A Brief Historical Discourse of the concept of Islamism

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Abstract – **Who is an Islamist or what is Islamism. The term 'Islamism' is often used to describe a wide range of actors who are either conservative Muslims that reject in totality Western values, practice some radical form of Islam, advocates violent extremism or are even terrorists. This paper clarified the meaning of the term Islamism. The significance of this clarification is that the right actor need to be captured and described as Islamist. This will also ensure that the right messages are received by the public.**

Keywords – **Islam, Islamism, Islamic, Fundamentalist.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The concern of this paper is simply to clarify the term "Islamism" often used to describe a wide range of actors who are either conservative Muslims that reject in totality Western values, practice some radical form of Islam, advocates violent extremism or are even terrorists. While Islam as a religious faith is literally believed to mean 'peace' and the total submission to the will of Allah, Islamism on the other hand is considered to be some form of radical Islam that advocates violence. Many scholars like Bassam Tibi described it as a politicized form of Islam[1] while others especially among Western scholars perceive it as terrorism[2]. The varying interpretation of the concept of Islamism often creates room for misrepresentation of Islam to the public and by extension encourages stereotyping of Muslims. Such attitudes towards a group of people that make up about 26 per cent of global population could be a bane to the achievement of international peace and security.[3]

With a mindset that Islamism entails Muslims who are terrorist, we risk the temptation of profiling every Muslim a terrorist. We should be able to differentiate between a Muslim activist like the American Imam Mujahid Abdul-Karim and or Abubakar Shekau a member and leader of Boko Haram.[4] What is obtainable in most literature is that these individuals are labelled Islamists which consequently creates the impression that all Muslims are terrorists or all Muslims have tendencies of becoming terrorist. Hence the pertinent question this paper seeks to clarify: who then is an Islamist? Or what is Islamism all about? Clarification of this concept becomes imperative in order to ensure that the right actor is captured when describing an Islamist and also the right messages are received by the public. This has become expedient given that the current notion of "Islamism" or "Islamist" as it is being portrayed in the media seems misleading. The purpose of this paper therefore is clarify the concept of Islamism by attempting an historical analysis that would lead to a concise understanding and a consensus in the meaning of the term.

II. EVOLUTION OF THE TERM ISLAMISM

The term Islamism has been evolving since the 17th century when it was first used by scholars like Voltire, Alexis de Tocqueville[5], Caussin de Perceral, Comte de Gobineau[6], French poet Alphonse de Lamartine[7] and Ernest Renan among others. The context in which these scholars used the term 'Islamism' was to highlight the religion professed and taught by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).[8] Gobineau specifically considers Islamism as a camouflaged mixture of religions prior to Islam. Renan used the term as a parallel to Christianism (the equivalent of Christianity in English). The 19th century Western scholars like Max Weber (1864-1920), Claude Cahen (1909-1991), William Montgomery Watt (1909-2006) did not strictly use the world "Islamism" in most of their works to describe Islam in any form.[9] The contemporary scholars that followed like Samuel Huntington, Francis Fukuyama among others used radical Islam to describe political Islamic movements.

During the colonial era, the term evolved into some form of resistance movement against certain cultures that are antithetical to Islamic values. For instance, in India, during the colonial era, the Muslims launched a resistance movement as a response to colonial conditions and the multi-layered deprivations of the Muslims in the Indian society. It started with the formation of the All India Muslim League (AIML) set up to promote the political rights of the Indian Muslims in the given context of British rule, Hindu majority and multifaceted backwardness/deprivations. The deep-rooted cultural, political and religious tensions between Hindus and the Muslims, and a

1 Bassam Tibi, Ballot and Bullet the politicization of Islam to Islamism, (Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalization (CIR), Department of Political Science Aarhus University, Denmark November 2009. https://pure.au.dk/ws/files/32769584/H_fte_5_Tibi.pdf, accessed 31 July 2018.

2 Richard Wike and Brian J. Grim, "Western Views toward Muslims: Evidence from a 2006 Cross-National Survey", International Journal of Public Opinion Research Vol. 22 No. 1, 2010.

3 Houssain Kettani, World Muslim Population: 1950 – 2020", International Journal of Environmental Science and Development IJESD) Vol. 1, No. 2, June 2010. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7c2b/9fea1298362898bb577f06c42f8a12a30e77.pdf, accessed 31 July 2018.

4 Mehdi Mozaffari, "What is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept", Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, Vol. 8, No. 1, 17–33, March 2007.

