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Protester-shield model

Misuse of Jihad by Muslim protesters, and tolerance of this misuse by non-Muslim protesters in pro-Palestinian protests in the EU

“The world accordingly was sharply divided in Muslim law into the *dār al-Islām* (abode or territory of Islam), and *dār al-ḥarb* (abode or territory of war). These terms may be rendered in less poetic words as the “world of Islam” and the “world of war”. The first corresponded to the territory under the Muslim rule. (...) The *dār al-ḥarb* consisted of all the states and communities outside of the world of Islam. Its inhabitants were often called infidels, or, better, unbelievers. (...) Thus, the *jihād*, reflecting the normal war relations existing between Muslims and non-Muslims was the state’s instrument for transforming the *dār al-ḥarb* into the *dār al-Islām*.” (Khad-duri, 1955)

Abstract

In the paper, the author examines the possibility of misuse of jihad by European Muslims (some of which may be jihadists or are motivated by jihadists) and misunderstanding (tolerating) this misuse of jihad by European non-Muslims, both participating in pro-Palestinian protests in Europe which creates a paradoxical situation for both. Non-Muslims are against militant jihadism symbolism and are at the same time tolerating such symbolism. In order to analyze this paradox three steps are taken. In the first part, the description and levels of the paradox are supplied. In the second part, three elements are given: the description of the circumstances in Europe after the Palestinian attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the elements of possible misuse of jihad (by jihadists), and the description of jihad and jihadism in Europe. In the third part, a conclusion is drawn from the previous premises. Since jihadism is a fact in Europe as well as terrorist attacks by jihadists, there is a possibility and even some probability that jihadists, misusing jihad, are related to Muslims among pro-Palestinian protesters in Europe, which creates a paradoxical situation for non-Muslim members of pro-Palestinian protesters in Europe since they are in the same time against jihad, and jihadist terrorism (Hamas) and pro-Palestine (civilians).

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Introduction: paradoxes of pro-Palestinian protests in EU

A collection of quasi-religious, primarily political and militant concepts are employed to propagate economic, political, social, and cultural influence, aiming to attain local or global dominance (especially if a religion is a *conquering* one). These concepts, fundamentally imperialistic, historically demonstrate a complete disregard for the identities and existence of others. Examples of such concepts include the Christian world or Christendom (Marty, 2008), Islamic or Muslim world (Tausch et al., 2015), more recently Russian World (Bajt and Buzar, 2023), as well as on a smaller scale, the Serbian world (Đorđević, 2021) and Greater Hungary (Holroyd, 2022). Similar ideologies exist in Asia, exemplified by concepts like Greater China, among others. Misuses of the dominant religions closely connected to such concepts exists in Christianity, Orthodox (Krkač, 2023), and Roman Catholic (Krkač, 2024 *forthcoming*) as well as in Islam which is the present topic.

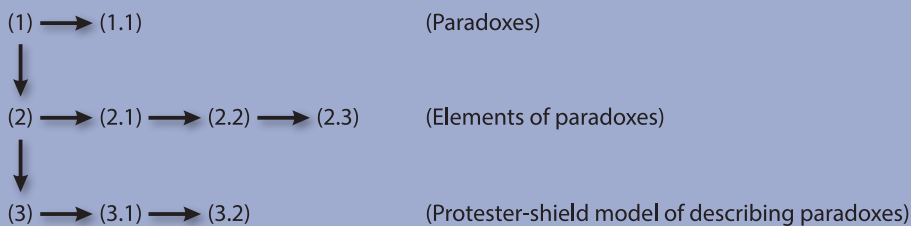
The common line among all these concepts is their disregard for the identities of neighbouring states, nations, and societies, often employing a *misuse* of religious or ideological beliefs to justify imperialistic actions. The logic behind such *religious misuse* is remarkably straightforward and takes several forms: asserting that our religion is true while theirs is false; claiming that our specific form of religion is true and theirs is false; or even suggesting that they lack religion (atheists), all leading to the same conclusion; therefore, they should either adopt our religion or face destruction. The religious element in imperialism, especially concerning neighbouring countries and nations, is strategically valuable as it has the potential to mobilize and radicalize a great number of people in a short period of time.

Although there are sometimes huge differences between various types of such *misuses* of religions in imperialistic, in most cases suicidal (self-destructive) tendencies, given the differences between religions, but also between different historical periods, and economic, political, and military circumstances, they all share the basic pattern of mobilizing religious part of population, and radicalizing a lot of it. In what follows the case of possible *misuse* of jihad in contemporary radical Islamism (by Jihadists) will be scrutinized in the light of the situation in Europe (especially in EU member states) since the Palestinian (Hamas) (Levitt, 2006) attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 (and later on by West Bank and Syrian terrorist groups, and by Hezbollah from Lebanon as well).

