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Islamophobia and the Challenges of Pluralism in the 21st Century

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Preface

Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu

Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

“Islamophobia and the Challenges of Pluralism in the 21st Century” is a topic which attracts a wide-range of attention and interest. Indeed the relationship between Islam and the West matters more today than ever before: the rift between Islam and the Western world remains dangerously wide and the need for the two to accommodate each other in our increasingly globalized world has never been greater.

Religion is an indispensable prerequisite to sustain human life, a feature that has dominated our lives since time immemorial. It also plays an important role in shaping the cultural identity of individuals and communities, and constitutes a key component in the building of civilization.

The teachings of Islam constitute the basic code of ethics that guide Muslims in their daily lives, as witnessed throughout the history of Islamic civilization. These teachings include: moral excellence, honor, virtue, justice, piety, equity, compassion, and human dignity. Christianity and Islam share a common monotheistic vision and these basic teachings. However, despite this closeness and the fact that our histories are tightly linked – offering compelling reasons to live together and cooperate – much of that history has, too often, been marked by mutual hostility, giving rise to an enduring tradition of distrust and animosity.

We have been, and still are, looking to our past from different and, more often, opposite and contradictory angles, trying to disavow or ignore each other.

I do not think that theology and religion have been a major factor in this antagonism. To find the root causes of this persistent enmity one has to look elsewhere. Islam, since its inception, has venerated Christianity as a revealed religion. It recognizes Christians as “the people of the Book” and continues to show genuine and deep respect for the teaching of Christianity, and belief in the message of Jesus Christ is one of the pillars of the Islamic doctrine. Islam sees both Judaism and Christianity not as “others” which it has to tolerate but as standing *de jure*, as truly revealed religions from God. Moreover, their legitimate status is neither socio-political, nor cultural or civilizational, but religious. In this, Islam is unique, for no religion in the world has yet to make belief in the truth of other religions a necessary condition of its own faith. Islam does not see itself as coming to the religious scene *ex nihilo*, but as a reaffirmation of the same truth presented by all preceding prophets of Judaism and Christianity.

Muslims are committed to pluralism and tolerance. Muslims have played a pioneering role in acquiring knowledge and disseminating expertise in various

fields and sharing this with other civilizations. Under the long rule of Islam, non-Muslims enjoyed equity and justice. Based on the Islamic guidelines of social and religious pluralism, their institutions and places of worship were repaired and maintained, their personal laws protected, and their expenses were often paid from the public or state treasuries. As Karen Armstrong points out, “in the Islamic empire, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians enjoyed religious freedom. This reflected the teaching of the Quran which is a pluralistic scripture, affirmative of other traditions. Muslims are commanded by God to respect the People of the Book, and reminded that they share the same belief and the same God.”¹ Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together under Islamic rule in Cairo, Jerusalem, Andalusia, Istanbul and many cities and towns throughout the Ottoman Empire, and communities flourished throughout the Muslim world.

One of the principal causes of the rising trend of intolerance against Islam in many parts of the world is ignorance, or if I may say so, lack of proper understanding of the Islamic faith, often rooted in a failure to distinguish between mainstream Islam and Muslims and the words and actions of extremists. In my own life as a scholar and now as the head of an international organization, I have had the chance of devoting some time to studying the philosophers of comparative cultural and religious beliefs and practices. I have come to the conclusion that every culture and religion has goodness embedded in it and all of these together have enriched human civilization. The pioneering work of Muslim philosophers and scholars in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, architecture, geography and jurisprudence, just to name a few, have contributed enormously to shape modern day civilization.

Often text books in many parts of the West, while silent about the great contributions of Islam in the building of universal civilization, portray the two hundred years of crusades as a series of heroic tales of valor in which Western kings, princes, knights and soldiers managed to “rescue” Jerusalem from the wicked Muslim infidel. By contrast, the text books in many Muslim countries consider the crusades, which are known as the Wars of the Franks in the Islamic historiography, as an episode of barbaric cruelty and cold blooded carnage of Muslims at the hands of European soldiers of fortune. This is only one of many examples (which are far more deep-seated and intractable), that highlights the way in which many Muslim and Western societies build their perception of one another from a very early age.²

Today we must acknowledge that Islam is increasingly being regarded by some in the West as a threat, a source of intolerance, extremism, terrorism and as having declared war to destroy “Western” values. By contrast, the West is increasingly being regarded in the Muslim world as an arrogant imperialistic colonizer, prone to propagate Western materialism and mass culture, to destabilize and destroy Islam and to exploit the Muslim world’s potential while imposing its

values and way of life on the rest of the world. Recently, certain newspapers in the West, under the guise of opening debate on taboo issues, proclaimed that the West has been silenced by Islam, and found it fit to publish infamous cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed. However, the attempt proved to obscure rather than enlighten, while also being gratuitously offensive and condemnable. Such an approach pours oil on the fire, and merely reinforces prejudices on both sides.

This was also an occasion for some in the Western media to invoke the sacrosanct right of freedom of expression. Nobody can contest this right which is at the heart of any enlightened society. However, we see behind this approach an attempt of “will testing” which can only lead to a power struggle and emotional polemics. I firmly believe that one should recognize the inalienable right to freedom of expression, however it should be exercised responsibly and in a measured way.

The above depicts an untenable situation which should not be allowed to persist. What is now urgently needed is to discard this unbearable mindset of centuries-old prejudices and work towards harmony and understanding. Sadly, in recent years, the repeated calls for dialogue among civilizations have become empty slogans and seem to go no where. The reports of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other international organizations, including Western institutions monitoring Islamophobia in Europe, warn of the emergence of Islamophobia, a new form of racism in Europe and America based on discrimination towards Islam and Muslims.

Based on this premise, I have called for a genuine historical and rational reconciliation between Islam and Christianity³, which will mark a new era in the history of mankind and human civilization. Similar initiatives were taken between Judaism and Christianity a few decades ago and have proven successful and productive. Suffice it to say that it resulted in putting an end to feuds and miseries that lasted almost two millennia. In proposing this idea, I would like to further develop the initiative taken by the Eucharistic Congress of the Vatican in 1965, which issued a document entitled, “The World of Light Encyclical; Dialogue between Christians and Muslims.” In this document we find support in favor of an Islamo-Christian dialogue, which for the first time acknowledges the value of Islamic faith, the favorable stand of Islam towards Christianity, and Islam’s contribution to the advancement of human civilization.

Neither Christianity nor Islam is monolithic, therefore reconciliation efforts should involve representatives from all sects of both religions along with all stakeholders such as scholars, thinkers, policy makers and the media. The thrust should be oriented towards promoting a mindset anchored in the moral imperative of each human being, and it should be a part of much needed pedagogy which fosters pluralism. This task must be supported and nurtured by international

leaders and organizations. Education also has a very prominent role in this endeavor, supported by fair and objective media.

Under the present circumstances worldwide, there is need for greater efforts to create new opportunities for real rapprochement and mutual recognition and understanding, away from tendencies of mistrust and domination. Indeed there is no alternative, if one truly wishes to live in a peaceful world, enjoying positive coexistence with other cultures, civilizations and peoples. And this is exactly what Islam urges us to do. Islam teaches that we have been created as humans of different races and colors to reach out to each other and to respect each other for the common benefit of all.

Islam and the West could and should live and co-exist together in peace and harmony, as the common denominators that link them outweigh their differences. There are many facts which facilitate this reconciliation between Islam and the West:

Geographical Proximity: Islam and the West are close neighbours and destined to live together for a long period of time.

Similar Spiritual Reference: As part of the entire history of monotheistic religions, Islam is a continuity of Judeo-Christian traditions and culture.

Common values: There is no inherent conflict between Islam and modernity, and Muslims are committed to pluralism and the right of people to cherish their diversity.

On the basis of these facts, the root causes of the misunderstandings and conflicts should be addressed and assessed to come up with a realistic approach that might lead to a convergence of views. Together we should not allow the relationship between two great monotheistic religions and civilizations to be defined in mutually antagonistic terms and become hostage to radicals and extremists. The OIC stands ready to work for avoiding such a path, which is rife with disastrous consequences for global peace, stability and cooperation.

There are tremendous strategic common interests for the West and Islam which need to be developed and nurtured in the coming decades. Our world is going through a rapid development, with the possibility of the emergence of new world realities and new centres of power. This makes it all the more imperative for the Western and Muslim worlds to try hard to reconcile their differences, dispel misunderstandings, and look to the future with a new spirit. This is possible, and the OIC is authorized and committed to work to that end.

Endnotes

¹ Armstrong, Karen. "The Curse of the Infidel." *The Guardian*. 20 June 2002. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/jun/20/religion.september11>.

² Based on a speech by HRH Prince Charles. *Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies*. 27 October 1993.

³ I made the call for a historic reconciliation between Islam and Christianity at my lecture at the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) entitled "Is Islam an Intruder to Europe?" on 29 January 2007 and repeated it, *inter alia*, at the inaugural session of the high level segment of the UN Human Rights Council on 10 March 2007, at the International Conference jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference under the title of "the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding" which was held in the capital city of Azerbaijan, Baku on 26-27 April 2007, in my International Day of Tolerance message on 16 November 2007, and in my Lecture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on 28 April 2008.

Introduction

John L. Esposito

We live in a world in which two great world religions with Semitic origins are often under siege, the objects of discrimination, hate crimes, and acts of violence and terror. For one, the 14-18 million Jews of the world, we have a powerful term, anti-Semitism, and a global awareness and sensitivity that can be mobilized against anti-Semitic attitudes and acts. As history and recent experiences affirm, the term anti-Semitism is a key antidote for this disease that continues to infect our societies.

However, for the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, we have had no comparable effective way to counter the hostility, prejudice and discrimination directed towards Islam and Muslims. In 1997, the Runnymede Trust, a UK-based independent think tank on ethnicity and cultural diversity, coined the term 'Islamophobia,' to describe what they saw as a two-stranded form of racism – rooted in both the 'different' physical appearance of Muslims and also in an intolerance of their religious and cultural beliefs. At a December 7, 2004 UN conference, "Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding," Kofi Annan addressed the international scope of its impact: "[when] the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry – that it is a sad and troubling development. Such is the case with 'Islamophobia'.... Since the September 11 attacks on the United States, many Muslims, particularly in the West, have found themselves the objects of suspicion, harassment and discrimination.... Too many people see Islam as a monolith and as intrinsically opposed to the West... [The] Caricature remains widespread and the gulf of ignorance is dangerously deep."¹

How Serious is the Problem?

