
ORIENTALIZED ISLAM: A CRITICAL STUDY OF BERNARD LEWIS' BOOK:

“THE CRISIS OF ISLAM: HOLY WAR AND UNHOLY TERROR”

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ABSTRACT

Multiple brands of orientalism owe to the diversity in western studies of Islam. A renowned orientalist and Western Islamologist, Bernard Lewis, is considered as an authority on Middle Eastern studies as well as on Islamic history. Lewis' work on Islam attracted a lot of attention after the Twin Tower incident of 9/11. His works on Islam particularly his books *What Went Wrong*, *The Crisis of Islam* and his oft-quoted essay *The Roots of Muslim Rage* is cited by analysts and intellectuals in Western Academia. In this study views of Bernard Lewis have been analyzed through the prism of an extremely influential and paradigm shifting book *Orientalism* by Edward Said which discusses his Orientalist perspective and theoretical assumptions on orientalism. The researcher finds Said's assumption in case of Lewis as an orientalist tiger more or less justified. Lewis' study of Islam is an epitome of traditional version of orientalists, classical orientalist scholarship and dualistic and essentialist approach towards Islam. For his critics the work of Lewis on Islam has established him to a great extent a traditional orientalist and western orient list scholarship generally inflates the similar analysis about Islamic world and Islam symbolizing his massive influence on western Academy. In a nutshell, Lewis' approach towards study of Islam is Reductionist and Essentialist.

Key Words: Orientalism, Orientalist, Lewis, Said, Middle East

Introduction

Bernard Lewis is widely recognized as one of the West's leading authorities on the Middle East in the wake of September 11th. The Princeton historian's views are said to have had a strong influence on George Bush and his foreign policy. Bernard Lewis is considered in the West the specialist on Islamic history and Middle Eastern Studies.(Brinner & Kramer, 2001).He undoubtedly has written countless pages on Islam, more or less on every topic of the Islamic history and its movements. In the following pages his published literary work is given, which shows his interest in Islamic history and movements. His proposed pieces of advice have been welcomed by western policymakers frequently. Bernard Lewis may arguably be considered as the last orientalist in the traditional sense of the word. Bernard Lewis has Zionist connections and that's why he sees the Arabs are incapable of revolution and modern times events proved him wrong. He subscribes the idea that Islam and modernity are not are not compatible. Islam and democracy are not compatible and that Islam is enraged at modernity which means that Muslims are living in a medieval time and this should be kept there or other way otherwise they will show they will use terrorism and violence to challenge Western modernism which they don't like.

Methodology

The present study analyzes Lewis' work in Said's perspective on orientalists and orientalism. It seems desirable to discuss it prior to delving into further discussion. And the discussion of

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Orientalism and Islam has been divided into three points. The first point we're going to discuss is Edward Said as a theorist and the second point we will try to define Orientalism and lastly, we would be raising some questions on the methodology of Orientalists in general and Lewis in particular and try to navigate its possible answers. Said's most influential book is Orientalism and this would be our focus what do we mean by orientalism is and what does it mean.

The central and Paradigm-shifting work of Edward Said' Orientalism is one of those works that changed our ways of Understanding and knowledge about other cultures and regions. And it seems that this has really made a mark in many ways. Not only in the region of the middle east and more generally the Islamic world but it has really very much influenced post-colonial studies more largely in other places. The key word is Epistemic shifting up until the publication of orientalism we didn't know how do we know what we know. What he managed to do he made us conscious of the instrumentality of this. For example, just as a camera gives a view of events, what Edward Said did was he made us conscious of the instrumentality of Modes of knowledge production and Interest in knowledge production. Edward was not a historian he was a literary theorist a genius literary theorist, a monumental Figure in literary theory also. Orientalism is from a perspective of literary mimesis of representation who gets to represent whom and by what authority and how that representation changes. Foucault had become known (Barrett, 1991) and Said's notion of orientalism heavily borrows from focused relation of knowledge and power. That there is a correspondence between colonialism and knowledge production. One realizes that there is something the Trouble with the manner of knowledge Production that there is power Involved in the modes of knowledge Production. There is a process of Canonization who gets to choose what is canon so from the epistemology of knowledge to the idiomatic city of knowledge being produced to the institutions that produce knowledge became an issue and as a result became the reasons for its success but another reason is that at Versailles Orientalism enables. As all great works of the scholarship in theory do to disagree with him Said is able to do that too. It is precisely its richness that it offers this possibility to think reflect disagree and work with as an intellectual tool exist now, we tend to forget this a little bit today because it has been so successful in helping us shift our ways of thinking but at the time the reaction to it in some sectors was quite violent reading again.

