. National Conference of State Legislators, March 29, 2019.

⁸¹ Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization & Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants.” *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1, no. 2 (December 2015): 1.

⁸² Lyons-Padilla, “Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization & Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants,” 2.

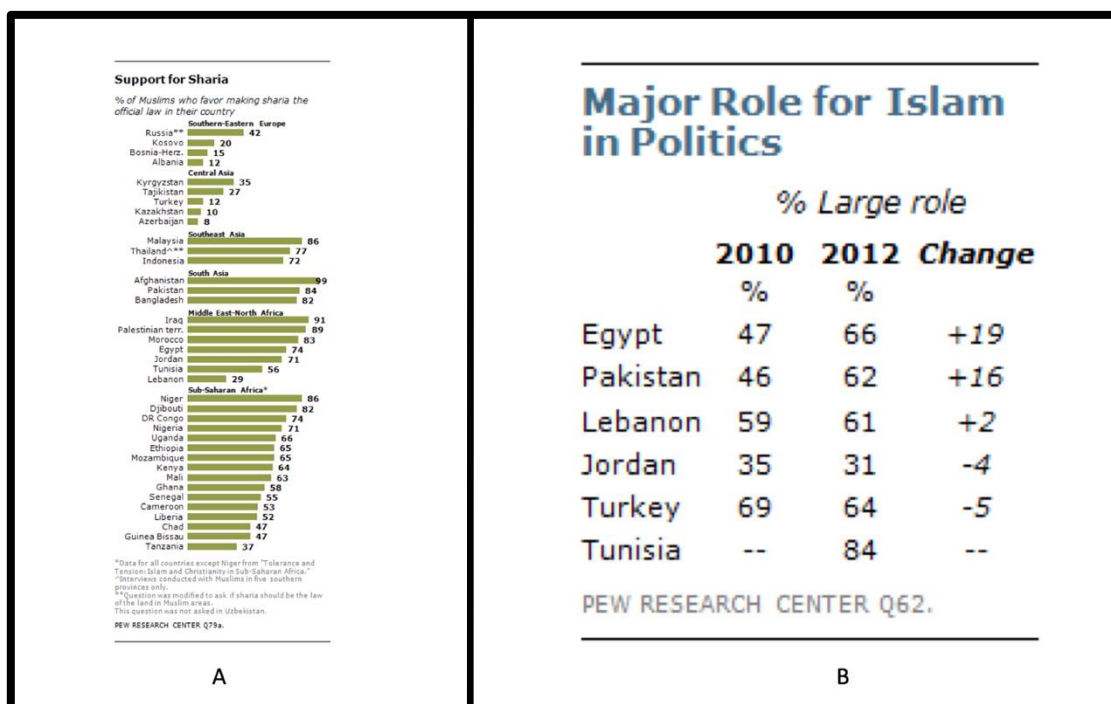
⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Etzioni, Amitai. “Talking with the Muslim World.” Arab Barometer. Arab Barometer, November 20, 2018.

Muslim-majority states and cannot be externally imposed...via long distance social engineering.”⁸⁵ These strategies fail to win the hearts and minds of Muslims, and rather demonstrate the characteristics of *jahiliyyah* societies, as Qutub had warned against. Moderate Muslims, although not violent or radical, still seek religion as an integral part of society, particularly in their approval of Sharia law. As a result, the U.S.’s “strong preference for secular forces and the quest to enshrine separation of state and religion in the Muslim world ignores the fact that...religion is actually...playing a growing role”⁸⁶ in the region, ultimately further pitting the West and East against each other and causing many Muslims to join terrorist organizations or become radicalized. Supporting secularism will drive Muslims away, but promoting moderate Islamic principles in the East will increase Muslims’ approval of the West. Those ultimately able to bring peace to the region and reduce the clash between the East and the West through an understanding of the differences between the two parties will have as much influence as Tocqueville and Qutub have enjoyed until today.

