
Mi smo politička bića čija je potraga za moći instinkt moćan kao seksualni nagon. Budući da svaka ideologija i vjera preživljava zahvaljujući moći, moramo je regulirati. Pobožna je prijevarena tvrditi da bi Bog trebao jednostavno ignorirati i odreći se onoga što je Carevo. Moramo prihvatiti moć kao sredstvo u svijetu nekontroliranog konflikta. Moramo to učiniti a da to ne idoliziramo jer cilj mora ostati mir, nikada moć kao cilj sama sebi. Kur'an dopušta pomirenje s neprijateljima (Kur'an, 8:61), no s obzirom na jedinstveni standard pravde u njemu, on odbacuje mir zagađen nepravdom. Bez pravednog mira zapadnjaci i muslimani će, u oba smisla, ostati zarobljenici rata.



Shabbir Akhtar (r. 1960) profesor je na Teološkom fakultetu Univerziteta u Oxfordu. Bio je profesor na Međunarodnom univerzitetu u Kuala Lumpuru, Malezija, i na Univerzitetu Old Dominion u Virdžiniji, SAD. U okviru svoga naučnog rada posebno se bavi filozofijom religije, odnosom religije i politike i odnosom islama i kršćanstva. Nastoji doprinijeti jačanju savremenog islamskog filozofskog diskursa. Privlači

paznju neobičnim i u mnogočemu inovativnim načinom pisanja. Objavio je, između ostalih, sljedeće knjige: *Reason and the Radical Crisis of Faith* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), *Be Careful with Muhammad!: The Salman Rushdie Affair* (London: Bellew, 1989), *The Light in the Enlightenment: Christianity and the Secular Heritage* (London: Grey Seal, 1990), *The Quran and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2008), *Islam as Political Religion: The Future of an Imperial Faith* (London: Routledge, 2011).



ISLAM KAO POLITIČKA RELIGIJA



Shabbir Akhtar

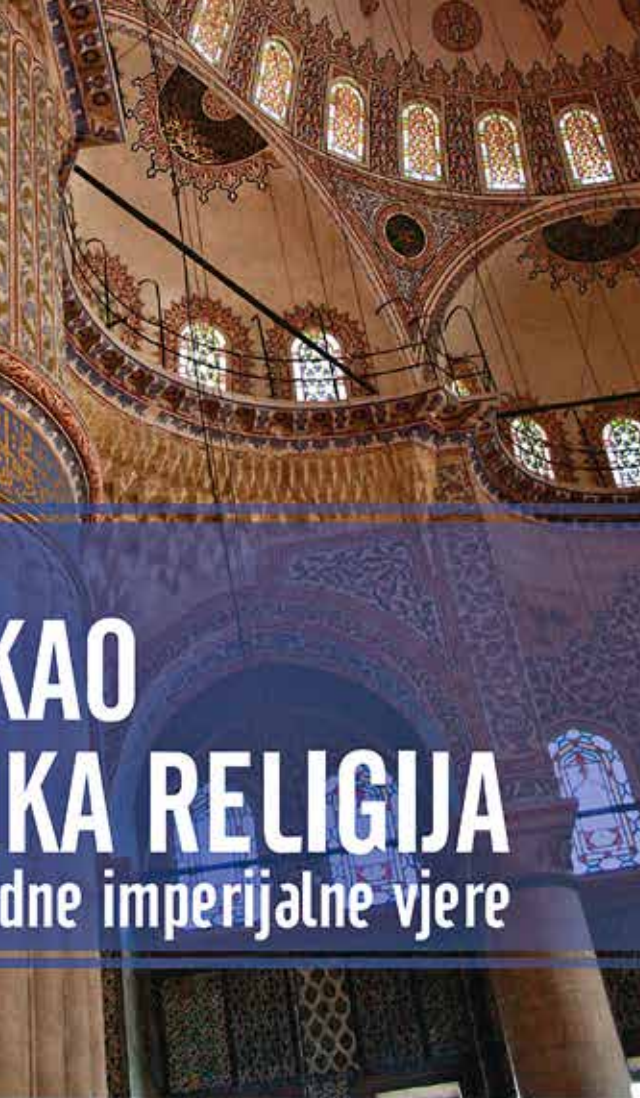
ISLAM KAO
POLITIČKA
RELIGIJA
Budućnost je

ILUSTRACIJA - Naslovnica bosanskog prijevoda knjige: *Islam kao politička religija: budućnost jedne imperijalne religije*.