The current potential *misuse* of the concept of jihad in Palestine and within the European Union, notably seen among protesters waving flags of jihadist terrorist or-

ganizations, may not exhibit distinct characteristics. However, there is a significant possibility that the *misunderstanding* of this misuse leads to a failure to properly distinguish between the attitudes of pro-Palestinian civilians and the terrorist practices of certain Palestinian groups who, driven by a jihad-oriented ideology, fundamentally oppose the existence of others (thus challenging Israel's right to defend itself against what is essentially a terrorist army). The circumstances within the European Union are unique due to the absence of neighbouring Muslim countries (the closest being Turkey bordering Greece, and Bosnia and Herzegovina bordering Croatia, albeit partially). Most Muslims in the EU are migrants from regions such as Turkey, Asia, and Africa, many of whom belong to the second or third generation of immigrants. This situation may be particularly unique, especially concerning the recent possibility of deportation in cases of violations of specific laws of the EU member states.

General structure of argument:



(1) PARADOXES. Currently (since 7 October 2023 i.e., since the start of the Palestine-Israel war) in the European Union (EU) we have had possibly *paradoxical* situations. Pro-Palestinian protesters in the EU consist of Muslims, some of whom carry the flags of Islamic organizations which are declared as terrorist in the West or state sponsors of terrorism, radical Islamism and jihadism (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, etc.) who understand jihad exclusively as armed struggle (tolerating attacks on civilians which is forbidden by their own rules), which does not exclude terrorist methods while the rest of the Muslims among the protesters do not protest. However, protesters also consist of non-Muslims who seem to believe that the display of such symbols (not only flags but also other symbols such as scarves, badges, banners, etc.), of terrorist organizations and jihad is permissible and just (moreover, among non-Muslims there are also members of groups, e.g., LGBTQ that are banned, persecuted and physically punished in many countries of the Islamic world). Can these actions of Muslim pro-Palestinian protesters be called *misuse* of jihad, and actions of non-Muslim protesters a manifestation of *misunderstanding* of this misuse? For non-Muslim protesters this additionally creates a paradoxical situation in which they are *against* or *don't tolerate* jihadist terrorism

on the one hand, and at the same time they *tolerate* jihadist terrorist symbols used by European Muslims.

(1.1) FORMAL STRUCTURE OF PARADOXES. A common criterion of misuse is that it is an intentional improper or incorrect use of X. So, Muslim protesters claim that they protest *for* the civilians of the Gaza Strip and Palestine, and at some point during the protest they start to show support *for* terrorist organizations (Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, etc.) and *for* Europe caliphate, jihad, etc. This is a possible *double misuse*; first, they misuse the very concept of jihad taking it exclusively in the militant sense, and second, they misuse protests for civilians in order to protest for jihad in the EU etc. So, they are misusing peace protests to protest for war. Whether this is a paradox or not is a matter of logical dispute and depends on how we understand the Muslim protesters. A common criterion of toleration says that A tolerates B if: (a) A holds a negative judgment about X which is performed by B; (b) A has the power to negate X; and (c) A deliberately refrains from negation of X. Now, non-Muslim protesters (at least proclaim that they) are (a) against (they don't tolerate) symbols of terrorist organizations, and protesting for war (X), (b) they have the power to negate these symbols, and (c) they deliberately refrain from negation of symbols of terrorist organizations. So, at the same time, non-Muslims protest for peace, and tolerate protesting for war by Muslim protesters. Whether this is a paradox or not, as in the previous case, is a matter of logical dispute and depends on how we understand non-Muslim protesters.

In the next three sections, we will discuss the situation in Europe following the Palestinian attack on Israel in 2023. We will look into the concept and application of jihad in radical and terrorist practice. Finally, we will explore the phenomenon of such jihad in Europe, particularly in the EU member states. There is a possibility that jihad is simultaneously misused by radical Muslims, such as those supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS/Islamic State, as discussed in "Jihad as Terror" (Murawiec, 2008: 295-324). This misuse may extend to Muslims in the EU and be misunderstood by radical non-Muslims in the EU, including pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, anti-NATO, anti-establishment groups, radical left groups, and perhaps the LGBTQ community. These groups may coincide as the same protesters in various EU cities between October 7, 2023, and November 7, 2023.

