

Islam in the West

Islam in the West:

*Issues of Identity Crisis,
Multiculturalism, and Conflict*

By

Yinka Olomjobi

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To the memory of Olive Greene

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INTRODUCTION

"Over a billion people believe in Allah without truly knowing what Allah supposedly stands for or what he really demands of them. And the minority that do understand continue to be Moslems because they have redefined their morality and ethics to fit within the teachings of Islam..."¹

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Islam has been a persistent phenomenon in the history of the world. Islam has occupied vast parts of Europe. Islam via the Ottoman Empire had been a hegemon during its Golden Age (88AD-1258)—a vast number of Islamic States have gone through the process of imperialism and colonization by the West. The Arab defeat by Israel in the June war (1967) ushered in a new paradigm for Middle Eastern States and their relationship with the West. It is characterized by the development of the Palestinian resistance movement. Political Islam underwent a period of political inactivity in Western societies during the Cold War and has resurged in different rhetoric as radical and recently generated new paranoia—Islamophobia. Islam has always been a universal force—depending on whose lens it is being viewed through. It is important to note at this point that the resurgence of Islam in the contemporary age can be explained by looking at historical trajectories. Fukuyama's overconfident arguments on the 'end of history' are therefore frivolous as the role of Islam in international politics was overlooked. It is important to stress that Islam is not referred to as a single unit. Islam is not static, but dynamic according to Price (1999). The centrality of Islam in society constitutes differing cultures. Roy argues that:

The notion of a single 'Muslim culture' cannot survive analysis. If it refers to Islam as a religion, it is redundant. The different Muslim populations have some element in common such as diet and holidays, which are nothing more than the basic tenets of the rituals and beliefs, but in themselves, they do not constitute a culture. What is beyond the strict tenets

¹ See 'The Alien Concept of Free Speech, accessed at <<https://sites.google.com/site/islamicscripturesunveiled/Home/free-speech>> on the 28th of September 2023.

of religious rituals and beliefs refers to specific national ethnic cultures, of which Islam is just a component, even it is indistinguishable (Roy, 2004: 129).

Furthermore, Fukuyama (1989:4) argued that: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the *end of history* as such: that is, *the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.*" The resurgence of Islam has put the triumph of the West in jeopardy—the end of Western civilization. Perhaps the end of history could be referred to as the renaissance of Islam and its confrontation with the West. It is significant to note that Islam is now the fastest growing religion on the planet.

In the second half of this century, will likely surpass Christians as the world's largest religious group. While the world's population is projected to grow 32% in the coming decades, the number of Muslims is expected to increase by 70% – from 1.8 billion in 2015 to nearly 3 billion in 2060. In 2015, Muslims made up 24.1% of the global population. Forty-five years later, they are expected to make up more than three-in-ten of the world's people (31.1%).²

Perhaps more significant is that Muslims are migrating to the West where in previous times they made up an insignificant population. The population of Muslims is predicted to surpass the number of Christians by the end of the century. In America, it is predicted that:

By 2040, Muslims will replace Jews as the nation's second-largest religious group after Christians. And by 2050, the U.S. Muslim population is projected to reach 8.1 million, or 2.1% of the nation's total population. ...the Muslim population has continued to grow at a rate of roughly 100,000 per year, driven both by higher fertility rates among Muslim

² See 'Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group', accessed at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/> <10th July 2018>

*Americans as well as the continued migration of
Muslims to the U.S.*³

The evolution of Islam in the West and the utopian ideology of radical Muslims have ushered in political discussion in the international sphere. There is, it is argued a transposition of relevance from the West to Muslim civilization and the reaffirmation of the Muslim identity. Samuel Huntington (1998: 47) is precise when he stated that “religion is a central defining characteristic of civilizations.” To this end, this book focuses on evolving concepts on Muslims in the West. It does this by explaining and evaluating the symbiotic relationship between Islam and the West. In particular, it analyses the behavior of Muslims and their pursuance of the concept of religious nationalism within Western societies. The study attempts to explore the position of Islam and Muslims in Western societies. The central aim of this book is to explore the difficulties in the assimilation and integration of Muslims in Western societies.