ILLUSTRATION - Cover page of the Bosnian translation of the book: *Islam as Political Religion: The Future of an Imperial Faith*.

Prof. dr. Ahmet Alibašić školovao se u Kuala Lumpuru i Sarajevu. Trenutno je vanredni profesor na Fakultetu islamskih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu, predaje kurseve islamske kulture i civilizacije. Također vodi *Centar za napredne studije* u Sarajevu i aktivno sudjeluje u međureligijskom dijalogu. Napisao je knjigu o islamskoj opoziciji u arapskom svijetu, više članaka i uredio knjige koje se bave islamom u Evropi, ljudskim pravima u islamu i muslimanskom svijetu, te odnosima crkve i države. Jedan je od urednika *Godišnjaka Muslimani u Evropi* i časopisa *Muslimani u Evropi* (*Muslims in Europe* - Brill, 2009/2016 do danas). Također, od 2003. godine do danas član je i redakcije revije *Novi Muallim* - bosanskohercegovački muslimanski pedagoški časopis (Sarajevo, BiH).

Prof. Ahmet Alibašić, Ph.D. was educated in Kuala Lumpur and Sarajevo. Currently he is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Sarajevo, teaching Islamic culture and civilization courses. He also heads the *Center for Advanced Studies* in Sarajevo and actively participates in inter-religious dialogue. He has authored a book on Islamic opposition in the Arab world, more articles and edited books dealing with Islam in Europe, human rights in Islam and Muslim world, and church-state relations. He is one of the editors of *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* and *Journal of Muslims in Europe* (Brill, 2009/2016 till today). Also, since 2003 he is a member of the editorial board of *Novi Muallim* magazine - Bosnian Muslim Educational Magazine (Sarajevo, B&H).



ISLAM KAO POLITIČKA RELIGIJA

dne imperijalne vjere

Shabbir Akhtar

ISLAM KAO POLITIČKA RELIGIJA

IZ SADRŽAJA KNJIGE

Niti jedna religija čiji su sljedbenici osvojili gotovo cijeli svijet, uključujući njegove nenaseljene najudaljenije krajeve, i nedavno kolonizirali dijelove svemira, u nadi da će spasiti druge (pretpostavljamo i sebe same), ne može istinski polagati pravo na indiferentnost prema moći, osim u nekom tipu internog humora. Oficijelno kršćanstvo, i katoličko i protestantsko, tokom historije tražilo je kontrolu nad svjetovnom moći.

Islam doživljava nezasluženu neprijateljsku kritiku uglavnom jer je pitanje njegove suštine, za razliku od drugih vjera, političko. Zapadni monoteizmi iskusili su interne pritiske da definiraju svoje ortodoksije. Rano kršćanstvo glasovito je po svojoj proizvodnji hereze tokom pokušaja da definiše svoju doktrinu. Islam je danas jedinstven po tome da, uz unutarnje borbe oko njegove suštine, i lica sa strane žele također oblikovati njegov izgled. Za razliku od kršćanstva, o islamu debatiraju autsajderi koji tvrde da su veći eksperti o njemu od njegovih vlastitih pripadnika. Čak i u akademskim krugovima, politički islam izložen je a priori odbijanju i odlučnom odbacivanju. Samo je apolitični islam prihvatljiv. Politički pogled smatra se nekontroverznim ako muslimani nisu dio toga.



Ahmet ALIBAŠIĆ

NI NASILNI, NI UMJERENI, VEĆ OSNAŽENI ISLAM

Shabbir Akhtar, *Islam kao politička religija: budućnost jedne imperijalne religije*,
CNS, Sarajevo, 2017., 355.

NEITHER VIOLENT NOR DOCILE, BUT AN EMPOWERED ISLAM

Shabbir Akhtar, *Islam as Political Religion: The Future of an Impirial Religion*,
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NEITHER VIOLENT NOR DOCILE, BUT AN EMPOWERED ISLAM

Shabbir Akhtar, *Islam as a Political Religion: The Future of an Imperial Religion*, CNS, Sarajevo, 2017, 355.