While the term Islamophobia has been used quite regularly in Europe, in America it has not yet gained wide recognition. Due to the lack of a collective consciousness regarding the reality of 'Islamophobia' in the U.S., political and religious leaders and media commentators engage in a form of hate speech, asserting with impunity what would never appear in mainstream broadcast or print media about Jews, Christians and established ethnic and racial groups in America. For example, Ann Coulter, author and syndicated columnist, commented: "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We

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weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war."²

Michael Savage, host of the *The Savage Nation*, stated: "I tell you right now - the largest percentage of Americans would like to see a nuclear weapon dropped on a major Arab capital. They don't even care which one...I think these people need to be forcibly converted to Christianity. It's the only thing that can probably turn them into human beings."³

Rush Limbaugh, reacting to criticism of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Graeb, commented, "They're the ones who are sick. They're the ones who are perverted. They are the ones who are dangerous. They are the ones who are subhuman. They are the ones who are human debris, not the United States of America and not our soldiers and not our prison guards."⁴

David Horowitz, editor of Frontpage and sponsor of Jihad Watch summarizes the views of many Islam/Muslim bashers: "Liberals are so afraid of offending Muslims that they are denying these facts which are staring us in the face:

- Muslims the world over are engaged in an openly declared Holy War or Jihad against the West.
- This Jihad is a grave danger to our nation and to all of Western civilization.
- The Jihad challenges every facet of American life. Its agenda includes the purposeful and systematic dismantling of all aspects of our culture. It hopes ultimately to impose Sharia law on the U.S., replacing our law with provisions such as the stoning of adulterous women and cutting off thieves' hands.
- The extent of the threat is not being effectively and truthfully communicated to the American public.⁵

Leading figures of the Christian Right were not to be outdone. Despite President George W. Bush's careful distinction between the religion of Islam and the acts of a minority of extremists, religious leaders who are counted among President Bush's closest political allies engaged in a demonization of Islam that fostered religious bigotry and anti-Muslim demagoguery. On PBS's *Religion & Ethics*, Franklin Graham stated, "The God of Islam is not the same God of the Christian or the Judeo-Christian faith. It is a different God, and I believe a very evil and a very wicked religion."⁶ On Fox News' *Hannity & Colmes*, Pat Robertson said, "This man [Muhammad] was an absolute wild-eyed fanatic. He was a robber and a brigand. And to say that these terrorists distort Islam, they're carrying out Islam...I mean, this man was a killer. And to think that this is a peaceful religion is fraudulent."⁷ Robertson also called Islam "a monumental scam" and claimed the Quran, Islam's revealed text, "is strictly a theft of Jewish

theology.” Jerry Falwell referred to the Prophet Muhammad as a “terrorist” on the CBS news program “60 Minutes.” At a pro-Israel rally, Benny Hinn declared, “This is not a war between Arabs and Jews. It’s between God and the devil.”⁸

What are the Roots of this Modern Epidemic?

It is difficult today to appreciate that just a few decades ago, Islam and Muslims were invisible on our cognitive and geographic maps – they were almost invisible in our schools, universities, publications, media, think tanks, and government. When my department chair in graduate school in the late 1960s suggested I take a course in Islam, I thought, “Why should I do that; how would I ever get a job?” When I finished my degree, there were teaching positions in World religions but few in Islamic studies. The Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 changed all of that, almost overnight. Americans’ first encounter with an unknown Islam occurred with the taking of hostages in the American embassy, resulting in an explosion of interest and coverage of the religion of Islam as well as of the Middle East and the Muslim world that has increased exponentially over the years.

Today, Islam and Middle East often dominate the negative headlines. Despite the fact that Islam is the second largest religion in the world and the third largest religion in America, as well as the fact that American Muslims are an integral part of the American mosaic in the 21st century, the acts of terrorists over the last three decades have fed the growth of Islamophobia in this country. The kidnapping of 66 American diplomats and embassy officials, first spawned the image of ‘revolutionary Islam,’ etched into the collective memory of Americans. Fear that Iran would export its revolution dominated global politics in the 1980s, Subsequent hijackings and hostage-taking transformed the image of Muslims from Arabian nomads to Kalashnikov toting mullahs.

With the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s a ‘threat vacuum’ created the need for new international enemies. Within this context, Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran and Muammar Qaddafi’s Libya as well as the rise of Islamic movements in the Muslim world provided fertile ground for the U.S., with the encouragement of many authoritarian Muslim regimes, to identify its new enemy as Islamic fundamentalism. Little distinction was made between mainstream and violent extremist movements. In the wake of Islamist performance in elections in the 1990s, fear grew that a larger pan-Islamist movement would gain political ascendancy not only through bullets but also through ballots.

Amidst dire warnings of “Muslim Rage” and a “Clash of Civilizations” a quiet, peaceful revolution, inspired by mainstream Islamic movements was actually growing in the Muslim world. During the early 1990s, unlike extremists seeking to overthrow existing regimes, Islamists were pursuing gradual reform through

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education, social services, and political participation. Electoral gains by such mainstream Islamist candidates in various countries confirmed their new popularity. In Egypt and Tunisia they emerged as the leading opposition even though they were not allowed to organize separate official political parties. In Jordan they captured 32 of 80 seats in the lower house of parliament and held five cabinet-level positions and the office of speaker of the lower house. In Algeria, the stunning victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the 1990 municipal elections and then its sweep in parliamentary elections sent a shock wave around the globe. By the mid-1990s, Turkey, the only constitutionally secular Muslim state, had an Islamic party, Welfare, and its leader had come to power as prime minister. At the dawn of the 21st century, there were many reasons to be positive about the future of Islam and Muslim-Christian relations. Despite continued attacks by Muslim extremists and warnings of a clash of civilizations, in many parts of the Muslim world there was a continued push from below for greater political participation and the rule of law. Coverage of Islam in the West, in schools, publications, and the media had increased exponentially. Islam and Muslims were more and more visible and institutionalized, as was seen in the growing number of mosques, Islamic centers and Islamic schools, NGOs and Muslim publications. In America, many Muslims had become more prominent in the professions and more prosperous. Muslim thinkers in the West were making significant contributions to Islamic reform, free to develop new ideas and perspectives in their writings and in training of students. Their impact was growing not only in the West but through the globalization of communication in the Muslim world as well.

Post 9/11 Climate

The catastrophic events of 9/11 and continued attacks in Muslim countries as well as in Madrid and London have obscured the many positive developments and exacerbated the growth of Islamophobia almost exponentially. Islam and Muslims have become guilty until proven innocent, a reversal of the classic American legal maxim. Islam is often viewed as the cause rather than the context for radicalism, extremism and terrorism. Islam as the culprit is a simple answer, easier than considering the core political issues and grievances that resonate in much of the Muslim world (the failures of many Muslim governments and societies, American foreign policy of intervention and dominance, Western support for authoritarian regimes, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, or support for Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon).

It is not difficult to find material that emphasizes selective analyses of Islam and events in the Muslim world, crisis-oriented and headline-driven, fueling stereotypes, fears and discrimination. Islam's portrayal as a triple threat (polit-

ical, civilizational, and demographic) has been magnified by a number of journalists and scholars who trivialize the complexity of political, social and religious dynamics in the Muslim world. Prominent scholars, public intellectuals and political commentators such as Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Daniel Pipes, and Martin Kramer, reflecting a post Cold War tendency, have reduced Islam and Islamic revivalism to stereotypical phrases or caricatures: “Islam against the West”, “Islam’s War with Modernity”, and “Roots of Muslim Rage”. They lump together indiscriminately Islamic political and social movements under the umbrella of Fundamentalism or Islamism, with little or no distinction between mainstream and violent extremist movements.

The result has been to downplay the negative consequences of Western support for authoritarian regimes, and the blowback from American and European foreign policies in the Middle East, from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the invasion of Iraq. Anti-Americanism or anti-Westernization (which has increased significantly among the mainstream in the Muslim world and globally as a result of these policies) is often equated simply with Muslim hatred of our Western way of life.

Too often, those who speak out against the demonization of Islam, hate crimes or threats to Muslim civil liberties are accused of being soft on Islam or of supporting terrorists. Scholars who identify potential root causes of terrorism are attacked in the media or on Islamophobic websites, accused of defending a religion that supports and condones violence, of lack of patriotism, or anti-Semitism.

Without coverage that tells the whole story, that provides the full context for Muslim attitudes, events, actions, that reflects the diversity of Muslim practice, Islam and all Muslims have been demonized. As I travel across America and in Europe speaking at universities and to civic groups as well as in conversations with government and corporate leaders, similar questions continue to be raised. Among the most common are: “Is Islam a violent religion?”, “Does the Quran condone terrorism?”, “Are there Muslim moderates?”, “Why don’t more Muslims speak out against global terrorism?”, “Why are women treated so poorly in Islam?”, “Why is Islam so intolerant towards non-Muslims?”.

Islamophobia has affected the prism through which Muslims are viewed domestically. Mainstream Islamic institutions (civil rights groups, political action committees, charities) are indiscriminately accused of raising money for extremism by individuals and sometimes governments without the hard evidence which would lead to successful prosecution. In fact, there is a stark contrast between the number of Muslims and Muslim organizations charged with terrorism, and those that are convicted. For example, in 2005, the FBI admitted that it had yet to identify a single al-Qaeda sleeper cell in the United States.⁹ Of the more than 5,000 Muslims held in preventative detention after 9/11, the vast majority were never

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accused, much less convicted, of any terrorist act. Not a single individual was found guilty of having committed a terrorist act. While more than four hundred persons were charged in “terror – related” cases by the Justice Department, “the vast majority involved no charges of terrorism whatsoever, but only minor nonviolent offenses, such as immigration fraud, credit card fraud, or lying to an FBI agent.”¹⁰ As noted by David Cole, a prominent civil liberties expert: ‘In the name of preventing terrorism, the administration has locked up thousands of individuals without trial – within the United States and abroad – the vast majority of whom have never been accused, much less convicted, of any terrorist act’.¹¹ Significant minorities of non-Muslim Americans show a great tolerance for policies that would profile Muslims, require special identity cards and question the loyalty of all Muslim citizens. The extent to which the religion of Islam and the mainstream Muslim majority have been conflated with the beliefs and actions of an extremist minority can be seen in a 2006 *USA Today*/Gallup poll: “Forty-four percent said Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs. Nearly one-quarter of Americans, 22%, said they would not want a Muslim as a neighbor; less than half believe U.S. Muslims are loyal to the United States and favored heightened security measures with Muslims to prevent terrorism.”¹² Given the role of Islam as a source of Muslim identity and faith, belief that somehow Islam is antithetical to Western values can have serious implications for many Muslims living in the West as well as for the conduct of American foreign policy.

At a time when the need for better mutual understanding has never been greater, the proliferation of selective, and therefore biased, analysis continues to contribute to ignorance rather than knowledge, to narrow perceptions and perspectives rather than broaden understanding, and so to reinforce the problem rather than paving the way to new solutions. This creates serious repercussions on a domestic and international level for those fighting terrorism. The current campaign to “Win the Hearts and Minds” of mainstream majorities in the Muslim world – who are needed to fight and marginalize the minority of extremists in their communities – cannot start with broad scale demonization of Muslim culture and religion.

Islamofascism

After 9/11, President George W. Bush drew a sharp distinction between the Muslim majority’s religion of Islam and a minority of Muslim extremists. However, his subsequent use of the term Islamofascism blurs this distinction and implies that Islam, not just its misuse by extremists, is the root cause of the problem. Bush, joined by members of his cabinet and congress as well as neo-conservative political commentators, has used Islamic fascism or Islamo-fascism to strengthen waning support for their international policies. After the August 10,

2006 transatlantic bomb plot was foiled by British police in London, Bush emphasized that the plotters “try to spread their jihadist message—a message I call, it’s totalitarian in nature – Islamic radicalism, Islamic fascism, they try to spread it as well by taking the attack to those of us who love freedom.” “It is the great challenge of this century... As young democracies flourish, terrorists try to stop their progress.... This is the beginning of a long struggle against an ideology that is real and profound. It is **Islamofascism**. It comes in different forms. They share the same tactics, which is to destroy people and things in order to create chaos in the hopes that their vision of the world becomes predominant in the Middle East.”¹³

Members of Congress have followed suit. Former Senator Rick Santorum stated, “We’re at war with Islamic fascism...These people are after us not because we’ve oppressed them, not because of the state of Israel...It’s because we stand for everything they hate.” [7] Neo-conservative columnists and talk show hosts (Daniel Pipes, Stephen Schwartz, Michael Savage, and Christopher Hitchens) and bloggers have used and promoted the use of Islamofascism. Conservative Republican Patrick Buchanan has charged that “neoconservatives, whose roots are in the Trotskyist-Social Democratic Left, are promoting use of the term. Their goal is to have Bush stuff al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran into an ‘Islamofascist’ kill box, then let SAC do the rest”.¹⁴

Does Islamofascism Clarify or Obfuscate?

