

Macron Tries to Harden His Stance on an “Islam of France” (Part 2)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Turkish author of the *Hürriyet* article on President Macron, that I began to discuss in an article yesterday, continues:

Macron made his comments ahead of France’s municipal elections, and according to some international news outlets, the message was intended to elicit support from right-wing voters.

But if we are to put aside the electoral timing of the statement, let’s not forget that France is home to Europe’s largest Muslim community (estimated at around 6 million, or 8

percent of the population) and the issue of living in harmony is not going to go away.

Right-wing voters are unlikely to be mollified by the mild suggestions of Macron – to ban foreign imams, as well as teachers of language (Arabic, Turkish) and Islamic “culture” in order to promote a severing of links with the home countries of French Muslims, in order to better create that “Islam of France” he keeps talking about but never quite explains. He has expressed the hope that such moves will make Muslims more likely to accept and follow French customs, as handshaking between men and women, He expects that removing these “foreign” influences will make Muslim students more willing to accept female teachers, and Muslim patients more willing to accept female doctors. He remains, despite his outward self-assurance , still uncertain about Islam, and the degree and kind of threat it represents. He still thinks a “solution” can be found, but there hasn’t been a “solution” to Muslim aggression against non-Muslims discovered in the last 1,400 years. That is something he cannot allow himself to think about – it is too upsetting.

The important point is to what degree France’s approach to the issue is healthy and whether the strategy will pave the way to the desired outcome.

At 2,000, France has the largest contingent of foreign fighters in Syria. As far as I know, there are a handful of Turkish-origin, French citizens among them. The crime levels among Turkish communities in France are lower than those of other migrant communities.

That Muslims in France have supplied the greatest number of foreign fighters in Syria – I assume the author is referring to those fighting for the Islamic State – points to the severity of the problem of “radicalization” and “separatism” that Macron hopes to solve. “Radicalization” is discussed by

Macron as if it rests on a misinterpretation of Islam, but in truth, Muslims who have been “radicalized” are simply those who are prepared to put their beliefs into practice. All Muslims are taught to wage violent Jihad against the Infidels; most Muslims ignore this command; those who take it to heart, and act upon it, are the ones who join the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf, Al Shebaab, Boko Haram, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah, and many other groups and groupuscules. It’s not a different set of beliefs – it’s the same Qur’an – but a different way to translate those beliefs into practice.

Now that the Maghreb countries will stop sending teachers and imams, will this help get rid of the causes of their frustrations?

The “frustrations” the Turkish author of this piece is referring to are those of Muslims in France who are at the bottom of the economic ladder, who are often unemployed or engaged only in menial jobs. We are being asked to believe that it is economic deprivation that explains the “frustrations” of Muslims who, as a response, what to separate from the larger society, which they regard with hostility and hate, and some even resort to terrorism. This is a false diagnosis. Many Muslims in France are not “frustrated” by being unemployed; they are glad to remain on the generous dole of the French state. They are eager to receive all the benefits that a generous welfare state provides, and not have to do a lick of work to be eligible. They receive free or highly subsidized housing, free medical care far more advanced than anything that was available in their countries of origin, free education, unemployment benefits, family allowances, and more. Many of them appear in no hurry to find gainful employment. Why should they, when they can do so well, receive so much, when unemployed? How many Muslims in France are trying desperately to find work, and how many are finding that with the benefits they receive, they can supplement their

income with petty crime – burglaries, robberies, car-jacking and, especially, drug dealing – and do quite nicely.

The “frustration” of Muslims in France is prompted by the realization that Unbelievers still dominate, when by rights Muslims should be in charge. It is infuriating to have to observe French laws and customs, when it is the French who should be modifying their behavior to meet Muslim demands. Non-Muslims on top, Muslims on the bottom is simply not acceptable; such an order of things goes against the Qur’an, goes against Allah, goes against everything that Muslims are taught from an early age. One more time: the Qur’an insists that Muslims are the best of peoples and non-Muslims “the worst of created beings.” This topsy-turvy world of France, where the Unbelievers are in control over Believers! – they pass the laws, rule the roost, set the tone, lord it over Muslims – of course that is “frustrating” for Muslims.