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³ See ‘New estimates show U.S. Muslim population continues to grow’, accessed at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/><10th July 2018>

CHAPTER ONE

ISLAM AND THE AGE OF GLOBAL-DIGITALIZATION: ENCOUNTERING THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

"Having established the reality of this absolute Allah, we move to the character. What is its character? The merciful, the compassionate. And there's two flows there. The merciful in having created us, given us this gift of life; the compassionate in drawing us back to Him, in Islamic imagery, to Heaven."⁴⁴

Huston Smith (1919)

Introduction

After the obliteration of the Berlin wall, and the balkanization the Soviet Union, there has been a gradual process of integration in the world market and with multi-lateralized political communities. Fukuyama (1992) has eloquently argued that the end of history had begun with the triumph of Western civilization and its capital system over communist ideology after the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. However, the end of history never ended, it only began, with a new ideological confrontation and the ushering in of globalization. Three key global events that have occurred since the crash of the Berlin Wall are the collapse of the bipolar system, the dawn of globalization and the rise of radical Islam. The process of globalization has been largely due to the growth and development of communication, travel networks, effective methods of international trade, and most importantly, the Internet. Globalization has impacted many facets of life. Modern technologies have made the world easily interconnected with various cultural and religious identities. The line of separation between cultures and religions, in our global village, is said to be becoming imprecise and without boundaries whilst integrating social and cultural domains.

⁴⁴ Accessed on 28th September 2023 at: 'The Wisdom Of Faith With Huston Smith', <<https://billmoyers.com/content/wisdom-faith-islam-transcript/>>

Before delving further, the term ‘global-digitalization’, used as the title of this chapter, refers to the notion that globalization is an influencer of the digital interface that is evolving and replacing traditional methods with new innovative realities in the world. Conventional frontiers of innovation and technology are being confronted with issues of relevancy, as the digital interface has disrupted modern technology. However, we would confine ourselves to the term ‘globalization’ in order to avoid complexities.

The distance from Paris to Damascus and from New York to Baghdad is now within the realm of a planetary community, where time and space are now immaterial. Events around the world are now interconnected. In this state of affairs, the distance between events taking place around the world is now miniaturized. Ostensibly, people are now connected through new technologies/informational superhighways such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram amongst others. Thus, in the words of Giddens (1990: 64): “globalization is about the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” Another pragmatic definition is provided by Friedman (2000:7-8): “The inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before, enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper.” In other words, globalization is an effective process that breaks boundaries that were once confined to strict cultural markers, consumerist patterns and communication devices. In other words, the global society is a terrain where “political, economic, social, and cultural relationships are not restricted to territorial boundaries or to state actors” (McCorquodale & Fairbrother, 1999: 735-736). It is important to note that globalization cannot be considered as a singular and coherent process. One view point on globalization is that it adopts the ideology that all cultures are homologous, and it assumes equality of all individuals, thereby increasing unification of racial, national/ethnic identities under one umbrella and augmenting the latitude of global unity. Another view on globalization which has been theorized is that it connotes hybridization (the mixing of many cultural characteristics (Ritzer, 2010: 244), and glocalization (the connectivity of the global and the local) (Ritzer, 2010: 245). The question then arises: how does globalization affect Islam? Is it a positive or a negative force for Muslims? It will be argued that globalization has a dual effect on Islam. Globalization has the propensity to integrate Muslims under the *Ummah* (a global community of Muslims). Secondly, it also has a tendency to co-opt the *Ummah* to become inclusive. Finally, to radical Muslims, it is a mechanism to foster the establishment of an imagined Caliphate. As perceptively explained by Cesari (2007: 56):

Globalization is a cultural process that favours the development of non-territorialised cultures and communities based on race, gender, religion, or even lifestyle. In this respect, Islam is a powerful element in identity formation, weaving together solidarity between various groups that are separated by constraints of diverse nations, countries and cultures.

Globalization dismantles the borders separating different societies by building a bridge with other cultures, economies, and political institutions. Globalization is a progression in which the world and its cultures transmute into a small community, where developing societies can evolve into developed states by following the Western models of living standards.

