

Masoud Banisadr's remark on Quilliam report about Al Qaeda and Daesh

I could manage to read the full report of Quilliam, I am afraid I did not find it very promising. Yes, there is a large amount of information in the paper about history, ideology, and facts about Al-Qaeda and ISIS and somehow their members, recruitment and what should we do about this ugly phenomenon. However, nothing original, almost all facts are from published books, papers and the web. There is hardly any information from ex members or returnee or any interview with the families of those who have joined these terrorist groups. In addition, I felt it was much politicised and bounded within the framework of the government, hesitating to mention name of 'friendly' countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia in arming and financing IS, facilitating their move to Syria or Iraq.

1- Ideology; the report talks about the ideology of both Al-Qaeda and ISIL; to avoid the word of 'Wahhabi' (not to annoy Saudis), it calls their ideology Sallafi (Sallaf means ancestor; those who call themselves Sallafi claim that they have gone back to the origin of Islam and are against any innovation in the religion. They also are against interpretation of the Quran and take every word of it literally, so they can generalise its sayings to all different situations, societies and times). In my view there is a big difference, although both are almost the same in theology and history but I differentiate them as these days Wahhabi is the ideology of terrorist cults such as Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al-Qaeda and ISIL and many offshoots of them; while Sallafi is religion of almost twenty million people, who live mainly in Gulf countries (22.9% of Saudis; 46.8% of Qataris; 44.8% of UAE; 5.7% of Bahrain; %2.17 of Kuwaitis are Sallafi). Although I am happy that many people including Mr. Blair have learned not to call terrorist groups 'Muslim', or 'Sunni' and differentiate between Terrorist Cult's ideology and religion of 1.6 billion people, still we cannot call religion of twenty million people, however extreme, solid, backward and fanatic, ideology of terrorist cults and let them to recruit easily from people who call themselves Sallafi.

It is interesting that the report talks about Manichean (B/W) world view of these groups but don't say where this worldview is coming from, what is its implication and why it doesn't call it the ideology of a cult.

2- History; Again to avoid irritating Saudis, instead of starting the history of these terrorist- violent groups from mid 18th century when Wahhabis under leadership of first Ibn Saud and Mohammad ibn abdol Wahhab himself killed many innocent people and destroyed many towns and historical buildings in Arabia and Iraq (if you are interested to know more, you can refer to Wikipedia or read the brilliant book by Charles Allen, called God's Terrorists) the report starts the history from a more convenient point, i.e. late 19th century and not from Arabia but from India and Egypt. It talks about Indian preacher, Abul' Ala Mawdudi of Jemaat e Islami for introducing the concept of Hakimiyyah (loosely rule of God instead of rule of people or democracy) Egyptian Sayyid Qutub for redefining the word of Jahiliyyah (dividing the world between believers and none believers calling ordinary Muslims Jahiliyyah or ignorant equal to unbelievers, therefore paving the way for even killing innocent ordinary Muslims) and a Palestinian Abudullah Azzam for talking about new meaning of Jihad (holly war. I think on this point they are wrong as Azzam still was talking about defensive Jihad and therefore was against Bin-Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri who were calling Jihad against American and European. Azzam argument was because Muslim land is not anymore occupied by Western countries we cannot fight against them. Bin-Laden and Zawahiri were arguing that as American and European are supporting Israel that has occupied Islamic land we can fight against them, I guess this was the reason that Azzam was killed)

Even so, and if we accept the root of the ideology of these terrorist cults goes back to rise of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and Jemaat e Islami in India and not abdol Wahhab and Al-Saud in Arabia, Still I wonder why they don't talk about promoter of these groups. Turkey and Qatar are supporting Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey and Saudi Arabia are main supporter and financier of Jemaat e Islami, interestingly yesterday the only two Muslim countries that condemned ruling of Bangladesh court against leaders of Jemaat e Islami were Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

3- Reason for rise of Al-Qaeda and ISIS; The report has tried to explain rise of both terrorist groups

