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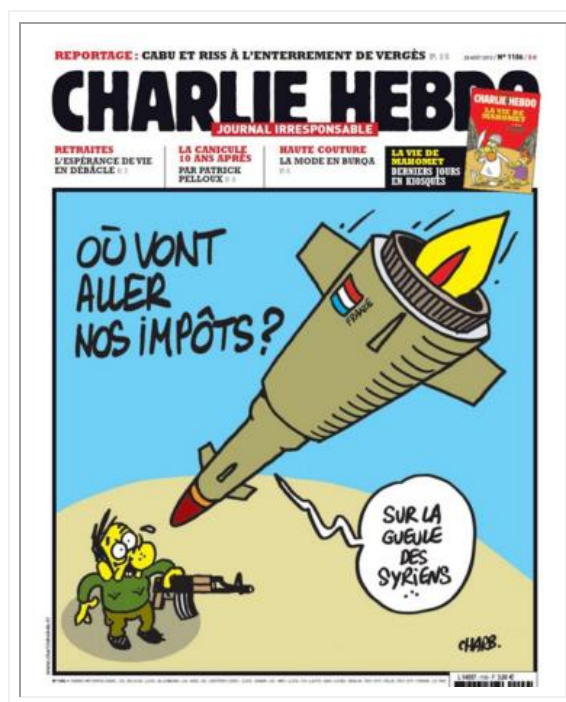
Samir Amin on the Charlie Hebdo Murders:
Imperialism and International Terrorism
by Giuseppe Acconcia

The Western errors and neo-liberal damages: Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi knew how to contain the Islamist drift, but they were slaughtered. In Libya, Paris and Washington have it all wrong.

We reached Samir Amin -- philosopher, economist, and director of the [Third World Forum](#) based in Dakar -- in Paris by phone, to ask for comment on the attack on the editorial staff of [Charlie Hebdo](#).

Why did the terrorists strike so hard at the heart of Europe?

It is a direct result of Western policy in Libya. In particular, southern Libya has become a huge supply base. That region is strategic for France -- without it the French army would not be able to intervene in the Sahel. I will say more. I also believe that the timing of the attacks is related to the French army's advance from Chad in recent days. The jihadists wanted to reassert that southern Libya remains their base and a no man's land. Obviously all this is then a direct result of the NATO attacks against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.



Who then is really responsible for these acts? Is it perhaps appropriate to question the Western policy in the Middle East?

It is an odious act of terrorism by self-styled Islamists who have a very peculiar understanding of Islam and religion. But the responsibility for these attacks belongs to France and the United States. The Western powers continue to support Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the other Gulf states. They back all these countries that are giving massive support to terrorism. To be more precise, the Western powers consider the alliance with the Gulf states a foundation of neo-liberal policy. The second Western error is to have fought autocrats who tried to put the brake on political Islam, from Saddam Hussein to Muammar Gaddafi. For example, in Iraq Saddam Hussein was brutally deposed, though he could ensure coexistence between Shiites and Sunnis. And Gaddafi had clearly contained the drifts toward Islamism in Libya.

Are there things for which France is particularly responsible?

France has an extra responsibility: having supported the Islamists in Algeria, presenting them as victims of the dictatorship of the army. Some of these Islamists have taken refuge not only in Saudi Arabia but also in Europe -- in Britain even more than in France.

Why do the Western powers have an interest in continuing to foment international terrorism?

The only goal of the Western powers is to advance their neo-liberal policy. For this, the world, for them, is divided into two: countries that unconditionally support neo-liberalism are the only friends of the West, even if it means dealing with odious Islamists; recalcitrant countries are the enemies of the dictatorship of international capital. In other words, the Western powers have only one criterion: absolute liberalism. Whoever supports it is forgiven. And democracy has nothing to do with this.

Some of the perpetrators made reference to Al Qaeda in Yemen during the attacks.

Doesn't surprise me -- in Yemen Islamists were supported for years as anti-communists, by the United States along with Saudi Arabia. In that case the battle was against the national popular "threat" in former South Yemen.

Is it plausible then that it is jihadists with European passports that explain this phenomenon?

The Western powers have tolerated Europeans to leave for Syria to fight Bashar al-Assad. This mechanism has been supported by Turkey and the other Western governments. But we must be careful not to fall into islamophobia. The overwhelming majority of immigrants living in France, believers or not, are not fanatics of reactionary Islam at all. Rather, not to be underestimated is how many atheists and converts are involved in these radical movements. The perpetrators, as usual, are well prepared. The same thing happened with the Taliban in Afghanistan, who had been trained by the CIA in Pakistan. And so these "European jihadists" are not amateurs, probably they have trained in Syria and Iraq. That is why they have been extremely effective.

Why was the press chosen as the target?

The perpetrators chose a "smart" target. Their purpose is to spread terror in the media. The goal, in final analysis, is to force the West to renounce secularism and freedom of expression.

Follow Giuseppe Acconcia on Twitter [@stradedellest](#). The original article "[Samir Amin: 'Un atto odioso, ma la colpa è di Francia e Stati Uniti'](#)" was published by *Il Manifesto* on 8 January 2015. Translation by [Yoshie Furuhashi](#).

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