5 Alan S Khan, "Tocqueville, Islam, and Democracy", internet accessed, http://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu/colloquia/materials/papers/Kahan_Tocqueville%20and%20Islam.pd

6 Geoffery Nash (ed), trans. Daniel o' Donoghue, Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

7 Quoted by Claudine Grossir, *l'islam des Romantiques, 1811-1840* (Paris: Maisonneuve et larose, 1984), p. 157.

8 Martin Kramer, "Coming to terms: fundamentalists or Islamists?", Middle East Quarterly, Vol.10, No 2, Spring 2003,

9 Medhi Mozaffara, "what is Islamism? History and definition of a Concept", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions,* Vol. 8, No. 1, 17–33, March 2007.

number of constitutional developments over time pushed AIML leadership to seek a radical shift in its basic objectives. That is, a departure from the idea of a united India to one of Muslim independence.

Mohdi noted that the outbreak of Islamic revolution under the leadership of Ayattolah Khomeini, a Shi'ite Muslim who preached political Islam and established the first Islamic government in the world popularized the word Islamism. It was after the revolution that words like Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic revival, became common in media reportage indicating that a new version of Islam was emerging. Moszayyan argued that the revolution produced a wake-up call throughout the Muslim world and led to widespread Islamic resurgence.[10] Muslims began to struggle to retain some Islamic public character such as use of Islamic greetings (*assalamliakum*) and adopting Islamic dressing such as the hijab for women.[11] Commentaries from the West began to refer to the revolutionary action as both Islamism and radical Islam.[12] Ibrahim El Houdaiby[13] and Khaled Al-Hashimi believe that the revolution influenced contemporary radical political movements in Syria, Libya, and Tunisia. Current contextual meaning as depicted by most Western scholars like Oliver Roy, Gilles Kepel Malise Ruthven among others see Islamism as a political movement geared towards establishing an Islamic state.[14] The thinking here therefore is that a group like Hamas is an Islamist group. However, Nasr Emam posits that Hamas cannot be categorized as an Islamic organization but a product of Israeli aggression against Palestine. Disagreeing with Emam, Robert Spencer argues that Islam is inherently designed to be violent citing the Hijra as the true beginning of Islamism.

Obviously, the debate is still ongoing in Europe and America where stakeholders (Muslims, Christians, Atheist, Gays, Human Rights Activists among others) are constantly engaged with one another trying to define an Islamist. Most Western Scholars have concluded that Islamism is a political Islamic movement that seeks to establish an Islamic state across the world. This is in line with the question Radhan asked in his paper titled "Muslims against the Islamic State: Arab critiques and supporters of Ali Abdarrariq's Islamic Laicism". He said, "Does a Muslim, in order to be a good Muslim, have to advocate an "Islamic state?" Answering the foregoing question is imperative given the activities of ISIS and Boko Haram that claim to advocate for an Islamic caliphate. The gruesome activities of these groups which they believe is *Jihad* as provided in the Qur'an tend to further confirm the general speculation that Islamism is synonymous with terrorism. However, this notion has been rejected by Ajmal Masroor and some other Islamic scholars who feel that the selective interpretation of the legal theory of the Qur'an and the Hadith by these groups is questionable given the provision of the Qur'an "… *what, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part*?..." (Al-Baqarah, 2:85); "… *they pervert words from their context; and they have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded of* …" (Al-Maidah, 5: 13); "… *those who have reduced the Recitation, to parts*" (Al-Hijr, 15: 91). Therefore it is not logical to use the interpretation of a few to generalize for Islam. The reason behind this is that everything in the Qur'an is the Truth, and everything in authentic Hadith is divinely inspired, so it is not permissible to ignore any part of it and claim to be carrying out *Jihad*. .

The term Islamism is a controversial social construct with varying definitions that have evolved over time.[15] There is no consensus as to who an Islamist is or what Islamism represents suggesting that Islamism normative framework have not been properly analyzed in detail. Most Western scholars, commentators and policy makers consider Islamism as a Muslim agenda to conquer the world or enforce its way of life, hence the political attributes often given to the term.[16] Daniel Pipes in an interview with *history news network* described Islamism as a modern movement that shares much with fascism and communism.[17] These perception have been highly advocated in the Western media and unfortunately, it served as the main platform for spreading Islamophobia in the West. Huntington succinctly described it as clash of civilization attributed to the deep cultural differences between various civilizations that will inevitably lead to conflict.[18]

Dowd defined Islamism as the proactive promotion or enforcement of Islamic ideologies, laws, policies or customs.[19] This definition seem to suffice given the narrative of some Muslim movements like al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shaabab, ISIS[20], and other dissidents that have in recent times attacked different climes like Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Iraq, Turkey, the USA, France and

[10] Mozayyan M, "Glory in Defeat and other Islamist Ideologies", in (ed) Jeffrey H Norwitz, P*irate, Terrorists and Warlords, the History, Influence and Future of Armed Groups around the World*, (New York: Akyhouse Publishing, 2009), p.246.

