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Can King Charles Tell the Difference between a Muslim and an Islamist?

Opinion & Interview › Opinion › Can King Charles Tell the Difference between a Muslim and an Islamist?



King Charles III has allowed his desire to promote good relations between Islam and the West to blind himself to the threat of Islamism. (Photo by Mark Jones, via Wikimedia Commons.)

By Hannah Baldock

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Since his accession to the throne, King Charles III has been heralded by Muslim news outlets such as [Middle East Eye](#), [Al Jazeera](#) and [Al Araby](#) as the most pro-Muslim Western leader on the world stage, with good reason.

The King's sympathies for Islam can be seen in a landmark speech he gave in 1993 in which lamented "misunderstandings" between the Islamic world and the West. He defended the faith against those who believed that "extremism is ...the hallmark and essence of the Muslim."

Then Prince Charles displayed similar sympathies in a 2010 [lecture](#) in which he praised Islam's concept of the oneness of the universe and the need for balance and harmony. At the same time, he took a jab at the West, expressing misgivings about the impact of

rampant consumer capitalism on the planet and on the happiness of individuals. Unsurprisingly, Charles has studied Arabic so he can read the Qur'an and "decipher Arabic script during visits to mosques and museums of Islamic art."

Clearly, King Charles's Islamophilia, which has been documented thoroughly by Daniel Pipes, is motivated in part by a desire for peace between Islam and the West. "We must not slide into a new era of danger and division because governments and peoples, communities and religions, cannot live together in peace in a shrinking world," he said in the 1993 speech.

Expressions of comity on the part of King Charles have not moderated Islamist hostility toward England, or the royal family.

Sadly, King Charles's desire for harmonious relations between Islam and the West blinds the monarch to the designs of Islamists who seek to make Islam a revolutionary political project. This blindness was on display in 2001 when he opened the London Muslim Center at the East London Mosque in 2001, which houses the Islamic Forum of Europe, a front for the Jamaat-e-Islami, the South Asian Islamist movement founded in India in 1941. He stood alongside Saudi Prince Mohamed al-Faisal-Al Saud during the ceremony.

Two years later, this mosque hosted a speech by Al Qaeda ideologue Anwar Al Awlaki, spiritual adviser to three of the 9/11 hijackers.

Prince Charles's host at the 2001 event was Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, who was sentenced to death in absentia in Bangladesh in 2012 for the killing of Bengali intellectuals during the Bangladesh Liberation War as a member of the fundamentalist Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami. Uddin had been a key organiser of the UK protests against Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988. The future king should never have legitimized the East London Mosque with his presence.



In 2001, Prince Charles appeared at the opening ceremonies for London Muslim Center at the East London Mosque. Two years later, the center hosted a speech by Al Qaeda ideologue Anwar Al Awlaki (pictured above). Al Awlaki was spiritual adviser to three of the 9/11 hijackers. (Photo by Greg A L via Wikimedia Commons).

Similar naiveté was evident during his 2006 speech at Al Azhar University in Egypt during which he condemned the publication of cartoons depicting Mohammed in a

Danish newspaper, portraying it not as an act of free expression, but an assault on minorities in Europe.

The following year, then Prince Charles established Mosaic, a Muslim youth mentoring and empowerment programme supported by the Qatar Foundation, a charity that funds Arab language classes as part of a strategy to promote Qatari propaganda in the United States and has promoted Islamist separatism in Germany.

Charles himself appears to have been a target of such influence operations, having reportedly accepted three lots of cash totalling €3 million from Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, the former prime minister of Qatar between 2011 and 2015. The donations were intended to support a charitable trust, but it raises legitimate concerns about Charles's judgment when it comes to issues related to Islamism. The prince's meetings with Qatar's former prime minister did not appear in the Court Circular, the list of official engagements undertaken by working royals.

Sadly, these expressions of comity on the part of King Charles have not moderated Islamist hostility toward England, or the royal family. In 2018, an Islamic State group supporter from Lancashire, Husnain Rashid, was jailed for life with a minimum of 25 years after calling for an attack on Charles's four-year-old grandson Prince George. (Rashid had posted a photograph of the young prince at St. Thomas's school in Battersea on a Telegram chat group super-imposed with silhouettes of two masked jihadist fighters.)

According to the BBC, Rashid had suggested that jihadists could attack British football stadiums and "and plotted to inject supermarket ice cream with poison."

While King Charles's scholarly interest and good will towards a faith held dear by millions of his British subjects are of undoubted benefit to a head of a pluralistic state, he should take a cool-headed approach to Islamism and listen to those with a deep understanding of both Western liberalism and this totalitarian ideology. Instead of rubbing shoulders with Islamists, King Charles III should highlight the work of reformers such as former Islamist and co-founder of the erstwhile Quilliam counter-extremism think tank Ed Husain.

In his 2021 text, *Among the Mosques*, Hussain warns that "Free societies can become self-destructive unless we are vigilant. We must not tolerate intolerance. For nothing less than the future of our country depends on it."

If King Charles III wants to serve his country and the cause of peace, he must help his subjects differentiate between Islam and Islamism and encourage people to show respect for the former and combat the latter.

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