Between Radical Islam and Islam

Religious radicalism is not exclusive to Islam. It is connected to all religious faiths. Radical ideology constructs a different narrative from religious texts than that which is proposed by normative Muslims. It tends to misinterpret and falsify sacred texts of a religion. In Islam, Muslims who choose to use terrorist activities to attain a utopian Caliphate can be referred to as radical Muslims given the fact that they use Islam as a justifiable reason to propagate violence. It is necessary to consider the essence of Islam to showcase the difference between Muslims and radical Muslims.

Radical Muslims desire people to change their religion. While Islam says: "Let there be no compulsion in religion...." (Quran 2:256). Radical Muslims have forcefully married off girls. While Islam says: "... Do not inherit women against their will..." (Quran 4:19). Radical Muslims are aggressive toward those who do not follow their beliefs. While Islam says: "IF IT HAD BEEN YOUR LORD'S WILL, all of the people on Earth would have believed [in one religion] ..." (Quran 10:99). Radical Muslims have murdered thousands of Muslims and Christians alike in cold blood. While Islam says: "... If anyone slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land (and must be through legal means) - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people..." (Quran 5:32). Radical Muslims hide under the cover of Islam to commit mayhem and claim that they are doing ALLAH'S work or JIHAD (Holy War). While Islam says: "...but so not transgress limits; for God loves not transgressors" (Quran 2:190). Radical Muslims believe that once you are not with them you are an enemy to them. While Islam says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair)

of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other) ..." (Quran 49:13). Radical Islamic groups have unleashed tyranny and indecency in the land. While Islam says: "God commands Justice and doing Good and giving to relatives. And He forbids Indecency and doing wrong and tyranny..." (Quran 16:90).

Globalization and the Secularization of Islam

Modernism and technology have generated a fast pace of globalization. Religion plays a dominant role in most societies because it acts as the building block of civilization. The phenomenon of religion built great empires such as the Roman Empire and the Ottoman Caliphate. Before the Ottoman Caliphate (1517-1924), there were three major caliphates: The Rashidun (632-661), the Umayyad (661-750), and the Abbasid (750-1258, 1261-1517). Most religions have the overarching capacity to merge different nationalities and societies together. The essence of Islam is that it is both a religion and a way of life for its co-religionists. Moreover, Muslims perceive that they live in a global community—the *Ummah*. The *Ummah* is a blueprint for social order and exists as a community that has established a way of life for its co-religionists. The *Ummah* is an important concept to Muslims which is mentioned 64 times in the Quran (Al-Ahsan 1992). The essence of the *Ummah* is established in the Quran 2:143:

We have made you (true Muslims) a moderate nation so that you could be an example for all people and the Prophet an example for you. The direction which you had been facing during your prayers (the qibla) was only made in order that We would know who would follow the Messenger and who would turn away. It was a hard test but not for those to whom God has given guidance. God did not want to make your previous prayers worthless; God is Compassionate and All-merciful.

This extract illustrates that the *Ummah* enables Muslims to imagine that they possess a distinctiveness and unique identity due to an exclusive religious marker. In many ways, globalization has assisted Islamic societies in socio-political development and progress of technological growth. Some of the positive effects of globalization are that it has resulted in increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which has assisted developing states to reduce poverty, thereby intensifying foreign trade and investment in these states. Globalization has also aided the dissemination of knowledge and

ease of communication in developing states. Furthermore, globalization has enabled developing states to become more aware of human rights issues such as women's rights and the recognition of the rights of homosexuals and the need for transparency and accountability in public services.