Webster’s American Dictionary definition defines fascism as “a totalitarian government system led by a dictator, used historically for the totalitarian ideology of Mussolini and Hitler.” Neither Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda or much of global terrorism fits this definition. Moreover, the use of the term “fascism” is so fluid, has been used in so many diverse ways and contexts by former President Harry Truman, Martin Luther King, or by the liberal left that the word has lost any meaning or use other than denunciation. The notion that we are fighting “Islamic fascists” reflects President Bush’s bipolar vision of the world: the struggle between us and them, good and evil, democracy and the axis of evil. It obscures the nature, root causes and protagonists of the conflict and risks equating the acts of the enemy, a minority of Muslim extremists, with Islam itself.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Islamophobia, its manifestations and impact, has contributed to the perception in many parts of the Muslim world that the American-led War Against Global Terrorism (Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda) is a War Against Islam and Muslim World. Many ask to what extent Islamophobia, or fallout from it, influ-

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ences domestic (terrorism legislation and civil liberties) and foreign policies (wars and the justifications of wars).

9/11 made the international community more aware of the critical importance of intercivilizational dialogue. Governments in Europe and America, the Muslim world and beyond as well as international organizations like the United Nations and Organization of the Islamic Conference have undertaken serious efforts to promote intercivilizational dialogue. The World Economic Forum created the Council of 100 Leaders (political, religion, intellectual, and media) and the U.N. the Alliance of Civilizations. Centers like Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, promote a better understanding between the Muslim world and the West, have been active in Washington and globally, speaking, briefing, and writing for a broad audience of university, government, media and corporate audiences.

Education in our schools, universities and seminaries (not just madrasas) as well as our churches and synagogues that train the next generation of policymakers, religious leaders, educators, and citizens is critical.

Attempts to limit public discourse and debate, silence alternative voices in America and Europe who speak out against ignorance, stereotyping and demonization of Islam, discrimination, hate crimes or threats to the civil liberties of Muslims must be turned back. Some are attacked in the media and on Islamophobic websites. Would this discourse and these actions be tolerated if Christianity or Judaism were the targets?

Islamophobia can have serious consequences on foreign policy. America's policy in Iraq, from war to post-war reconstruction, was affected by the extent to which Islam and Muslim religious leaders, and Shii Islam in particular, were seen through the distorted lens of "Khomeini/Iranian" revolutionary fundamentalism. Therefore, the potential roles of Shii religious leaders and institutions were unforeseen or underestimated, and then feared; the belief that Iranian Shii would control Iraqi Shii, leading to a Qom-Najaf axis, failed to appreciate and understand the diversity of Shii leadership.

In the late 1960s, Islam and Muslims were invisible on the cognitive and spatial maps of America and Europe. Since the late 1970s both international politics and the emergence of Islam as the second or third largest religion in the West have transformed this situation. Islam and Muslims are visible in our societies, neighborhoods, places of work and prayer, and in our curricula and media.

However, too often the religion of Islam, its diversity and mainstream, has been seen through the lens of Muslim extremism. 9/11 has exacerbated this situation exponentially. While Islamophobia, like anti-Semitism, is centuries old and will not be eradicated easily or soon, governments, policymakers, the media, educational institutions, religious and corporate leaders have a critical role to play in transforming our societies and influencing citizens and policies to limit and contain the voices of hate if we are to promote global understanding and peace.

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- ¹⁰ Dane Eggen and Julie Tate, as quoted in David Cole and Jules Lobel, *Less Safe, Less Free: Why America is Losing the War on Terror* (New York: New Press, 2007), p 10.
- ¹¹ David Cole and Jules Lobel, *Less Safe, Less Free: Why America is Losing the War on Terror* (New York: New Press, 2007), p 3.
- ¹² Saad, Lydia. "Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace." Gallup. 10 August 2006. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/24073/AntiMuslim-Sentiments-Fairly-Commonplace.aspx>.
- ¹³ "President Bush and Secretary of State Rice Discuss the Middle East Crisis." The White House. 7 Aug. 2006. 14 Sept. 2006. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060807.html>.
- ¹⁴ Buchanan, Patrick. "Fascists under the Bed." *The American Conservative*. 11 Sept. 2006. http://www.amconmag.com/2006/2006_09_11/buchanan.html.

“Islamophobia” in the West: a Comparison Between Europe and America

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Although the first occurrence of the term Islamophobia appeared in an essay by the Orientalist Etienne Dinet in *L'Orient vu de l'Occident* (1922), it is only in the 1990s that the term became common parlance in defining the discrimination faced by Muslims in Western Europe. Negative perceptions of Islam can be traced back through multiple confrontations between the Muslim world and Europe from the Crusades to colonialism.¹ However, Islamophobia is a modern and secular anti-Islamic discourse and practice appearing in the public sphere with the integration of Muslim immigrant communities and intensifying after 9/11. The term has been used increasingly amongst political circles and the media, and even Muslim organizations, especially since the 1997 Runnymede Report (*Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*). However, academics are still debating the legitimacy of the term (Werbner 2005, Modood 2002, Vertovec 2002, Halliday 1999)² and questioning how it differs from other terms such as racism, anti-Islamism, anti-Muslimness, and anti-Semitism.

The term Islamophobia is contested because it is often imprecisely applied to very diverse phenomena, ranging from xenophobia to anti-terrorism. It groups together all kinds of different forms of discourse, speech and acts, by suggesting that they all emanate from an identical ideological core, which is an ‘“irrational fear” (a phobia) of Islam.’

However, the term is used with increasing frequency in the media and political arenas, and sometimes in academic circles. The European Monitoring Centre on Xenophobia and Racism (EUMC) report documenting the backlash against Muslims in Europe after September 11th was titled ‘Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001.’ In France it has been used in several important academic studies although it is still rejected by the Consultative Commission on Human Rights (France Report). In *Le Monde*, a premier news journal, the term has appeared in over thirty articles in the past year and more than 150 in the past ten. However, a search of *Der Spiegel*, a premier news journal in Germany shows only six uses in the past year. Another term in more regular usage seems to be ‘Islamfeindlichkeit,’ which expresses the anti-Muslim sentiment but does not imply the same fear. The term and even the idea have only recently become used in academic work, where previously the study had been about Muslim communities rather than German attitudes towards them (Germany Report).

*Based on the research report “Islamophobia: Why the Term is more a Predicament than an Explanation” available at www.euro-islam.info.

The use of the word is very common in the United Kingdom (UK Report), where the aforementioned Runnymede Report of 1997 helped launch its popularity. An examination of the archives of *The Guardian* reveals that the term has been used hundreds of times within the last year, often by prominent politicians and commentators. Notable also is the existence of the group FAIR, Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, created by Muslim activists. By contrast, in America, the term appears only twenty-six times in *The New York Times*, and except for editorials by Muslim activists, always refers to the situation in Europe. However, it has been used regularly by the group CAIR, Council on American Islamic Relations. Searching through other media, the usage of the term appears to be rising, perhaps partly due to its use by activist groups.

There have been several recent studies on European Muslims which relate to Islamophobia. The EUMC reports on discrimination against Muslim populations in Europe have been the first to generalize the term and thus give it some credibility at the European level (EUMC Reports 'Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001' and 'The Impact of July 7 2005, London Bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU,' November 2005). The EUMC reports examine the European response towards Muslim minorities in their own countries, identifying attacks against Muslims, anti-Islamic rhetoric and the efficacy of the government in the European countries in minimizing community tensions. Both EUMC reports state a marked rise in anti-Islamic attitudes and attacks in European countries for a short period of time engendered by the events of 9/11 and 7/7. However, both reports state the level of physical acts of aggression against Muslims were disparate and isolated incidents and that hostile attitudes expounded in certain sections of the media and political spectrum were counter-balanced by concerted efforts by European governments to make sharp distinctions between those who committed the acts of terrorism and the general populace. The report on the impact of the July 7 2005 bombings lauds the UK political and community leaders for their immediate reassurances to the Muslim community; government initiatives of engaging with the Muslim community through setting up Muslim consultation groups and the police for implementing reporting and communication mechanisms in order to de-escalate potential community tension. However, the EUMC uses data gathered by national agencies that have different methods for quantifying discrimination, and whose home countries often have different policies toward recognizing ethnic minorities. In addition to these methodological flaws, the EUMC reports approach the term Islamophobia uncritically.

In the United States, the Congressional Research Service (CRS)'s report on Muslims in Europe describes the impact of different integration policies on Muslim populations after 9/11, and assesses their influence on extremism among

Muslims. The report looks at the challenges faced by European countries in integrating their Muslim population due to their lack of a common legal or political framework on immigration, security or integration. The authors state that British, French, German and Spanish integration strategies have failed to create a sense of loyalty to the national identity amongst their Muslim subjects and this coupled with the high levels of socio-economic disadvantages faced by the Muslim communities relative to indigenous population in most European countries have been exploited by terrorist elements. The report notes that European countries are reassessing their relationship with the Muslim communities in light of the threat posed by ‘homegrown’ terrorists through intensification of dialogue with moderate elements in Muslim communities, new anti-discrimination legislation, introduction of citizenship markers and tighter immigration and security policies.

These reports exemplify two separate trends in the field: the CRS analyses different state policies concerning the integration of Muslim populations, while the EUMC records levels of discrimination encountered by European Muslims. None of the above reports combine these approaches (analysis of state policies and analysis of discrimination) to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding post-9/11 Muslim populations.

In a unique effort to understand the status of Muslims in Europe, the methodology we used for the report on Islamophobia, has amalgamated both methods of analysis. We examined policies undertaken since 9/11 in fields such as immigration, security and religion, and we will simultaneously assess the influence of these policies on Muslims. We also addressed the structural causes of discrimination, such as the socio-economic status of Muslim populations or the legal status of racial and ethnic minorities. In doing so, we differentiate our approach from the dominant view, which defines Islamophobia solely in terms of acts or speeches explicitly targeting Muslims.

It is important to shed light on the multi-layered levels of discrimination encountered by Muslims. This phenomenon cannot simply be subsumed into the term Islamophobia. Indeed, the term can be misleading, as it presupposes the pre-eminence of religious discrimination when other forms of discrimination (such as racial or class) may be more relevant. We therefore intend to use the term Islamophobia as a starting point for analyzing the different dimensions that define the political situation of Muslim minorities in Europe and America. We do not take the term for granted by assigning it only one meaning, such as anti-Islamic discourse.

It is particularly complex to identify Islamophobia because of two major features of Muslims in Europe that stand in sharp contrast with the features of Muslims in America:

- European Muslims are mostly immigrants
- European Muslims are socio-economically marginalized

For these reasons, Islamophobia overlaps with other forms of discrimination, such as xenophobia, anti-immigration policies and political discourses and rejection of cultural differences. However European and American Muslims share the same international situation related to the war that may trigger Islamophobia.

Most Muslims in Europe are Immigrants or Have an Immigrant Background

According to the best estimates, Muslims currently constitute approximately 5 percent of the European Union's 425 million inhabitants. There are about 4.5 million Muslims in France, followed by Germany's 3 million, 1.6 million in the United Kingdom, and more than half a million in Italy and the Netherlands. Although other nations have populations of less than 500,000, these can be substantial minorities in small countries such as Austria, Sweden or Belgium. Approximately half are foreign born. In general, the population is younger and more fertile than the domestic populations (Savage 2004).