In Bernard Lewis and many others one can see also that this resistance. And this is literally the term that one should apply intellectual resistance or power politics resistance has stayed with us as well what is the reason for that first of all up until recently the same sources and institutions of knowledge production that continue to produce knowledge and establish it as truth, they haven't ceased they have metamorphosed and as a result the term Orientalism and orientalist knowledge production has become a catch word. Two points to relation between knowledge and power so who finances what for what reasons some of those exchanges in fact with Bernard Lewis that follows Orientalism in my opinion were counterproductive for our understanding of orientalism. Orientalism is basically a critique of epistemology. It is a critique of knowledge reduction. In Said's exchanges with Bernard Lewis this became enmeshed with Arab-Israeli conflict and Said was a very passionate defender of a Palestinian cause and rightly so the most significant spokesman of the Palestinian cause abroad and as a result it did some enduring damage for us to deal with Orientalism. Orientalism, it is not to say, that it is evil, it is a critique of the mode of

knowledge production so we have to either way bypass and bracket aside. As the critique of knowledge production and do what it was publication of Orientalism because orientalism was coterminous with classical colonialism and modes of knowledge production during the Cold War didn't have that similar kind of knowledge production because now it is irrelevant. What emerges are these think tanks in Washington DC so precisely to follow that now.

According to Said Imperialism is a living organism and it is not a stable always say when the World Trade Center was attacked World Trade Center is misnomer World Trade has no center. (Said,1979) All over 24/7 because imperialism has become amorphous first of all Imperialism has become amorphous because capital has become America's. Capital is amorphous, imperialism is amorphous knowledge production is amorphous. Could we have thinktanks in Doha, Qatar? Can we have thinktanks in Saudi Arabia. Can we have them anywhere they're part of an amorphous the central modes of knowledge production to sustain power that exists but that power itself is not self-conscious. It's like a wild animal. Power has no room deciding it doesn't have a form. As a result, it wants to invade Afghanistan goes to a thinktank. The advantage of think tanks is that contrary to Orientalists. An Orientalist is accountable to an academic tradition if we say probably something embarrassing our colleagues our students that certainly they hold us accountable but not in think tanks. It is a kind of a disposable knowledge. The point is one should not fetishize the insight of adverse sight one must learn from it and then unfold it as we move on as imperialism changes modes of knowledge change agencies of knowledge production change institutions of knowledge production change. No longer Islam is subject of knowledge they don't want to understand Islam. At the culmination that has come to Steve Bannon there is a kind of Christian triumphalism they want to destroy Islam. Islam is the enemy. It is all different from generation that they wanted to understand Islam and they produced organically a kind of understanding of Islam that was compatible with colonialism. (Said,1979)

Limitation of the Study

As it is beyond the scope of study to discuss all of Lewis's work on Islam. The present study will include his general views on Islam out of his encyclopedic work with a special focus on his The Crisis of Islam.

Literature Review

Orientalism is in its basic line definition is the study of the Orient so it has nothing to do with science it's an ideology that aims at studying others. Edward Said popularized the term Orientalism in 1978. He was referring to a body of scholarship that uses Eurocentric assumptions and biases in approaching other cultures and communities. Said remarks that much of academic scholarship in the West is Orientalist. (Said,1979)

Orientalism from its name it is related to the orient. Orient is the Middle East or the whole of the Middle East and Far East and so on. So, Orientalism is basically why do we deal with it as an ideology because Orientalism is essentially an ideology that has nothing to do with science. It views objects from a certain perspective not objectively but subjectively. So, Orientalism in its like baseline definition is the study of the Orient of the Islamic world. But this definition has of

course changed. Said came up with a very important idea that far from being an innocent right the more you know about Islam the more you become a capable of controlling it. So, knowledge is to know and is to control. So, knowledge was basically not an objective kind of science or it was the kind of subjective science that wanted to portray this subject matter in a specific way as to make it possible to control. Studying Islam was never instant it basically meant that the more you know about Islam the more you can control it through knowledge. It's also very interesting, there are great names in the Oriental world like Bernard Lewis for example. He talks about what went wrong in the Muslim society but how they put in so much effort into learning Islam simply to control the Muslims is that correct of course it starts with a passion but this passion is not very far from the Western spirit of expansion. This desire to know is a part of desires were motivated by a desire to see your country advanced and more prosperous.

