

## Europe, Israel and the Challenge of Radical Islam

Wednesday, February 18, 2015

### Institute of International Relations Prague

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*In his lecture, Dr. Dan Schueftan offered a critical account of radicalism in the context of Islam, and where Europe and Israel stand on this issue.*

Dr. Schueftan started by highlighting the fact that radicalism is salient but not exclusive among Arabs. Islamic radicalism is only one brand of radicalism, only perhaps more established than the others. He attributed the popularity of radicalism in the Arab world to the fact that it is now deeply rooted in the culture, as manifested in the last 200 years of recent history. The sense of failure perceived by none other than the Arabs themselves is one of the major reasons behind this need for radicalism.

According to Dr. Schueftan, Arabs are brought up to believe that they are “destined for greatness”. However, referring to the United Nations’ Human Development Reports, he stated that Arab countries continue to lag behind other regions in terms of human development progress. Seeing the obvious gap between what should be the state of affairs and what really is creates a lot of disillusion and frustration, which in turn opens the way to radicalism. A revolutionary rather than evolutionary way out becomes preferred as a means to fulfill promises and achieve immediate results.

Dr. Schueftan deemed the lack of a strong “immune system” against radicals a major issue faced by non-radicals in the Arab world. Citing the Six Day War in 1967 as an example, he affirmed that wars are sometimes necessary. In the Six Day War, instead of waiting to be attacked, the Israelis managed to defeat Syria, Jordan, and Egypt in exchange for peace in their country. However, Dr. Schueftan found the approval of Islamic radicalism from the Arab world “dangerous”, as it raises the question of whether the Arab society is able to withstand the power of radicals. While radicals use Islam as a vehicle to promote radicalism, Dr. Schueftan stressed that the Arab society must be strong enough to stand against it.

Dr. Schueftan noted that Europe and Israel have reacted rather differently in response to the prevalence of radical Islam. While Israel is in close proximity to the threats and is therefore sufficiently alarmed, Europe seems to be under the illusion that pluralism could be boundless. Dr. Schueftan explained that Europe is used to the successful assimilation of different peoples, which renders it less prepared for the challenges brought by Islamic radicalism.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Schueftan concluded by quoting Theodore Roosevelt: “Speak softly and carry a big stick.” This quote serves as a reminder that violence could be kept at a minimum with credible preparation for it.

Dr. Schueftan then took questions from the audience in the subsequent discussion. Much of it revolved around radicalism and the extent of its influence in different cultural contexts, including those of Russia, Israel, Saudi Arabia and North Africa.