The central similarity between the global community of the *Ummah* and globalization is that both of them are universal. Globalization in the context of Islam is a paradoxical and mystifying question as it in some ways acts as a double-edged sword for Muslims. It may be deemed to be contrary to the concept of the *Ummah* and at the same time plays an integral role in uniting different cultures and people. The crux of the *Ummah* is that it glues together different cultures. It is then a platform multiracial, multicultural interaction—'one religion, one culture' archetype. An illustration of such integration is found in Muslim migration where Muslims upon arrival in foreign lands, especially in Western societies, become united under the umbrella of the *Ummah* (Saunders, 2008). Roy (2005:135) goes further to tell us that:

The space of the ummah is no longer a territorial one, implying a political leadership, with a nation-state and borders. In fact, most of the neo-fundamentalist movements, including the most radical ones, stopped discussing the "dar ul Islam" (abode of Islam) in territorial terms. They consider the ummah to be everywhere Muslims are to be found. An interesting case is that of Hizb-ul-Tahrir, a radical (although not terrorist) movement now based in London, which advocates the revival of the Islamic Caliphate but simply skips the issue of its territorial basis: the Caliphate could be restored in a very short time if every Muslim decides that it exists and pledges loyalty to it. Thus, one can live both as a member of a specific minority group while also part of a universal community.

Globalization is a process where Western concepts of liberal democracy have universal significance. These concepts are however not in conformity with the *Ummah*. The threat to Muslim societies is that globalization is the moving force of Western civilization. The perceived fear is that prevailing Westernized ideologies of liberal capitalism, secularization and western culture will subsume Islamic identities. A vast number of Muslims tend to view globalization as a Westernized concept project to propagate Western values and culture as a prototype for the human race to follow. The global society has made the *Ummah* to understand that its co-religionists are not

superior to others societies/communities. This phenomenon has threatened Islamic societies, as globalization is connected to Westernized origins and significance, therefore, transmuting Muslims into a 'global minority' (Moghaddam, 2008). Globalization introduces Western concepts and ways of life to non-Western societies. Globalization has lured Islamic states and Muslims living in Western societies to the economic, political and cultural laissez-faire. The integration of cultures implies that the demarcation of identities are gradually subsuming into a universal identity where economies, liberal capitalism and information are shared by all people around the globe, thus removing the concept of 'we' against 'them' awareness. But perhaps, most importantly, globalization attempts do away with religion, and state boundaries, resulting in cultural homogenization which is perceived as an affront to Islamic culture. It then may be argued that Islam is a religion that posits itself as an uncompromising opponent to global pluralism. The ideal of this argument is found in the Quran 3: 110:

*You are the best nation that ever existed among humanity. You command people to good and prohibit them from evil, and you believe in God. Had the People of the Book accepted the faith (Islam), it would certainly have been better for them. Some of them have faith, but most of them are evil doers.*⁵

After the 9/11 attack, there was a string of extremist attacks in the Western world wherein European countries were targeted, such as the London bombings on July 7, 2005, and the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004. The era of terror, which is characterized with radical groups generating violence in the name of Islam, has caused a major focus to be placed on the phenomenon of religion-based group identity as well as the debate that surrounds it. The threat which comes from the globalization has been amplified in an exponential manner. The perceived threat of globalization to Islamic culture is that there seems to be a decline of Islam and political governance since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1924.

More so, the incessant state of conflict and autocratic leadership in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa has created a state of grievance, deprivation, and a lack economic development, as became evident in the Arab Spring revolutions. Piscatori (1986) inputs rationales behind these views. He argues that adherence to conventional Islam has been abandoned in many Muslim societies. Second, that Muslims, especially in the Middle East, have not taken advantage of scientific innovations to argument its economic

⁵ Muhammad Sarwar, Translation

potential, which has resulted in frail industrial capabilities. Perhaps, a sense of cultural and economic inefficacy in states where Muslims are in the vast majority explains the fear of globalization. A pointer to this suggestion is illustrated in the fact that a vast majority of Muslim states are embroiled with inter-state chaos and conflict. This has generated political and cultural obliteration, and a lack of economic development in such states. This is in contrast to Westernized societies where integration for capacity building and knowledge-based society are crucial assets of governance. This lack of economic and cultural unity amongst Muslims has been a pacesetter for the invasion of the West and its contraption of globalization. The intriguing question is what accounts for this occurrence? Does Islam procure the lack of economic growth in these countries? In answering this question, Ragab (1980:513-514) argues that:

(a) The ideal Islamic belief system is not conducive to modernization. The belief system is sometimes referred to in the abstract (without reference to time) and sometimes reference is made to the beliefs of contemporary Muslims. (b) Ideal Islamic behavioural injunctions are not conducive to modernization. Reference here again is either to the abstract or to the present. (c) The problem is not in Islamic beliefs or behavioural commandments. The problem is that they (beliefs and behaviours) are not as effective in guiding behaviour as pre-Islamic elements which tend to persist after embracing Islam. (d) The problem is in the degeneration of Islamic ideals as the masses corrupt them as a result of Islam's inherent idealism that is hard to apply in reality.

