TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE IN ISLAM
Abstract - PhD Thesis

Summary

Motivation

Nowadays, is increasingly promoted tolerance as a unifying and peacemaking principle, especially in terms of religious and ethnic, because everywhere in the world we unfortunately see, interethnic and interreligious conflicts. We find that most of this kind of conflicts occurs in regions predominantly Muslim and these conflicts are multiplying and even spreading to other areas of the world where Muslims, though a minority, are increasing.

To illustrate it, although it passed more than ten years, we still have fresh in memory infamous terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 at World Trade Center, committed by members of the Islamist terrorist network Al-Qaeda, but also those of Madrid (March 11, 2004) and London (July 7, 2005), where thousands of innocent people died. Moreover, we cannot overlook the humiliating and full of suffering situation of Christians in Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria and, more recently, Syria and discrimination faced by the majority of Muslim countries.

The natural question arising from this is: is it Islam itself the source of intolerance and religious violence or some Islamic fundamentalist groups who claim to represent the official and authentic Islam, are the main factor underlying these reprehensible acts?

Although it has been and still is written a lot about these issues, because the subject is topical and very interesting, however, without claiming exhaustive approach, we try to answer the above question, even more that locally has never been addressed this issue so complex.

Current state of research, updating and purpose of thesis

After researching a complex and rich bibliography by Muslim and non-Muslim authors, we see two major attitudes about Islam: one of the Muslim scholars[1], which supports high degree of tolerance of Islam, and comparing it with other religions, especially Christianity, which showed very intolerant of Hebrew and Muslims, especially in the Middle Ages, and one of the "others", especially Westerners[2], which contrary, are lifting the increased level of violence and intolerance of Islam compared to other religions.

In addition, we find a "middle" attitude, present even in some renowned Orientalists and Western islamologists[3], who are trying to reconcile the two above: Islam itself promotes tolerance and peace, but along Islamic history until today, there have been periods, as in Christianity, when the Muslim leaders were removed from the essential message of Islam and for more political and economic reasons, had extreme attitudes towards those of other religions, especially Christian and Hebrew subjects, characterized by intolerance and violence.

The theme of this thesis is therefore highly topical, especially since many of the events in the Islamic world, which characterizes our thesis topics are contemporary with us, as exacerbation of Islamic fanaticism and extremism, multiplying terrorist Islamic attacks, major political changes in the Arab world characterized by totalitarian regimes and dictatorships in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria etc., armed conflicts between Muslim-majority countries and Israel or Western powers and, above all, sufferings and humiliations faced by Christians (all denominations) and those of other religions than Islam in Muslim-majority lands.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the extent to which Islam is the cause or source of these events, the relationship between Islam and other religions, if Muslims are able to relate peacefully

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[1] We mention here: Maher Y Abu-Munshar, Şeich Ahmad Al-Hasin, Arshad Khan, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Amir Saikal, Harun Yahya etc.

[2] Of these, we mention Anne-Marie Delcambre, Raphael Israeli, Bat Ye'or, Robert Spencer, Aaron Tyler, Yohanan Friedmann, Timothy George, Archimandrite Antim Nica etc. We emphasize that among Muslims there are critics of Islam, which wants a reform of the meaning of cultural enlightenment and openness to modernity and democracy, as happened in European and Western Christian world in general. Of these, we give an example Bassam Tibi, Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Farag Foda etc.

[3] Among them, the most representative are: Karen Armstrong, Bernard Lewis, Henri Lammens etc.

and tolerant with "others" and if they can fully integrate into non-Muslim societies, especially in the West.

The Method

In our analysis we used the most important source of Islam, the Koran, translated in Romanian and English, but also a rich literature consisting in works, dictionaries, encyclopedias, articles, local and international media information, as well as Internet.

In our analysis approach, methods fluctuated from an analysis of historical perspective of Islam, to a systematic and comparative analysis of Islamic doctrine in relation to other religions (and here we consider in this work studied religions: Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and religions of Africa). We must emphasize that it isn't missing a critical attitude to Islam from a Christian perspective. For example, when it comes to tolerance or intolerance promoted by Islam against non-Muslims, we consider the meaning of tolerance by Christian's point of view.

A Short framework of the thesis

This paper is structured in three parts, preceded by an introduction and finalized by conclusions. The three parts totals seven chapters, which includes in turn a variety of sections.

In the first part of the thesis, called *"Islam and tolerance",* which contains three chapters, we examined the concept of religious tolerance in Islamic perspective. From the first chapter, entitled *"Islam - the religion of peace and tolerance?",* I pointed rejection of the Muslim scholars to "label" made by Western Islam as "religious intolerance,"[4] "intolerance"[5] or "terror". Rather, they consider Islam as "the embodiment of tolerance"[6] that promotes "peace" (*salam*), from which derives the name of religion, "mercy" (*rahma*), which is the main attribute of Allah and even "love" (*muhibba*) for all people. These are all qualities of tolerance.

