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Denial of Islamism

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First example of Islamism denial: A book on Islamism edited by Richard C. Martin and Abbas Barzegar (*Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*, Stanford University, 2009) includes articles by Hassan Hanafi/Feisal Abdul Rauf. The book and most of its contributors reject even the use of the term “Islamism.” According to Martin Riexinger, a German scholar in Islamic studies, Hanafi promotes a typical form of conservative anticapitalism, including antisemitic resentments. Hanafi is also very popular within Egypt’s academia. Rauf, known as the key promoter of the mosque project called Park 51 [originally called Cordoba House and now known as the Ground Zero Mosque—Ed.], rejects the term Islamism, preferring instead Islamic religionism, equating by definition Islamism with the religion of Christians and Jews. For relatives of 9/11 victims, his mosque project is anything but “fruitful.”

Next example: Matti Bunzl, professor of anthropology at the University of Illinois, and the use of the term Islamophobia. Son of Austrian anti-Zionist John Bunzl, Matti is part of a huge trend in academia and political culture to counter any criticism of political Islam as Islamophobia. Bunzl wrote a monograph that received several positive responses from outstanding scholars—e.g., Jewish historian Dan Diner—who do not at all disagree with him that Islamophobia has similar features as antisemitism.

Another fashionable scholar is Steven Beller, who literally says that Ahmadinejad does not mean what he says and that Islamic Jihad does not pose any kind of threat.

I have addressed elsewhere the minimizing and denial of Islamism at a conference by the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) in December 2008. Muslims were portrayed as Holland’s victims when Theo van Gogh was murdered.

Gudrun Krämer is the head of the Islamic Studies department at Free University Berlin. In 2010 she published a monograph on Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna in which he is portrayed as a nice guy, committed to spread Islam. No mention is made of al-Banna and his “death industry” in the 1930s. The same holds for Yusuf al-Qaradawi, today’s leading Sunni Islamist thinker and activist who is reduced to a moderate.

Another very fashionable trend is to equalize antisemitism with Islamophobia. So-called leftist or progressive or liberal scholars in particular are using this tool. In Germany, the journal *International Journal for the Study of Islam* portrays Qaradawi as moderate and obfuscates any substan-

tial analysis of antisemitism. There is no anti-Muslim conspiracy theory, there is no anti-Muslim anti-Mammonism/anti-capitalism, there is no anti-Muslim ideology called Moloch and accusing them of killing innocent children for the purpose of making *döner kebab* [grilled meat kabob]. Sound like a familiar antisemitic myth? On the other side, all the mentioned topics are essential ingredients of the history of antisemitism.

There is also Sabine Schiffer, who chaired an event where Palestinian activists denied the unprecedented character of the Shoah. Schiffer says that Daniel Pipes is against Islam, ignoring the fact that Pipes publicly declared that he is collaborating with moderate Muslims and that he is not against Islam as such. As long as people are able to hold their beliefs as a matter of privacy, that's fine.

Yet another fashionable academic and philosopher who is in denial of Islamism is Italian writer Giorgio Agamben, one of the most quoted mainstream heroes in academia worldwide today. He compared the U.S. policies after 9/11 to be like the establishment of Guantanamo Bay with the Holocaust, portraying Jihadis as Jews.

Two points are striking here: first, the denial of the fact that California-based Abou El Fadl is an Islamist, even if veiled under the warm words of multiculturalism and peace. The other point is even more striking, particularly 65 years after Auschwitz: when Germans want to say "This is a fucking Jew" (sorry to use this language), they use the term *Zionist*. Neonazis and the mainstream most often use *Zionist* as another word for Jew because not many people in Germany talk like "*dieser Jude ist ein böser Jude*" (this Jew is a bad Jew, read: Zionist). They just say *Zionist*, aiming at *the Jew*.

Finally, an example from the academy. When I was a postdoctor fellow, during some reading sessions, I suggested Robert Wistrich's *Muslim Antisemitism: A Real and Present Danger* one of the most popular AJC brochures ever. One of my colleagues responded that the very title is racist and to *talk* about Muslim antisemitism in his view is racist. Others had similar ideas toward the Wistrich brochure. For them in their parallel world of multicultural and most important cultural relativist world, the discussion about Islamism is by itself problematic.

Few scholars dare to deal with Islamic Jihad, Islamism, and political Islam or Muslim antisemitism critically and publicly, in order to decode it and to provide the public tools to fight Islamic Jihad, Islamism, antisemitism, and anti-Zionism. For democracy, it is crucial that scholars, politicians, and elites stand up against antisemitism/anti-Zionism, bigotry, hatred, political Islam/Islamism, and other forms of anti-Western, anti-democratic resentment. Many if not most academics in the humanities and social sciences still need to learn that antisemitism has shifted from Germany and its allies toward the Muslim and Arab world. Many left-wingers (including

those who always had rejected Stalin and Soviet-style socialism) in the West have unwittingly become part of the problem since 1967, and particularly since 9/11. They are now collaborating with the enemies of freedom, unveiled women, gays and lesbians, unmarried strangers, and democracy, even ignoring the fact that political Islam in Europe and Germany was established after 1945 with help of several former Nazis, SS-Imams, and converted Nazis. Iran is developing nuclear weapons and the Western world talks about Islamophobia and the analogy of antisemitism and criticism of Jihad and political Islam/Islamism. Mullahs can't stop laughing.