Piscatori proposes that there is an assimilation of Westernized cultural practices, a situation he refers to as 'westoxication', which has polluted the *Ummah* and represents a remnant of the suppressive colonial era. Benjamin Barber (2005: xxvii) alludes to the pollution of globalization:

The most egregious globalization has been the exploitation and abuse of children in war, pornography, poverty, and sex tourism. Children have been soldiers and victims in the raging ethnic and religious wars; children are the majority of the global cohort that suffers poverty, disease and starvation. Children are our terrorists-to-be because they are so obviously not our citizens to come.

Globalization to Muslims is reminiscent of the early 12th century—when Christian Crusades seized the Islamic holy city of Jerusalem and vast territory of the Muslim Kingdom. Furthermore, Islam's third consecrated location, the al-Aqsa Mosque, was captured by the Crusaders. Globalization is viewed as another attempt to capture the heart and spirit of Muslims. This perhaps explains the rationale why religion is all about arguing that my 'God' is better than your 'God'. It is observed that most religions were bestowed upon people by conquering them. Christianity was given to a vast majority of the world through the early Christian Crusades, colonialization, the transatlantic slavery and by war. History tells us that Emperor Constantine made Christianity the mandatory religion of the Roman Empire—this fixed its roots into Europe. Islam does not have such a peculiarity. It was bestowed upon people by trade, conquest and through social mobilization. The sword was used only as a means of self-defense.

The Gulf States which are enjoying relative peace and economic development is a result of the acceptance of globalization with its spread of multiculturalism allows individuals to access cultural diversity. The gospel of Westernization is produced by export of Hollywood movies, cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, musical entertainment such as MTV, fashion wares such as Nike, and consumables such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Burger King, and KFC and other Western concepts of beauty and acumen which are deleterious to Islamic culture and identity. The culture of many non-Western societies is fashioned by Hollywood movies and pop-music which are iconic symbols in the West. In Islamic societies where globalization and its capitalist consumerist behavior have been inculcated into their way of life, it is safe to imply that there is a subtle invasion by Westernized models of culture, trade, and finance which is adversative with Islamic culture. The paradox of Westernized good living is that it entails moral decadence. The fear of globalization is that it ushers in Westernized liberal ideologies, political freedom, free enterprise and individual rights under the guise of globalization—characteristics of western cultures. In line with this way of thinking, Robert Wright (2002) perceives that:

The modern world—featuring alcohol, satellite-beamed pornography, lapel-wearing alpha females—is an offense to traditional Islamic values. And globalization sticks modernization in the face of Muslims, whether they like it or not. Mohamed Atta didn't have to go to Germany to see Hollywood movies or the Western skyscrapers that, in his view, scarred the landscape of Islamic architecture.

Arguably, the question remains: where have the Muslims, especially those in the Middle East, acquired this sense of inferiority? Muslims seem to view their identity as inferior to the West. This then may generate some Muslims to be judgmental about globalization due to its connectivity to Western civilization. Thus, the impulsion of globalization by the West could be seen as generating a complexity of fear and insecurity among such Muslims. One answer to this may be found in the preeminence of Arab Superiority in Islam is found in a controversial narrative:⁶

The fact that Allah Most High has chosen the Arabs over other nations is affirmed in rigorously authenticated hadiths of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and give him peace; related by Bukhari and Muslim in their "Sahih" in the beginning of the chapter of merits, # 5897, on the authority of Wathilah ibn al-Aqsa' who said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, 'Verily Allah has chosen Kinanah from the son of Isma'il, and He has chosen Quraysh from among Kinanah and He has chosen Hashim from among Quraysh and He has chosen me from the Bani Hashim.

