

The Perils of NonViolent Islamism

Reviewed by Phyllis Chesler at [*The Perils of NonViolent Islamism*](#), her fourth book in English, the University of Zurich [author](#), activist, and consultant offers a warning to the West.

In Manea's view, "nonviolent Islamism," is the basic building block that leads to violent jihad. And our misreading of that reality can lead to real harm.

If we continue "cancelling" politically incorrect ideas and speech, continue "vilifying dissent," and "insisting upon the infinite guilt of the West" then, as Russell A. Berman writes in the foreword to this work, "we should expect the real-world consequences of this ideology soon to become clearer and rougher." Manea believes that repressing dissent can easily turn into repressive practices. "Cancel culture" may indeed be our "Islamism."

Nonviolent Islamism's insidious nature is one of Manea's most important points. Westerners have been hopelessly gullible in their choice of "smiling and patient" Saudi-funded Muslim Brotherhood/Salafi representatives as their go-to experts on both Islam and Muslims.

"One cannot combat an ideology and fundamentalism by working with the very groups that promote that ideology," she writes. Further, Western cultural relativism and doctrines of "multiculturalism" has served us and freedom-loving Muslims very, very poorly.

This battle, she writes, is "*the* global challenge of the 21st century."

Both hardcore and softcore Islamism must be "challenged and

confronted ... we need to dismantle the structures and the system that spread(s) this ideology and its radicalized form of Islam.” That means we must adopt significant changes in Islamic schools, mosques, youth groups, and camps; we must retrain paid imams who work in the prison system.

“Not only do we need to fight criminal organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. We must also deal with the nonviolent form of Islamism: the ideology and its fundamentalist reading of Islam... security measures... alone are futile. They do not solve the problem. They do not tackle its roots or structure.”

Manea insists that Western governments must “fight them as you fight your own fundamentalists, fascists, and racist groups.”

Following in Investigative Project on Terrorism Executive Director Steve Emerson’s [faced execution](#) and spent five years in prison for “blasphemy” for challenging the Quranic basis for slavery, a practice which remains legal in Mauritania. Only an international campaign may have stopped his execution.

Black African [held captive](#) by ethnic Arab Muslims in Mauritania, Sudan, Libya and Algeria, by Boko Haram in Nigeria. ISIS enslaved Yazidi girls and women, and held slave auctions when they controlled territory in Iraq.

Ironically, according to Manea, Muslim scholars are blaming Islamic texts and fundamentalist Muslim indoctrination and practices for jihad even as Westerners are berating and blaming themselves for colonialism and white racism as having led to violent jihad. Such Westerners do not understand that Muslim leaders in countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia also perpetrated these practices as well as practiced both religious and gender apartheid.

Manea is now adding her voice to those of us, like Ibn Warraq, Bat Ye’or, Zeyno Baran and Douglas Murray, who have been challenging Islamism for years only to be ignored or defamed as “racist Islamophobes.”

Most of these voices are either apostates, converts, secular Muslims, or they are Jews or Christians. Although Manea happily quotes atheists Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, what makes her unique is that, like [Seyran Ates](#), Manea is not a secularist. She is holding onto the possibility that Islam as a religion can and must be reformed. In her view, the way to do so is to follow the “peaceful” Meccan verses of the Quran, and re-interpret or pay no mind to the “war-like” Medinan verses.

Manea personally remembers a far more tolerant Muslim society in Morocco, Egypt, and Yemen, one in which women were not veiled or segregated. She writes about a diversity among Muslims, both in her lifetime and in times gone by, which she misses and longs to see again.

Manea adds to the conversation by giving us recent examples of how and why certain European governments have courted “the Muslim (Islamist) vote”: In the 1960s, Belgium’s king needed cheap oil, and in return, allowed for Saudi-funded mosque-building and imam-training. Sweden’s Social Democrats lost elections, and their way back to power relied on a Muslim voting bloc, especially immigrants, in exchange for protecting a segregated life—and in the name of “multicultural progress.”

Manea, who has written about [Secular Islam Summit](#) in St. Petersburg, Fla. It was organized by Austin Dacey and Ibn Warraq; I had the honor of chairing the opening panel with participant [Ayaan Hirsi Ali](#) endorsed [reformation](#).” She wanted to abolish sharia law and “repudiate and nullify” certain precepts entirely. Hirsi Ali accepted the fact that most Muslims will not leave Islam entirely and that women’s rights, minority rights, and the separation of religion and state may only come about through a *religious* reformation.

Manea suggests that the more peaceful, less hateful Meccan sura be relied upon for such a reformation; the later more hostile and hateful Medinan sura must themselves be abrogated

or re-interpreted.

I asked my good friend and comrade-in-arms, Ibn Warraq, what he thinks about dividing the Quran in half and keeping only the “peaceful” Meccan sura, as Manea suggests. “I do not accept the Islamic version of events and cannot take this suggestion seriously,” he said. “There is no such thing as the Meccan vs the Medinan sura.”

I am a religious Jew, albeit a very imperfect one. I would not want to be totally parted from a religious life, socially, ritually, but more important, intellectually. I would like to see someone like Ibn Warraq and Hirsi Ali working together with Manea to fight what Manea has, correctly, called “the greatest battle of the 21st century.”

Manea has written a moving and persuasive book. It is also a brave and informative work, one which deserves a serious readership.