People like Bernard Lewis for example has written books that place Islam as a medieval and as a religion that is not for the modern times. Said's theory came, arguably, as a result to speak for Muslims and their origins also to uncover the hidden goals of the study or of this study why others are studying us. Why the Westerners are studying us as objects. In Said's interpretation is that the hidden goal is to control the Muslims people. Said's theory came, arguably, as a result to speak for Muslims and their origins also to uncover the hidden goals of the study or of this study why others are studying us. why the Westerners are studying us as objects.

Basically, in the Middle Ages in pre-modern times Europe had a sort of Hegemony in many parts of the world. The scholarship that developed within that milieu looked at the what the club referred to as the East for the purpose of understanding the people the cultures their religions but also with a certain aim it is claimed to dominate that region understanding a people how to relate to them how to conquer them how to get the upper hand over them. So this is basically done in order to dominate them they have to sort of demean them in some way. They studied them as objects to think about how exactly to control them. (Said,1979)

It goes without saying that Orientalism is a racist way of looking at other cultures because Orientalism did not deal Muslims as normal human beings, they viewed Muslims as some kind of aberration some aberration from humanity. They were barbaric they were an Islamist. Basically, Islam had to be characterized as violent as negative as barbaric in order to make Europe's and the West's image brighter by putting it against a very degenerate Muslim world and it is fair to say that the efforts of the Orientalists have had a negative effect on the development of Muslim world by interfering in the educational system by producing an Islamic world that's a negative and this is what was characterized as Orientalizing self.

If we analyze the impact that Orientalism had on the Muslim world and its role still to this day, where is it manifested and where is it growing and what is really going on, we come to know that it is still there and there are Orientalists out they were studying Islam for the sake of imperialist agendas. However, it's in full force because Edward Said's intervention in 1977 proved very damaging to the overall structure of Oriental's. Orientalism is a is now used as a pejorative term. So, if you're producing if you're talking about Islam in a specific way this is called Oriental's. and that's a negative attitude if your scholarship is called Orientalism then it means it is not scientific or it's not real a real study of Islam it's just ideology. (Said,1979) This is because

mainly one of the best things that he wrote has done was to intervene and show Orientalism as a discourse of power that sought to enable the West to intervene in the Islamic world militarily and carry its mission civilizing mission to the Muslim world.

There are people who tried of course to control the damage to Orientalism but they never succeeded to totally debunk it. Still there are major people like Bernard Lewis who is a major Orientalist who continues to produce knowledge about Islam that questions the origins of Islam and casts doubt on Islam.

Discussion and Analysis

Prior to delving into the critical analysis of the book it seems apt and appropriate to discuss some of the thoughts of Lewis in the book and its gist. As the title suggests there is an ongoing debate, according to Lewis, on what is the crisis of Islam and what are its reasons and more importantly what is the solution of it. The title suggests close link of the crisis with holy war that creates an unholy terror.

Instead of defining the terms according to Islamic resources i.e., Quran and Sunnah, he equates Jihad with holy war. The basic pitfall of his methodology is that he speaks on behalf of Muslims by picking only the selected elements at his will. He does not differentiate between Islam as a religion and Muslims as a people. He uses Islam and Muslims interchangeably. His sources are not directly from Quran and Sunnah. He selects certain aspects of Islamic history and portrays it as a universal truth and ageless essence of Muslim society.

What is the crisis for Islam? Lewis remarks that Islam has reached a point when they have come think the Muslim world has reached the point when most Muslims are aware of the fact that their society has taken a wrong turning somewhere. There is a growing awareness thanks especially to modern media that they have fallen behind the rest of the world. (Lewis, 2004). They know that for many centuries theirs was the most advanced civilization in the world. Indeed, the most advanced civilization known to history and then suddenly they fall disastrously behind. What they have become aware of recently is that not only are they are falling behind the advanced countries of the West but even newcomers to the scene like Korea for example. Not more than half a century ago Korea was just emerging from the Middle Ages and now the Korean standard of living and achievement in almost every significant field is vastly better than in the Muslim world. At the difference between India and Pakistan they look. (Lewis, 2004) At the difference in the fate of former British colonies like Hong Kong and Singapore on one side of the world or Aden on the other is there therefore a call for modernization within Islam. (Lewis, 2004) And is there a call for say a different place for women in Islam. Lewis remarks that the Muslims are not. The debate has been going on now for a long time. There is first an awareness that something is wrong and then come to the to relay on the wrong side of history for whatever reason then.