[11] Harvey a, Sullivan I, and Groves R, "A Clash of Systems: An Analytical Framework to Demystify the Radical Islamist Threat", *Parameter*, Autumn, 2005.

[12] Fethi Mansouri and Ahahram Akbarzadeh, Islamism and Political Violence in the New World Order, in F Mansouri and S Akbarzadeh (eds), *Political Islam and Human Security*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), p.3.

[13] Ibrahim El Houdaiby, "Trends in political Islam in Egypt", Michael Emerson, Kristina Kausch et al, ISlamist radicalization: the challenge for Euro-Mediterranean Elations, (Publication of the Centre for European Policy Studies, 2006) [14]

[15] Ihsan Yilmaz, "Beyond Post-Islamism: Transformation of Turkish Islamism toward 'Civil Islam' and Its Potential Influence in the Muslim World", European Journal of Economic and Political Studies 4(1), 2011, p.247.

[16] William E. Shepard, "Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology", *International Journal of Middle East* **19/3** (August 1987), pp.307.

[17] *History News Network* interview with Daniel Pipes, explaining what is wrong with Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations argument, internet accessed, 30 August 2016, historynewsnetwork.org/article/163509

[18] Samuel Huntington, ***The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), p.217.

[19] Caitriona Dowd, "Islamist Militias and Rebel Groups across Africa", Armed Conflict Location and Dataset, August 2012

[20] John L Esposito, "The Origin of ISIS Conflict", **Oxford Islamic Studies online**, accessed 23 August 2016, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/focus/essay1009_isis_origins.html

Belgium claiming to be advancing the course of Islam. These group of people are referred to as Islamists. The narratives of some of these groups as serious as it may seem, ought not to be taken as a religious obligation or a total representation of Islam as God in Islam have proclaimed Himself as mercy. He stated in the Qur'an, "…***Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy***…." (Al-An'am, 6:54). God also states that His mercy encompasses all things: "…***My mercy embraces all things***…" (Al-A'raf, 7: 156). In an authentic Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said 'When God created Creation, He wrote in place above His throne, with Himself "Truly, My mercy is greater than My wrath[21]". Accordingly, it is forbidden to equate 'the sword-and thus wrath and severity-with 'mercy'.

III. DERIVING A CONSENSUAL MEANING OF ISLAMISM

The ideology of Islam has deep epistemological and historical roots in the Qur'an and the *Hadith*.[22] Therefore we cannot reduce the activism of some dissident movements oppressed by either their home governments or other environmental pressures to represent the ideological views of Islam. Political groups like Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah-Party of God established in 1982, as a Shite resistance fighting the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon[23]- and Hamas-Islamic Resistance Movement formed in 1987 in Gaza, Palestine, by members of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood in response to Israeli occupation of Gaza[24]- with militant wings established for political purpose are referred to as Islamists.[25] These political groups according to Mandaville are inherently anti-democratic[26] and have tried at various times claimed that they want to institute Islamism in states like Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, and even Sudan.[27] But in the long run, end up becoming oppressive against the people they claim they want to divinely govern.

Cihan Tugal's Marxian perspective of the ultimate intention of the Islamist political parties could be related with the politics in Turkey. He posited that Islamism in this sense was just an instrument for the domination of lower classes.[28] Leiken and Brooke had this to say about the Muslim Brotherhood: "The Muslim brotherhood is the world's oldest, largest, and most influential Islamist organization. It is also the most controversial, condemned

by both conventional opinion in the West and radical opinion in the Middle East".[29] The following remarks shows that both terrorists, militants, and even some states are categorized as Islamist. Does that mean that they practice or represent Islam?