In France and the United Kingdom, Muslim populations began arriving in the middle of the 20th century largely from former colonies, leading to a predominately North African ethnicity in France and South Asian in the United Kingdom. In Germany, the community began with an influx of 'guest workers' during the post-war economic boom, largely from Turkey. In the Netherlands, immigration of guest workers led to a largely Moroccan and Turkish population. Along with the other nations in the European Union, all of these populations have been substantially augmented by immigration flows over the last twenty years. Although immigrants have come from all over the world, the countries with existing populations tend to attract more of the same ethnic background. Among current European Union member states, only Greece has a significant indigenous population of Muslims, residing primarily in Thrace. Greece also has a substantial population of non-permanent residents from Albania, most of who are nominally Muslim but do not practice regularly. This makes it difficult to estimate the total number.

This situation in which the categories 'immigrant' and 'Muslim' overlap is particular to Western Europe, as can be seen by comparison with the United States. In 2006 particularly, immigration became an important political issue in America. At the margins of the discourse, the issue can be connected to terrorism. The long unprotected border with Mexico can be seen as pushing the effective boundary of the United States to Mexican authorities, with the implication that it would be easier for suspect individuals to gain access. However, this is not the central issue in the debate. Instead, the immigration debate centres on economic and social concerns such as wages, assimilation, and language. In America, the prototypical immigrant is a low-skilled Mexican or Central American worker

rather than a conservative Muslim. Of the 15.5 million legal immigrants who entered the United States from between 1989 and 2004, only 1.2 million were from predominantly Muslim countries. There was a sharp drop from more than 100,000 per year prior to 2002 down to approximately 60,000 in 2003, but this recovered somewhat to 90,000 in 2004.³ Immigration in the United States is thus a topic in which the issues of Islam and terrorism are at best marginal parts of the issue.

Muslims are Part of the Underclass of Europe

Because European Muslims tend to be socio-economically marginalized, much of the discrimination against them may be due to their class situation rather than their religion. Religion and discrimination may also interact in the formation of ‘class’ – for example in the formation of underprivileged classes of British Asian Muslims or French North African Muslims (Modood 2002 and Cesari 2004).

The EUMC completes regular reports summarizing their findings in this sphere. In 2003, the EUMC released a report on employment. In the United Kingdom, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis had unemployment rates higher than twenty percent, relative to only six percent in the broader population. Immigrants in general had a thirteen percent unemployment rate. In Germany, the largest Muslim group of Turks had unemployment rates of twenty-one percent, contrasted with only eight percent among others in Germany. Nationality statistics were unavailable for France, but immigrants had a twenty-two percent unemployment rate, compared to thirteen percent for the country as a whole. Immigrant unemployment rates tend to be at least twice that of natives. In the Netherlands, non-Western immigrants had an unemployment rate of nine percent, Western immigrants four percent, and native Dutch three percent. In Spain, the numbers were closer to equal, while in Italy migrants had only a seven percent unemployment rate compared to eleven percent in the broader population.

In France, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands, OECD data shows that individuals with ancestry from majority Muslim countries have substantially poorer educational outcomes, while they are more equivalent in Italy and the United Kingdom. In Germany, about seventy percent of those with ancestry in majority Muslim countries have secondary education or less, while this is true for only about twenty-five percent of the rest of the population. Only five percent have advanced degrees, compared to nineteen percent of the broader population. In France, fifty-six percent of those with ancestry in majority Muslim countries have secondary education or less, compared to 46 percent in the broader population. Higher degrees are more equally distributed in France. In Spain, seventy-six percent have less than a secondary education, compared to sixty-three percent for others, while only eleven percent have advanced degrees, relative to twenty percent

nation-wide. The Netherlands' numbers are divergent as well, with fifty percent of those of Muslim ancestry having less than a secondary education, with the balance going the other way in advanced degrees – thirty-one percent to twenty percent. In Italy, the numbers are roughly equal among the wider population. In the United Kingdom, the statistics are also relatively equal, although this conceals the difficulties of those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage.

The EUMC 2006 report on housing shows that, although there have been some improvements, housing is overall much poorer for immigrants, and they often face discrimination and sometimes even exclusionary violence. In general, rigorous measures of these trends are not available due to reporting inadequacies in the countries mentioned. In Germany, the report states that minorities clearly live in spatially segregated areas with poorer quality housing. The problem has been recognized by the government in Spain, which is taking action to increase public support for housing. France is in a similar situation, although there is a more particular difficulty with declining conditions in the stock of public housing. In Italy, responsibility for housing laws is distributed at various levels, with the resulting patchwork being difficult to analyze, although generally more difficult for immigrants. In the Netherlands, although there have been reports of exclusionary violence, the best evidence available suggests that state policy on housing has worked fairly well in decreasing the significance of discrimination. The EUMC states that the United Kingdom has dealt with the problems of housing particularly well relative to other European states, with better support for public housing and more effective anti-discrimination initiatives. However, the largest groups of Muslims come from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds and statistics show that they live in much poorer conditions than the average Briton. Over two thirds live in low-income households.⁴ Nearly a quarter live in overcrowded houses, while only two percent of white Britons do the same.⁵

The situation in Europe is in sharp contrast to that in the United States, where Muslims tend to be of higher education and income than the non-Muslim population. Because the U.S. Census does not ask about religion, and Muslims are too small a proportion of the population to be reliably measured in general national surveys, exact information on their status is not easy to obtain. Special surveys done by Zogby International Polling in 2001 and 2004 provide the best demographic information. These surveys show that more than half of American Muslims earn at least \$50,000 per year relative to a nationwide average of \$43,000. Some of this difference may be due to the greater likelihood that Muslims live in urban areas with higher incomes and standards of living, but it is clear that they are doing at least as well as non-Muslims in the labour market. Fifty-eight percent of American Muslims are college graduates, while according to the Census Bureau that number was only twenty-seven percent among the population as a whole.⁶

International Constraints that Trigger Islamophobia

Muslim integration in Europe is occurring under the international constraint of the battle against Islamist terrorism. Over the last several years, as the states under review have responded to the threat of terrorism, most have updated and strengthened their security and anti-terrorism laws while placing further restrictions on immigration. It often appears as if immigration and internal and external security policies are conflated with one another. Terrorism can be characterized as neither entirely foreign nor domestic. If international terrorists based in foreign countries are recruiting among the disaffected populations of Europe, this becomes a simultaneously internal and external security problem. There is little in the way of systematic evidence, but there are suggestive clues. The September 11th plots were at least partially planned in Hamburg, and among the individuals imprisoned by the United States in Guantanamo Bay there are at least twenty Europeans.⁷ Since 9/11, the nations of the EU have arrested more than twenty times the number of terrorist suspects as the United States.⁸ Because of this threat, states can take a view of domestic Muslims as ‘foreign enemies,’ a classification that implies a much lower level of legal and social rights and privileges.

Although France did not substantially change its anti-terrorism framework after September 11th, the Law on Everyday Security passed November 15th, 2001. This measure expanded police powers, allowing stop and search of vehicles in the context of terrorism investigations, the ability to search unoccupied premises at night with a warrant but without notification, and much more extensive monitoring and recording of electronic transactions. A new immigration law in 2003 made it substantially easier to deport individuals who ‘have committed acts justifying a criminal trial’ or whose behaviour ‘threatens public order,’ along with increased penalties for illegal immigration, more temporary detention centres and new limits on family reunification.

Germany developed new policies regarding civil liberties, immigrant rights, the freedom of churches and law enforcement powers. These new policies were passed in two large packages, the first coming only on September 19th, 2001 and the second on January 1st, 2002. It thus became possible to ban religious groups for threatening the democratic order, and the idea of a threatening group was redefined to take more account of foreign concerns. Financial records, electronic and postal communications, and most forms of transportation records became available to the police. Authorities were allowed to use a previously extremely controversial data-mining search method called the ‘grid-search’. The new laws also allowed a certain amount of eavesdropping and wiretapping in the course of an investigation. Police can now track the location and numbers of cellular phones. Military intelligence has received substantially more domestic powers, with easier searches, access to communication records, and the legal ability to

communicate its findings with other law enforcement agencies. Since September 11th, Germany has substantially tightened its asylum granting procedures and established the legal principle that foreigners considered a threat to German democracy and security can be barred entry and deported.

The United Kingdom published a new Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill on November 13th, 2001. The law allowed the indefinite detention of foreign nationals for whom it was not considered safe to deport to their country of origin, the freezing and confiscation of funds associated with terrorism or proscribed groups, and required individuals not to associate with suspected terrorists or proscribed organizations and report any suspicions to the police. Individuals can be detained and interrogated in anticipation of violence rather than in response to the action. After the bombings on the London subway on July 7th, 2005, the government introduced an updated Prevention of Terrorism Act (UK Report). This act proscribed several groups, criminalized the condoning of terrorism, allowed for detention of terrorism suspects for up to ninety days without charges, and proposed the possibility of stripping citizenship from naturalised Britons accused of terrorism. A study by the Institute of Race Relations⁹ suggests that the anti-terrorism statutes have been used overwhelmingly against Muslim defendants. Few arrests have led to convictions and they have been used to cover routine criminal acts and immigration violations. Of the cases reviewed, one in eight was a Muslim arrested for terrorism violations and turned over to the immigration authorities without any prosecution for the alleged initial offences. Several Muslims have been arrested for crimes such as credit card fraud due to the expanded police powers provided by the anti-terrorism statutes.

Despite the attacks on the Madrid railway system in 2004, Spain did not make significant changes to its security and anti-terrorism laws. These had been well codified over the years as the Spanish government faced terrorism from Basque separatists. However, preventive detention of alleged conspirators increased dramatically. Most of these individuals are held for some time and later released due to lack of evidence (Spain Report). Immigration laws have been through several changes. Over the years in which the conservative government was in charge, restrictions on immigration of foreigners considered undesirable were increased and the ability of foreign nationals to exercise basic rights such as that of assembly was restricted (Spain Report). However, since the advent of leftist control of the national government, a proposal was adopted in January 2005 to regularize the status of the immigrants in the country. Efforts have been under way to improve social and economic conditions as well (Spain Report).

The Italian government passed what was known as the Pisanu package in 2005 to combat the threat of terrorism. This law expanded police detention powers and loosened the definition of terrorism to include training. The use of the military

in emergency situations was legalized and new recordkeeping for electronic communications was mandated (Italy Report). Italian immigration law was somewhat unorganized prior to the passing of the Bossi-Fini law in 2002. This law tightly controls the entry and residency of immigrants, and an amendment in 2003 created tighter penalties for illegal immigration, mandated the building of more detention centres, and limited family reunification.¹⁰

The Netherlands has increased its focus on the threat of terrorism, although to date there have not been major legal changes (Netherlands Report). The increased focus has had two major goals, firstly that of security, and secondly the prevention of the radicalization of domestic populations. The government proposed new anti-terrorism laws to make it easier to arrest terrorist suspects and to hold them for up to two years prior to court dates. They have also responded with new policies on financial reporting, better intelligence coordination, and a stronger police and military. There are plans to make legislative changes such as the weakening of protections against searches of mosques and the ability to search outside databases to profile suspects. Although there have been numerous proposals discussed in these regards, little legislative action has actually been completed (Netherlands Report). After much debate, various new immigration policies have been developed emphasizing the assimilation of immigrants to a common set of values, rather than the previous focus on multiculturalism. Laws passed in 2001 and 2004 have made family reunion more difficult by creating age and income restrictions, and there are proposals under review to make expulsion of foreigners easier. In 2001, the Netherlands passed an Aliens Act aimed at reducing the tremendous flow of asylum seekers that the country had accepted during the 1990s. This policy has been successful, as asylum requests have now dropped to one quarter of their previous number (Netherlands Report).