Do the youngsters from African countries radicalize because of the preaching of imams or because of the same frustrations that push “native” French youth toward right-wing extremists, as argued by Professor Ayhan Kara? His research reveals that Muslims’ anger does not stem from their religious difference but from exactly the same reasons that anger other youngsters, such as economic difficulties, unemployment, the feeling of marginalization and the like.

It is unsurprising that Professor Ayhan Kara, a Muslim Turk, would insist that there is no real difference in the “frustration” of Muslim and non-Muslim youth. He wishes to minimize, or even dispense with altogether, the effect of Islamic teaching on the behavior and attitudes of Muslims. He wants us to believe that “Muslim anger” does not stem “from their religious difference” with the majority Unbelievers, but to economic difficulties.

This is the same specious argument we have heard ever since

9/11 – that poverty is the cause of Muslim terrorism. It won't wash. Osama bin Laden was the multi-millionaire son of a billionaire father. His second in command, Ayman Al Zawahiri, is a doctor, from one of the most prominent families in Egypt; his great-uncle was Azzam Pasha, the first, Secretary-General of the Arab League. Of the 19 terrorists who took part in the 9/11 attacks, 15 were well-heeled Saudis and two were well-heeled Emiratis. Of the remaining two, Ziad Jarrah came from a wealthy Sunni family in Lebanon, while Mohammad Atta came from a wealthy family in Egypt. None of the hijackers were economically deprived; all of them were from wealthy backgrounds. It was not economic frustration that motivated them, but the teachings to be found in the Islamic texts, Qur'an and Hadith. If they were "frustrated" it was only that they felt the American Infidels had to be put in their place. Many other terrorists, too, have turned out to be well-off. The underwear bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, was the son of a banker, one of the richest men in Nigeria. The Intel engineer "Mike" Hawash earned \$300,000 a year. Major Nidal Hasan had his entire medical education paid for by the U.S. military, and was earning \$90,000 a year which would triple once he left the service. Aafia Siddiqui had received scholarships from both Brandeis and MIT. She was an upper-middle-class Pakistani who, had she returned to Pakistan with two such prestigious degrees, would have been set for life.

In "[Ending the Myth of the Poor Terrorist](#)," Claude Berrebi and Owen Engel take note of studies by researchers in Europe and America, who have investigated the backgrounds of thousands of terrorists, and whose data shows that Muslim terrorists are, on average, "wealthier and better educated than the median level in their respective societies."

Berrebi and Engel continue: "But going back to Sept. 11, 2001, when 19 radical Islamic terrorists from al-Qaida hijacked four commuter planes and attacked the United States, a false consensus began to form among American politicians and experts

scrambling to confront this new threat, that linked terrorism to poverty, ignorance, and hopelessness. In 2002, President George W. Bush declared that America “fights against poverty because hope is an answer to terror.” His secretary of state, Gen. Colin Powell, agreed. “The root cause of terrorism does come from situations where there is poverty, where there is ignorance.” The Bush administration’s perceptions about terrorist roots was soon echoed by rival American politicians and around the world.” Indeed, Muslims are keen to spread the notion that “poverty” and “unemployment” are the cause of the “frustration” that leads some Muslims to terrorism. This claim has had two effects. The first is that it persuades some in Western countries that they should give ever more economic support to Muslims living in their countries and more foreign aid directly to Muslim countries, as a way to diminish the threat of Islamic terrorism. It brings in more money. Second, it gets Islam off the hook. Western attention turns away from studying the ideology of Islam, which is the real source of Muslim terrorism, to focus on economic distress.

It is obviously unacceptable for teachers and imams to teach and preach in a way that would fuel France’s fear of “separatism.” One hopes that France can provide clear evidence to that effect when it comes to teachers and imams sent from Turkey.

The difficulty arises from the challenge of defining what amounts to “separatism.” For Macron, for instance, “a man unwilling to shake the hand of a woman” is “separatism.” Even Muslims can agree or disagree with that conviction. At the end of the day, religion is a highly sensitive issue and there could be additional complexities when it becomes a matter of a bilateral agreement between countries.

