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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITOLO:** A Liberation Theology Approach to Jihad

**PROPONENTE/I:** - Marco Demichelis

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**ABSTRACT:**

The “Empire” hegemonic visio as XIX century European Colonialism have imposed to the world their political and cultural understanding of State Nationalism and Religious homogeneity (*Cuius Regio eius Religio*). This twofold process emphasized the corresponding “Religious Nationalism” narrative that from the ‘60s started to impact in the Middle East regional area, Israel, Turkey and Iran included, continuing in the ‘90s with the “Clash of Civilization” theory.

The main instrumental action to reach this result has been “religious violence” or better the Globalization/internalisation of Islamic Jihad, assuming it as an exclusivist and defensive/offensive agenda, both in the last part of the Cold War than after it, as a factor of fragmentation and control on Middle Eastern countries.

However, contrarily to propagandist and falsely democratic narratives, the Empire hegemonic actions have not only been the instigator of this situation, but the real contributor of the same through different actors.

This panel would like to implement the analysis to shape a theoretical as practical “Liberation” from “Jihadism” as an artificial – fabricate outcome starting from the “deconstruction” of his anti-Hegemonic narrative. The fight as the resistance to the Empire through its same methodology is not only impracticable but hopeless; western manipulation of Jihad concept and the necessary rereading of it, is part of this narrative. What does resistance to Eurocentrism and North American Empire look like in today’s world, and does it differ from struggles for liberation? Even if we cannot unify practices of resistance, can a Liberation Theology approach still offer a loose concept of resistance and liberation? And finally, is liberation from Eurocentrism and Imperialism possible while still embedded within the hegemonic colonial framework (an episteme that falsely presents itself as the human universal)?

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I:**

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## 1. Jihadism au rebours: from anti-Hegemonic interpretation to its contrary

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**Marco Demichelis** (Torino, 1979) is Marie Curie Fellow (IF, 2016) in Islamic Studies and History of Middle East within the ICS at the University of Navarra and Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg (SA).

According to its colonial project, Europe imposed a political and cultural understanding of State Nationalism and religious homogeneity (*Cuius regio eius religio*) on the world during the nineteenth - twentieth centuries .

On this twofold process emerged from the last '60s an increasing "Religious Nationalism" narrative within the Arab world, but also Israel, Turkey and Iran through which a Supremacist religious discourse internally came out. Neo- Wahhabite Islam and Orthodox Judaism as well as the "Clash of Civilization" theory were politically backed becoming the frontrunner of a new Global conflicting target.

The main instrumental action to this new ideological content has been the rise of "religious violence" – or better the globalization/internalisation of "Islamic Global Jihad" – assuming it as an exclusivist and defensive/offensive agenda, both during the last part of the Cold War in Afghanistan and after it, with the deflagration of the Balkans, as a huge factor of fragmentation and control on the Arab-Islamic countries.

However, contrary to propagandistic narratives, the hegemonic actions of Empire have not only been the troublemaker of this situation, but also the real contributor of the same through different actors (Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran).

This paper will critically analyse the Western manipulation of the Jihad concept and implement a theoretical and practical understanding of "Liberation" and "Jihadism" as an artificial or fabricated outcome within the colonial discursive framework, starting with a "deconstruction" of this anti-hegemonic narrative. The anti-colonial discursive framework of resistance to Empire adopts the same colonial methodology, using violence and sectarianization. This situation is not only impracticable but hopeless.

This paper will argue also that it is necessary to re-consider the Jihad concept as part of an anti-hegemonic discourse based on Liberation Theology, Arab-Islamic Consciousness and inter-religious inclusivism.

## 2. NAVIGATING THE HIGH TIDE OF THE 'LESSER JIHAD' TO THE 'GREATER JIHAD': THE IMPERIAL VIOLENCE UPON ISLAMICATE DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

**Junaid S. Ahmad**

### **ABSTRACT:**

A post-9/11 narrative that conceived of 'jihadi Islam' as the bane of human existence rested upon several unwarranted, hegemonic assumptions. The claims made by Western intelligentsia and their comprador counterparts in the Islamicate world, by pundits and the media, fundamentally relied upon a superficial and selective understanding of the concept 'jihad' in the spiritual and political imaginary of a Muslim. The deployment of a 'flavor-of-the-month' Islam comes from a Eurocentric epistemic lens that engenders an 'incitement to discourse' (Massad) of either a 'jihadi Muslim' or a 'moderate Muslim,' a 'bad Muslim' or a 'good Muslim' (Mamdani). This paper provides a contemporary socio-political genealogy of the framework of comprehending jihad and armed resistance. In particular, we map the coordinates of 'expansion' and 'contraction' (Soroush) in the realm of the political jihad. The larger paradigm of engaging the centrality of jihadi and resistance discourse is intimately anchored to a project of transformation, emancipation, and liberation. The paper evaluates how counter-hegemonic notions of jihad have very little to do with the extent of armed force enacted by its practitioners, but by its substantive and affective 'revolutionary' appeal. Liberation theology in resisting the empire (Dabashi), in the Islamicate world, highlights the figures of Malcolm X, Ali Shariati, and Hassan Nasrallah as central to a project of toward greater sovereignty and social justice in Islamicate lands. The paper contextualizes these processes in the 'Muslim world' by situating them within both shifting geopolitics of the world order, as well as the deepening of processes of decolonization.

