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The Impact of Orientalists on the Formation of Western Public Opinion on the Islamic Religion and Arab Peoples

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Abstract
The topic of Orientalism is not one of the topics that has been touched upon for the first time, but has been touched upon in the last two decades repeatedly in writings, books, lectures, press articles, and investigations in magazines and periodicals. However; the perspective of Orientalism was constantly changing until it ended up with the image that could be considered clear in minds. As time passed, the image of Orientalism began to become obvious and its dimensions turned evident, but some scholars believe that this did not occur or did not become clear in the minds of the intellectuals of our nation until two decades ago. This does not imply that the notion of Orientalism was not frequently stated among peoples, and that some of the sayings of Orientalists circulated in scientific spheres and others were not known as Orientalist ideas and opinions; as one hundred and fifty years ago – until the present time, a book about Islam is published in Europe in its various languages. Therefore; Orientalists are the ones who portrayed the East before the very eyes of the West; they are the ones who said who Muslims are and what their mental characteristics are, what their culture is, what their customs and traditions are, towards what Islam pushes them, and how much it – Islam – affects them. At a time when military and economic plots are being drawn up to control the countries of the East culturally and militarily, this matter – portraying Easterners in the sight of the Westerners – was one of the major goals of the Orientalist movement; as it was required to give a specific image that would enable the military, economic and cultural conquest. Subsequently, studies that were characterized by ethnicity began at the beginning of the nineteenth century AD. The monetary method and the historical method were used during this research. Keyword: Orientalism, Western Public Opinion, Orientalist Suspicions, Goals and Motives

Introduction
Topic Problem
1. Fending off the suspicions claimed by Orientalists to distort the image of Islam and Muslims in the West; and
2. Focalizing on the impact of the thought of Orientalists on Western public opinion on Islam and trying to propose ways to correct the course of this thought.

**Topic Objectives**

1. Highlighting the role of Orientalist studies in distorting the directives and law of Islam "Sharia" in the sight of the West
2. Shedding light on the factors that helped Orientalists spread their erroneous thought towards the Islamic law
3. Focalizing on the development of the thought of Orientalists towards Islam and Muslims as an intellectual trend concerned with the study of the civilization of eastern nations in general; and
4. Recommending some means to address the impact of this thought in the East and West.

**Research Content**

The research plan consists of an introduction, three topics and a conclusion. Introduction includes the definition of the topic, a clarifying for its significance and objectives, and the problem of the research.

The Third Topic: Means of Preserving Identity towards Western Thought on Islam.

**Orientalism and its Rise as an Intellectual Trend Concerned with the Study of the Civilization of Eastern Nations in General**

The term "Al-lastishraq"; i.e., Orientalism, is taken from the word "Sharq"; i.e., Orient, then three letters were added to it, which are Al-Alif, Al-Seen, and Al-Ta’a, which means a request for the East, and the request for the East is nothing but a request for the sciences, literature, languages, and religions of the East. Elgendy (2014) And as for European languages; there is another definition that indicates that what is meant by the Orient is not the geographical East, but rather the Orient associated with the meaning of sunrise, lightness, illumination and guidance.

As for the Oxford Dictionary, it defines the Orientalist as; "who navigates the languages and literature of the Orient."

In the book "Orientalism", Edward Said mentioned several definitions of Orientalism; including that; "it is a style of thinking based on a distinction related to the existence of knowledge between the East and the West." Said adds that Orientalism is not just a political topic or a field of research that is negatively reflected in different cultures, studies, or institutions, and it is not an accumulation of a large group of texts about the Orient... It is, therefore, a distribution of geographical awareness into aesthetic, scientific, economic, social, and philological texts. Elsewhere, Said defines Orientalism as the field of knowledge or science by which the East is recognized in an organized manner as a subject of learning, discovery and application. Somewhere else, he states that Orientalism; "is a kind of Western projection on the East and the will of the West to rule the East" (Ghorab, 1441).
Ahmed Abdelhamid Ghorab defines Orientalism as; "Academic studies conducted by infidel Westerners – among the People of the Book in particular – on Islam and Muslims, in various aspects; creed, law, culture, civilization, history, systems, wealth and capabilities... with the aim of distorting Islam and attempting to cast doubt on Muslims about it, misleading them about it, imposing submission to the West on them and trying to justify this dependence with studies and theories claiming being scientific and objective, and pretending the racial and cultural superiority of the Christian West over the Islamic East" (Ghorab, 2020).

