

LESSON PLAN

on

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

by

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LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

This lesson focuses on the issue of Islamic fundamentalism and the question of whether or not it poses a major threat to world political stability. It utilizes two articles by two different authors published in two different scholarly journals. The articles have been "adapted" or "simplified" by the teacher and a READING GUIDE has been created for students to use as they read the materials.

CONNECTION TO CLASSES/TEXTBOOKS.

The lesson is intended for a class of ninth grade, gifted and talented, World Civilization students. It is a part of a unit on "Islam and Islamic Civilization." Prior to this lesson, students would have had several days of instruction on the origins of Islam, the basic tenets of the faith, the rapid spread of Islam, and the major contributions of Islamic civilizations.

ESTIMATED TIME:

I would envision this particular lesson, the reading and discussion of the articles, to take a 90 minute class period. (See Procedures and Materials section for more detail.) The entire unit, along with the follow-up research and presentation segment described later (See Suggestions for Assessment section.) will probably take about 2 weeks.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- critically analyze 2 opposing views concerning the potential threat of Islamic fundamentalism.
- articulate arguments for and against the issue of Islamic fundamentalism as a threat.
- determine which argument has more validity in reference to a particular case study.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Copies of the articles presenting the 2 opposing viewpoints are included. They are taken directly from the Debate Materials provided for participants in the 1997 Strom Thurmond Seminar in Government and Politics.

PROCEDURES AND MATERIALS:

Before distributing the materials for the lesson, I would try to assess, through a brief discussion, students' current knowledge/ understandings of the term "Islamic fundamentalism." Then I would distribute the materials (ARTICLE SUMMARIES and READING GUIDE) and give specific instructions. Students would be instructed to work individually until given a signal to discuss the articles and reading guide at their tables of four. We would follow the small group discussions with a whole group discussion, focusing primarily on questions raised by the small group discussions and the reading guide.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT:

Student understanding of the concept of Islamic fundamentalism will be assessed by having them work in pairs on a particular case study. They will investigate the role of Islamic fundamentalists in a country which they will be assigned. Among the possible countries are the following: Algeria, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen. Their overall objective will be to find out about Islamic fundamentalism in their assigned country, try to answer specific questions that are related to the issues raised in the Pipes and Esposito articles, and report to the class on their findings. (See handout entitled CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT.)

As an additional, more formal assessment, the test given at the end of the unit will have an essay question where students will be directed to make a case for or against the statement, "Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to political stability."

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

for

ISSUE: IS ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM A THREAT TO POLITICAL STABILITY?

YES: Daniel Pipes, from "Same Difference," National Review
(November 7, 1994).

NO: John L. Esposito, from "Political Islam: Beyond the Green
Menace," Current History (January 1994).

"Introduction"

The growth and spread of Islamic fundamentalism has been significant in recent years. Its beginnings date back to 1979 and the Iranian Revolution, when the Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah and established an Islamic republic in Iran. For our purposes, we will define Islamic fundamentalists as Muslim traditionalists who want to establish governments and legal systems based on religious law, the shard' ah, which is Islamic law derived from the study of the Koran. In general, fundamentalists want to reinstitute such traditional practices as banning alcohol and **having women** cover their faces, and they see Western influences as evil and corrupting.

Some people believe that Islamic fundamentalists represent a threat to political stability in the various countries where they are active and even a threat to world peace in general. Others argue that this is not the case.

Following is a summary of the 2 articles mentioned above, each representing an opposing point of view. You should take a look at the accompanying READING GUIDE before you begin to read the ARTICLE SUMMARIES.

"Same Difference"

- by Daniel Pipes

Daniel Pipes, editor of Middle East Quarterly, is among the scholars who believe that Islamic fundamentalism is a dangerous threat to world political stability. He sees it as an " - ism", a belief system, a form of political ideology that is every bit as dangerous as Communism; therefore, it should be confronted head-on, just as we confronted Communism.

Mr. Pipes points out that even many Muslims consider fundamentalism a grave threat to stability. They believe that religious and civil law should be kept separate and that Koranic law is flexible enough to allow changes in tradition. **Furthermore, fundamentalism does not represent** true Islam, which is a religion of peace and social justice.

Islamic fundamentalism is a total belief system that **is willing** to use any means to accomplish its goal; its veil is similar to that of Communism - to radically remake society. If fundamentalists are willing to use any means, terrorists tactics included, to accomplish their goals, they must be considered offensive rather than defensive. (Some who do not see fundamentalism as a major threat say that fundamentalists are simply reacting to bad economic and political conditions in their

countries, so their actions are defensive.) Pipes says that fundamentalists are on the offense, and should be considered dangerous.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that Islamic fundamentalism is a co-ordinated, world-wide movement, funded in great part by Iran. Its purpose is to challenge the predominance of modern, Western civilization. Pipes says that "Teheran administers a network akin to an Islamic Comintern, making its role today not that different from Moscow's" at the height of Communism.

Western civilization, then must stand up and take notice. The West should not assume that Islamic fundamentalists are motivated by just causes. The West should confront aggression and violence wherever they see it.

"Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace"
by John L. Esposito

John Esposito, a professor of religion and international affairs, is among the scholars who believe that Islamic fundamentalism does not pose a major threat to world political stability. He believes that we should look independently at each country where fundamentalism is a political force and consider developments in each cultural context.