Globalization, in many ways, could then be inferred to be exploitative, imperialist and neo-colonialist in orientation to vast number of Islamic societies through its indirect control over its economies and agro-techno systems. As captured by Ahmed (2007: 12): "Since the late twentieth century, the Muslim world has plunged into the age of globalization, which to many of its people resembles a new form of Western imperialism." Thus, "Islam is framed as the absolute opposite to 'Western values' and individuals who practice Islam as incapable of becoming 'enlightened' This reductive view on Islam ignores any historical change and the development of Islam in relation to modernity" (Ekman, 2015: 1994). The explosive relationship between Islam and secularism is such that:

In both theory and practice, Islam has been, is and will continue to be resistant to secularization. In other words, Islam is different. It is fundamentally different than other major religions ... Islam becomes a distinct political project. Islamism only makes sense in opposition to something else - that is, secularism. For the first time Muslims, and Islamists in

⁶ See "Sunan Abu Dawud 25:32". See also Sunan ibn Majah 13:60).

particular, feel the need to say, "We are different. We are affirming (or reaffirming) our Islamic identity." It becomes a very conscious political act (Hamid: 2016).

It is important to note explain to Islamism. It is described by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1998: 118) as:

The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.

The global society, then, could be argued to be the proselytization of Westernization and the domination of capitalism. Benjamin Barber's celebrated work 'Jihad vs. McWorld' (2005) makes the argument that the West is the source of globalization. Barber (2005:157) describes the Western civilization as the 'McWorld'—"...Westernization—that has gone on since the Renaissance birth of modern science and its accompanying paradigm of knowledge constructed as power." It is then not surprising that a vast majority of Muslims have sentiments of grievance against globalization and contest its vision of new international markets and new international boundaries. Francis Fukuyama (2001) tells us that "modernity has a cultural basis ... that makes Muslim societies particularly resistant to modernity." Therefore, it may be argued that modernity is conterminous to Islam. This perhaps explains the rationale of globalization being shrouded with complexities and being problematical to Muslims as it may be accompanied by the subjugation of Islamic culture by Western civilization. It then seems that the tables have been turned around—Islamic civilization (the Ottoman Empire), once had political and economic dominance over the West.

The important issue to be drawn out here is that Muslims desire to return to their Golden Era of enlightenment which occurred during the Abbasid Dynasty, an Arab Islamic Empire that ruled in the Middle East (750-1258). There is a strong desire to situate Islam in the domain of international grandeur it once relished. However, what is discernable is that God does not change the condition of a people until they are willing to change themselves.

Globalization ushers in Westernized education, technologies and educational systems which seek to situate the glories of Islamic culture to an imagined glorious past. The vast majority of orthodox Muslims are aware that Western education cannot be excluded from Westernized culture. Rejecting Western education will exclude other forms of educational systems and promote Western dominance over Islamic culture. For Islam to achieve its lost glory, it will need to find an alternative to the Westernized influence of globalization. In order to find its path to its lost splendor, the search does not lie in the quest for an imagined past with medieval constructions, and cannot be achieved by situating Islam as an inclusive religious community. It is to be found in the unity of all variants, brotherhoods, and dominations of Islam. More particularly, the quest for Islamic revival found in the desire of radical Islamic groups seeking a Caliphate has to be curtailed and destroyed by the Islamic leaders across the globe, in order for the *Ummah* to acquire a new awakening in international politics. Showcasing the weak unity of the *Ummah*, Western states are taking on the mantle of the responsibility to protect war-torn states where Muslims are a majority. A case in point is the Syrian crises—a vast majority of the refugees from this conflict migrated into Western societies rather than Islamic states that were economically buoyant. Given these premises, the *Ummah* could be argued to be connected to Westernized dependence without cognizance to its religious construction.

The sacred essence of the universality of the *Ummah* is found in the Quran. To Muslims, Islam will triumph over all religions for the reason that it is the Truth. The holy Quran 61:9 states that:

*He it is Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad SAW) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islamic Monotheism) to make it victorious over all (other) religions even though the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger Muhammed SAW) hate (it)...*⁷

The crux of this recitation reveals the spreading the ‘truth’ in the context of this extract is devoid of using forced conversion. Presumably, it also reveals that the process of globalization with its ensuing culture of pluralism undermines the unity and solidarity of the *Ummah*.

