



Muslims Should Not Fear Western Populism

News:

Trump's presidential victory along with Brexit has encouraged populist movements across Europe to take a firm stand against the ruling elites of the West. The driving engine behind the success of the populist movements are issues like immigration, globalization and the fear of Islam. The latter has caused deep anguish not only for Muslim residents in Western countries, but also for Muslims living in the Islamic world. There is widespread paranoia amongst Muslims that a possible nexus between US President-elect Trump and the far right extremist parties in Europe could precipitate another disastrous war in the Islamic world.

Comment:

For many Muslims, the triumph of Brexiteers, Trump's ascendancy to the White House, the remarkable rise of Marine Le Pen in France and the popularity of extremist parties across Europe is incontrovertible proof of a united West determined to destroy Islam. Some Muslims go to extraordinary lengths to eschew discussions about the unity of the Ummah via the restoration of the Caliphate, fearing that such talk will hasten western intervention in Islamic lands.

Concerns about Islamophobia uniting the West are deeply misplaced and demonstrates a poor grasp of international affairs. The West is far from a homogenous entity. There is more that divides the West than unites it. In 2003, the French scholar Dominique Moisi famously remarked, "the West has now split into European and American halves." In his view, Islamic fundamentalism, international terrorism and WMD no longer had the impact of unifying Europe and America, as the Soviet threat once did. Since September 11 2001, differences amongst Europeans and Americans on how to confront these issues have intensified.

America has bitterly complained about the lack of European support in fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Europe grudgingly joined America's fight in Afghanistan, and whenever possible sought to undercut America. France and Italy bribed Taliban commanders to leave their troops alone, Britain attempted to undermine America in Helmand province, and Germany kept its troops out of combat by providing training to Afghans in safe zones.

Today, Europeans view Obama's Syria plan with contempt - one that has spawned the largest refugee crisis Europe has ever witnessed - and regard America's war in Iraq responsible for the creation of ISIS and terror attacks on European shores.

Another major cause of disagreement between America and Europe is in the treatment of the biggest financial crisis the world has seen. Europe favored austerity, and America preferred unconventional monetary stimulus. Furthermore, trade tiffs, currency wars, enormous fines for European banks, and Panama leaks that exposed the hypocrisy of European tax heavens widened rifts.

A Trump administration is more likely to rub salt into the deep wounds of the transatlantic relationship than to heal them. Trump's comments on tearing up Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), NATO and overtures towards Russia will no doubt harden entrenched divisions.

The sad irony is that the Islamic countries remain feeble in exploiting tensions between Europe and America to safeguard the interests of the Muslim Ummah. This is because the

Islamic countries are mere instruments used by Europe and the US to fight their own wars for primacy. The wars in Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen, and Israel's occupation of Palestine are vicious contests fought between Europe and America for the supreme right to claim control over these lands.

It is precisely this sad state of affairs that demands the restoration of the rightly guided Caliphate to protect the dignity of the Muslim Ummah. The situation of Europe and America of today is akin to the condition of the Roman Empire several hundred years ago.

At the time of the Messenger of Allah (saw) until the middle of 15th century the Roman Empire was effectively divided into two halves - Western Roman Empire with its capital Rome and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire with its capital Constantinople. The divisions between the two Empires were real, and the Caliphate was able to exploit such differences to conquer Spain and later Constantinople.

Consider the reign of Sultan Muhammed Fateh. The young sultan calculated that the Pope would fail to rally European support to aid Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos in a military offensive with the Turks. The Sultan's reasoning was based on the fact that two hundred fifty years earlier a profound fissure had opened up between the two Empires—when Constantinople refused to support the European crusades against Salahuddin. Hence, when Emperor Constantine requested the Pope for military reinforcements the public mood in Europe prevented the dispatch of significant reinforcements, and Constantinople fell to Muslims in 1453.

The Europe of today is extremely weary of fighting wars in the Muslim world and spilling blood of their sons only for American multinational companies to reap the benefits. Additionally, Europeans intensely resent America's leadership of the Western world, and this is bound to increase during Trump's presidency. Indeed their predicament is like what Allah (swt) has described.

﴿بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّى﴾

“Their violence among themselves is severe. You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse.” [TMQ: 59:14].

Despite the glaring tensions in the transatlantic relationship, the Islamic world is unable to seize the opportunity. Had the fifty odd Islamic countries been united under a single Caliphate much could have been done to exploit the divisions in the West, and permanently end their interference in Muslim lands. Therefore, Muslims must work to restore the Khilafah Rashidah upon the methodology of the Prophethood, put their trust in Allah (swt) and not lose heart when confronted with the illusionary unity of the West.

﴿إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذَلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

“If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there after Him that can help you? And in Allah (Alone) let believers put their trust.” [TMQ: Al-i-Imran: 160]

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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