The Serbian Patriarch Irinej is not the only one who thinks that Muslims “when they are fewer in number, they are able to behave themselves and to be proper. As soon as they become equal in number, they dare to raise their heads; once they become superior and powerful, they exert pressure either for others to move out or for others to join them.”¹ It is a widespread prejudice (or rather conscious imputation) that Muslims do not know how to conduct themselves when they are a majority, when they are powerful, when they are in power. The work that we are reviewing claims the opposite to be true. Muslims are corrupted by powerlessness, not by power (138, 261 of the English edition). Islam has always been a political, public, worldly, i.e. secular religion, from day one. Its political involvement is neither abusive nor distorting. On the contrary, its being originally a political religion hinders its political abuse. Islam originally teaches that public religious engagement not only makes sense but that, without it, religion can hardly make sense: “The Quran transfers moral concerns found in private ethics to politics so that social justice becomes the paradigmatic public cause – no longer private concern of charitable organizations” (238); “The morally constrained employment of power is an intrinsic demand of all-encompassing faith, not a lapse from an initial integrity necessitated by later recalcitrant events” (250). The Qur’an calls for social and economic justice, respect for learning and personal moral excellence (257). Therefore, the terms “Islamism” and “Islamist” are a hoax. When have you ever heard about “Christianism”? (4). However, there are religions, private religions that, when public and engaged, betray their original nature because they do not believe in their principles that it makes sense to make an effort to repair this world (240).

The Muslim problem with powerlessness is that Islam has been understood and interpreted as a religion of power for centuries. Muslims have developed theology of power (8). However, for three centuries,

Muslims have been living powerless while continuing to read literature that addresses them as being in a position of power. It frustrates them in a way that powerlessness does not frustrate other powerless communities. Contrary to members of private religions, Muslims were better off when they were powerful: A weak Islam gave us terrorism; a strong Islam shall give us peace and mutual tolerance on equal terms. (268).

Powerlessness is not the only problem for modern Muslims. They are deprived and denied the right to power from both the West and those who rule them. Faced with powerlessness and the deprivation of power, some Muslims and Ulama agree to passivity, i.e. surrender (248). Others turn to aggression, violence (247), claiming that the violence is originally Islamic. Insofar as this violence can be understood, it is neither Islamic nor will it produce the desired results. Akhtar set out to help Muslims “move graciously from their imperial past to a modest role in the power structures of a world in which their aspirations, even lives and property, mean little” (2-3). This new formula is a non-imperial but still empowered, representative, self-contained Islam that fights injustice everywhere (260) versus a domesticated and privatized Islam (12) as a private source of comfort and another option for self-help in the spiritual market (9). Empowered Islam is legitimate (260) and this is what ordinary and sinful Muslims, who are the primary interest of the author, wish but fail to articulate. It is legitimate for Muslims to determine their own destiny as other nations determine their own destinies. They consider the instinctively and justifiably the submissive, pacifist, politically impotent, ‘moderate’ Islam to be a betrayal of the true nature of Islam. Unfortunately, instead of acting affirmatively, assertively and decisively in affect, they act aggressively and violently. Muslims cannot afford such a mistake in today’s world because “Muslims cannot win in the sphere of physical power” (239).

Akhtar dispels many myths, not just the one about the corruptibility of power. Islam is, he says, an anti-

¹ <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/izjava-nanela-stetu-odnosima-spc-i-iz/>, accessed 04. 04. 2020.

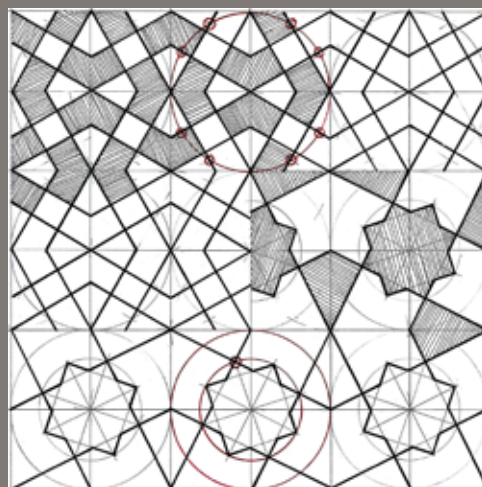
fatalistic religion. Islam demands rebellion: “Things are so bad that something must be done about it” (240-1). Elaborating on the “revolutionary potential” of Islam (cf. Abdurrahim Muddathir), the author sees the Friday prayer as a revolutionary gathering and a threat to corrupt rulers (240). In fact, the whole book is a detailed guide to understanding the hadith (which is not mentioned in the book) “A strong believer is better and more dear to God than a weak believer, and in each one there is good”.