Lewis says two questions arises for Muslims what is wrong and what do we do about it. (Lewis, 2004) The crisis has become manifest to a degree that was not possible before. Because of two reasons, one is the obvious, one of these is defeat in battle but more important than that was the modern media which bring to everybody the immediate visible spectacle of how other people live compared with how they live so all of a sudden, they realized that America was more than

just something they heard about. They could see it and in a sense of that they were doing significantly better exactly.

Lewis remarks that he doesn't think anyone in the Muslim world disputes that the question is what does one do about it. The different answers to this crisis can fall into two main groups. On one hand there are those who say we have failed to modernize. We have fallen behind the modern world. We have not kept up with modern science and technology. We have not kept up with the free institutions which have made modern Western civilization possible. The answer therefore is more modernization and there are different aspects of modernization. An important one which mentioned is the position of women. (Lewis, 2004) It was pointed out by Ataturk in Turkey and by others elsewhere that they are after all half of the population. The other view is not the exact opposite, they say we have been misled. Our problem is not insufficient modernization. Rather it is excessive modernization. We have had rulers who were traitors who introduced foreign ways, foreign customs and foreign manner.

According to Lewis, the talk about imperialism no longer has much wait. (Lewis, 2004) Half a century ago and little more than half a century ago the greater part of the Muslim world was divided between four great European empires the British the French the Dutch and the Russian. They are all gone. Imperialism in the sense of foreign domination is ruled by foreigners with foreign Garrison's that's finished. Now it doesn't exist anywhere and it's beginning to wear rather than as an explanation of what's wrong so what they talk about now is not foreign rule but foreign influence. And the enemy is not the foreign imperialist, he has long since gone away but the local ruler who is seen as a foreign puppet well.

Moreover, "The crisis of Islam: the holy war and unholy terror" suggests all Muslims are not terrorists which everybody knows. Say that most terrorists are most terrorists that we hear about at the present time are Muslims. (Lewis, 2004) According to Lewis, there are other terrorist movements but that's about it and even those have been much less active of late. One hears about terrorist activities in most cases there are Muslims. Now that certainly doesn't mean that most Muslims are terrorists it doesn't mean that most Muslims support terrorists. He says it just happens that they are going through a phase in which they are the ones that are capturing the attention of the media and therefore of the world. (Lewis, 2004)

Lewis is adamant in making the point that not all Muslims are fundamentalists. And not all fundamentalists are terrorists. But that the terrorists that world is experiencing today the Al-Qaeda the Usama bin Laden form of terrorism does have its roots in the basic philosophy of Islam that the history. The philosophical underlining tenets of that religion explain that form of militancy does not have its roots in the basic philosophy of Islam. He discusses the word Islam in two senses. One of its uses is as the equivalent of Christianity. It is to say a religion in the narrow sense of the word. It is also used as the equivalent of Christendom meaning an entire civilization shaped by that religion with including many elements that are not part of that religion or may even be hostile to that religion. But, nevertheless, arise within this civilization. Lewis rationalizes that one has to say that Hitler and the Nazis arose within Christendom. He elucidates but one could not say that they arose from Christianity. This is the distinction which Lewis thinks it's important to bear in mind. While these terrorist movements certainly arise within Islamic

civilization in the same way that Hitler and the Nazis arose within Christian civilization but that doesn't mean to say that they have their roots in basic Islamic philosophy. (Lewis, 2004)

Muslim's identity has become a function of west. It mirrors image in the West not any real Islam. (Said,1979) Then arises a question that how does Orientalism affect the Muslim world and Muslims in general so the answer first by interfering into the educational system there is what Edward Said characterized as self-Orientalizing. (Said,1979) And it would be fair to say the Eastern students studying Islam in western institutions of Area studies, when they come, they have a superiority complex in fact because they studied in the West. They speak English or one Western language. They are put in positions of decision-making in professors at universities. They decide what to teach how to teach it what kind of stuff to teach and they usually teach Orientalism material and Orientalist thesis about Islam and it is a digit to generate civilization. Basically, they control the imagination of Muslims and limit their view of their past by imposing a curriculum that takes a Western point of view about Islam.