It might be easier for France to impose an agreement on its former colonies, but it is still noteworthy that it has not reached an agreement with Turkey, the only secular country which is benefiting from the program Macron wants to end.

Turkey under Erdogan is no longer the “secular country” it once was. The imams and teachers that Turkey had been sending to France, and who will no longer be permitted to preach or teach or even come to France, are vetted by the Turkish government. That government, under Erdogan, has been steadily re-islamizing the country; it appears it is refusing to come to an agreement – “it [France] has not reached an agreement with Turkey.” But in the end the French can simply refuse to allow the Turkish clerics in, and also can expel those already in France. It is difficult to see how Erdogan can have his way, especially since the three Maghreb states – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – have submitted to Macron’s demand to stop sending their imams to France. Erdogan is only further antagonizing Macron and the French. What can he do, after all, to make Macron change his mind? He has already “weaponized” the Syrian refugees whom he has now let loose on Europe, but Greece and Bulgaria have reinforced their frontiers with Turkey to keep out those immigrants; that “weapon,” once unsheathed, cannot again be used to threaten.

Then again, maybe we should not be so surprised to see that there have been problems given that Turkey’s Religious Affairs authority, the Diyanet, has become one of the most controversial institutions in the country over the past few years. The Diyanet’s approach toward women, as well as its head’s statements, have also irked and sparked reaction from the secular segments in Turkey. Turkey and France might find it hard to reach an agreement on such a sensitive topic. But finding a common ground could be easier if Macron avoided instrumentalizing anti-Turkey sentiment for his personal political gain – and if Turkey were to avoid interpreting the strategy as an effort to assimilate Muslims.

Whatever criticism one has of Macron for his miscomprehension of the ideology of Islam, he has not been “instrumentalizing anti-Turkey sentiment” for “personal political gain.” Macron has objected to Turkey sending warships to intervene in Libya,

because he thinks all foreign powers should stay out of the country during its civil war. He sparred with Erdogan in 2019 at a NATO meeting over the definition of "terrorism," which is how Erdogan wanted the alliance to describe the activities of the Kurds in Syria. Erdogan was enraged when Macron met with Syrian Kurds. Macron has real differences with Erdogan over policy; he has soberly expressed those disagreements and not been whipping up "anti-Turkey sentiment" as this Turkish writer claims. In fact, it is Erdogan who for the last decade has been whipping up anti-European sentiment in Turkey, demanding admission into the E.U., and suggesting the country is being kept out because of anti-Islam bigotry.

Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become an enemy of the non-Muslim West, though he is not above calling on support for NATO in his current clashes in Idlib with Syrian and, very likely, Russian forces. Turkey has been one of the countries President Macron is worried about, for half of the "detached imams" who have been moving about Muslim communities in France have come from Turkey. And Erdogan is angry at Macron for a number of things. He was furious when Macron met with Syrian Kurds. He was angry when Macron criticized the sending of Turkish warships and mercenaries to help the Libyan government based in Tripoli withstand the assault by General Khalifa Haftar. He also suspects that France is one of the countries most intent in keeping Turkey out of the E.U., a suspicion that may well be true.

Erdogan is maddening in almost everything he says or does. His plan to create a pan-Islamic military force to destroy Israel, his foreseeing a war "between the crescent and the cross," his denunciation of Germans as "Nazis" and the Dutch as "Nazi remnants" because both Germany and the Netherlands refused to allow any electioneering by his party among the Turks living in both countries, his constant threat to "let loose" onto Europe millions of Syrian refugees, his berating the American government for refusing to extradite Fethulleh Gulen, his

imprisonment on trumped-up charges of Pastor Andrew Brunson, in a transparent attempt to trade him for Gulen (the attempt failed, and he eventually had to let Brunson go), his flouting of the United States and NATO in agreeing to buy the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, his attempt to inveigle NATO into backing him militarily in Idlib. Province, even though NATO is an alliance to defend fellow members when they have been victims of aggression, and it is Turkey that in this case is the aggressor, by sending thousands of its troops to invade northern Syria, and much – all this rightly infuriates the West.