Three elements of paradoxes

1. The circumstances in Europe after the Palestinian (Hamas) attack on Israel on October 7, 2023

Since the beginning of the 2023 Palestinian-Israel War, there have been numerous pro-Palestinian protests worldwide, along with anti-Semitic protests in some countries, such as anti-Jewish riots in Dagestan, Russia (Hodge, 2023). Within the European Union, there have been pro-Palestinian demonstrations in many Western European countries, including France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and outside the EU in the United Kingdom (“2023 Israel–Hamas war protests” and “Infographic: Global Demonstrations in Response to the Israel-Palestine Conflict”, 2023). However, there has been significantly less protest in Middle European and East European countries, with minimal activity in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Croatia, and almost none in Poland, Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria, etc. Pro-Israel protests were also less prevalent across all EU countries. Incidents of violence, such as the destruction of private and public property, clashes between pro-Palestinian demonstrators and the police, and occasional confrontations with Pro-Israel protesters, were reported. In response to the scale and potential escalation, some countries, including France and Germany, banned pro-Palestinian protests that involved flags of Palestine, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, and various symbols, or singing protest songs like “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”. However, others, like the Netherlands, did not enforce such bans, while some EU countries considered these actions as criminal offenses. Certain countries even warned that violators could not only face arrest but also deportation. These measures showed some effectiveness. Outside the EU, in some countries, there have been no comparable measures, and protests continue to be frequent, massive, and occasionally violent.

Theoretical and practical issues arise, particularly for democratic states, around the longstanding challenge of balancing freedom of speech and the right to protest concerning the public support of organizations designated as terrorist, such as Hamas and ISIS. Ensuring public safety and protecting property further complicates this delicate balance. The boundary is blurred, with the principle that non-violent protests should be allowed, but regular escalations may warrant bans. Similarly, protests supporting recognized terrorist organizations should be prohibited. The presence of obvious symbols of terrorist organizations, like Hamas flags, justifies a ban. However, the situation becomes tricky with Palestinian symbols, like flags, as they indirectly connect to groups like Hamas, which de facto governs Palestine. Even expressions like “Free Palestine” on banners raise questions about legality, considering the international recognition of Palestine. These challenges put EU democracies to the test. While the majority of Muslims and Arabs in the EU are not radicalized and are integrated into

society, enjoying democratic rights, the border becomes clear when applicable laws democratically prohibit any form of support for terrorist organizations and regimes.

On the one hand, if these public protests, assuming they are non-violent, aren't fundamentally prohibited, the question arises of how one can express dissent if symbols, songs, and similar elements are banned. Some propose focusing on advocating for the civilians of the Gaza Strip, as seen in a recent protest in the UK calling for a ceasefire, an end to violence, lifting Israel's siege, and providing full humanitarian aid to Gaza (Rajvanshi, 2023). It is important to note that such protests can attract radicalized individuals, even though a significant percentage of protesters in the EU are non-Muslim. Despite this, there have been only two terrorist attacks in the EU member states since the beginning of the Hamas attack on Israel, occurring on October 16 in Arras, France, and Brussels, Belgium, resulting in three fatalities and four injuries. It is a crucial moment for Islamic terrorist organizations to refrain from attacks in the EU, given the international support for Palestine and criticism of Israel. Any attacks could jeopardize this support and increase their status as a major security risk in the EU. On the other hand, Islamic clerics and laymen in the EU are regularly heard propagating radical plans and actions at least on the level of general ideology.

The term *jihad* features prominently in speeches within mosques and various media, acting as a number one concept for much of the discourse. It is safe to say that the core of all Islamic terrorist activity revolves around this seemingly simple word. Its significance extends beyond the word itself, encompassing the very concept, its meaning, and its application in religious (theological), non-religious, terrorist, and military contexts. The efficiency of religious radicalization, particularly in various forms of radical Islam, heavily relies on the presence of this word. Jihad serves as justification for numerous terrorist and military actions undertaken by practitioners of radical Islamism. It is crucial to note that the misuse of terms such as Islam, Islamism, Jihadist, and similar, especially in Western contexts, can foster a negative understanding potentially leading to the perception of Islam as de facto "a religion of terrorism" (Younes et al., 2020). On the other hand, explicit refutations of the violent, militant, and terrorist use of the term jihad are relatively rare, both in speeches and even religious services, from Muslim clergy (Imams) and laymen.

(2.1) In brief, there is a *misuse* of the term *jihad* as an exclusively militant and terrorist concept by supporters of radical Islamism and Jihadism. There is a certain level of tolerance for this misuse within some Muslim communities, at least in certain EU member states, the UK, and surrounding countries with a significant Muslim population (Rajvanshi, 2023). Simultaneously, there is a *misunderstanding* of jihad by non-Muslim pro-Palestinians in the EU and other surrounding areas. This confusion leads to various cynical and paradoxical situations, such as counting and comparing civilian casualties between two sides in a conflict, one of which

exclusively targets civilians and uses its own civilians as human shields in the name of jihad (Schmitt, 2023). The paradox extends to instances like the support of Palestinians and Hamas by the European LGBTQ community, seemingly unaware of how Islam, in general, and Jihadists, in particular, treat homosexuals, lesbians, and similar groups, often resorting to various physical punishments and, in some cases, even death penalties (Abdelmoez, 2021).