When considering the role of international terrorism in conditioning the situation of Muslims in Europe, it is useful to compare Europe to the United States. Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, America has substantially changed its legal framework for dealing with terrorism and pursued various policies of questionable constitutionality and legality. The PATRIOT Act lessened the restrictions on surveillance, allowed various personal records to be obtained by authorities, reduced the privacy of attorney-client conversation, and broadened the definition of terrorism to include ‘material support,’ a concept which has not been fully defined. Along with these changes in the law, American citizens have been imprisoned without judicial review, mosques have been searched for radiation without warrants, phone calls and phone records have been obtained without court approval, and individuals have been abducted and sent to secret prisons, as well as foreign prisons where they could be interrogated with more violent methods. The severity of these policies compared to the European response does

not seem, however, to have made the situation for Muslims worse in America than in Europe.

Due to this complexity of the situation of Muslims in Europe, it becomes difficult to untangle the threads of motivation behind them, and this may not ultimately be possible. Although there is clearly rising anti-immigrant sentiment across western Europe, one must wonder to what degree this is a result of the fact that so many of the immigrants are Muslims, and whether a different group of immigrants would have provoked such a strong reaction. It has been theorized that Islam is a particular threat to European national identities in a way that it is not in America, where language difference is considered more problematic to national solidarity.¹¹

In general, we can see that aside from anti-Muslim sentiment, the primary factors driving discrimination in Europe are policies towards ethnic minorities in general, anti-terrorism policy, and legal changes in the immigration and naturalization frameworks. This discrimination is expressed in physical abuse, political, media and intellectual discourse, and in obstacles to religious practices. The public discourse on Islam by politicians, intellectuals and media as well as the status of religious practices of Muslims are more likely to lead to Islamophobic practices.

Role of Political Leaders and Political Parties

In Europe, the pressures of increasing immigrant populations and the erosion of national boundaries through the transnational force of the European Union have led to a rising incidence of nationalist rhetoric and policies and an essentializing approach to identity. In its more severe forms, this can be classified as xenophobia, a fear and hatred of the foreign. Sometimes, as in Italy, this becomes represented by claims such as that by Forza Nuova that Italy is essentially Catholic, which naturally leads to the conclusion that Muslims cannot be good citizens (Italy Report). In Terrassa, Spain, in 1999, after riots between immigrant Maghrebis and local youths led to several injuries, there were two responses. The Socialists proposed better ways of integrating the immigrants to lessen the social pressure, but the centre-right Popular Party diagnosed the problem as one of the immigrants' presence rather than of Spanish society's difficulty in coping with them. As these types of incidents pile up, the public mood shifts and the problems are interpreted as based in Islam (Spain Report).

Anti-immigrant sentiment is common in many countries as they face the difficulties of integrating culturally different populations. However, in European countries, this can slide into what can be termed more accurately as Islamophobia. Over the years since immigration became an issue in Europe, extreme right-wing parties have found some success in pushing racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. However, it seems clear that in recent years, this has become more anti-Muslim, as the parties have taken advantage of declining attitudes in the broader population.

The Bradford riots in the United Kingdom, which could have been presented as a racial issue, instead were attached to the problems of international terrorism by the British National Party. In a continuing campaign, Chris Allen documents that the BNP was able to enlist fringe Sikh and Hindu allies in its anti-Muslim campaign, a dramatic shift from the general anti-foreign attitudes of years past. Similarly, Le Pen and the National Front in France have been able to play up fears of Muslims linked to fears of terrorism to push themselves towards a much more prominent place in French politics. The Lega Nord in Italy has switched its rhetoric to take advantage of anti-Muslim sentiment, deploying slightly modified versions of traditional anti-Semitic devices as weapons against Islam. The German DVO party has increased in strength as well.

This shift in the far right and its growing strength inevitably affect the more central public discourse on the issues. In Germany, the use of the term ‘*leitkultur*,’ which had been taboo for many years, has come back into regular politics and is used approvingly by members of the centre-right. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom stated that all Muslims were responsible for terrorism, while the current government under Tony Blair made it a criminal offence to condone terrorism in speech either at home or abroad. Many Muslims (and non-Muslims) fear that the label terrorist is being used to criminalize what they consider to be resistance or liberation movements. The definition of terrorism is highly controversial and often results from political decisions more than from objective facts concerning movements or groups.

Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi has made his famous comments about the superiority of Western civilization and the backwardness of Islam. Even in Spain, which has had fewer of these problems, former President of the Catalan Autonomous Government Jordi Pujol stated that ‘in Catalonia, as in any European country, it is easy to integrate the Polish, Italians or Germans, but that is difficult to achieve with Arab Muslims, even not being fundamentalists.’ In France, local politicians have used anti-mosque campaigns as tools for drumming up support. Perhaps the most dramatic change has been in the political culture of the Netherlands, where violence and death threats have become increasingly common in an acrimonious debate (Netherlands Report). Although policy has not yet followed, public debate now incorporates drastic ideas such as the forbidding of Islam, the deportation of second generation Moroccans or the banning of gender segregated mosques (Netherlands Report). The Netherlands is a prime example of the political changes across Europe. Increasingly it is possible to make anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant statements in common politics which would have been entirely inappropriate in previous years.

Two other trends in political discourse are worth mentioning. First, a distinction between radical (bad) Islam and law-abiding (good) Islam has become a

common political framing of the difficulties. This has been led particularly by Nicolas Sarkozy in France and has become widespread in German politics (Germany Report). As Alexandre Caeiro astutely points out in the report on France, this is not a neutral characterization. The fact that Muslims must be named as good or law abiding means that there is an underlying assumption that Muslims are potential troublemakers. The second trend has been the use of Muslim spokespeople to criticize Islam and Muslims. As members of the minority, they can voice criticisms which would seem unduly harsh from the majority population. Probably the most famous of these is Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Dutch legislator and former Muslim born in Somalia. She is positioned in Dutch discourse as an expert on Islam and thus a plausible critic. She has moved her political alliances from left to right as her prominence in this debate increased. She has declared even more moderate forms of Islam fundamentally incompatible with liberal democracy and named the prophet Muhammad as 'a pedophile' and 'a perverse tyrant.'

Media Coverage of Islam

The country reports display several broad themes in the media coverage of Islam in Europe. Most mainstream media are not openly Islamophobic, as noted in each of the country reports. Some extreme examples of anti-Muslim speech can be found in the reports as well, but these do not seem to typify the media environment. However, events have driven an increase in coverage along with more sensationalist reports that can be portrayed as about the threat of terrorism. This trend is evident in all of the country reports. In these sensationalist news stories especially, but also across the media overall, there is a tendency to mix foreign and domestic Islam together, thus extending the entire trope of politically radical Islam to immigrant Muslim populations. The European media also seems to show a particular interest in questions of gender power and politics, often a cultural flashpoint between secularized Europeans and more conservative Muslim immigrant populations.

Quantitative data cited in the UK report shows the dramatic increase of stories about Muslims and Islam. A study by Poole identified different patterns for 'British Muslims' and 'global Muslims' in *The Times* and *The Guardian*.¹² As she stated, however, 'the associative negative behaviour [of global Muslims] is seen to evolve out of something inherent in the religion, rendering any Muslim [global or British] a potential terrorist.'¹³ Similarly, in Germany, the topic of Islam is often an international story, but it is woven into domestic contexts in which international events are seen as probative on the attitudes and behaviours of German Muslims (Germany Report). Italian research in 1999 showed that the media tends

to confuse between ‘Islam as religion’ and the ‘Muslim world,’ to portray the Muslim world as homogeneous and monolithic, and to simplify and define Islam with largely negative ideas such as the status of women’s rights, the rise of fundamentalism, and practices some Europeans would find offensive, such as the sacrifice feast (Italy Report).

The sensationalism of much of the stories means that there are far fewer discussions of the successes of Muslim integration than of the problems. As noted in the report on Germany, honour killings are a large controversial topic, despite the fact that they are rare and not representative of the population as a whole. The oppression of females in general and a strong focus on the practice of forced marriages is notable. This means that German viewers can get a skewed picture of the prevalence of objectionable practices among Muslims. The daily life of Muslim migrant families are generally not portrayed. However, in 2006, a few new TV series placed both Muslim and German characters in realistic situations and have been lauded as a corrective to the media environment (Germany Report).

Islam has become a major media topic in the Netherlands (Netherlands Report). In December 2000, the opera *Aisha and the Women of Medina* in Rotterdam was cancelled because of threats by offended Muslims. This led to a debate about the influence of conservative Muslim associations and artistic freedom. Another notable media moment was the May 2001 broadcast of an interview with a Moroccan imam arguing that ‘homosexuality was a contagious disease,’ which if spread among Dutch youth would mean the end of the Netherlands, for ‘if men marry men and women marry women, who will take care of procreation?’¹⁴ Complaints were filed alleging anti-gay discrimination but the judge ruled against them, stating that the imam had expressed his religious beliefs.¹⁵ However, it was followed by public debates about Islam, freedom of speech and religion, and anti-gay prejudice and violence. A number of more detailed media studies have been done in France and are well documented by Alexandre Caeiro in the French country report. He cites a study by Geisser, which notes that the media tends to adopt public attitudes and prejudices rather than being informative and typically presents Islam and Muslims in frameworks that suggest danger. A detailed study by Pierre Tévanian shows how the media helped construct the ‘problem of the hijab’ by deciding which voices would be included in the public debate. Social scientists, feminists, teachers, and civil actors not opposed to the hijab were excluded, helping to construct a narrative in which bearded foreign religious men defended the Muslim headscarf against women who had rejected the hijab, supported by native or emancipated male intellectuals.

Role of Intellectuals

Along with the changes in political and media discourse above, intellectuals in the various countries have also been part of the difficulty for Muslims in Europe. Similarly to the political dialogue, more and more harsh rhetoric has become acceptable. Probably most notable has been the work of the famous political commentator Oriana Fallaci, whose book, *The Rage and the Pride*, attacks Muslims as members of a warlike religion bent on destroying Italy's Christian society (Italy Report). Her book sold at least 1.5 million copies and was adopted by various right-wing political movements (Italy Report). In Spain, political science professor Antonio Elorza argues that Islam is a 'religion of combat' that defends terrorism as a 'legitimate defence,'¹⁶ a position shared by Professor Fernando Reinares, who opposes Muslim migration since it may allow the entrance of Islamist terrorists.¹⁷ In the Netherlands, the prominent philosophy professor Herman Philipse has made numerous appearances claiming that Islam is a violent tribal culture incompatible with modernity and democracy, and ethics professor Paul Cliteur claims that religion causes violence, and that the only solution is secularization (Netherlands Report). In Germany, an academic area has been developed which focuses on the delegitimation of practices such as the wearing of the hijab, moving them from the area of protected religious expression to that of anti-state minority nationalism. In France, a pamphlet by Caroline Fourest warning of the fascination of the left with radical Islam won an award from the French Assembly (France Report). As Alexandre Caeiro points out in the report on France, this kind of speech is presented as courageous truth-telling in the face of moral relativists and dangerous Muslims (France Report).

