

Study: "The role of the different political and military factions in the conflicts of the broader Middle East and the EU attitude towards them"

Summary:

With so many different Islamic political and military groups making claim to Islamic identity in the broader Middle East, it is easy to paint them all with the same brush.

Doing so, however, grossly oversimplifies the situation. Labelling all groups and the roles they play indiscriminately as 'terrorists', 'extremists' and 'fundamentalists' not only serves a grave injustice to the very noble causes some of these groups are struggling for, but also makes the search for a solution to the emergence of hostile groups, such as ISIS, that much harder as we fail to understand the root causes of the problem.

Furthermore, 'lumping' all of these groups together creates a sense that there exists one monolithic Islamic body that comes as a threat to the West. This aptly serves the common, yet flawed and dangerous, narrative that Islam and the West are at war with one another.

Unfortunately, the current political and media narrative lazily fails to distinguish between different Islamic groups and, as a result, both fuels this Islam versus the West agenda and serves to isolate and essentially create enemies with those that are tolerant, peaceful and social.

Such propaganda proves unhealthy as it erodes relations between communities here in Europe. Muslim minorities feel vulnerable, misunderstood and targeted whilst the mainstream are hurled into a state of fear of some

impending terrorist threat amongst them. The result is a growing tension that leads to radicalisation as Muslim youth are led to find solace in extremist groups and the mainstream community turn ever more right wing. Governments have handled the situation poorly with a series of knee-jerk reactions that have only frustrated and polarised communities further.

I propose that the EU launches a comprehensive investigation into the differences that mark the roles these groups play so that the European narrative is better informed, avoids unjustly labelling groups that deserve better and shapes a better basis for dialogue between the Muslim and Western worlds.

The study would be followed by:

- an exchange of views at a public hearing organised by SEDE Committee, and
- SEDE's own-initiative report addressing the Commission, the Council and key international stakeholders.