Data and Analysis

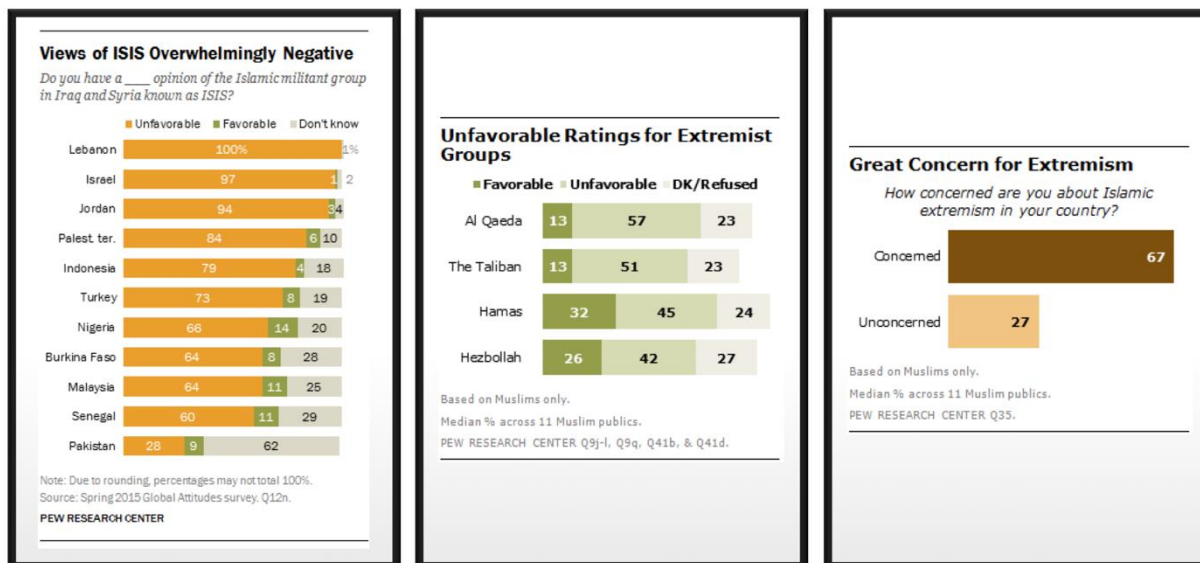
To answer whether Tocqueville’s thinking on freedom and liberty, freedom of religion and separation of church and state, man-made laws, and materialism have been received by Muslims today, the following data has been gathered. Pew Research Center frequently conducts surveys to gauge Muslim thinking towards liberal ideals, as visualized in the following graphs.



⁸⁵ Etzioni, Amitai. “Happiness Is the Wrong Metric: A Liberal Communitarian Response to Populism.” *Library of Public Policy and Public Administration Happiness Is the Wrong Metric* 11 (2018): 196.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 193.

As depicted in Graph A above, 99% Afghani Muslims approved of Sharia as the official law of the land in 2015, as well as 91% in Iraq, 84% in Pakistan, and 74% in Qtub’s country Egypt.⁸⁷ This indicates that many Muslims of that region support an increasing role of religion in society, refuting Tocqueville’s support for the separation between church and state. Illustrated in Graph B, a majority of Muslims in Egypt, Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Tunisia support the major influence of Islam in politics in 2012. This was a positive change for particularly in Egypt (+19), Qtub’s home nation, as well as Pakistan (+16) and Lebanon (+2), indicating that they may be more persuaded by Qtub’s teaching than Tocqueville’s.⁸⁸



C

D

E

Illustrated above in Graph C, Muslims’ views of ISIS are overwhelmingly negative. Although many Muslims do not support the separation of church and state, they do not support the increased presence of religion through violent jihad, as represented by the polling.⁸⁹ Graph D depicts unfavorable ratings for extremist groups by Muslims polled, including al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hamas, and Hezbollah.⁹⁰ Graph E supports Graphs A and B, as 67% of Muslims polled are concerned about extremism.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Lipka, “Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World.”

⁸⁸ “Most Muslims Want Democracy, Personal Freedoms, and Islam in Political Life.” Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Pew Research Center, July 10, 2012.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups.” Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Pew Research Center, September 10, 2013.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

By analyzing Tocqueville's and Qutub's thinking on Western principles, as well as by taking into account the studies conducted, the research question that sought to answer whether Sayyid Qutub has successfully discredited the values supported by Tocqueville to draw more Muslims to support an increased role of religion in society, and to influence the majority of Muslims to conduct violent jihad, has been answered by concluding that Muslims agree with Qutub that Islam must be increasingly influential in society, but the majority do not seek to increase its role through, or for the purposes of, violent jihad. Overall, Qutub has inspired many Muslims to commit violent jihad but has not succeeded to radicalize all moderate Muslims. As a result, the U.S. must determine how to better engage with the Muslim world to combat violent extremism and support peace and stability in the region. If current strategies do not prove to be successful in countering Islamism, radicalization, and terrorism, it is suggested that the U.S. must continue to assess and evaluate its policies, as it has committed itself to the G.M.E for many decades and will face immense challenges in attempting to fully withdraw from or ignore the region.

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