But Macron, for very different reasons from those that make Erdogan so disliked throughout Europe, also leaves much to be desired. Suave, well-educated at all the right “grandes ecoles,” an investment banker before entering politics, Macron symbolizes the failure of the political and media elites in Europe to confront head-on the dangers posed by millions of Muslims now living in their midst. His plan to ban foreign imams is a feeble response, though some reporters have hailed the measure as demonstrating his willingness to take on the “Islamists.” It is actually the bare minimum he could have done. Worse still, it makes people think that something important and useful is being done when it is not. His confused attempt to create an “Islam of France” – something he has been talking about for several years – in reality will solve nothing. There is no such thing as an “Islam for France” that is different from an “Islam for Turkey” or an “Islam for Algeria” or an “Islam for Somalia.” Islam, normative Islam, the texts and teachings of Islam, do not vary. What varies is the degree to which Believers are ready to act on those texts and teachings. Those who belong to Al Qaeda, or Hamas, or Boko Haram or Abu Sayyaf, do not read a different Qur’an from that read by millions of peaceful Muslims; the difference is that the terrorists and their supporters take what they read to heart and behave accordingly. Some Muslims are willing to engage in terrorism, just as the Qur’an commands when it tells

Believers to “strike terror in the hearts” of Unbelievers. Others may not take part in terrorism, but nonetheless support, financially, politically, and in other ways, those who do engage in that terrorism. Still others do not approve of terrorism, having convinced themselves, despite all the textual evidence to the contrary, that it is not required of Believers. What does vary is the desire of Muslims not just to believe in Islam, but to put its commands into practice. The Muslim who wants to engage in terrorism is a True Believer, more committed to the cause; he does not embrace some kind of strange interpretation of the faith.

Here are some of the Qur’anic verses that Macron, and every Western leader facing the same problems, should read and reread, and make sure that the public for its own safety reads these verses too:

“And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from where they drove you out; persecution is worse than slaughter. But fight them not by the Holy Mosque until they should fight you there; then, if they fight you, kill them – such is the recompense of unbelievers, but if they give over, surely Allah is all-forgiving, all-compassionate. Fight them until there is no persecution and the religion is Allah’s; then if they give over, there shall be no enmity save for evildoers.” (Qur’an 2:191-193)– “We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve for what they have associated with Allah of which He had not sent down authority. And their refuge will be the Fire, and wretched is the residence of the wrongdoers.” (Qur’an 3:151)

– “They wish that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, and then you would be equal; therefore do not take friends from among them, until they emigrate in the way of Allah; then, if they turn their backs, seize them and kill them wherever you find them; do not take for yourselves any one of them as friend or helper.” (Qur’an 4:89)

– “This is the recompense of those who fight against Allah and His Messenger, and hasten about the earth to do corruption there: they shall be killed, or crucified, or their hands and feet shall be struck off on opposite sides; or they shall be exiled from the land. That is a degradation for them in this world; and in the world to come awaits them a mighty chastisement.” (Qur’an 5:33)

– “When your Lord was revealing to the angels, ‘I am with you; so confirm the believers. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers; so strike the necks, and strike every finger of them!’” (Qur’an 8:12)

– “Fight them, till there is no persecution and religion is all for Allah; then if they give over, surely Allah sees the things they do.” (Qur’an 8:39)

– “Make ready for them whatever force and strings of horses you can, to strike terror into the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides them that you know not; Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah shall be repaid you in full; you will not be wronged.” (Qur’an 8:60)

– “Then, when the sacred months are over, kill the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; Allah is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.” (Qur’an 9:5)

– “Fight those who believe not in Allah and the Last Day and do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, and do not practice the religion of truth, even if they are of the People of the Book – until they pay the jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.” (Qur’an 9:29)

– “Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their possessions against the gift of Paradise; they fight in the way of Allah; they kill, and are killed; that is a promise

binding upon Allah in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur'an; and who fulfills his covenant truer than Allah? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him; that is the mighty triumph." (Qur'an 9:111)