The impression the above categorization (Islamist as terror groups, Islamic political parties and sovereign states that support terrorism) espouses is that, the main actors in Islam pursue intrinsically an Islamic agenda to dominate hence the use of means like selective interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith, violent extremism, terrorism and insurgency to intimidate and cajole others to accept their demands. This impression however, contradicts conclusions of the decade of counterterrorism research, and reports (European Network of Experts on Violent Radicalization, Marc Sageman and the University of Chicago's Robert Pape among others) which states "terrorists are driven by political belief, not by religious faith".[30] What the foregoing demonstrates is that these actors may not actually be practicing Islam but may be using the identity clout in Islam to achieve certain political agenda. This perhaps is in congruence with Ayoob's conclusion that Islamism is the instrumental use of Islam in politics.[31] However, restricting the meaning of Islamism to just political Islam will hinder us from understanding the drivers of collective behavior tendencies that characterize Islam. Bassam Tibi made an attempt to expand the scope of actors involved in Islamism when he called it religionized politics.[32] He noted that Islamism grew out of a specific interpretation of Islam but noted that it is not Islam.[33] His argument is that Islam is based on faith while Islamism strives the imposition of a political system in the name of faith. Indeed, Bassam Tibi's relentless effort to prove that Islamism is not Islam is intellectually convincing but not a statement of fact.

Another category of Muslims that are often referred to as Islamist are "devout and active Muslims". Devout and active Muslims in this paper are those Muslims who advocate publicly for *sharia* as the only form of governance that can address human challenges.[34] This is not an unusual behavior given that any other major religion, require the faithful to be active participants in the public sphere with an aim of reaching a more ethical and just society. Therefore, such usage of the term blurs the differences between individuals who take Islam as an ideology and condones its instrumentalist use in politics and individuals who simply sees life as a divine test and try to follow religion's basic tenets such as giving alms,

[21] Narrated by Bukhari in *Kitab al-Tawhid*, No 7422, and by Muslim in *Kitab al-Tawbah*, No 2751

[22] William Al-Sharif, **Islamism: Religion and Ideology**, (Jerusalem Academic Publishers, 2009), p.10.

[23] Alastair Crooke, **Resistance: the essence of Islamic revolution**, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.viii.

[24] **Ibid**, p.viii.

[25] Peter Mandaville Op.Cit.

[26] Ibid

[27] James Piscatori, "Islamist in Power", internet accessed, 23 August 2016, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/focus/essay1008_islamists.html

[28] Cihan Z. Tugal "Islamism among the Urban Poor of Turkey: religion, space, and class in everyday political intervention," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Michigan: The University of Michigan).

[29] Robert S Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", Foreign Affairs, March/ April 2007, internet accessed, http: //archive.is/JdlX#selection-289.0-315.1

[30] Doug Sanders, "What turns some Western Muslims into terrorists? The causes of extremism", 25 April 2013, http://dougsaunders.net/2013/04/muslim-immigrants-terrorists-jihad-terrorism/

[31] Ayoob, Mohammed, "Political Islam: Image and Reality', **World Policy Journal** 21: 3, fall, 2004, p.5.
Bassam Tibi, **Islamism and Islam**, (London: Yale University Press, 2012), p.1.

[33] Ibid

[34] Graham E Fuller, **The future of Political Islam** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

helping the needy, trying to tackle socio-economic inequalities and so on.[35] As Fuller puts it, "the Islamist are those who believes that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion.[36] These Muslim faithful believe that the standard for a Muslim is the *deen*. The word *deen* can literally mean obedience to the law of Allah. So devout Muslim is stereotyped an Islamist as well because of his stance concerning westernization especially when he/ her lives in a Western dominated society. Ramadan pointed that it is all about self-protection, self-preservation, and sometimes even self - definition over and against Westernization.[37] Most times, the devout Muslim end up being isolated and marginalized and often referred to as Islamist. The moderate Muslim who condoles Western liberalism and values is preferred to the former. This happens because of the logic of the dominant system in which the devout Muslim lives is powered by openness and pluralism-liberalism.[38] The thrust of liberalism is opinion.[39] Liberalism legitimizes a diversity of opinion about action or inaction. At any given time, some opinion prevails and determines both policies and culture, power and social truth.[40] The essential point about liberal perspective, is that a particular opinion even though it may be hegemonic, is still susceptible to change and it is within that framework that it treats religion as opinion[41]. In the case of Islam, opinion does not matter but that of revered truth which can only be derived from the Qur'an.