As in the realm of politics, Muslim academics who repudiate aspects of Islam have prominent voices in the discussion over Islam in Europe. In Germany, Bassam Tibi, a professor of international relations at the University of Göttingen and a Muslim of Syrian origin launched the term 'Euro-Islam' in 1998 to express an understanding of Islam in a 'European culture of reference' (Leitkultur).¹⁸ Although Tibi does not himself promote essentialist visions of Islam, his ideas about the incompatibility of Islam and Europe contribute to an understanding of Islam as foreign and dangerous (Germany Report). Turkish-born sociologist Necla Kelek has criticized traditional marriage practices in a way few non-Islamic intellectuals would dare (Germany Report). In the Netherlands, the Iranian refugee and professor of law Afshin Elian has become an important voice warning of the dangers of Islamist radicalism due to his status as an 'expert witness' (Netherlands Report). Chadortt Djavann, born in Iran in 1967, wrote two critical books in France, named *Bas les voiles* ('Down with the Veils', Gallimard 2003) and *Que pense Allah de l'Europe?* ('What does Allah think of Europe?', Gallimard 2004).¹⁹

There have been other notable contributions by authors and intellectuals. In the Netherlands, the beginning of the questioning of multiculturalism is often attributed to an article by a leftist intellectual, Paul Scheffer, in 2000. He argued that the Netherlands policies were simply not working, and cited as evidence the poor socioeconomic condition of immigrants, the growing neighborhood tensions, and the increasing influence of more conservative strains of Islam (Netherlands Report). In France, a literary genre of anti-Muslim literature has become more popular over the last few years. The report on France lists titles such as ‘Les islamistes sont déjà là: Enquête sur une guerre secrète,’ ‘La France malade de l’islamisme: Menaces terroristes sur l’Hexagone,’ ‘La tentation du Jihad: Islam radical en France,’ and ‘Sentinelle: Contagion islamiste en Europe, le vaccin.’ The question of Islam has become a central part of the battles over contemporary French identity (France Report).

Religious Practices

Although there is religious freedom across Western Europe, there have been difficulties for Muslims. The country reports indicate that most of the nations studied here have tried to adjust to the practices of Islam. However, they have done so largely within legal and social frameworks formed to accommodate the place of Christianity in European society. These frameworks have not always functioned as well in accommodating Islam. There have been several areas of difficulty, including the conflict over the hijab, which in Germany and France particularly has been interpreted as a political rather than a religious practice. Attempts to build mosques often run into resistance from local communities. There have also been particular problems with extending the practice of religious instruction in public schools to Muslims. The other significant problem has been the confluence of fear of international terrorism, which is associated with conservative and radical imams in domestic contexts.

Policies against the hijab can be couched in general terms, as in the French ban on religious symbols, but are still widely understood by Muslims as a move against Islam – in particular after the approval of a law prohibiting all religious signs in public schools (France Report). The case is different in Germany, where the hijab is allowed for public school students, but may be banned for public school teachers. In July 1998, the Minister of Baden-Württemberg upheld the decision made by a Stuttgart school not to recruit a Muslim woman as a teacher because she wore a veil. The Minister declared that in Islam the hijab was a political symbol of female submission rather than an actual religious requirement.²⁰ Since then, discussion on the legitimacy of the hijab has grown even more polemical. Based on a Federal Constitutional Court decision of 2003 that acknowledged

the right of German states to enact such bans, seven German states declared in October of 2003 that they supported legislation barring teachers from wearing the headscarf. This declaration occurred at a meeting of sixteen regional ministers for culture, education and religious affairs in the German city of Darmstadt.²¹ In late March 2004, the regional government in Berlin agreed to outlaw all religious symbols for civil servants. On April 1st, 2004, the southern state of Baden-Württemberg became the first German state to ban teachers from wearing the hijab. Another five out of sixteen states, including Bavaria and Lower Saxony, are in the process of enacting similar bans. An obstacle to such bans has recently arisen, however. On July 7th, 2006, the state court of Baden-Württemberg rejected the state's headscarf ban as discriminatory against Muslims, since veiled Catholic nuns were not forbidden to teach in the state's schools.²²

Mosques are often opposed with pragmatic complaints about traffic and noise, but as the church bells ring across European cities, it seems inevitable that Muslims will see these kinds of complaints as Islamophobic in nature. In Spain, the fear of terrorism has been deployed in campaigns against mosques in a way that it had not been prior to the Islamist international terrorism of recent years. After the attacks of March 2004 in Spain, a new mosque in Sevilla faced significant problems as the site was vandalized and local community members organized a slaughter of pigs on the prospective site (Spain Report). Reports of these types of problems have also been noted in the Netherlands, France, and Germany.

In the countries that provide religious education in schools, there have been ongoing problems. Part of this is due to the lack of an official hierarchical clergy that can speak for Muslims as a whole. Accustomed to the organization of European Christian churches, negotiations stall when states cannot find representatives acceptable both to the community and to the state. In Germany, this has been a particular problem, and has coincided with controversies over the unwillingness of some Muslim girls to participate in physical education in the public schools (Germany Report). In Spain, the problem was thought to have been solved in the 1990s as the state came to an agreement for the provision of classes by Muslim teachers in the schools. However, in practice, the program has not been implemented across much of the country. There have been accusations of bad faith from Muslim leaders (Spain Report). Although the Netherlands was formerly seen as a model in this regard, in the wild rhetorical climate of contemporary Dutch politics extreme ideas such as banning Muslim schools have been proposed (Netherlands Report).

Across Europe, the worry over radical preaching in the mosques has led to some impositions on the practice of Islam. For instance, after the attacks of March 2004, the Spanish Minister of the Interior proposed a law to control the sermons

of imams. The proposal was greeted with mixed reviews, denounced by the president of the Islamic Commission of Spain, Mansur Escudero, but welcomed by the Maghrebi union ATIME (Spain Report). Both France and the Netherlands have been deporting imams for radical speech. Were this incitement to terrorism, it might be seen as simple law enforcement, but it has been extended to cases where the primary complaint is about attitudes towards women.

Islam and European Secularism

Secularization means that political power is defined by its neutral interactions with religious institutions. We should remember that, with the exception of France, this principle of neutrality is not synonymous with separation of church and state. In fact, it is realized within a range of institutional structures, from a state religion or a concordat to strict separation. It is striking to notice that throughout Europe, Islam’s arrival has re-opened a case previously considered ‘closed:’ the relationship between the state and religions. The multiplicity of European Islam’s situations sheds more light on the specific political and cultural characters of individual European countries than it does on the supposedly monolithic nature of Islam. The secularization profile specific to Europe can be divided into three types: cooperation between the state and the churches, the existence of a state religion, and separation between the state and religion.

The institutional agreements between Islamic organizations and the secular state are only one aspect of the status of religions within Europe and the United States. Beyond the differentiation of the political and religious spheres and the notion of neutrality lies an ideological meaning to secularization, the origins of which lie with the philosophy of the Enlightenment. A common denominator of Western European countries is their tendency to consider that the sacred is misplaced and illegitimate within the civic context. The idea that religion cannot play a role in the general well-being of societies – a mark of the secularized mind – is, in fact, common throughout all of Europe, despite differences among the national contracts between states and organized religions. It is important to note here that there do exist non-Muslim religious groups that question certain tenets of mainstream secularism. Germany, for example, has seen some debate over Christian values in the public sphere, while the display of the crucifix in the classroom has sparked controversy in Italy. However, the main strands of public culture in the political, media, and intellectual spheres are highly secularized, and tend to ignore religious dimensions and references that are still meaningful to some segments of society.

The consequence of the invalidation of the religious is that the various manifestations of Islam in Europe have become troublesome, or even unaccept-

able. The hijab controversy, the cartoons crisis, and the Rushdie affair shed light on the tension between Islamic claims and European conceptions of secularism.

Demands and requests made by Muslims are perceived immediately as suspect and sometimes as backward. As such, they provoke highly emotional reactions. The Islamic headscarf worn by women is interpreted as a sign indicating a rejection of progress and individual female emancipation and provokes the wrath of those groups spearheading the defence of secular ideology: teachers, intellectuals, feminists, civil servants, and so forth. The French law prohibiting religious signs in public schools (March 2004) illustrates this secular ideology at its peak, although there are affairs of hijab or niqab all over Europe, as shown in the country reports. The arrival of Islam inside the boundaries of Europe re-launched the dispute over religion in general, as shown by the example of a Norwegian atheist association that sought the right to proclaim for several minutes daily the non-existence of God in order to compete with Oslo's muezzin.²³

Throughout Europe, the presence of Islam has called into question the norms of the dominant secular culture. In France, the controversy surrounding the veil has renewed a long-dormant debate over the definition of a secular society. In the United Kingdom, the Rushdie affair sparked a new critique of British public culture. Until the affair, the British debate over multiculturalism had been dominated by members of the majority population, and had treated integration as all but synonymous with minority adjustment to majority standards. After the affair, integration came to be understood as a mutually effective process that would necessarily transform the majority population as well.²⁴ British Muslim leaders, for example, expressed their desire after the affair to extend British blasphemy laws to protect Islam and all other non-Anglican faiths. In the terms of this request, political integration is understood as a bilateral relationship, in which the host society must negotiate a consensus respectful of the fundamentals of the minority's way of life. For British Muslims, conflating political adhesion with cultural adhesion constituted an attack on their moral and cultural integrity.

The protests of European Muslims against the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad also illustrate the tension between the dominant secular public culture and the resistance of a religious minority. There are, of course, other religious groups (including Western Christians) at odds with the idea of a secular public space. But their dissatisfaction tends to receive less media attention than that of Muslims, and rarely has the same international dimensions.

Although conflicts with incoming non-European migrants may have been inevitable in any case, cultural differences between immigrants from Muslim countries and often-secularized European populations have tended to make these disputes more dramatic. Interestingly, in contradiction to Huntington's thesis on the clash of political values between Islam and the West, the conflict does not

occur over the nature of the state in Europe, nor Islamic governance, nor the accommodation of Shari’a in the common law. The clash concerns lifestyles, gender equality, and the question of homosexuality. In this regard, Inglehart and Norris are right to emphasize that the fight is over Eros and not over politics.²⁵

Probably the most explicit case of cultural conflict has taken place in the Netherlands over homosexuality. Prior to his assassination, openly gay politician Pim Fortuyn ran a highly successful political movement against Muslim immigration due to what he described as Muslims’ un-Dutch intolerance. Recently, the Netherlands has introduced a video for the socialization of immigrants into Dutch society. The video is clearly intended to press these cultural differences, with its emphases on homosexuality and portrayals of nude sunbathing. Although the Dutch case has been the most prominent, the work of Inglehart and Norris analyzing the social attitudes of Western and Islamic societies shows that the differences are broad in scope. Even controlling for numerous other potentially relevant factors, they find that attitudes in Muslim countries are notably more conservative with regards to abortion, homosexuality, gender equality, and divorce. They tend to attribute this to differences in economic development rather than core cultural attributes. However, for European societies attempting to integrate Muslim minorities, this difference is likely hard to note, leading to further conflation of cultural conflicts with an anti-Muslim sentiment.

The differences in religiosity and social attitudes between the incoming Muslim immigrants and the European host societies are often substantial. Although data on the social views of Muslims in Europe are hard to come by, the World Values Survey produces polling on useful questions in the countries of origin and the host countries. Seventy-seven percent of Turks, the largest group in Germany, consider themselves to be religious, while the number is only forty-nine percent in German society as a whole. Moroccans, of whom ninety-five percent consider themselves religious, are the largest group in the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy, with proportions amounting to sixty-four percent, sixty-five percent, and eighty-five percent respectively. These numbers are even more pronounced in France, where only forty-nine percent of the population considers itself religious. Algerians also are more religious at fifty-nine percent.