– "O believers, fight the unbelievers who are near to you; and let them find in you a harshness; and know that Allah is with the godfearing." (Qur'an 9:123)

– "So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of your deeds." (Qur'an 47:35)

– "When you meet the unbelievers, strike their necks, then, when you have made wide slaughter among them, tie fast the bonds; then set them free, either by grace or ransom, till the war lays down its loads." (Qur'an 47:4)

Macron recognizes that there is a problem with Islam – a recognition which is to be welcomed – but his prescription leaves much to be desired. The notion that Muslim "separatism" can be overcome by prohibiting foreign imams from coming to preach and teach in France is wrong. After all, only 300 imams arrive from abroad, while there are already many thousands of imams, "French" imams, working in France. The "separatism" most French Muslims try to practice can be explained not by the "foreignness" of some imams whom Macron now propose to ban, but in the Qur'an which Macron never – not once – has ever cited in all of his discussions about Islam.

As long as Muslims continue to read in the Qur'an that they should not take Christians or Jews as friends, "for they are friends only with each other," as long as they read that non-Muslims are "the most vile of created beings," while they, the Muslims, are "the best of peoples," as long as they read the more than 100 verses commanding them to take part in violent Jihad, they will refuse to integrate into the societies of the Infidels.

Macron should now openly and intrepidly discuss the Qur'anic verses I have mentioned. He should quote them verbatim, let the French know what is in the Qur'an, in order to be properly informed about the danger of Islam. And let the Muslims in France know that they will no longer get away with hiding what is in the Qur'an, but will have to explain what they intend to do about such passages. This will infuriate many of them. That's too bad. The French political and media elite have for years been afraid to tackle the most important domestic subject: what is in the immutable Qur'an that explains the hostile behavior of Muslims toward Unbelievers today, as for the last 1,400 years. The French people deserve to know.

Macron could give an address to the country in which he would ask the questions that most need to be asked, unapologetically:

What should we think, in France, when we learn that Muslims are told, in Qur'an 3:110, that they are the "best of peoples"? What should we think when, in Qur'an 98:6, non-Muslims are described as "the most vile of created beings"? Tell us, please, those in the Muslim community, how you think we should understand these crystal clear verses? Is there really nothing here for us to worry about? Do these verses have no effect on the six million Muslims in France? Or the tens of millions in Europe? Or the 1.5 billion Muslims all over the world?

And how should we react to that verse in Qur'an (3:151) which tells Muslims "not to take Christians or Jews as friends, for they are friends only with each other"? I admit that it worries me Am I wrong to be worried? What do you think?

But those are only part of what we need to discuss. We want to know if we are supposed to ignore those verses – more than 100 of them! – that tell Muslims to fight, to kill, to smite the necks of, to strike terror in the hearts of, Infidels. Tell us what we should make of all these verses, such as 2:191- 194,

3:110, 3:151, 4:89, 5:33, 5:51,8:12, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4, 98:6? I hope everyone listening tonight will find those verses – they can all be found online – and ponder their significance. We cannot continue as before, pretending these verses do not exist or that they do not mean what they so clearly do.

And it is not just the Qur'an that needs to be examined. The hadith – those collections of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad – should not be overlooked. Muhammad says in one of them that “war is deceit,” and in another that “I have been made victorious through terror.” How should the French people understand these two hadith? What can Muslims do to relieve our fears?

We all know there is a serious problem and it goes far beyond “separatism.” It is not only here, in France. It is in Great Britain, in Belgium, in the Netherlands, in Italy, in Germany, in Denmark, in Sweden, in Norway, everywhere that in the last two decades has seen an unprecedented influx of Muslim migrants. We need to discuss what this has meant, without apologies on one side, and apologetics on the other. I have a duty as President to both protect and instruct the people of France. I realize that in speaking tonight, I have not been delicate and tactful. I have chosen instead to be indelicate and truthful.

That should shake things up. And France, and the Western world, need – when it comes to the subject of Islam – to shake things up.

First published in *Jihad Watch* [here](#).