It is very hard to know about yourself from a different point of view that is limiting. And that is because usually a point of view it's always a reflection of the interests of the West rather than any real Islam. People came back with ideas and thesis taken from Orientalism and disseminated their ideas and thesis among their students. That means the question Muslim history, questions the origins of Arabic poetry and questioning the dates of that poetry thus bringing the whole Islamic tradition to into question, okay so, basically this, these ideas and ideologies are destructive because they're self-Orientalizing. They know about the self through the eyes of the others. (Said,1979)

Bernard Lewis is a part of the same wider phenomenon of trying to study the Middle east in particular to explain to his readers whether Jewish or others and that this is how Muslims are if they are a violent people. They should be understood not within the geo political special circumstances but they should be understood as Muslims and that whatever negative things are being described about them. It is not because of their present circumstances but because of who they are. This is how Muslims are. If we analyze some of Lewis other works, it is serving the same purpose as the books written about the Islamic world were not just justifications after the fact, they were the kind of projects manuscripts for people like Napoleon and others. As they had introduced Islam into the knowledge of an imperial and an expansionist world.

While discussing Lewis as an orientalist in the classical sense of the word, he has a quite splinting and limited point of view of events. Lewis is the Doyen and Head of Middle Eastern Studies where Islam is not taught from the point of view of real Muslims or people who are Muslims and aware of its history it is taught from the point of view of discourse of the west. it is like knowing about America through reports written by Russia or knowing about a Palestinians through the archives of Israel.

If Lewis study of Islam is seen in relation to the objective liberal scholarship, we come to know that, Oriental knowledge may be seen as a divisive kind of knowledge at large. Because Muslim historians who have traditional knowledge training have historical evidence and books written throughout Muslim tradition and then an Orientalist or a student of orientalists brushes all that aside and says listen to me that's what the Orientals and Muslims are and that's like the objective

knowledge one has to study and believe. Bernard Lewis who's a major Orientalist who continues to produce knowledge about Islam that questions the origins of Islam and casts doubt on Islam.

In general, there is, of course, a problem because most of the orientalists start with a rejection of Islamic sources. So, it's they want to know about Islam but from sources not and from sources not Arabic. they totally reject Arabic sources. Orientals have such a contention with the aim of the science of hadith. The statements of the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. Actually, some of them have certain theories that much of the hadith literature was invented later on for political reasons. As a result of political expediency to praise a certain kind of person or a certain kind of people and of course that's the whole structure of it.

Any impartial analyst would find Lewis' methodology problematic because his method is to have a very big theses or theory and to have an assumption and then go to Islamic history and try to prove that assumption. So, he starts start with the fact and then goes all out to prove it.

He uses Islamic history as a kind of proof. He does not start it with a question then try to answer it .Lewis starts with a conclusion and then start to provide evidence from Islamic history to support the conclusion. That is why in general the efforts of the Orientalists in trying to attack the Quran has been one of major failure of course because basically they wanted to relate Quran to other traditions but it never materialized. They try to question the language of the Quran as faulty or not reflecting Arabic standard the real Arabic. They, of course, try for example to say that some of the Quranic verses are affliction of early Arabic poetry like that. Generally, the evidences are concocted from other sources and put into one.

The impact that Orientalism has on the Muslim world and its role still to this day where is it manifested and where is it growing and what is really going may easily be seen in the works of Lewis. Bernard Lewis has Zionist connections and that's why he sees the Arabs are incapable of revolution and modern times events proved him wrong. He subscribes the idea that Islam and modernity are not compatible. The democracy is also incompatible. Islam is enraged at modernity that Islam which means that Muslims are living in a medieval time and this should be kept there or other way otherwise they will show they will use terrorism and violence to challenge Western modernism which they don't like.

He tries to naturalize the battle between the two civilizations by historicizing it that it has been for centuries. He is of the view that the real focus should be on the reasons that why West is dominating the Muslims. In general, regardless of the background of the orientalists their analysis of others for the most part is problematic because Orientalism is basically an ideology it's not science.

Conclusion

Lewis was a credible scholar about Ottoman Turkey specifically. There are no credentials that anyone can show that he's a scholar of Islam or Islamic history per se. In his old age he has started saying things that he didn't really say earlier because they are perhaps profitable to say. His oversimplified assertions are essentialist as well as reductionist.

Everyone has a certain bias, a certain Predisposition a certain position a certain viewpoint and a way an angle through which one approaches a certain Study. Naturally, people from a Particular



cultural background are going to look at another culture from their Particular viewpoint and through their Special lenses. So, no one is entirely Free from this at the same time we can Say that if Muslim study others they Will have the same sort of problems to Overcome as well they have to recognize Their own bias to overcome those.

So, to a large extent people have been now recognizing their particular biases. And overcoming them trying to describe What they see from as neutral a Perspective as possible and so there has Been much improvement but there are still some lingering bits of Sometimes it's being described as Eurocentrism sometimes it's being described as Islamophobia but this is Still found in the literature to this day.

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