Substantially more conservative social views are normal in the Muslim countries. One difference can be seen in the number of people who considered a gay person an unacceptable neighbour. In the major countries of Muslim immigration to Europe, eighty percent of Algerians, ninety-two percent of Moroccans, and eighty-eight percent of Turks felt this was unacceptable, while only nineteen percent in France, twenty-three percent in Germany and Spain, twenty-seven percent in the United Kingdom, thirty-two percent in Italy, and eight percent in the Netherlands felt the same. Majorities in France, Germany, and the

Netherlands considered homosexuality acceptable, and near majorities in Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom agreed. In Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Albania, and Bosnia, substantial majorities felt that homosexuality was not acceptable. Attitudes towards abortion were slightly more mixed, although Algerians and Moroccans were extreme in their disapproval. Attitudes towards divorce were also mixed, although South Asians were likely to find it unjustifiable. When asked whether males should have more rights to jobs than females, seventy-nine percent of Pakistanis said yes; seventy-seven percent of Algerians, eighty-seven percent of Moroccans, sixty-two percent of Turks, fifty-six percent of Albanians, seventy-six percent of Bangladeshis and forty-four percent of Bosnians agreed. In the European countries under review, these numbers were twenty-nine percent for France, thirty-two percent for Germany, thirty-nine percent for Italy, twenty percent for the Netherlands, and twenty-nine percent for Spain.

This conflict between the European secular mind and Muslim religious values highlights a broader challenge. Islam makes it necessary to rethink the principle of equality between cultures and to contextualize this principle, thus bestowing on the principles of tolerance and pluralism a whole other resonance. The multicultural policies that predominate in European societies do not really allow for equality and pluralism to be rethought along the lines of an incorporation of the minority culture's values. In order to create a place for different minority cultures, one solution would be the emergence of a 'societal culture,' i.e., organized around a shared language to be used in many institutions (both public and private). Such a culture would not imply that religious beliefs, family customs or lifestyles would have to be shared. Since 1965, American society has presented certain elements of this societal culture insofar as the plurality of lifestyles and religious beliefs is no longer considered an obstacle to successful integration within the nation. In such conditions, we might wonder whether agreement on shared cultural and social values is still possible.

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¹ These confrontations were often phrased in terms of religion – Islam v. Christianity – as demonstrated by Maxime Rodinson, Daniel Norman, and Edward Said. See: Daniel Norman, *Islam and the West, the Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980); Maxime Rodinson, *La fascination de l’Islam* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1978) ; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1978).

² See Prina Werbner, “Islamophobia, Incitement to Religious Hatred – Legislating for a New Fear?” *Anthropology Today*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2005), 5-9; Tariq Modood, “The Place of Muslims in British Secular Multiculturalism” in *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Nezar Alsayyad and Manuel Castells, 113-30 (Lanham: Lexington books, 2002); Steven Vertovec, “Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain” in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Yvonne Yazbek Haddad, 19-35 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Fred Halliday, “Islamophobia Reconsidered,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 5 (September 1999), 892-902.

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- ¹⁴ Baukje Prins, Voorbij de onschuld. *Het debat over de multiculturele samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2004).
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Antonio Elorza, "Terrorismo islámico: las raíces doctrinales" in *El nuevo terrorismo islamista*, ed. Antonio Elorza and Fernando Reinares Nestares, (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2004), 156-157. See also "Maniqueos e integristas," *El País*, September 28, 2001 and "El círculo," *El País*, November 23, 2001, among others.
- ¹⁷ Fernando Reinares, "Al Qaeda, neosalafistas magrebies y 11-M: sobre el nuevo terrorismo islamista en España", in *Elorza and Reinares Nestares*, *ibidem.*, 40-41.
- ¹⁸ According to Tibi, Euro-Islam incorporates pluralism, tolerance, secularity, civil society and individual human rights.
- ¹⁹ Djavann published another book in 2006, a novel suggestively entitled *Comment peut-on être français* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), which has however failed to sustain much media interest.
- ²⁰ *Germany Country Report on Human Rights Practices 1998* (US Department of State, 1998).
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- ²² Although the Federal Administrative Court had ruled in 2004 that such legislation did in fact apply to nuns.
- ²³ The government authorized their request at the same time they authorized the request made by the Islamic association "World Islamic Mission" to sound a call to prayer. BBC News, 'Oslo's Rooftop Religious Rivalry,' March 30, 2002.
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Images of the Enemy: from Caricature to Stereotype

Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg

In February 2007, political cartoonist Paul Conrad drew an image of a man wearing a gutra holding a poppy and saying “Allah Akbar.” He apparently intended to lampoon the dubious religiosity of the Taliban for their support in the cultivation of Afghan opium. Of course, Afghans do not wear gutras. By confusing Afghans for Arabs and underscoring the alleged Islamic justification for poppy cultivation, Conrad neatly demonstrated how Islamophobia leads to a simplification among Americans in their view of the world’s more than one billion Muslims to a single generalization characterized by Arabs, the Middle East, and – most prominently of all – threats to the West. When confronted by those who criticize their depictions of Muslims, many political cartoonists respond that they expose Muslims to the same method of critique they level against all whom they draw – American and foreign, Muslim and non-Muslim. Indeed, editorial cartoons work by combining humor, criticism, and caricature and no one, they argue, should be beyond their attention. Yet, such arguments miss what this cartoon demonstrates: due to Islamophobia, caricatures of Muslims too often slip into stereotypes of Islam.

Islamophobia is particularly pernicious because, like sexism, racism, or homophobia, the fear of Islam has become normalized within American and other Western cultures. In other words, the mass media, political discourse and everyday conversations of those comprising a society’s mainstream express anxiety about Islam using conclusions so taken for granted that they become truisms: neither needing substantiation nor likely to be challenged. Political cartoons, in particular, demonstrate quite vividly the Islamophobia that has been alternately latent and manifest in the United States for more than two centuries. By distinguishing between caricatures and stereotypes in political cartoons one can better understand the negative and unwitting role Muslims play in defining the American norm.

Americans often attempt to characterize their behavior, beliefs and values as the “norm” by defining these as the middle ground between extremes of too little and too much. So, in terms of religion and the state, most Americans tend to see the secularism of the United States as normal relative to, on one hand, the purported atheism of communists and, on the other, the political agenda of some Islamists. (Of course we recognize that many American Christians would prefer another norm, one that rescinds the supposed godlessness of secular humanism

and establishes the Christian nation that they imagine the country's founders intended.) In any case, over the past five decades Americans have viewed Muslims as variously typifying one and then the other extreme that negatively defines their conception of what is normal.

	The extreme of too little	The norm of the middle ground	The extreme of too much
Religion	Atheism	Secularism	Political religion
Men	Effeminate passivity	Properly masculine	Masculine rage
Women	Scantly clothed object of desire	Clothed according to choice	Entirely covered object of oppression
Morality	Hedonistic	Balanced	Puritanical

As this chart shows, this normalcy involves expectations regarding the masculinity of men, the clothing of women, and the morality of society. The descriptions of the cartoons that follow demonstrate that despite the shifts in how Muslims have been portrayed since the 1950s, they have tended to be marginalized on one extreme or the other of the American norm.

Men: between effeminate and rage

In the 1950s and 1960s, the only predominantly Muslim area of the world that garnered much attention from American editorial cartoonists was the Middle East. But cartoonists of this period tended not to depict Middle Easterners as Muslims but, rather, as Arabs. Nevertheless, historical evidence testifies to the long association Americans have made between Arabs and Islam. It remained only a matter of time before shifting circumstances provoked them to emphasize the Muslim identity of certain Middle Easterners rather than their Arabness. The following images, therefore, focus on portrayals of Arabs with the understanding that the conclusions Americans drew about Arabs implicitly applied to them as Muslims as well.

Arabs were often personified in the body of a woman. In one contemporary cartoon, a Soviet officer posing as a vacuum cleaner salesman bangs on a house door labeled "Middle East." A scantily clad woman answers innocently and is soon sucked into the machine. The femininity of this Arab woman, familiar to Americans from Orientalist representations of diaphanously clad harem inmates, contrasts with the gruff masculinity of the devious officer serving as a symbol for the Soviet Union.

Images of the Enemy: from Caricature to Stereotype

Another cartoon from this period again uses a vulnerable woman to signify all Arabs, though this time as one who makes the best of her helpless position. As the masculine figures labeled “France” and “USSR” molest her, she picks their pockets of the Cold War antagonists. Here we see the distinction between caricature and symbol. The cartoonist had systematically exaggerated the facial features of Prime Minister Pompidou of France and Premier Brezhnev of the Soviet Union so as to make them immediately recognizable to the reader. In contrast, Arab men and women are symbolized by a hapless female. Also we note how the cartoon’s title, “Arms for the Love of Allah,” casually associates Arabs with Islam: an association the cartoonist must have expected his audience to share.

The representation of Muslim men as effeminate takes a more strident

Cleopatra



turn in a 1959 image in which President Nasser of Egypt becomes the Cleopatra to the fawning attention of the US and Soviets. Here the distinction between symbol and caricature become more pronounced as Uncle Sam symbolizes the US, a caricature of Premier Khrushchev represents the Soviets, and a caricature of Nasser's face is married to a body intending to represent his political seductiveness.



Neal von Hedemann, 1974.

An important shift in representations of Arabs occurred beginning with OPEC's 1973 oil embargo of the United States and some of its allies. Abruptly, cartoon Arabs shed their effeminateness for an angry masculinity. Cartoonists now used male figures to represent groups of Arabs, commonly arming them with that pervasive symbol of Arab/Muslim militancy, the scimitar.

Scimitar sizes became outlandish in proportion to the claims made as to the purported ambitions of Arabs to control or bleed the world. One cartoon from the period depicts a stereotypical Arab man in beard and kaffiyeh, wielding an enormous scimitar in one hand with which he has stuck a bleeding globe held in the other.

Yet some cartoons – however few – resisted marginalizing Arabs. In notable contrast with the previous two examples that emphasized the distinctive violence of Arabs who used their so-called “oil weapon,” another cartoon argued the similarity of capitalism shared among Americans and OPEC members (including the non-Arab Venezuela). It depicted an agitated Uncle Sam complaining to an Arab and Venezuelan that, in light of their reduction of oil production to inflate prices, “You’re like a bunch of...of...of...CAPITALISTS!” In

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sharp contrast with most of the cartoons discussed so far, this one included Arabs within the norm – in this case, the norm of capitalism – instead of using them as a negative example to define the norm from which they seemingly exclude themselves.

Cartoonists commenting some years later on the Iranian Revolution and subsequent hostage situation perpetuated the images of male rage, though this time – for obvious reasons – with a certain shift in noting the Islamic character of those critiqued. One image placed a caricature of the Ayatollah Khomeini abreast the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, sharing the wide-eyed aggressiveness of his fellow warrior-like scourges while lofting a scimitar.

Of course, we would not expect anything but the most negative depiction of those men responsible for the 9/11 hijackings. That a cartoonist represented one in hell unpersuasively pleading his case before a bemused devil does not surprise us. However, his visage should. The turban and raggedy beard of the cartoon hijacker hardly matched the images of the alleged terrorists in the photographs run by newspapers showing each as bare headed, well kempt, and with trimmed facial hair on those few who had any. Clearly, the cartoonist portrayed the qualities he anticipated his audience would have of a Muslim's appearance. Because he did not systematically exaggerate the physical features of any specific individual – as we saw in the caricatures of Nasser and Khrushchev – the cartoonist clearly drew on the stereotype of the hypermasculine, violent Muslim man. His pronounced nose – a racialized feature of Arabs that occurs repeatedly in cartoons – demonstrated how cartoonists often conflate Arabs and Muslims.

In light of the 1950s representations of Arabs as a woman, one 2001 cartoon that personified Islam as a group of identically appareled men, most with large beards, indicated how cartoonists shifted their depiction of Muslims from female to male figures once Muslims changed from being seemingly passive objects of American interests to an active threat to those US concerns. The image showed four similar men, labeled “Islam,” mesmerized by the theatrical head of bin Laden controlled by a hidden devil who declares, “PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN.” Although, the cartoonist attempted to differentiate Islam from the phantom bin Laden manipulated by the devil, he enforces a stereotyped image of Muslims in doing so.

