



The Myth of Muslim Silence; The Persistence of MSM Silence

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"Muslim silence" in the face of terrorism has become a predictable cliché in Western discourse. It is now widely believed by non-Muslims throughout the West that no representative of the faith of Muhammad will denounce violence against Jews, Christians, Hindus and others, even though non-fundamentalist Muslims are by far the most numerous victims of terrorism.

The very existence of a moderate, pluralist Islam is so widely doubted in the West that it often appears there is no alternative to a war of extremes between those of ill-will on both sides of the cultural and religious divide.

Muslims are not silent in the face of radicalism, extremism, and other ideologies that support terrorism from within the ranks of the Islamic

global community, or *umma*. But Western mainstream media - the MSM - have proven unwilling or incapable of reporting to Western audiences on the personalities embodying the Islamic "counter-jihad," the principles that impel them, or the daily facts of their struggle. When the battle for the mosque is invoked, it is too often done so by commentators who have no idea how this battle shapes up, where its fronts are located, or who represents each trend.

The problem is more that of "MSM silence" than of "Muslim silence." Furthermore, MSM silence about moderate and pluralistic Muslims then filters, or better, refracts through the prejudice of bigots in the media audience, who seek to turn the war against terror into a war against all of Islam. [Almost two years ago, on TCSDaily.com](#), I out-

lined the basic failure of comprehension in the MSM when faced with the challenge of radical Islam. Ignoring moderate Islam is merely a variation of obliviousness and laziness about radical Islam. In its worst effects, MSM silence about moderate Islam discourages the recruitment of moderates to anti-terrorist activism, but also deters the solidarity of non-Muslims who could otherwise assist moderate Muslims.

There is no more immediate or eloquent example of how these factors affect American public opinion than the recent MSM coverage of the arrests in a terrorist plot to attack Fort Dix, NJ. Four among the six suspects detained in the case turned out to be ethnic Albanians. Certain commentators rushed to declare they were all Albanians from Kosovo, and to reproach them as ungrateful refugees from a war in which the U.S. had intervened to save Muslims. A rage spread through the blogosphere against all Albanians - presumably including Albanian Christians, of whom few onlookers know much, notwithstanding the prominence of the most famous of all modern Albanians, Mother Teresa. It turned out, however, that the three Duka brothers indicted in the conspiracy, Dritan, 28, Shain, 26, and Eljvir, 23, are from the town of Diber in western Macedonia, and not from Kosovo. Nobody in the Western commentariat bothered to apologize to the Kosovar Albanians for their allegations against a whole community, based on supposition, alarmism, and spite.

Furthermore, the Duka brothers had nothing to do with the Kosovo war and refugee influx, but had been brought to the U.S. as small children. While their untrimmed beards appeared a sure marker for their having become adherents of the radical-fundamentalist Wahhabi sect, they did not attend an Albanian mosque in the U.S., but an Arab-Pakistani institution, the South Jersey Islamic Center. [As noted in *The Washington Post*](#), one member of the congregation declared, "The oldest brother was a funny guy, a joker. But he was not North African or Pakistani, and the language barriers often force us to talk among our own ethnic groups."

Arabs and Pakistanis are, by a far length, the Muslim communities in the West most saturated with fundamentalism. Thus, it took some time for American pundits, or aspirants to that title, to catch up with the dangerous probability that rather than the Fort Dix conspiracy exposing radical Islam among Muslims *in the Balkans*, it emerged from the underworld created by Wahhabi domination of Sunnism *in America*. I have repeatedly argued that radical Islamic ideologues have been more successful in imposing conformity on Sunnis in the U.S. and England than in most Muslim countries. Even Saudi Arabia, the source of Wahhabism, is now undergoing mass discontent with the Wahhabi order.

Wahhabi functionaries in America impose silence where they can, but an unfortunate reality remains: few MSM reporters look for authenti-

cally-moderate Muslims to interview or publicize. In the Fort Dix case, they appeared thrilled to go to the mosque where the Duka brothers were taught to grow their Wahhabi beards and hear the officials there tell them how moderate everybody was, but all the journalists heard were disclaimers, rather than denunciations of radicalism.

The MSM were also quick to question the suspects' neighbors in Cherry Hill, NJ, and to elicit fairly typical statements about their apparent harmlessness. Some stringers went to Diber, in Macedonia, and appeared surprised to find that the Albanian Sunnis there are overwhelmingly pro-American and religiously moderate. Had they spent more time in the district, they might have found out that the Dibrans, as people from the area are known, include a large contingent of Bektashi Sufis - who claim with justice to be the most progressive Muslims in the world - and Albanian Catholics.

So what is wrong with this picture?

Within two days of the Fort Dix case arrests on May 7, the Presidency of the Albanian Muslim Community in the U.S. and Canada had published the following [declaration](#): "we were shocked and appalled to receive the news of the possible terror act on Fort Dix Military Base in New Jersey. We strongly condemn violence and terrorist activities perpetrated in the name of Islam... we condemn all acts of terrorism. It is forbidden for a Muslim to cooperate with any individual or group that is involved

in any act of terrorism or violence. It is the civic and religious duty of Muslims to cooperate with law enforcement authorities to protect the lives of all humans... this alleged heinous act evokes an acute sense of grief... We are grateful to the US Government and its military forces for helping Muslims... The Presidency of the Albanian Muslim Community in the United States and Canada fully supports United States Government efforts to end terror. We pray for peace and stability in the world. We are against all those 'so-called Muslims' who misuse and humiliate Islam and create ugly images of the Muslim people... We pray to Almighty God to save and protect the United States."

This statement of the Albanian Sunni clerics, representing all of their community's mosques in North America, was posted by the organization I helped found, the [Center for Islamic Pluralism](#). But it was ignored by the MSM. You can check it on Google. When a friend of mine emailed it to one of his American acquaintances, the latter said it was the first such statement by a Muslim leader he had ever seen.

The leader of the Bektashi Sufis in Macedonia, Baba Edmond Brahimaj, about whom I had written as one of the ["people on our side"](#), two weeks before the Fort Dix conspiracy arrests, was quick to assure U.S. diplomatic representatives in Macedonia that his community will always support America. That item was also destined to be overlooked by the MSM. And so were many more, from Muslim figures in the

Albanian worldwide diaspora, in Macedonia, in Kosovo and in Albania itself.

How many Albanian Muslims - many of whom speak perfect English - appeared on television news in the wake of the Fort Dix arrests? The MSM is pleased to interview Islamist radicals, and equally happy to broadcast the views of Islamophobes, but cannot make the effort to locate a genuinely moderate Muslim representative from a community targeted for recruitment by radicals. Many more such examples could be cited, from the Arab states, Turkey, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and even Iran. From September 11, 2001 until now, moderate Muslim clerics and intellectuals around the world have declared their condemnation of Al-Qaida and other extremists. Their voices are unheard, not always because they are suppressed by or fear Muslim radicals, but because they have no access to the MSM.

But the burgeoning fear of Islam in the West feeds the appeal of radicalism among Muslims, both inside and outside the Islamic world. Western media could play a significant role in alleviating the threat of a "clash of civilizations." That might, according to some journalists, violate their objectivity - although journalistic objectivity should not mean neutrality in the face of evil. Others profess politically-correct values and claim they want to contribute to positive change in the world, but many among that cohort habitually regurgitate, if they do not directly support, the claims of radical Islam.

As a moderate Muslim, I have often been asked if I am an apostate from Judaism. I am not, as I have explained [here](#).

But in contending with Western media errors regarding a test more serious than any the world has faced in decades, I confess to believing I am an apostate from journalism.