The events detailed in the first month following the commencement of the Palestinian war against Israeli civilians, along with the civic actions by both non-Muslim and Muslim communities in the EU, provide clear evidence regarding (1). However, it is necessary to, at least briefly, mention the instances of misuse and misunderstanding in (2.1). The *misuse* will be highlighted through a concise conceptual analysis of jihad, emphasizing its theological misinterpretation and misuse across ideological, political, historical, and contemporary contexts. On the other hand, the *misunderstanding* of jihad does not require additional indication, as the presented instances appear to be evident.

2. Jihad: the word and concept in its religious, quasi-religious, military, and terrorist use

The phenomenon of jihad (from *jāhada* = exerted, and further from = *juhd*) as spreading the Islam and the belief in Allah all over the world, may be of pre-Islamic origin, namely Bedouin (Bedouin from Bedu = one who lives out in the desert). “In pre-Islamic Arabia, Bedouins...” (who were polytheistic with animal sacrifice practices, magic, and sorcery, but also worshiped God’s names i.e., Al-ilah (probably from old Babylonian *ilu* (*elu*) = deity (Oppenheim, 1960) as the possible origin of Allah) “...conducted raids against enemy tribes and settlements to collect spoils. While Islamic leaders instilled into the hearts of the warriors the belief in jihad as a holy war and *ghaza* (raids), the fundamental structure of this Bedouin warfare remained, (...) raiding to collect booty.” (Johnson, 2002). So, jihad itself perhaps has pre-Islamic origin.

It is interesting that pre-Islamic Bedouins and Jews collaborated in various economic and social situations over a long historical period (so, nowadays it should not be strange to see Bedouins serving in the Israel Army). Also, some suggest that “the phenomenon of jihad was introduced in Islam since Arab tribes were in constant wars among each other, and Islam raised the concept of war between-Muslims one level up to the concept of holy war against non-Muslims until the whole world becomes Muslim” (Khaduri, 1955). So, jihad is by definition global or at least tends to be globalized by any conquering religion. Of course, real globalization started decades ago. “Since September 11, memoirs, diaries, and interviews with jihadis clearly point to the bin Laden–Zawahiri connection as the driving force behind the formal birth of Al Qaeda and its strategic decision to take jihad global. (...) In contrast, Zawahiri was leader of

Tanzim al-Jihad, one of the oldest and deadliest existing jihadist organizations, and he became a leading theoretician of jihadism.” (Gerges, 2005: 119). But, how did this concept of jihad thing start?

In Qur’an, jihad is used in 28 places (4 times as a noun, a 24 times as a verb, and Mujahid as Jihadist is mentioned in 2 verses) (Ali, 1938). Dominant or non-combat use of jihad is in its religious sense as a religious belief, as an inner struggle against one’s passions, struggle against one’s sins, and a struggle to live in accordance with God’s will. Non-dominant or combat use has its various meanings spanning from combatting against him/herself (a believer), to combat non-religious and non-Muslim peoples. It is interesting that the meaning is sometimes close to religious apology (Latin *apologia*, Greek ἀπολογία) in terms of religious defence or justification of one’s religious beliefs and ways of life.

In the ḥadīth, which are attributed reports about what Muhammad said and did, of the “199 hadith references to jihad in the Bukhari collection of hadith, all assume that jihad means warfare” (see “Jihad”). However, Muhammad also said, “I cannot find anything” as meritorious as jihad; he further likened jihad to “praying ceaselessly and fasting continuously”. So, again there is the difference between religious and military use of Jihad, but there is a dominance of military meaning over religious meaning compared to Qur’an. The further difference, not always accepted by Muslims, is the one between “greater” and “lesser” jihad meaning that the first is inner struggle against sinful behaviour (religious and non-military sense), and the second has explicit military sense. Most classical texts use jihad only in military sense. There is also the difference between defensive and offensive jihad (Rodriguez, 2015). Perhaps the most important element of offensive jihad regards the rules that “prohibit attacking or molesting non-combatants, which include women, children under the age of puberty, elderly men, people with disabilities and those who are sick” (Al-Dawoody, 2011 :78, Christie 2015 *The Book of Jihad of ,Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami*, Bonney, 2004, Bonner, 2006), the practice which is common among Islamic terrorists and was a major practice in the 2023 attack of Hamas on Israel as the most recent example. There are of course perhaps deeper differences in understanding jihad in Sunni Islam and in Shī’a Islam, and Islamist and Jihadist movements are more frequent in the first one.