Mr. Esposito says that the talk of a world-wide Islamic uprising and a clash of civilizations in which Islam may overwhelm the West is just a part of a search for a "new enemy," something to fill the "threat vacuum" created by the fall of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of Communism. The fear of a unified Islamic uprising is unwarranted.

Islamic fundamentalism cannot be viewed as a unified movement because there is too much diversity among Muslims in general and even among fundamentalists. Also, countries that are considered Islamic states are very different. For example, Saudi Arabia is a conservative monarchy while Libya is a populist socialist state headed by a military dictator. Some Islamic states are close allies of the United States while others are extremely anti-American.

Esposito believes that fundamentalists are, in most cases, simply reacting to governments that have failed to meet the needs of the people. They are offering an alternative solution - distinct from capitalism, socialism, or communism. The majority of fundamentalists, he believes, prefer to work within their existing governmental and social structures.

Furthermore, Esposito believes that some Middle Eastern governments have "used" the threat of Islamic fundamentalism as an excuse for increasing their own authoritarianism and suppression of political opponents. Most Middle Eastern governments are more concerned with their own "national interests and regional politics rather than ideology or religion."

In conclusion, Islamic fundamentalism does not present a major threat to world political stability. There is little evidence to suggest a unified, world-wide movement. The political situation varies from country to country, and fundamentalists are working within the system wherever possible. Some Middle Eastern governments may be "using" the

supposed threat to enhance their own power, and the West
should not be "taken in" by all these complicated
circumstances.

READING GUIDE

for

IS ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM A THREAT TO POLITICAL STABILITY?

Literal Level: Read the following statements. When you read the selection, refer back to the statements in this section and indicate those that you believe accurately restate what the author(s) said in the selection. To indicate that a statement is an accurate restatement of what the author said, place a check mark in the blank to the left of the statement. If you feel that a statement is inaccurate, change the wording to correct it.

- _____ 1. Pipes believes that Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to world political stability.
- _____ 2. Pipes believes that the goal of Islamic fundamentalists is similar to that of communism - to remake society.
- _____ 3. Pipes says that Islamic fundamentalists are dangerous because they are willing to use any means to achieve their purposes.
- _____ 4. Pipes believes that the Islamic fundamentalist movement is a co-ordinated, world-wide movement.
- _____ 5. Esposito believes that Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to world political stability.
- _____ 6. Esposito believes that the threat of Islamic fundamentalism as a destabilizing force is exaggerated.
- _____ 7. Esposito believes that some Islamic fundamentalists are willing to work within the existing system in their countries.
- _____ 8. Esposito says that some Middle Eastern governments may be using the threat of Islamic fundamentalism to increase their own power.

Interpretive Level: After you have read the selection(s) and are familiar with the content, respond to the following statements at the interpretive level. Check each statement you believe represents what the author(s) meant by what they said. Refer back to the text to find bits of information which, when considered together, would form a relationship represented by the statement.

- _____ 1. Pipes and Esposito agree that there is diversity in the religion of Islam.
- _____ 2. Pipes and Esposito agree that Islamic fundamentalists want to see change in the way their countries are run.
- _____ 3. Pipes and Esposito agree that Islamic fundamentalists may be justified in some of their actions.
- _____ 4. Pipes and Esposito agree that Islamic fundamentalism is a co-ordinated, world-wide movement that is funded primarily by Iran.

Applied Level: Now that you are quite familiar with the material in the selection, review the statements below and check those that you feel accurately combine information from the reading selection with information that you already know.

- _____ 1. Pipes and Esposito would probably disagree on U.S. foreign policy regarding Islamic fundamentalist movements.
- _____ 2. Pipes would probably favor taking a "hard line" against Islamic fundamentalism.
- _____ 3. Esposito would probably favor policies that encourage the participation of Islamic fundamentalists in existing governments.

CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

for

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

As a continuation of our investigation of the role of Islamic fundamentalism in today's world, you will be randomly assigned a specific country to study. You will work with a partner of your choice. You will have one day in the library and one day in the computer lab to collect information. You will have a third day, one class period, to discuss and prepare with your partner. Then, you and your partner will present a brief (5 - 10 minutes) report to the rest of the class. Try to answer the following questions about Islamic fundamentalism in your assigned country. Once everyone has reported, we will try to draw some general conclusions so that you can decide if you agree more with Pipes or more with Esposito.

1. Briefly describe the current government in your country. (If Islamic fundamentalists run/control your government, go directly to the questions at the bottom of the page after you answer this first question.)
2. What is the role of the U.S. in your country? Does the U.S. support the existing government? Does the U.S. give foreign aid to the existing government?
3. How many Islamic fundamentalist groups are there in your country? What are the names of some of the organizations? Do they seem to have support from other Islamic governments?

Are fundamentalists allowed to participate in the political process? Do they hold any government offices?

5. Describe the most recent activities of Islamic fundamentalists in your country.
6. Do you think Islamic fundamentalists pose a threat to the existing government in your country?
7. What do you think U.S. foreign policy should be regarding your country?

Answer the following questions only if you have determined that your assigned government is an Islamic fundamentalist government. Check with me before you proceed - just to be sure you are "on the right track."

1. Number 1 above.
2. How long have fundamentalists been in control of the government.
3. How do their policies differ from those of the previous gove
4. Number 2 above.
5. Number 7 above.