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[4] Anne–Marie DELCAMBRE, *Inside Islam,* Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 2005, p. 8; cf. Arshad KHAN, *Islam, Muslims, and America. Understanding the Basis of Their Conflict,* Algora Publishing, New York, 2003, p. 98.
[5] Robert SPENCER, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades),* Regnery Publishing, INC, Washington, 2005, p. 47.
[6] Nadeem Abdul HAMID, „The Problem with Interfaith", în: *Islâmic Perspective on the Interfaith Movement,* Connecticut Council of Masajid, Inc., Hamden, 2001, p. 5.

Also in *the first chapter,* we further analyze the manifestation of Islamic tolerance in history, till now, researching first Islamic sources, which is the source and model of Muslim behavior in society towards the "other". Also, we highlight how exactly was *dhimmi* status granted to "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) and which were this status criteria.

In *the second chapter* we approach the relationship of Islam with monotheistic religions, respectively Christianity and Judaism, its location in relation to this, availability of Islam to interreligious dialogue and items that can be common ground for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. We observe here the reserve or reluctance that Muslims have to interreligious dialogue: once because of suspicions and prejudices that exist on both sides, on the other hand because of the superior attitude which Islam has towards other religions.

In *the third chapter* we extend our analysis of the relationship of Islam to other religions in the world, namely Buddhism and Hinduism and Africa region, and the possibility of a dialogue between them, if not religious, at least intercultural.

In *the second part* of the thesis, entitled *"Islam and intolerance",* which contains two chapters, we attempt an analysis of Islamic intolerance. Thus, in *the fourth chapter,* we take a "snapshot" of the Islamic religion in order to find the causes of violence from Islamic theology, from its sources, from the life of "Prophet" and from the historical development of Islam. Here we highlight the situation of Christians and Jews in Muslim area (*Dār al-Islām*), which had a discriminatory status, with humiliating restrictions.

In *the fifth chapter* we show the difference between the *Islamic religion* (*Islām*), defined as a strictly cultural and religious reality with non-military character, *Islamism* (*islāmiyyah*), which represents a highly politicized form of Islam (*Islamic siyāsī,* translated as "political Islam"), considered the fundamentalist face of Islam oriented to autoconservatorism and *fundamentalist groups* and the relationship of those with Islam. Our conclusion at this chapter is that although there is a difference of degree between Islam and Islamism, in essence Islam is about the same from the beginning.

Finally, in the last part of the paper, called *"Islam between tolerance and intolerance",* which extends over two chapters, we resort to the analyze the Muslim communities from Islamic diaspora (in *the sixth chapter*), especially in Europe and America, and their relations with the rest of the Muslim world, but also with "extra-Islamic" spaces, in which they are living. In our analysis, we noticed

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a difference in perception between Europeans and Americans against Muslims from their societies. If Europeans perceive more in ethnically and culturally, Americans (U.S.) perceive more in religious. From this perspective, the European Islamophobia, which arises as a reaction to social, ethnic and cultural changes occurring by the presence of Muslims in an increasing number in their societies differ from the American type, as a reaction of fundamentalists evangelical Christians and Zionists against Muslims in American society.

Islamophobia, especially in Europe, is manifested by rejection or marginalization of Muslim communities here, which in turn isolate themselves by rejecting Western values like democracy, tolerance, freedom of expression, human rights etc. This self-isolation and marginalization of Muslims in the West is a real threat to security in the area, in that some Muslim who have relations with fundamentalist groups from their countries of origin, are involved in terrorist acts.

In *the last chapter (the seventh)* we make an assessment of the "center interreligious conflict," which is the land of Palestine and we also highlight the main causes of this conflict, which is considered to be one with global and eschatological meanings. What holds our attention in this final part of the thesis is the situation of Christians in the area, mostly of Palestinian Arab ethnicity that although the target of religious discrimination by Muslims, yet they are united with the Palestinian cause, which is engaged in fighting with the Israeli enemy on the one hand and his allies (U.S. and major European powers) on the other.

This conflict, which at first sight has a political character, develops into a religious one. The fight is against the Jews still consider by the Quran as Allah's enemies and, by extension, against their allies, Americans and Europeans "crusaders", which support the Israelis. For these reasons, the entire West is called the "Great Satan" that by the "values" of its superiority in terms of the material, political and armed seeks to "subdue" and to "profane" Muslim societies. Involvement of Western powers in the internal politics of Muslim countries, which are opera of Western colonialism, biased economic policy of the U.S. in the Middle East and Western support for Israel in its policy of territorial expansion in the Palestinian are the source of "hate theology" of Muslims and "Islamic rage" against "others".

In conclusion, we find that while Islam strongly promotes the principle of religious tolerance towards non-Muslims, this

tolerance has a restrictive, limited to non-Muslims from the "Koranic sketch", meaning those considered "People of the Book". Also, this type of Islamic tolerance is considered by those who "support" it, as a humiliating, discriminatory and interested one. Its purpose is to highlight the superiority of "Islam" to religious "market" and even make it the only religion in the world. If by tolerance we mean freedom from discrimination, then, Islam certainly was and it is intolerant, and this intolerance is required by doctrine and law and applied by popular consent[7].

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