

# The Taqiyyah

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Yesterday I was in the supermarket to buy charcoal for barbecue. At the check-out line, there was a man in front of me and a woman with headscarf in front of him. There were some beers waiting to be processed. I thought they are the man's until the woman with other garb collected them to her bag.

Recently I began to read a book titled *Savvy Kafir's Introduction to Islam* or something similar, it's becoming harder and harder to remember Kindle book titles. It had a section on this concept *taqiyyah*, saying basically that Muslims are Machievallian beasts when it comes to honesty and Islam has an institutionalized lying mechanism.

I'm aware it's a bit paradox to tell that I'm telling the truth in this case, but *honestly* as a Muslim I'm never told about such an institutionalized lying. My later readings showed that *taqiyyah* is among Shia beliefs but its main use is to explain the behavior of Imam Hasan's rejection of Caliphate after Imam Ali and Prophet Joseph's position in Egyptian kingdom. How can the second Imam, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad reject Caliphate? How can a Prophet of God work as a minister of infidel Egyptian Kings? (Yes, it's *kings* not *pharaohs* because they were probably Hyksos kings and Qur'an (12:43, 12:72) tells the ruler as *king* but that doesn't matter much for this question.)

They explain this through *taqiyyah* that these two were not telling the truth when they are asked about their position. A simpler explanation for Imam Hasan would be that he simply wasn't *Imam* and for Joseph that the king wasn't infidel or it's not prescribed for him to reject that position, but if your beliefs revolve around *Chain of Imamate* and political history is mostly based on opposition, you have to iron the history with such explanations. Anyhow this doesn't mean Shia muslims have institutionalized lying. My Shiite friends are not more or less honest than Sunni friends, but I never thought this is due to their religious beliefs.

Because people don't need some religious institution to lie. They simply do it. If you think, it's very improbable for one to be so pious that they look for religious justification for telling a lie. This can only happen in politics and in politics you don't need excuses to lie. (*This is for our group's/party's/nation's best interest* justifies pretty much anything powerfully than religion, and you

don't need to be that pious for it too.)

So all Muslims are fully honest and upright people? No they aren't. Probably because of statistical accidents, my trust in Muslims is actually lower than other faiths, and I also think that having distrust among each other is one the most basic problems of Muslims. (or Turks, as my *Islam* is mostly Turkish Islam.) But these are not due to religion, it's simply people are living in conditions in which it's difficult to be honest or they are simply evil and bad people.

What about terrorist organizations like ISIS or Qaeda? Don't their members lie? Surely they do. I have never met a member of these but they certainly must, but again, this is not because they are Muslims, but they are terrorist. Do you think Muslim terrorists lie but Communist terrorists don't? So Communism preaches lying perhaps?

About 25 years ago, while I was in secondary school, one of my friends joined a religious organization and his organization asked him to join the army. Military schools had some restrictions about families back then, like the boy's family should not show religious tendencies. In the application form, mother's photo was also asked and a photo without headscarf should be provided. (This is at least what they told us, I never applied to that and my information is mostly second hand.) Supposedly he supplied such requirements and successfully joined the army. I never talked to him after that.

After months later than the July 15th, 2016 coup attempt I googled his name. In a news page from that night, it seems, an army major with the same name tried to capture a certain garrison and failed. He and three of his comrades were detained that night.

This was perhaps the most notorious example of *the taqiyyah* for me. For years they lived as if a *good Islamist*, with a hidden agenda to *capture the state* following Fethullah Gulen's directives. Could they succeed? Probably not, because apparently they disliked people and people disliked them. During the time of Facebook, you can't govern while the public hates you.

The interesting part, however is that this *taqiyyah* was towards allegedly an Islamist government. If these FETO members were questioned, their faith in *western democracy* is as strong as their faith in Prophet. Before the coup, when their leader called *vendetta* publicly against the elected government, he did so mentioning *universal criteria of democracy*. So what's happening here?

The Taqiyyah I claim is a double edged sword. Were these soldiers, members of Gulen's cult practicing taqiyyah against Kemalists or against Islamists? Were they really trying to overthrow Islamist state in the name of Islam, or were they trying to alter Islam to conform to state ideology? Probably we will never be sure, because all these were hidden in their leader's mind and even Gulen himself doesn't know, because apparently his quest for power is much more dear to him than any ideological basis. He simply believes in himself, nothing more, nothing less.

So what's the catch here? Sunni Islam doesn't preach the taqiyyah, but apparently a Sunni sect was all hidden for 40 years. The reason I've told Gulen's taqiyyah is this: It doesn't need any ideological or religious basis. If you want to change the world and an underdog, open warfare is not a possibility and you have to devise *techniques* like this. Does it work? Probably not. You begin to change the world and the world changes you.

Another example might be from Kemal Ataturk's lifetime. He was fighting *to save the Sultan and Caliphate* until he wasn't. For Kemalists this sounds *normal*, we have his photos praying with religious figures in front of the National Assembly in 1920, where he'll abolish the Caliphate four years later. Did he do this because he was a religious fanatic checking his fatwa books about the permission of taqiyyah?

Reading history I find all these examples throughout. I don't it's specific to culture or religion, but power needs such. In 48 Laws of Power, the first one as I remember was *don't outsmart your boss*. Don't show your true face to anybody, never talk the full truth. This seems *ethics of power*.

All politicians and politics suffer from this too. When there is power, there is always taqiyyah, need to hide your true face. And that true face doesn't *exist* without necessary conditions anyway. If you're afraid of someone's taqiyyah, it's better to remove the conditions for their true face to appear, than being slave to constant fear.