Similar to Abdelwahab El-Affendi (‘Abdulwahrāb AL-Afandī), the author has a special message for those Muslim intellectuals who have the ambition to reform Islam: “Only a Muslim reformer who argues for strengthening Islam, not emasculating it, carries any weight with ordinary Muslims both in the East and West... Protestant reformers showed that they were more truly conservative and committed Christians than their Catholic opponents” (2).

The main part of the book is devoted to the elaboration of ten characteristics of Islam. Some of these are standard (mission, book, universality, ethics, rationality, privacy) for religions. Some, however, are specific to Islam: political, legal and imperial. It would be too ambitious to try to present this original “decimal” characterization of Islam in a few paragraphs, so we will refrain from it.

The reader will be greatly mistaken to think that he/she now knows what Akhtar’s book is all about. Simply, this is such a condensed reading that it does not allow compression. Each page is full of deep thought that can only be further explained, rather than summarized. In fact, the main idea of the book is so consequently and gradually developed, but also strongly and, occasionally, radically expressed that it makes it easily misunderstood if read selectively, despite the clear conclusion that powerful Islam today should not be dominant and hegemonic, but rather an Islam that is engaged for justice and prosperity: “Muslim activism does not envisage theocratic fascism... the lust to institutionalize revealed certainties is the shortest route to fascism. Universal democracy is compatible with modern Islam but not with Western imperialism” (254).

Akhtar’s thought is confident, assertive, politically incorrect, and spares no one. Stylistically, the book is brilliantly written and masterfully translated. It is not a custom in presentations, but I find it appropriate to bring in a quote more than try in vain to go beyond the author in a statement. Referring to the absence of original theology in Islam, he writes: “We are permitted to know what we need to know, not to know everything we wish to know” (6). Elsewhere it says: The fear of this just faith is the greatest irrational phobia



in the age of reason (239); The religious universality of Muhammad’s mission justifies its political and legal repercussions, not the other way around (9); The increase in the number of mosques today, which is taken as evidence that Islam is the fastest growing religion, is in fact evidence of ethnic sectarianism and disunity of the Ummah (237); a corrupt elite without a people’s mandate, actively supports the West in the name of national security and global stability, which is a euphemism for Western economic, political and military hegemony (243); The Arabs will run out of oil and cash; they will not run out of Islam, their real wealth and only enduring contribution to the world’s stock of moral, aesthetic and spiritual meaning (245); Lasting peace between Islam and the West is possible ... only if Muslims are treated with dignity as equals (246); Muslims want to live with the West, not under it (246); Islamic unity is bad news only for those who want to maintain unjust universal hegemony (261); In peace time, sons bury their fathers; in war, fathers bury their sons (264); To reject the resistance to evil means to vote for the triumph of oppression (265); A falling camel draws many knives, says the Bedouin proverb. One must not be weak so that weakness does not tempt the unjust (265); Here we only note the irony of (Western) civilization in which peace awards are sponsored by gunpowder traders (266); Unless taken with the right intention, nonviolence is a lofty word for cowardice (266); Today we go to the West no matter where we go (268); The Qur’an is much less critical of the Jews than their own prophets from the middle part of the Hebrew Bible (269); The choice of this politically indifferent Islam is itself fraught with political consequences. This is not a politically neutral, but a neutralized Islam. These

writers are shaping Islam that fits the interests of the ubiquitous West, which is not exactly an innocent or neutral thing (269-70).

This analysis-appeal as a contribution to the Islamic theology of liberation comes at a difficult, i.e. the right time. However, this also means that there is a good chance it will be misunderstood by the powerless, and justly understood and rejected by the powerful. Whatever may happen with Muslims in the coming decades, it is justified to expect Islam to remain a religious superpower (244) because the right to freedom and self-determination of Muslim nations conflicts only with Western interests, not with declared Western ideals (244). Moreover, whatever one thinks about this book, I can agree with its conclusion: "Without a just peace, Westerners and Muslims shall both remain, in both senses, prisoners of war" (272).

ILLUSTRATION ~ Ismā'īl Mawlā, *A Set of Thirty Chinese Qur'an Juz', of the Qing Dynasty, The Great Qing Empire / Manchurian Dynasty, 18th Century.*