but has 'forgotten' to mention a very simple fact 'Mistake of US' in using Taliban and Al Qaeda against Soviet Union in Afghanistan and destabilising Iraq by removing Saddam Hussein without having any plan for afterward. The real and hard fact is that we don't have a democratic government in any Arab countries (in Case of Tunisia and recent election, still we have to wait and see what will happen). All rulers of Arab countries are one sort of life dictator (either under title of king or president), all of them violate basic human rights of their citizen, almost all of them are from minorities (political or religious), therefore supporting opposition in Iraq or Syria was not for the love of freedom or democracy but because they were not following the Western foreign policy. Defending right of minorities when it comes to Shia in Saudi Arabia easily will be forgotten by the West and rule of Majority when it comes to Bahrain again easily will be ignored. Truth is that opposite to claim of Saudis and some Western media following Saudis line of propaganda, neither in Syria nor in Iraq we have this horrible situation because of Shia versus Sunnis. They have lived with each other for thousand years without fighting and killing each other. As matter of fact in both countries (Iraq and Syria) we had secular/Nationalist Bath party in power. Both Iraqis and Syrian the same as other Arab countries were under a dictator (not worse than others) but at least they had security and a secular government in power, by removing Saddam and supporting so called 'Islamist' in Syria against Assad, Western countries destabilised both country and prepared the ground for rise of this infection called 'IS'.

4- Recruitment; The report talks about use of internet in promoting radical ideas and rightly mentions that Internet is not the reason but it is a catalyst. It also correctly mentions that recruitment starts on the ground and is physical and not virtual. But it shy away saying how and why. Why young Muslims are attracted to these violent ideology and terrorist groups (it mentions few personal reason like sense of belonging, again true but small part of a bigger picture) It doesn't say the main reason is Injustice that they feel and see (both as a person and as a Muslim). Also about how, though it says it happens before they connect to internet, but it doesn't say how as it doesn't want to mention Saudi or Wahhabi preachers in the Western Mosques.

The report talks about 16000 foreign Jihadist in Syria but again to avoid embarrassing Turkey it doesn't say how they could go from different countries as far as Australia and Canada to Syria? Who financed them and who facilitated their passing from the border between Syria and Turkey?

About finance of the ISIS, the report admits rich Arabs from Persian Gulf countries are helping them but interestingly in naming those countries it only calls Kuwait which is least of all, again avoiding naming UAE and Saudi Arabia. Also it try very hard to show that most of money of IS is not coming from donation but from sell of oil from Iraq and Syria captured oil fields, but to whom? Who can buy oil from them except Turkey that loves cheap oil from black market of either IS or Kurdistan. To produce an answer for another embarrassing question the report claims Syria buys oil from IS?!!

5- What should be done; the report has tried hard to produce some answers for this question but mostly has left it to the reader to come up with his/her conclusion. For example it says we should de-radicalize those who return from Syria; but how and what does it mean? If they have been radicalized through believing in Sallafi-Islam, then it is matter of belief and how do you want to fight against beliefs of these people. If one doesn't talk about mind manipulation then talking about de-radicalization is meaningless. The solution is first putting an stop in preaching of Wahhabi/Sallafi preachers in the Western Mosques, then Muslim preachers from other sects of Islam should come forward and explain why Wahhabi interpretation of Islam is wrong and at the same time we have to vaccinate young people, or at least young Muslims against mind manipulation and showing a way to them for expressing their pains (a democratic way to face injustice).

On the ground, in Iraq and Syria; the report claims Western bombing of ISIS is necessary but not enough and we need boot on the ground, but it advices that the Western countries should not send their troops there as it aggravate the problem (makes it war between Muslims and Christians). So what is the solution? It doesn't say much but in a way suggest that perhaps soldiers from Gulf Sunni Arab countries (Saudis as other gulf Arab countries don't have such an army) could fight there! Firstly Saudis never are going to that and after all what guarantee we have that Saudi soldiers will

not join IS instead of fighting against them, after all according to the report both have the same faith and followers of IS are there because of their faith and not mind manipulation. Another suggestion is to get help from Sunni tribes of Iraq , ignoring the fact that yesterday IS killed the whole population of a Sunni Iraqi tribe (children, old, young) because of helping Iraqi army. And In Syria they repeat call of Turkey and Saudis that West should support pro Western fighters against IS; Again ignoring the fact that they are too weak to be able to stand both against Al-Nusra (Al-Qaeda affiliated group in Syria) and ISIS. Again yesterday Al-Nusra defeated two groups of so called pro Western groups in Syria and captured all lands that were hold by them in Syria and captured all arms sent to them by Americans . I think in Iraq we have to support Kurds and Iraqi army to be able to fight with IS. And In Syria we have to reach a political settlement with Assad regime and fight against IS and Al- Nusra with the help of Syrian army and again Syrian Kurds. We should stop people crossing from Turkey to Syria and Iraq, We should stop people of Arabia helping these groups and we should stop Turkey buying oil from IS. But most important of all we should think of neutralizing Wahhabi teaching and mind manipulation of these groups.

<http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/islamic-state-the-changing-face-of-modern-jihadism.pdf>