Further difference is found in Sufism, namely, jihad of the hearth (i.e., greater jihad), jihad of the tongue (speaking truth), jihad of the hand (doing what is right, and combating injustice), and jihad of the sword (armed fighting in a holy war), which is a dominant interpretation of jihad by the Muslim Brotherhood without paying too much attention to previous meanings. Muslim Brotherhood is a Sunni Islamist organization founded in Egypt in 1928. It started as a movement aiming at English colonial rule, and ended as a political party after legalization in 2011. Political violence at its core means assassinations, terrorist activities, and military combat (Jalal, 2009). Major

state backers of Muslim Brotherhood are Qatar and Turkey, and as of 2013 it has been proclaimed as a terrorist organization in Bahrain, Egypt, Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (see “Muslim Brotherhood”). This group has had a constant involvement into Palestinian-Israeli clashes and wars starting from 1947.

The situation is similar for other Muslim militant organizations that use mostly terrorist forms of combat, such as Hamas, which developed from Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah (The Islamic Jihad Organization), etc. Most of them are directly connected or at least inspired by Iranian regime. Many of them (clergy, imams, scholars, military, and political leadership) use jihad almost exclusively in combat and military sense of the word. “However, some Muslims, including scholars like al-Qaradawi and Sayyid Tantawi, denounced Islamic terrorist attacks against civilians, seeing them as contrary to rules of jihad that prohibit targeting non-combatants.” (Broucek, 2014). Yet, militant interpretation of jihad (lesser and offensive with targeting civilians, and civilian infrastructure) is far more dominant in contemporary Islam.

One can observe how a term that primarily signifies religious inner struggle against one’s sinful behaviours transforms into a term primarily associated with military action against non-Muslims. As elucidated by Peters (2015: 3), “The primary aim of jihad as warfare is not the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam by force, but rather the expansion and defense of the Islamic state.” Additionally, the initial stagnation of early Islamic expansion led to a more spiritually oriented understanding of jihad, emphasizing defensive rather than offensive actions. Over time, this interpretation shifted once more towards a more militant meaning. It appears that the interpretation of jihad is intricately tied to the contemporary political landscape within Islam and its relationship with external political and military circumstances, including the waves of its spreading and the outcomes of ongoing battles with non-Muslims.

(2.2) To sum it up, the use of the word and concept of jihad, and its practical application, appears to be driven instrumentally and pragmatically. It adapted based on the ever-changing historical, political, military, and international landscape that Islam found itself in during different periods and circumstances. For instance, after each expansion followed by stagnation caused by external forces, jihad was described differently – shifting from the militant “jihad of the sword” to emphasizing the more spiritual “jihad of the heart.” While pragmatism in religion to elucidate beliefs and actions is generally positive, here, its misuse in the manipulation of religious beliefs and actions is likely something negative (Krkač, 2002). The decentralized structure of authority in Islam, lacking control by superior instances, allowed for the freedom of various descriptions of jihad by different individuals with varying levels of theological education. Therefore, the contemporary misuse of jihad in the 21st century, including the 2023 Palestinian-Israel war, is not a novel phenomenon. Instead, it is a continuation of a long history of such misuses dating back to the

first centuries of Islam. In this line of descriptions, the dominant understanding of and justification for terrorist actions predominantly revolve around militant or combat jihad. Ironically, this stands as a rare exception to the rule, considering that the term Islam is connected to the verb “salama,” related to concepts of submission, safety, and peace.

Now, considering the facts presented in the previous sections and the potential misuse of jihad at least hinted at here, let us look into the realm of misunderstanding. It is crucial to recognize that, despite being perhaps minor; interpretations of jihad as non-violent still exist (see Stephan 2009). If this misuse has its roots in the theological and legal history of Islam and is actively employed by radical Islamists and Jihadists, the core of misunderstanding lies in non-Muslims accepting this misused interpretation as the sole correct meaning and practical application in a military sense. In other words, thinking that this is the only and correct meaning, use, and practical militant application of jihad constitutes the essence of misunderstanding.

What is left to clarify are the facts surrounding the probability of conducting jihad in Europe, specifically in the EU. The misuse by Muslims in the EU and the misunderstanding by non-Muslims in the EU, by themselves, are not necessary and sufficient conditions for radicalization leading to terrorist activities (i.e., asymmetrical warfare). Various conditions must align for such radicalization to occur, including the presence of radicals in society, reaching a critical number, their ability to form groups, mobilize others, and take actions. If all these conditions were met, there would likely be a significantly higher number of terrorist attacks in the EU than the current count, although it is essential to acknowledge that many attacks are prevented, and others may be in the planning stages.