⁷ Mohsin Khan translation

However, on the other hand, it could be argued that the description of Islam, as being anti-globalized is, to say the least, quite misleading. There are a vast number of states where Islam is the religion of the majority. Furthermore, there are around 1.2 billion Muslims on Earth—Muslims are interconnected through the telephone and the Internet across the globe. This network structure has reinforced the tenacity of the *Ummah*. Therefore, to assume that these vast numbers of people are in opposition to globalization is distorting the picture of Islam as a religion. Another side of globalization is that it acts as social glue that allows Muslims living in different societies to understand the different constructions of Islam. What is understood here is that a universal Islamic tradition is non-existent. Globalization, in essence, has illustrated that there is an absence of the existence of a homogenous Islam.

The concept of a global society then in some ways is rejected by some Muslims, as it tends to sever ties to religious identities. However, on a deeper level, the rejection of globalization implies a rejection of modernity. The argument against globalization and its antecedent unification of cultures is found in the Quran: 49:13: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.”⁸ Globalization then tends to separate the individual from his/her religious identity. The essence of religion becomes detached from the construction of reality. Muslims who perceive that they belong to a global *Ummah* face a challenge when they are confronted with a non-homogeneous variant of Islam in Muslim states and Western societies. There are variants of Muslim societies and states—some of these states are autocratic, whilst others have utilized Sharia law. Furthermore, there are various brotherly strands of Islam—such as the Shiites and Sunnis who are antagonistic towards each other. Against this argument, Islam is dynamic and not universal, as it is constructed by socio-economic, cultural and political trajectories. Thus, Islam is a religion that has many faces as evidenced in the fact that Muslims partake in conflict with other Muslims than with non-Muslims at the international level.

It may be sufficient enough to assert that globalization has united the *Ummah* through the Internet, satellite communication and literature. Essentially, globalization challenges the ancient concepts of civilizations. Thus, Muslims living across the globe now have access to different variants

⁸ Sahih International translation

of Islam and a diversity of cultures. It could then be argued that globalization is a positive force for Islam. One recollects the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim."⁹ This then supports the quest for knowledge which is part of the essence of globalization.

The supposed monolithic identity, created on the basis of religion, of all Muslims in the world was the end product of the imposition of the stereotyped construction of Muslims by the West. The end product in question was brought by islamophobia—planted as a result of events such as the 9/11 attack, and more historically, the medieval crusades. For the West, the religion of Islam and its culture have become a metaphoric emblem of terrorism (Pollack, Detlef & Pickel Gert, 2007). Globalization has also illustrated that Islam is not a homogenous religion—it has never been monolithic. As Fattah (2013:289) explains: "Having several agendas and discourses is not that new to the complexity of the Muslim history. There has always been different *fiqhi madhabs* (jurisprudential schools), philosophical schools, Sufi orders, Shi'a formations, military rulers, and bureaucrats who have existed, and often contested, parallel to the caliphate institution."

Islam is not static, but dynamic, as Price (1999:24) points out that a distinguishing feature of Islam is that it is branded by an insufficiency in political agenda, in the sense that its laws were adopted by a society that existed over 1,000 years ago. Furthermore, globalization has shed light on Islamic jurisprudence which was previously in the domain of Imans and Islamic scholars. The Internet is a communicative tool has provided access to what was once not in the domain of all Muslims with respect to different cultures and Islamic practices all over the globe. For instance, Islam, as perceived and practiced in Indonesia, is different from what is practiced in Saudi Arabia. Friday is a non-working day in Saudi Arabia, but in Indonesia, Muslims goes back to work after Friday prayers. Furthermore, it may be argued that Islam is not in its entirety against globalization, this is given the fact that globalization has enabled Islam to become the fastest growing religion in the world. Globalization has assisted Islam in an enormous way by providing a context for the enduring regeneration of Islam, which has generated the expanse of Islam on a global dimension. The cumulative growth of knowledge, economic expansion and technological development has ushered the explosion of phenomenal evolution of globalization which has activated scientific and religious systems. Globalization has enabled

⁹ 220. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah.