Dr. Mutabaqani defines Orientalism as everything that comes out from Western Europeans (Eastern and Western, including the Soviets) and Americans, of university academic studies that deal with issues of Islam and Muslims in terms of belief, Sharia, sociology, politics, thought, or art.

The West has begun to move away from the term "Orientalism" because of its bad image in the minds of Muslims. Thus; one of the decisions of the World Conferences Organization – in its conference held in Paris in 1973 AD., was to dispense with this term – "Orientalism", and to name this organization: The International Conferences Organization for Human Studies on Asia and North Africa ICHSANA. The organization held two conferences under this title; until it was changed again to the International Conferences for Asian and North African Studies (ICANAS). The countries of the Eastern Bloc – Russia and the countries in its orbit – opposed this decision. However; at the 35th International Conference on Asian and North African Studies, which was held in Budapest, Hungary, the terms "Orientalism" and "Orientalists" were used with no reservations; which means that Western Europeans and Americans are the most objectionable to this term. Perhaps this change is a maneuver for the purpose of giving the impression of a difference between them and Orientalists; so that they talk about Orientalists to prove that they are not, but rather they are Arabists or Islamists or researchers in Humanists or specialists in regional, social or economic studies that pertain to a particular country or geographical area (Baqir, 2002).

**Orientalism Rise**

There are several theories that date the beginning of Orientalism. The reason for this difference is that if any study of the East can be considered an actual beginning of Orientalism or not.

1. Some researchers believe that the very beginning was the first Islamic migration to Abyssinia and the dialogues that took place between the Companions and the Negus – who was Christian, and the discussion that took place about this religion between the patriarchs in his council, and how this king realized the truth about this religion and embraced it.
2. There is an opinion that the Battle of Mutah, which was the first military confrontation, is one of the beginnings of Orientalism.
3. While many refer it to the days of the Umayyad State in the second century AH. and that Orientalism was activated in the Levant through the monk John of Damascus, who wrote two books; the first is "Hayaat Muhammad", and the second is "Hiwar bayna Masihi wa Muslim".
4. Other researchers believe that the Crusades are the beginning of actual friction between Muslims and Christians; which prompted Christians to try to get to know Muslims.
5. One of the opinions on the beginning of Orientalism is that it began with a decision of the Vienna Synod in 1312 AD. by establishing several Arabic language chairs in a number of European universities; such as Paris, Oxford, and etc. (Ghorab, 2020).
6. There is a suggestion that has several supporters, which is that the contact of Christians with Muslims in Andalusia is the real breakthrough for Christians' knowledge of Muslims and their interest in Islamic sciences. Several pioneers of research in Orientalism among Muslims – including the Sheikh; Dr. Mustafa Al-Sibai, tend to this opinion.

7. A certain amount of unorganized Orientalist activity took place in the medieval period; for instance, we find that a number of those interested in translation and teaching into and from the Arabic language are European prominent men. Here are some examples:

- Gerbert d'Aurillac (938-1003 AD.) was a Benedictine monk, went to Andalusia, learnt from its teachers, and then was elected – after his return – as the Pontifex Maximus in the name of Sylvester II 999-1003 AD.; he was – thus, the first French pope.
- In the year 1130 AD., the Archbishop of Toledo translated some Arabic scientific books.
- As for the Italian Gerard de Cremona (1114-1187 AD.); he went to Toledo and translated no less than 87 publications on philosophy, medicine, and sand readings.
- The Frenchman; Peter the Venerable (1094-1156 AD.) – who belongs to the Benedictine Order and is the abbot of the abbey of Cluny – formed a group of translators to obtain objective knowledge about Islam. He himself was behind the first translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur’an into the Latin language in 1143 AD., which the Englishman Robert of Ketton presented.
- We find that the Christianized Jew John of Seville – who appeared in the middle of the twelfth century – took care of the science of astrology; so, in 1133 AD., he translated four books for Abu Ma'shar Al-Balkhi from Arabic, and that was with the assistance of Adelard of Bath.
- As for the Englishman Roger Bacon (1214-1294 AD.), he received his education in Oxford and Paris, where he obtained the Doctorate Degree in Theology and translated the book of "Mira'at Al-Kimya'a" from Arabic.
- Raymond Lull (1235-1314 AD.) spent nine years – from 1266 to 1275 AD. – learning Arabic and studying the Qur’an. After mastering Arabic; he headed to the Rome Pontiff and asked him to establish universities that teach Arabic to graduate Orientalists capable of fighting Islam, and the Pope agreed. One of the results of this proposal was the holding of a conference in Vienna in the year 1312 AD., and Arabic language courses were established in five European universities; which are Paris, Oxford, and Bologna in Italy, and Salamanca in Spain, in addition to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (Ghorab, 2020).