3. Jihadists and Jihadism of Europe

Let us analyse the concepts of jihadism, Europe, and jihadism in Europe. Firstly, “Jihadism is a term coined to label militant Islamic movements perceived as existentially threatening to the West. It encompasses various insurgent Islamic extremist, militant Islamist, and terrorist individuals and organizations whose ideologies center around the Islamic notion of jihad.” (Firestone 2012; Badara, and Nagata 2017)

Secondly, when we say Europe, we’re primarily referring to the EU along with Switzerland, Norway, the UK, and Ukraine, excluding EU candidate states, especially in the Balkan region, where there’s a notable Muslim and Islamic radical presence, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kohlmann 2004). So, Europe is seen as an economic, monetary, and political union rather than a purely geographic or historical region. Notably, since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (and arguably since 2014), the Russian Federation is not considered part of Europe, except in geographical terms, which we will deem irrelevant here.

Thirdly, let us question jihadism in Europe. It is not just a theoretical concern; it is a contemporary and ongoing physical reality (Bakker 2006, Phares 2008, Baudon 2023). There are individuals who identify as jihadists in Europe, primarily Muslims from the first or second generation of immigrants from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) and the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine) (Bakker 2006). In a span of just four years, from 2002 to 2006, there were at least 31 major cases of jihadist terrorist attacks in Europe, with 28 identified networks (Bakker 2006: 18-29). Here is a snapshot of the average Muslim jihadist in Europe: “belonging to lower and middle classes, with over 90% having only completed secondary education, at least one-third being employed as unskilled workers, and every other person having a criminal record, among other traits” (Bakker 2006: 36-42). These details are not just plucked from thin air; they are corroborated by other independent sources (Khosrokhavar 2021, Europol 2023). However, it is noteworthy that there was a noticeable reduction in the number of jihadist terrorist attacks in the period from 2020 to 2023.

Edwin Bakker concludes with the following: “Nonetheless, there are a number of, more or less, common traits. A clear majority of them are from Arab countries and have roots especially in North Africa (mainly Algeria and Morocco). Many of these first, second or third generation immigrants also have in common that they come from the lower strata of society. A strikingly high number of persons had a criminal record; at least a quarter of the sample. Finally, it should be noted that almost all jihadi terrorists in Europe are male, and that many of them relate to each other through kinship or friendship.” (Bakker 2006)

(2.3) Let us explore the territory of probability here. There is a noteworthy chance that jihadists in Europe have been getting their hands dirty in pro-Palestinian protests across the continent since the onset of the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli war. Whether they have been physically there, pulling strings from behind the scenes, using terrorist symbols during the protest, advocating for jihad and a Europe Caliphate, or even sparking violence in what is supposed to be a non-violent peace protest – all these scenarios are on the table. But here is the point: crunching the numbers to gauge the probability of such events is like navigating a minefield. Why? Well, a ton of data on current events is locked up tighter than Fort Knox, thanks to various security services safeguarding national interests. Even if one managed to lay their hands on some data for probability calculations, even for some of scientific research, this would be irresponsible for obvious security reasons.

Let us dissect an intriguing hypothesis. Here is the dig in (2.3): terrorist and jihadist attacks in Europe have been as rare as a unicorn sighting since the kick-off of the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli war. We are talking about just two attacks so far in 2023, and maybe a couple more stopped before turning into actual attacks. Now, here is where it gets interesting – terrorist attacks would essentially be shooting themselves in the foot.

This is so because it would turn the public opinion against jihadists and, by extension, against Palestinians, who are currently enjoying some favourable support from the EU (and global) public.

So, for the moment, launching such attacks would be counterproductive for the terrorists, hence the limited number. But there is a twist here. There is a chance we might see a surge in jihadist attacks in Europe down the line due to various factors (think waning support from non-Muslims, the festive season from Advent to Saint Sylvester, or Olympic Games in Paris or if Israel's army makes new moves in the Gaza Strip which they actually did, etc.). However, researching into these possibilities and probabilities is a bit out of our scope in the present research. So far, this analysis of Jihadism in the EU seems to be necessary and sufficient for drawing the minimal and hopefully correct conclusion.

Protester-shield model and concluding remarks

Protester-shield model

So far, three key points have been laid out. In (1), we have established that pro-Palestinian protests in the EU during 2023 are a well-documented fact. These protests involve a mix of Muslim and non-Muslim participants. Notably, Muslim protesters are using jihadist symbols, creating paradoxes where they, by employing these symbols, seemingly support the *misuse* of jihad by supporting various terrorist organizations. On the flip side, non-Muslim protesters are generally against Muslim terrorism but oddly *misunderstand* and *tolerate* the same symbols used by Muslim protesters. Moving on to (2.1), there's a concerning tolerance within the European Muslim community toward the *misuse* of jihad and jihadist symbols, evidenced by a lack of counter-protests. Additionally, a certain level of cynicism regarding civilian victims on both sides has become an accepted fact. In (2.2), we have looked into the analysis of the potential origin and reality of the misuse of jihad in Islam, revealing that its use has been *pragmatic* and dependent on historical, political, military, and international contexts. Lastly, in (2.3), we have confirmed the presence of jihadists in Europe and raised the probability that some may be connected to Muslim protesters, blurring the lines between Palestinian civilians and terrorists from organizations like Hamas, ISIS, Hezbollah, and others. There is a possible way to describe what was said in (2.1), (2.2), and (2.3).