Referring to terror groups, political parties, movements and devout Muslims as Islamist or that they practice Islamism is not very satisfactory given the meaning of Islam in itself in its ideological books. Islam comes from the Arabic word *salaam* (peace) which literally translates to 'surrender' in English.[42] The *Qur'an* and authentic *hadith* are the two canonical sources of Islamic principles.[43] Muslim literally translates as one who submits to the will of Allah or a follower of Islam.[44] Islam is one of the Abrahamic faith traditions that preaches the oneness of God, the oneness of mankind and the oneness of the message and the entire message of Islam is derived

from its holy books-Qurʾān and ḥadīth. The Qur'an for the Muslim is the basis for absolute knowledge of the world. As Huntington puts it, "the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture… "[45]

The cultural clash between Islam and the Western values and opinion has manifested in several quarters with the liberal statements or acts of some non-Muslims that often triggers violent reaction from some Muslims who are considered as Islamist. Some examples include the Salman Rashdie Satanic verses, Danish newspaper Jyllands Posten publication and the Charlie Hebdo cartoon saga. Secular norms are part of the foundation of Western sovereign state system due to the historic separation of religion and politics in state affairs. It started with the enlightenment that rejected absolute laws, in which the impact ultimately led to build a non-religious state system that permits free thinking. When we compare some contemporary doctrine and Islamic values, we observe that the notion of a non-religious society is totally alien to Islam. Islam is built on the pillars of togetherness and its precepts uphold adherents' togetherness in a unique manner".

At this juncture, it is necessary to arrive at a consensus about who is an Islamist. Drawing from the earlier categorization, this paper argues that the Islamist is the devout active Muslim. This position is supported with Sayyid's ontological definition of the Islamist who practices Islam.[46] Mawdudi also support this position when he posited that "Islam is a universal and comprehensive way of life; it is a well-ordered system, a consistent whole with set of answers to all problems. Its fundamental postulate is *tawhid,* the unity and sovereignty of Allah. The scheme of life envisaged by Islam is known as *Sharia* and is established on the bedrock of faith. It is on that foundation that the edifice of the moral, social, political and economic system is created…"[47] From the foregoing, it is clear that it is difficult to separate the Muslim religion from his political life which is called *tawhid* (unification). This perhaps explains why a lot of Muslims may be against the idea of a secular state because they believe the objective of secularization is to eliminate religion completely from public domain as practiced in states like France and the USA, Germany among others where religion is highly privatized.

Islamism therefore is simply a way of asserting or expressing the 'being' of a Muslim especially in a world driven by popular western values and ideologies. Islamism relates to behaviors expressed by Muslims to assert or express themselves as Muslims following the ideology of Islam which they claim is the Qur'an. The Qur'an according to Muslims' belief defines their identity and directs them on how they should live and behave. For instance, the recent burkini ban in France, created a lot of concerns and debate on the issue of Islamism and western

[35] Ihsan Yilmaz "Beyond Post-Islamism: Transformation of Turkish Islamism toward 'Civil Islam' and Its Potential Influence in the Muslim World", *European Journal of Economic and Political Studies*, Vol 4, No 1, 2011.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[38] Tariq Ramadan, Op.Cit
[39] Leonard Binder, Islamic liberalism: a critique of development ideologies, **(**Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
[40] Ibid;
[41] **Ibid;**
[42] Joh Armajani, *Modern Islamist Movements: History, Religion and Politics*, (West Sussex, Blackwell Publishing, 2012).
[43] Ibrahim Kalin, "Islam and the West: Deciphering a Contested History", internet accessed, 25 August 2016, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/public/focus/essay0409_west.html
[44] Ali SR, Liu WM and Humedian M, "Understanding the Religion and Therapy Implications**",** Professional Psychology: Research and Practice**,** 2004, Vol. 35, No. 6**.**

[45] Samuel Huntington, **Op.Cit**.
[46] Mamdani M, *Good Muslim Bad Muslim*, (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited).
[47] Mawdudi, Abu A'la. Political theory of Islam. Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, 1960.

values. It is not enough to reduce Islamism to terrorism just because some Muslims are involved in terrorist activities under the banner of Islam. From the definition of Islamism adopted in this paper, those who get involve in terrorism are better called criminals and prosecuted in accordance with the laws of the land where the offence is committed. Therefore, Islamist in the real sense is not supposed to be a negative word to a Muslim but a word that symbolizes a Muslim who truly endeavor to adhere strictly to the dictate of his faith and beliefs in the Qur'an. As Crooke put it, "Islamism is the revolutionary struggle-a resistance-not centered on killing, but on ideas and principles".[48]