Rather, all these points are counted – as Dr. Al-Namla says; "such as harbinger of organized Orientalism and what came after is considered deepening and expanding of the idea and drawing attention to it.

**Examples of the Impact of Orientalism Goals and Motivations on the Formation of Western Public Opinion against Islam**

If Orientalism began with the study of the Arabic language and Islam, then the motive for that was not purely scientific for most Orientalists because it is the nature of the scientific motive to be honest and just, keen to elucidate the truth with impartiality, honesty and fairness, not being controlled by legacies or heavy deposits made by the special environment, or dictated by certain historical facts that are recorded by periods of bloody rivalries and aggressive conflict.
However, these conditions that make the Orientalist study of Islam, its history, and the Arabic language a true scientific work are not fulfilled to the European Orientalists who focused on Islamic studies because the European’s attitude to Islam is not only one of indifference and hatred – as is the case with its attitude to all religions and cultures; rather, it is a deep-rooted hatred based mostly on ages of extreme fanaticism. This hatred is not only mental, but also has a strong emotional shade. Indeed, Europe may not be forbearing toward the teachings of Buddhist or Hindu philosophy, but it always maintains – with regard to these two doctrines – a balanced mental stance based on thinking. However, as soon as it turns to Islam, the balance is disturbed and the emotional tendency begins to leak out. Even the most prominent European orientalists made themselves prey to unscientific partisanship in their writings on Islam. This is manifested in all of – at most – their research, as if Islam cannot be treated as a subject of research in scientific research, but rather as suspected standing before its judges. Some orientalists play the role of the public prosecutor who attempts to prove the crime; on contrary, a number of them act as defense attorney, who – despite being personally convinced of his agent’s criminality, he can only ask, with some lukewarmness, to consider the mitigating measures for him.

On the whole; the method of induction and conclusion followed by most orientalists reminds us of the facts of Inquisition; those institutions created by (the Catholic Church) for its opponents in the Middle Ages; that is, that method never considered the historical evidence impartially, but in every claim, it started with a previously agreed-upon conclusion, which was dictated by its fanaticism for its opinion. Orientalists choose their witnesses according to the conclusion that they aim initially, and if they are unable to choose the customary witnesses, they deliberately cut sections of the truth that the witnesses testified and then separated them from the text or interpreted the testimonies in an unscientific spirit of ill intent, without attributing any value to the presentation of the case from the point of view of the other party; i.e., by Muslims themselves.

The result of this trial is nothing but a distorted picture of Islam and Islamic matters that we encounter in all the writings of European Orientalists. This is not limited to one country without another – you find this in England and Germany, in Russia and France, in Italy and the Netherlands –; in a word, in every region where Orientalists turn their eyes towards Islam. It appears that they get high with some malicious pleasure when they capture an opportunity – real or imaginary – with which they undermine Islam through criticism (Assad, 2017). Here are some goals and motives that contributed to the formation of an anti-Islam Western public opinion:

**First: The Religious Motive, which can be summarized as follows**

1. Pouncing against Islam, distorting its facts, and slandering it with various lies by monks; in order to prove to their masses – who are subject to their religious leadership – that Islam is the only opponent of Christianity, and that it is a religion that does not deserve to be spread, and that Muslims are a people of savages, thieves and shedders of blood, whose religion urges them to physical pleasures and distances them from all spiritual and moral elevation (Mahmoud, 2008).
2. Protecting Christians from the danger of Islam by preventing them from witnessing its bright truths, clearly apparent signs, and glorious history; so that it does not influence them, and then, they convert into it.
3. Attempting to Christianize Muslims; for this purpose, they prepared troops of missionaries and provided their hands with the massive capabilities. They held several conferences – to achieve that goal – starting with the (Vienna) Church Conference in the year (1312 AH.), during which they decided to establish university chairs for the Arabic language, as occurred in the University of Cambridge and others at that time; in order to make it easier for them to learn about Islam and to recognize the weaknesses of Muslims, so they can surreptitiously infiltrate through them.