(3) PROTESTER-SHIELD MODEL. If (2.1)–(2.3) are correct, then we have a good working description of the paradoxes established in (1-1.1) in terms of something that can be called a *protester-shield model* (3.1–3.2)

(3.1) PROTESTER-SHIELD TECHNIQUE. Pro-Palestine protesters in the EU are protesting for peace, humanitarian aid for Palestinian civilians since they are not

equal to Hamas, and at the same time, the majority of them are *tolerating* some of them who are in the same protest using symbols of terrorist organizations, e.g., Hamas, and for jihad, and cheering for European Caliphate. So, some protesters are using the humanitarian pro-civilian protests to promote terrorist organizations responsible not only for attacks on Israeli civilians, but also for many collateral civilian victims of Israeli attacks since Hamas is using their own civilians as their own human shield, and for jihad against Europe. What these Muslim protesters are doing is in principle a practical *misuse* of the concept of jihad, i.e., taking it strictly in militant sense which is as such explicated by majority of terrorist organizations whose symbols they use during protests. They are using the majority of Muslim and non-Muslim protesters as a kind of *protester-shield* (parallel to *human shield* used by Hamas) to propagate terrorist organizations. Non-Muslim protesters manifest a different paradox, namely, they *misunderstand* and *tolerate* the *misuse* of jihad by some Muslim protesters, and by thinking that together with them they are protesting for ceasefire, peace, and civilians of Gaza Strip, they are in fact part of the protests which propagate terrorist organizations, jihad against Europe, and Europe Caliphate. The fact is that among protesters there are rare to no situations in which some ask others to remove flags and other symbols of terrorist organizations (in some EU member states this is done by the police); therefore, it seems that the majority of protesters *tolerate* this phenomenon. In principle, Muslim protesters *misuse* the peace protests and *misuse* jihad, and non-Muslim protesters *misunderstand* and *tolerate* this misuse as *the only* means for reaching pro-Palestinian ends. It is essentially a paradoxical action: in case of Muslim protesters to protest for peace, and at the same time to protest for war; to protest for peace and to call for previously misinterpreted concept of war (jihad); and in case of non-Muslim protesters to be *intolerant* of supporting terrorist, and military actions (jihad) and to *tolerate* calls for such terrorist actions (at least in terms of support). It is highly probable that the protester-shield technique is inspired by human-shield technique used by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

(3.2) PROTESTER-SHIELD EXAMPLE. The idea of *protester-shield* as an example of paradox in *misuse* and *misunderstanding* and *tolerating* the misuse is described quite vividly by Piatov and Lahav.

- F. Piatov writes the following in *Bild*: “Islamist and anti-Semitic demonstrations have been shaking the country for days. The demonstration in Essen is particularly frightening. The most radical Islamists met there under the pretext of solidarity with Gaza, then the escalation: They called for the proclamation of the caliphate in Germany and waved flags reminiscent of ISIS and the Taliban. “Allahu Akbar,” was heard thousands of times through the city center.” (Piatov 2023)

Piatov interviewed Islamist expert Eran Lahav who said:

- “The terrorists fertilize each other,” explains Lahav. “Hamas was inspired by ISIS to launch this attack on Israel. Now ISIS is using the Hamas attack to gain new followers and mobilize their members.” (...)

- He [Lahav] warns: “ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other groups are already calling on social networks to rebel against Jews and Christians.” They are also explicitly directed against Christians, whom they refer to as “Crusaders”. (...) “Listen to what is being shouted at the demonstrations in Germany. Yes, you hear “Free Palestine”. But there is more. They shout ‘Takbir’ and ‘Allahu Akbar,’” says Lahav. “In doing so, they make it clear that for them it is not a Palestinian war, but an Islamic war. For them, Israel is only the first step in this war. Israel is the front line of this war and the rest will follow.” (Piatov 2023)

The protester-shield model (3) helps to describe discussed paradoxes, and to understand them as paradoxes. This model does not resolve them. Perhaps they cannot be resolved with everything else staying the same. Namely, although there are *justifications* of actions by both sides included in pro-Palestinian protests in the EU (for Muslim protesters protesting for terrorist organizations, jihad in Europe (via *misused* concept of jihad), and Europe Caliphate is a natural progression starting with protesting for Gaza Strip civilians, and for non-Muslim protesters’ *toleration* of such protests by Muslim protesters is the only way to protest for ceasefire, peaceful and humanitarian solutions of the war, against Western establishment (Israel being a part of it), and for, as they see it, in principle left-wing militant *freedom fighters* (Hamas) and not *terrorists*), these are hardly good justifications, rather rationalizations.