Drawing from the foregoing, Islamism is simply *the act whereby a Muslim asserts or expresses his/her 'being' as a Muslim*. It is therefore a behavioral expression believed to be guided by some divine guidance as provided by the Qur'an and the prophet of Islam. The Qur'an according to Muslims' belief defines their identity and directs them on how they should live and behave. Islamist in the real sense is therefore not a negative word or term but a word that symbolizes a Muslim who truly endeavor to adhere strictly to the dictate of his/her faith and beliefs in the Qur'an. However, it is important to state that Islamism could be expressed by the Muslim at different levels depending on the individual knowledge (fiqh) of Islam and the environment that shapes the mind of the individual Muslim. Muslims believe they are imbued with Islamic values- faith, identity and ideology. This is why they believe that when they insists on their Islamic dress code, financing system and legal system (Sharia) they are only expressing Islamism-the act of being a Muslim.

The foregoing typology excludes groups like Al Qaeda, Hamas, Al Shabbab, AQIM that are engaged in acts that negates the cardinal principles of Islam. Members of these groups are though Muslims, but their acts do not seem to represent the doctrine of Islam as provided by the Qur'an. Those Muslims who get involve in terrorism or violent extremism could be better called criminals. A terrorist's religion does not necessarily matter whether Christians, Buddhists, Hindi among others. What matters is that the person has committed a terror act and should be classified as a terrorist

IV. THE CONTRADICTION OF ISLAMISM

A lot of acclaimed Muslim countries (Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iran, Iran, Afghanistan etc.) are in political turmoil. A significant portion of their population suffer prosecution and suppression from their fellow Muslim who incidentally are their leaders. This challenges the Muslim claim of divine political system derived from the Qur'an. Are the actions of these Muslim leaders from most of the Muslim countries guided by *Sharia*-the Islamic political system? Moreover, the Muslim world as a nation is in total disarray infighting, poverty, oppression and injustice despite its claim of divinity and righteousness. The Muslim leaders have not found answers to the numerous

human security issues that continually undermine the security of Muslims. Most often they find it easy to blame their calamity on America and Europe because of what they see as undue interference (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya) and double standard (Israeli/Palestine) being played by the West. However, when we look at how some acclaimed Muslim states are governed and the lifestyle of their leaders, the revelation is often disappointing as it portrays the Islamist in bad light.

Many of the citizens from these Muslim countries migrate to the so called free world to seek political asylum. Many of these migrants especially those who want to exercise Islamism, on arrival to the free societies face a lot challenges. They are often isolated by security operatives in public places because of their looks (long beards, pants that reached the ankles, niqub for women, etc). These Islamist are considered burden to their host societies because they look different.

Islam according to the Qur'an may not have instructed any Muslim to be a murderer or terrorist, but there are concerns over a lot of Muslims taking to terrorism behaviors claiming to be inspired by Islam. Ayoob posits that such Muslims pursue their personal agenda by rallying around the mobilizing prowess of Islam to achieve their personal objective. He described such persons as "Muslim opportunists" because they use the social movement platform of Islam to prosecute their opponents.[49] There are also those Muslims who have introduced their ethno-cultural theology into Islam creating an entirely new ideological orientation again sustained by the mobilizing nature and forces of Islam. These do not necessarily mean that they practice Islam rather they try to create a certain identity to satisfy certain ego.

V. CONCLUSION

Most discussions on Islamism carry negative connotations that portray Islam in bad light. In a multi-religious world of ours, it would be wrong for us to dub a particular religious as evil or bad when its books do not dictate so. The negative interpretation of the word Islamism is a recent development. Such interpretation has succeeded in dividing societies and families along religious lines. Islamism is simply an attempt for a Muslim to assert his/her being as a Muslim by abiding by the tenets of Islam in his/her everyday life. By this definition, anyone who tries to do anything contrary to Islam in the name of Islam should be condemned by both Muslims and Christians.

Islamism is an activity that is associated with every Muslim who practices Islam because of the common identity. Muslims in the course of trying to be Muslims will continue to clash with the West because of differences in values. Under the current Judeo-Christian system, the Muslim is indeed in a fix because he is forced systematically to embrace the system, some of which negates the principles of Islam. The Muslim Ummah should therefore continually engage in interfaith discussio-

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[48] Alastair Crooke, Op.Cit, P.17. [48]

-ns where it can seek to reconcile the Islamic culture, religion, and worldview by striking a balance.

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