Islam to find a breeding ground to proliferate to all corners of the globe. Swift changes in the globalized village ushers in a culture of diversity, therefore provoking religious temperance and acceptance of religious ideologies and inter-religious dialogue. Furthermore, the progression in communication such as TV channels, social media, interactive media, and websites have been used by Muslims to send messages of happiness, peace and submission to God all around the world. The defamation of the message and practice of Islam by Western media through the actions of radicals can be refuted by information—including that which refers to ‘what Islam is’ and ‘what it is not’ and interpretations of the Holy Quran. On the expanse of Islam, Pew Research notes that:

In the next half century or so, Christianity’s long reign as the world’s largest religion may come to an end, according to a just-released report that builds on Pew Research Center’s original population growth projections for religious groups. Indeed, Muslims will grow more than twice as fast as the overall world population between 2015 and 2060 and, in the second half of this century, will likely surpass Christians as the world’s largest religious group.¹⁰

Although high fertility rates amongst Muslims have been accountable for the high population growth of Muslims around the world, globalization promotes a borderless society and the emigration of Muslims to the four corners of the globe. However, what is crucial is that globalization may be seen as a two-pronged approach—it could be seen as a means to establish Islam as a precursor to global unity and peace and on the other hand, as a revival for radical Islam movements. It should also be recalled that Islam was the religion of dominance in the 8th and 15th centuries. It could, therefore, be an erroneous inference that Islam controverts globalization. Islam has played a critical role in contributing to globalization. History informs us that Muslims made impacts in sciences and mathematics, which started the renaissance period in the 14th century and kindled Western Europe’s to shift from the Middle Ages to the modern age. Another equally important point is that the world has always been revolving around being globalized in the sense that every period in history has an ‘age’. For

¹⁰ See Lipka, Michael and Hackett, Conrad April 6, 2017, ‘Why Muslims are the world’s fastest-growing religious group’, accessed at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/> <3rd December 2017>

instance, from 356 BC to 323 BC, Alexander the Great desired to expand boundaries from Greece to Egypt and brought Hellenistic civilization to the Mediterranean region. The Hellenistic period transpired in Mediterranean history after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, and 31 BC marked the beginning of the Roman Empire. It is important to note that the Roman Empire, which was in power for over 300 years, instilled Greek philosophy and Christianity into Europe. From 247 BC to 224 AD, Persia was governed by the Persian Empire and they supplanted the Roman Empire. The Arab conquest of Persia in 651 AD established that all Empires all sought to create a kingdom without borders. It then seems unsurprising that the Western world desires to plant Westernized culture throughout the world. Perhaps sometime in the near future our present period would be referred to as the ‘age of globalization’. The age of globalization has evolved into the digital/exponential age. The contention is that religion is always a regnant issue for all ages and civilizations at different periods of history. Globalization is a natural phenomenon, as it has existed since the existence of mankind—it evolves with the development of society. Globalization shows the involvement of the development of knowledge. It may then be argued that Islam is not against the effects of the ever-shrinking world, but it is against the impact of westernization on globalization—the domination of the West over Islam.

Globalization and Secularism: Old Wine in a New Bottle?

Secularism is an ideology that rejects religion as an important phenomenon in politics. In secularized societies, religion is disconnected from its construction of reality. Therefore, the concept of secularization is epitomized in most Westernized constitutions and ways of life. Lee & Ackerman (2002:5) notes that a secular society implies the “retreat of religion from all spheres of society.” In other parlance, secularization means “a decline of religion both in society and in the minds of individuals” (Berger 1999:2). Unlike non-Western states, especially where Muslims are the majority—religion is center stage in their society. Religion and politics are both systematically related in such societies (Levine, 1979). Secular or liberal views or lifestyle is a precursor to globalization. However, secularization has not procured the decline in religious authority in non-Western states where Muslims are the majority. Mark Chaves (1994:750) suggests “secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.” This suggests that secularization does not imply the rejection of religious authority in society,