Perhaps these paradoxes (in form of various dilemmas) cannot be resolved because:

- jihad cannot be militant and peaceful at the same time,
- protests cannot be for peace and for war at the same time,
- one cannot be intolerant of terrorism and at the same time tolerant of terrorism.

One cannot have both. One thing must be negated in order to affirm the other one. Protesters do not seem to abolish any; therefore, their beliefs, and actions are in principle contradictory, paradoxical, and irrational. Additionally, they seem to be essentially anti-democratic which is ironic because they (both groups) are exercising their democratic rights in democratic states to propagate essentially non-democratic goals.

Whether these *misuses*, *misunderstandings* and *toleration of misuses* intentional, premeditated, and planned or not is not the topic of the present research (although any misuse implies intention or even premeditation, it is possible that radicalized protesters misuse jihad *automatically* (unconsciously); they simply do not know of any other way; see Jayakumar 2019 on radicalization levels). Generally speaking, it seems that, given all the differences, this falls under the common *misuse* of essentially religious non-violent concepts and practices for quasi-religious, military, economic, ideological, and political purposes. In this case this was described in one of its current examples (pro-Palestinian protests by Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe) in one religion (Islam).

Concluding remarks

On the one hand, such *misuse* of religion is known in all *conquering religions* and most of their denominations, especially in Christianity (in Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodox Christianity; see Krkač 2024 *forthcoming*) and in Islam. It is less known that similar *misuse* of religion in quasi-religious, military and other purposes is also known in some archaic religions, religions of pre-Columbian Central and South Americas, in Hinduism, Buddhism (fighting each other), etc. Here one should differentiate between intra-religious fights from inter-religious fights (Krkač, 2022).

On the other hand, there are *non-conquering religions* as well, which simply do not care about their own numbers and numbers of others (such are for example Old Norse religion (e.g., Vikings did not force their religion on others, while later on Christian-Vikings forced Christianity on other Vikings), and Old Slavic religions in Europe, Indian primordial religions in North America, Shinto in Japan, and Judaism. Where there is no *conquering goal* of religion, there is lower probability of misuse of religious beliefs for non-religious goals, i.e., perhaps the seed of all misuses of religions lies in their conquering nature, and if such nature is abandoned, there would be no misuses of such religions.

Certainly, all those who misuse religion for political purposes are the most responsible. But they could not do that if religious people themselves were aware of potential misuse and educated themselves in their religion and threats to religion by profane / civil authorities and therefore at least part of the responsibility lies with those who allow themselves to be misused. For many people in the world, religion may not be a source of knowledge, but it is certainly a source of comfort in the most difficult moments of life, so allowing that source of comfort to be misused for non-religious purposes is all the worse for everyone.

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Model prosvjedničkog štita Zlouporaba Džihada muslimanskih prosvjednika i tolerancija te zlouporabe nemuslimanskih prosvjednika u prosvjedima za Palestinu u EU

Sažetak

U ovom radu autor ispituje mogućnosti zlouporabe džihada od strane europskih muslimana (od kojih su neki džihadisti ili su motivirani džihadistima) i nerazumijevanje (toleriranje) ove zlouporabe džihada od strane europskih ne-muslimana, dok obje strane sudjeluju u prosvjedima za Palestinu u Europi, što stvara paradoksalne situacije za jedne i druge. Ne-muslimani su protiv militantnog džihadističkog simbolizma, no istovremeno toleriraju taj simbolizam. Kako bi analizirali ovaj paradoks, poduzeta su tri koraka. U prvome dijelu navodi se opis i stupnjevi paradoksa. U drugome dijelu, data su tri elementa: opis okolnosti u Europi nakon palestinskog napada na Izrael 7. Listopada 2023., elementi moguće zlouporabe džihada (od strane džihadista), te opis džihada i džihadizma u Europi. U trećem dijelu izvodi se zaključak iz prethodnih premisa. Budući da je džihadizam činjenica u Europi kao što su i teroristički napadi džihadista, postoji mogućnost pa čak i vjerojatnost da su džihadisti, zloupotrebjavajući džihad, povezani s muslimanima među prosvjednicima za Palestinu u Europi, što stvara paradoksalnu situaciju za ne-muslimanske članove prosvjednika za Palestinu u Europi, zbog toga što su istovremeno protiv džihada i džihadističkog terorizma (Hamas) i za Palestinu (civile).

Ključne riječi: džihad, džihadizam, Europa, muslimani, ne-muslimani, prosvjedi za Palestinu 2023.