Second: The Colonial Motive
When the Crusades ended with the defeat of the Crusaders in the fifth and sixth centuries AH., Westerners did not despair of returning to the occupation of Arab countries, then the countries of Islam. So, they directed to study these countries; including all of their affairs of faith, customs, morals and wealth. For that mission; they recruited a remarkable number of those who were familiar with the conditions of Islamic countries, and they harnessed their knowledge to serve colonialism; thus, those Orientalists were agents of their governments and partners in political decision-making at the same time.

Those orientalists studied this land; including all its affairs to get acquainted with its strengths so they weaken it, and with weaknesses so they seize it, and to weaken the spiritual and moral resistance within the hearts of Muslims, and spread feebleness and confusion in their thoughts. Indeed, they had intrigues through which they infiltrated the souls of Muslims:
1. Raising the doubt of the usefulness of the heritage in the hands of Muslims and their creed, Sharia, morals, and human values, so that they lose confidence in themselves and throw themselves into the arms of the West, begging them for moral standards, beliefs and solutions to their problems; in order for the West to completely subjugate Muslims to its civilization and culture.
2. Replacing pre-Islamic-period concepts that have been wiped out since the spread of Islam; such as the Pharaonic, Phoenician, Assyrian, pagan, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian, and so on; for them to disperse the unity of the one nation.
3. Bringing sectarian strife between the Muslim population and other people of other religions and sects, igniting strife between neighboring countries, tearing apart the unity of the one nation by following the policy of divide and rule, and cooking up military coups in favor of the policy of one of their countries, until many of our governments have become military ruling their people with a rod of iron, fire, bloodshed, imprisonment of freemen and the reformers; although they do not accept for themselves anything but democracy and the full personal freedom of the individual.

Third: The Political Motive: After the liberation of the Islamic countries from military colonialism; Western politicians saw that colonialism had another character, the character of the (Intellectual Colonialism). Therefore, it was necessary to provide the consulates, embassies and international institutions affiliated with them with those who have experience in oriental studies and who are fluent in the Arabic language to carry out various political tasks (Mahmoud, 2008), including:
1. Contacting and negotiating with politicians to find out their views and directions;
2. Contacting intellectuals and the press to learn about their ideas and the reality of their countries;
3. Broadcasting the political trends that their countries want. This contact often had a serious impact in the past, whereas Western ambassadors – and they are still in some Arab and Islamic countries – spread intrigues to part up some Arab countries from one another and among them and Islamic countries under the pretext of directing advice and providing knowledge, after they had – thoroughly – studied the psychology of many of those officials in those countries, and knew the weaknesses in their general policy, as well as the popular tendencies that were dangerous to their interests and colonialism; and
4. Contacting their agents and mercenaries who serve their political purposes within the peoples of the Islamic nation.

Fourth: The Business and Personal Motives
In addition to the foregoing, there were business and personal reasons related to the mood of some people who had leisure and money, and took Orientalism to satisfy their own desires to travel or to learn about the cultures of the ancient world. However, among the motives that had the effect of activating the Orientalist movement is the desire of Westerners to deal with the East; to promote their goods in its markets and seize its raw natural resources at the lowest prices.

Fifth: The Scientific Motive
A very few individuals of Orientalists turned to Orientalism out of a love of learning about the civilizations of nations, their religions, culture, and languages. Those people were less than others in misunderstanding Islam and its heritage; moreover, some of them were guided to Islam and believed in its message. However, those people only exist when they have private financial resources that enable them to devote themselves to Orientalism with honesty and sincerity because their objective researches – that no passion has a control over – are not popular with the clergy, with the politicians, nor among the general researchers. Hence, it does not generate profit or funds for them; and for this reason, the presence of that group is rare among Orientalists.

