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Turbaned princes, magic carpets, and other Oriental topoi thrive in computer and video games, apparently because stereotypes of the Orient translate easily into high sales (Reichmuth and Werner, p.46). While it may not be surprising that pashas and djinns appeal to Western tastes, it is harder to understand the utilization of equally archaic stereotypes by Pope Benedict XVI in his 12 September speech in Regensburg. In response to angry reactions to his speech, the Pope stressed that the hostile views about Islam expressed by the Byzantine emperor he had cited did not coincide with his own, suggesting that he personally did not equate Islam with violence. Ironically, the written version of his speech, mentions violence only in relation to Islam, and Islam only in relation to violence. Furthermore, the topic of his lecture was not violence per se but the connection between Christian faith and reason. His reference to Islam was meant as an example of what can happen when reason is removed from faith. Violence and lack of reason are, of course, two key tropes in Orientalizing discourses. Employing those highly loaded tropes in a lecture that ostensibly aims to augment inter-religious dialogue is not only counterproductive but un-reasonable.

The incident underlines the need to be attentive to the labels, categories, and concepts we employ in our speech and writing. We cannot communicate without terms, but their unreflective use may easily reinforce their stereotypic associations preventing insight into their deeper significances. The main theme of this issue, "Shades of Islamism," points at the need to reach beyond labels to see the various dimensions of what we categorize "Islamism," without discarding the term itself. In many media reports Islamists are per definition depicted as extremists and anti-modernists, and associated with violence and terrorism. By tracing the development of thought in the writings of important Islamist leaders, we cannot but recognize the modern qualities of their thinking, even while disagreeing with their conclusions (Ahmad, p.12; Reinbold, p.14). Likewise, when examining more closely the resentment expressed by most Muslims in the Middle East, it becomes apparent that radical Muslims do not necessarily reject democracy, liberty, or modernity, but rather the double standards of Western political projects and the debasement of moral values (Esposito, p.6). Often, it seems, it is not simply Islamist ideology that is attracting growing support, but rather the way these ideologies are translated into social and political action (Meijer, p.16).

The societal relevance of such movements means that they cannot and should not be ignored in any attempt to promote democratization in the Middle East (Brusse and Schoonenboom, p.8). The political costs of entering the mainstream political arena have been conspicuous in the case of Hizbullah whose imprudent decision to kidnap Israeli soldiers seemed, at least partly, inspired by the wish to restore its authority as militant movement (Alagha, p.36). The retaliation that followed demonstrated that we should not only think about whether states should engage in a dialogue with Islamists or

not, but also whether conditions are present for Islamist movements to talk with (foreign) governments. In Uzbekistan for example, the government practice of labelling every grass-root organization a terrorist organization has prevented any form of dialogue and has caused a general confusion of what terrorism might actually be (Fumagalli, p.28); we may easily note parallels in other contexts.

By stressing the different shades, tints, and nuances of an umbrella concept like Islamism we do not have the illusion that those who are dependent on black and white images will change their opinions. Labels are simply too important for fostering political agendas and the creation of a collective enemy. In his article, Devji shows how, in its self-declared War on Terror, the US government employs the label "terrorist" not only to boost its own legitimacy, but also to classify its adversaries as "criminal-like" and, on those grounds, deprive them of rights (p.30). In cases where the relation between labelling techniques and the reality unfolding on the ground becomes increasingly obscure, it is often insightful to shift from academic to artistic representations of reality. By portraying his dearest family members as "terrorists," the artist Hassanzadeh effectively challenges the meaning of this label in an attempt to reclaim the right of self-representation (Shatanawi, p.54). Contributions to this *ISIM Review* ultimately demonstrate the importance of challenging dominant webs of signification as a means to maintaining our independence and as a reasonable prerequisite for critical analyses of the world we live in.

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