### **ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Junaid S. Ahmad** is Secretary-General of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST-Kuala Lumpur); a PhD candidate in De-colonial Thought at the School of Sociology, University of Leeds; a fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA-Istanbul); and the Director of the Center for Global Studies at the School of Advanced Studies, University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore, Pakistan.

### 3. *Jihad for the liberation of Palestine: Hamas' discourse on resistance*

PAMELA MURGIA

#### ABSTRACT:

Hamas (acronym for *ḥarakat muqāwama al-islāmiyya*, “movimento di resistenza islamico”) is the Palestinian political party which, at present, controls the Gaza Strip. The movement was founded during the first intifada by members of the Gazan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Although the movement has been misrepresented as a supporter of global jihad in mediatic narration, it has always claimed its goal was the liberation of Palestine, calling itself a “nationalist Islamic movement” to underscore the local nature of its resistance and the absence of global jihad aspirations.

In this context, jihad is represented as an instrument of resistance towards Israel and its allies, and can take many forms: armed struggle, strikes, boycott, demonstrations.

However, since its foundation, the movement underwent significant changes in its political action and thought, which are reflected in its discourse. The Islamic paradigm which characterised earlier *bayānāt*, the official statements, was gradually dismantled in favour of a discourse where the concept of *muqāwama*, “resistance” with no religious connotation, was predominant.

The present work aims at showing how Hamas represents jihad in its discourse, and explain how this representation changed by the means of socio-political context, political events, relationship with external actors. The analysis has been conducted by combining different methodologies concerning Discourse Studies theoretical framework, in order to make explicit the relation between ideology, society and discourse. It also proposes a research approach that overcome the exceptionality usually attributed to Islamic and jihadi movements, in favour of the adoption of more comprehensive fields of studies such as Social Movements theory and Political discourse studies.

#### ACADEMIC PROFILE:

- PhD candidate at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), in joint supervision with University of Cagliari
- Teaching assistant in Arabic language and literature at the University of Cagliari
- Research assistant (2015-2018) at University of Cagliari
- Research interests: Palestine, discourse analysis, political discourse, identity, political Islam

#### 4. Parissa Oskorouchi

**TITLE OF THE PAPER: ANARCHIZING ISLAM AND DECOLONIZING ANARCHISM: A DIALOGUE WITH MOHAMED JEAN VENEUSE AND ABDENNUR PRADO.**

*The aim of this paper is to investigate a new methodology of resistance as presented by Islamic anarchism, through the ideas of two contemporary Muslim anarchists keen on the development of Islamic revolutionary subjectivities: Mohamed Jean Veneuse and Abdennur Prado.*

*Islamic anarchism introduces itself as a theology of liberation, completely disembedded from the framework of the hegemonic narrative, with the objective to give form to a new self-representation of the Muslim identity. On one hand, it proposes a path of self-liberation from dominant orientalist misunderstandings of Islam; on the other, it encourages a libertarian ethic of universal freedom, social justice and anti-authoritarianism through religious theology.*

*The two authors offer an anarchist exegesis (what Veneuse defines as «anarca-ijtihād») of the two main sacred religious texts, the Koran and the Hadīth, by finding structural homologies between Islamic and anarchist principles (such as; Tawhīd, zakāt, ijmā etc.). The result of their thought comes as a sort of secularization of the sacred and sacralization of the profane, through which it is possible to construct a mature and trans-cultural anarchist commitment. A cultural symbiosis centered on the need to decolonize the concept of anarchism itself, through the understanding that libertarian and anti-authoritarian principles can be found in every culture outside the Eurocentric framework within which anarchism developed. It represents a move toward the difficult task of unifying the struggle for liberation, and although it is only theoretical, it constitutes a deeply challenging reflection of political Islam.*

**ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Parissa Oskorouchi is a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Turin and Florence, interested in the study of Islamic Theology of Liberation in the thought of Farid Esack and Asghar Ali Engineer. She graduated in International Sciences at the University of Turin (April 2018), presenting a final dissertation on the "elective affinities" between Islam and anarchism.