Means of Preserving Identity towards Western Thought on Islam
In order to preserve any identity of any human group, it must have components or factors that enable it to survive, compete, and continuity. These components are summarized in the existence of a sole belief in which the members of this society believe, and a comprehensive history of its days and conditions. The last of these components as well is represented in a culture under which a mother tongue, sciences, arts, literature, traditions, and customs gather. Indeed, the observer of our Islamic identity strongly notes the presence of these three, and for more clarification, we will discuss them in detail:

First: Belief: We mean – by it – the religion; including thought, law, belief, and behavior. The Islamic identity is, first and foremost, an affiliation with the faith, which is manifestly interpreted into manifestations of loyalty to it and commitment to its requirements. Indeed, the monotheistic Islamic belief is the most significant constant in a Muslim’s identity and personality, and it is the most honorable, supreme, and outstanding identity that a human being can be characterized with; whereas it – the monotheistic Islamic belief – is the belongingness to the most perfect religion and the most honorable Book that was revealed.
to the most honorable Messenger for the most honorable nation in the most honorable language borne by the hands of the most honorable angels, on the most honorable parts of the earth, during the most honorable months of the year, in the most honorable night, which is Qadr Night, with the most honorable law and the most correct guidance (Elmokadem, 2013).

Second: History: A nation without history is a nation without a future; thus, it is a nation without an identity. As matter of fact, there is no nation without history, for every nation has history at the level of the individual and the group, but the problem is not in history; rather it is those who memorize this history, record its lights, and extinguishes, and benefit from its stances, examples, and lessons. Likewise, there are some nations that do not have honorable history, as they seek – from time to time – to patch up their history, compose glories for themselves, and even at other times seek to steal history from others. On the level of our nation; its history is a witness that it is a nation with a strong, honorable and influential identity, because its history differs from the history of others, as it is a nation whose beginning was with the beginning of creation; and this is shown through our vision of the approach of the Holy Qur'an in presenting historical events; where "it proves that history does not begin with the prophetic mission in Makkah Al-Mukarramah; rather it means the history of prophecy related to Adam – may peace be upon him – from whom Allah created his wife, and from them he disseminated crowds of men and women. The Holy Qur'an instilled in the hearts of believers the importance of history, the need to be proud of its events and what resulted from them. The Qur'an made history a source of fixation for the hearts, through the stories of the prophets, and the points of convergence between the messages, the solemn covenant, and witnessing to the souls (Zaki, 2013).

Third: Culture: Culture in its Islamic format means community's sciences, ethics, and values, as well as the language in which it is expressed. In this regard, a major fallacy that was followed by many emerged. This fallacy is represented in the consideration of a few writers and intellectuals the Islamic identity as part of the cultural identity; that means that the cultural component should include the religious component, which is a great and catastrophic fallacy at the same time, because it gives the impression that the identity of the nation may deviate from the Islamic identity. However, as a matter of fact the cultural identity of our nation should in no way deviate from the Islamic identity; as the cultural identity should be governed, not a governor, and is governed by and measured by Sharia controls; so, whatever agreed with Sharia is accepted, and whatever contradicts it is rejected and refused; and this concept is the essence and purpose of the Islamic identity. Moreover, the language preserves and transmits this culture, keeps the unity and interdependence of the nation, and enables its members to communicate and express their cultural and value composition. About the Arabic language, it is an authentic origin and a necessary component of the requirements of the identity of this nation; as it is the language of the Qur’an and its loss is a loss for this religion. Thus, learning and preserving the Arabic Language is a must; Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah – may Allah have mercy on him – said; "The Arabic language is part of the religion, and recognizing it is a legal obligation and commandment, because understanding the Book and the Sunnah is an obligation, and they can only be understood by understanding the Arabic language; so, what obligation is fulfilled through is obligatory" (Taymiyyah, 1948).
However, at the same time, we must point out an important matter, which is that the Islamic identity is a religious-intellectual identity and not an ethnic identity, or a national identity based on race or language in the first place; so, we find under the banner of this identity those who do not speak Arabic, and are fluent in another language; such as English, French or German – and this does not detract from the identity of the Muslim on the individual level if he is a non-Arab, but the absence or weakness of the language on the general societal level in the Arab world is undoubtedly a defect and a deep stab in our Islamic identity. Among the components of culture are sciences, arts and literature, which may differ from one community to another in the Islamic environment. But, in the end, they all fall under the banner of Sharia, and the same is to be applied to traditions and custom.

How has our identity been threatened? The Islamic identity has been targeted since its first day. Since the beginning of the mission of the Prophet – May the Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon him – and the polytheists of Quraysh and the hypocrites are in complete agreement to annihilate this call and stop its extension. As years passed by, and the change of countries; the ferocity and strength of the attack has been increased, and this attack reached its climax in the modern era. Our enemies spared no effort in emptying this religion of its content in order to obliterate the Islamic and Arab identity. This matter proceeded according to an orderly and organized approach that we can summarize in the following points: 1- weakening the belief, and destabilizing the faith; 2- plotting against the Arabic language; 3- separating religion into wheat and chaff; 4- usurpation and dispersal of the Islamic identity; 5- attracting and deceiving Muslim women; 6- distracting Muslims with entertainment and cravings; 7- secular domination and promoting the claim of "globalization" and westernization; 8- exaggerated interest in reviving pagan myths and polytheistic myths; 9- obliteration of historical outlines and excavations that correct the history of the faith; 10- Christian missionary activity that exploits poverty and disease; 11- exploiting the economic factor in dissolving identity; and 12- psychological warfare supported by arbitrary methods.

Results and Recommendations
Among the research recommendations to preserve our Islamic and Arab identity are what follows:

The issue of identity and how to preserve it needs huge efforts that such research cannot limit. However, we will go through it quickly, in which we will mention the most notable means of confrontation in order to preserve our identity:

- **On the belief level**: Islamic communities – governments and peoples – must develop this aspect and pay attention to it because this identity is the only guarantee for the survival and continuity of life; whereas the aspect of religion and belief in relation to identity is like the soul in relation to the body, and by losing it all scientific, cultural, and literary profits turn into grudges and hardships for these peoples. Attempts to dissolve the Islamic identity and the nation’s connection with its religion – for that reason – must be confronted.

- **On the historical level**: It is necessary to work on restoring the memory of history once again in order to find out about the history of this civilization, because history is an "important element" of the elements of the Islamic identity; and this includes narrating the political, economic and military events related to different eras, and analyzing them in light of the motives, effects, and temporal and spatial conditions. The resources of Islam included many historical texts, and the purpose of the analysis is to derive the meanings of victory or defeat, contemplating the shortcomings of the human mind; as victory will remain the subject of
pride for successive generations, and defeat will remain the subject of consideration for successive centuries until Allah inherits the earth and those on it.

- **On the cultural level:** We must fill the civilizational void that we have reached through developing our knowledge and working to assimilate the ancient with an open mind. Likewise, we must preserve the language that keeps and transmits this culture because it is the only guarantee for the continuity and development of this component, and after that, there is nothing wrong with opening to the other to benefit from his sciences and knowledge. This is a problem summed up by Dr. Muhammad Emara in his talk about globalization and how to confront it by saying; "In the face of Western globalization, a distinction must be made between three levels: There is (the Western man) and there is no problem between us and him; indeed, in some of his intellectual areas and political currents, we have a lot of understanding, advocacy and support, and there is the (Western science) – especially the fruits of creativity of Western brilliant intelligence in natural sciences and their applications – in which the (wisdom); that we are called upon by religious and worldly standards to seek, learn from its people and be inspired by its truths and correctness, is represented, and finally, there is the (Arab project), which we do not oppose; except when it denies our Arab and Islamic project" (Emara, 1999).

- Among the factors of preserving identity – in addition to the above – is the promotion of self-esteem; which comes by developing the confidence of the members of the Muslim community in its nation and its civilization; as the nation that does not trust its abilities, and does not value its own potential; cannot be but a shadow of others constantly; subordinate to them, rely only on what they say and implement only what they decide; and this is the civilizational begging itself,


which represents the pinnacle of impotence, failure, and surrender in the face of the challenges it faces.

- It is also necessary to seek the help of a specialized, developed Islamic media that is in line with the times and the spirit of Sharia at the same time, in order to compete with the directed media that dominates all aspects of life in our Arab and Islamic world; as our media has become, in light of this globalization – or rather Americanization, nothing but what serves the goals of the Western project, so that it has become difficult to distinguish between our channels with the media content presented through and the channels that broadcast from Western countries.
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