Before turning to the representations of Muslim women, it is useful to mention that previously menacing Muslim men occasionally appear to lapse back into effeminateness in moments of defeat, such as those that beleaguered the Taliban in 2001. A variety of cartoons portray Taliban fighters dressed in burqas in a cowardly effort to avoid Coalition forces. This demonstrates how depictions of Muslims are not stagnant and may flip from one extreme to another if circumstances change. However, they seldom suggest that Muslims can be normal, in American terms.

Women: between titillation and oppression

The depiction of the harem-dwelling victim of the Soviet salesman in the cartoon described earlier demonstrates how Americans had long been exposed to such titillating images of Arab and Muslim women. Popular Orientalist productions, such as Rudolph Valentino's "The Sheikh" (1921) and the use of harem girls in advertising, all propagated this image. It would be televised weekly with the advent of "I Dream of Jeannie" in 1965. Yet this would be the zenith of the depiction of Muslim women as objects of Western desire as they would soon slide to the other extreme as objects of Muslim oppression.

While aggressive masculine figures replaced the passive feminine personifications of Arabs and Muslims when OPEC began flexing its economic muscle, the feminine figures that did appear tended no longer to imply sexuality but to become symbolic of oppression. One 1973 cartoon entitled "Harem" showed an obese, scheming Arab man grinning lecherously and labeled "OPEC" sitting in front of a dozen identically veiled women identified as "importing nations." This representation of the captive women of an avaricious Arab man abandons the earlier, sexually appealing overtones of harem life for the oppressive sameness of veiled oppression.

Another cartoon, drawn during the Iranian Revolution, takes this theme yet farther. Depicting an international fashion show in which glamorous women personifying Rome, Paris, and New York stand next to a veiled woman representing Tehran. Not only does the latter remain faceless under her burqa and hobbled by a ball and chain, but inexplicably she is hunchbacked and obese: the very opposite not only of the personifications of Western cities with whom she stands but also of her harem-dwelling sisters in earlier representations. Seemingly, the forbidden beauties of Western male fantasy turned into an ugly stepsister in the context of an American political nightmare.

Of course, the women's liberation movement of the 1970s in part helped spur these changes. One might expect that parallel with the long overdue and rising consciousness about the lack of parity between men and women in America came a heightened awareness of women in other societies. However, the fact that the shift of cartoon portrayals of Muslim women from objects of fancy to objects of oppression parallels the shift in depictions of Muslim men from passivity to aggression can hardly be unconnected to the increasing challenge of Middle Easterners and Iranians to American political and economic interests.

A more recent cartoon attempted a critique of what the cartoonist perceived as the current juxtaposition of women and men in Muslim societies. It depicted a stereotypical Arab man sitting in a chair with his feet across his prostrate wife's back. While he reads a newspaper with the well-publicized image of an American female soldier holding a leash connected to a prone Iraqi man, she

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dreams that she holds a leash with her husband at its end. The cartoonist counterpoised the revelations of torture and degradation at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison with the oppression and denigration of the stereotypical Iraqi wife wearing a facial veil. Indeed, she dreams that the mistreatment of the prisoners would be visited upon her similarly stereotyped husband with his turban, scraggly beard, and long nose. Through this fantasy turnabout, the cartoonist suggested that the humiliations practiced by American soldiers paled in comparison with those supposedly meted out by all Iraqi (or, perhaps, Arab) husbands.

Again, counterexamples have occasionally appeared, and have been increasingly visible as the wars in Afghanistan and, especially, Iraq have dragged on and lost the certainty of their justifications in the minds of growing numbers of Americans. Following the 2004 elections, one cartoonist depicted a group, including a woman in hijab, commenting on a Kerry poster. Each of the three appeared dissimilar, dressed differently, yet shared in the same conversation without distinction. This cartoon successfully imagined a Muslim participating in political discourse without saying anything that identified her as a Muslim. As we noted in the cartoon about OPEC and capitalism, the depiction of marginalized people as acting like or sharing the values of those purportedly representing the norm undermines stereotypes of difference.

Morality: between hedonism and Puritanism

Finally, we consider the delineation of an American norm of morality between the extremes of too much and too little. In one image from the 1950s entitled "Reading the Arab Mind," a cartoonist uses a caricature of Nasser to argue for a stereotype of all Arabs. Using a microscope and magnifying glass, scientists examine Nasser's brain which apparently lacks an adequate morality, as it is divided into sections entitled "vengeance," "fanaticism," and "no peace with Israel": the very stereotypical attributes often ascribed to all Muslims today. Although the caricatured head is Nasser's, the caption leaves no doubt that the conclusion fits all Arabs. Shockingly, this cartoon bore a near perfect resemblance to an anti-Jewish image from Vichy France that also attempted to relate the inherent qualities of a stereotyped people.

The oil crisis of the 1970s and the concomitant rise of Arab purchases of American real estate and business interests compelled many cartoonists to portray Arabs as omnivorous gluttons who threatened to consume America. In one caricature of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia that replaces his nose with a gas pump nozzle, we see the implicit racism of Arab stereotyping merge with the definition of Arabs as businessmen. Notably, Faisal also kneels in prayer, demonstrating again how Islam has remained implicit in American stereotypes of Arabs.

But the cartoon that perhaps best depicts how Americans imagine Muslims to inhabit two extremes in their role as America's foil is one situated in a Taliban school. A Taliban schoolteacher cries his surprise that his young student would hesitate to be aroused by the martyr's reward of seventy beautiful women. The child explains that he has never seen a woman. According to the cartoonist, the Taliban are both puritanical (in their segregation from women) and hedonistic (in their deferred lust for them in the afterlife). Although the cartoonist intended to signify that his critique was aimed at the Taliban, the stereotypical image of the teacher in his long beard, large turban, and robes might prompt some audiences to infer this is so for all Muslim men.

Our final cartoon demonstrates again the efforts of some cartoonists to challenge stereotypes. Two nearly identical couples (one labeled "U.S.A." and the other "Muslim world") point to images of the crimes committed by members of their community (the burning twin towers and the electrocuted Abu Ghraib prisoner) and fearfully plead with one another to understand that they are the work of a small minority of extremists. Although one might argue that the Muslim woman's hijab reflects a stereotype, her husband has a short mustache and beard that would hardly be out of place anywhere in America. Most significantly, the cartoonist portrays Americans and Muslims sharing a common ground defined by a mutual fear of those in their communities who practice extreme behaviors.

The trends and dynamics demonstrated in political cartoons have parallels in other American media as well. Motion pictures, television shows, and radio programming all reflect the dynamics described here. However, editorial cartoons offer a particularly excellent medium through which to distinguish how caricatures of individual Muslims have slipped into stereotypes of all Muslims, often in the service of perpetuating a particular image of the purported American norm.

Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism

Ibrahim Kalin

In a recent essay, the Canadian philosopher and political scientist Charles Taylor argued that the current debate about multiculturalism in the Western countries has become a debate about the limits of how far multiculturalism will go and what will determine these limits today are Islam and Muslims. Taylor identifies the current crisis of multiculturalism as one that concerns how people perceive themselves vis-à-vis others. Taylor believes that multiculturalism has become suspect and inextricably linked up with Islam because “almost every reason for toleration’s apparent fall into disrepute concerns Islam”.¹

Taylor’s remark that the debate about Islam and Muslims in Western societies is turning into a crisis of multiculturalism is alarming to say the least. Why? Because Islam has become part of the public debate to determine how far multiculturalism will go.² This is confirmed by the rising tide of what we now call Islamophobia and a host of other acts of intolerance, discrimination and racism against Muslim individuals and communities. Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, concurs that bigotry and prejudice against Muslims are increasing in Europe. In this regard, Arbour, who based her remarks on a recent study by Doudou Diene of Senegal, made a call to all governments to take action against racism and discrimination against Muslim communities.

The current attitudes towards Muslim communities in Europe and the United States are part of a complex set of issues. There is no easy way of discussing pluralism, multiculturalism and the future of Western societies without discussing Islam and Muslims. At this point we should ask ourselves the following question:

Is Islamophobia a phenomenon in itself or is it the result of a deeper problem?

In a world in which everything is related to everything else, Islamophobia cannot be seen in isolation from what is happening around us. Islamophobia did not suddenly come into being after the events of 9/11. In many ways, the trauma caused by 9/11 helped surface the problem. The problem goes beyond both 9/11 and the United States.

Whether we like the term or not, Islamophobia has become a fact of our lives especially for those living in Europe and the United States. The word

Islamophobia began to be used in the 1980s. The 1997 Runnymede Report called *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* was launched in November 1997 by the then British Home Secretary Jack Straw. The Report defined Islamophobia as “the dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetrated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims”. The Report also added that Islamophobia is based on “an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination”. Defined in these broad terms, Islamophobia covers a large area from politics and immigration to schools and workplace.

While the term continued to be used in various ways, the first major report after 9/11 was published by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). Entitled *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, the report documented the acts of discrimination and racism against Muslims in 15 EU member countries. The Report’s findings show that “Islamic communities and other vulnerable groups have become targets of increased hostility since 11 September. A greater sense of fear among the general population has exacerbated already existing prejudices and fuelled acts of aggression and harassment in many European Member States. At the same time, attempts to allay fears sometimes led to a new interest in Islamic culture and to practical inter-faith initiatives”.

The Runnymede Report was updated in 2004 and documented some encouraging developments. The acts of hatred and discrimination against Islam and Muslims, however, continued to be on the rise. The Danish cartoon crisis and its aftermath are still fresh in our memories. The speech by Pope Benedict the 16th at Regensburg University in 2006 continues to be seen as a sinister attack on Islam by the most important Christian figure in the world. The US President Bush uses the word “Islamofascism” freely and frequently while it remains a mystery how the words Islam and fascism became a single ideology in Mr. Bush’s political vocabulary. Numerous such events are happening on different scales, all pointing to a dangerous trend.

Manifestations of Islamophobia

Islamophobic acts manifest themselves in numerous ways. Some are quite explicit and obvious, some subtle and implicit. They take various forms and display degrees of aggression. Sometimes they come in the form of verbal and physical attacks on Muslim individuals. In some cases, mosques, Islamic centers and Muslim properties are attacked and desecrated. In the workplace, schools and housing, it takes the form of suspicion, staring, hazing, mockery, rejection, stigmatizing and

outright discrimination. In other public places, it may take the form of indirect discrimination, hate speech or denial of access to goods and services.

At the societal level, the political loyalty of Muslims is questioned to the effect that the Muslim citizens of Western countries are accused of dual or multiple loyalties. They are presented as less committed to democracy, constitution and human rights than others. Their religious identity is seen as an obstacle to respecting and abiding by their country's constitution and laws. The general accusation is that Muslims regard themselves as Muslim before they are British, French or Spanish. And this jeopardizes their full citizenship in the countries in which they live. This view thus introduces a deep dichotomy between religious identity and national loyalty. While it is true that Muslims feel attached to the larger Islamic world (*dar al-islam*), the religious association of a person is not at the same level as preferring a particular country or political order over others. As Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, points out, a Muslim's attachment to the *ummah*, the global Muslim community, is similar to a Christian's loyalty to the Church.³ The religious loyalty in question clearly predates the political loyalty required by the nation states in which we live. And it is a major challenge for all communities and nations, Muslim or non-Muslim, majority or minority, to maintain their loyalty to the society in which they live while upholding the universal principles of justice and equality which go beyond national boundaries.⁴ Yet to raise the issue of multiple loyalties only in relation to Muslims betrays a racist point of view. Critical Islamic thinking in Europe and the US is seen suspect because it goes beyond the conventional lines of criticism. Unless the conditions of being European citizens are set as being white, Christian and secular or a combination of them, the critical engagement of Muslims with their governments cannot be seen as misplacing one's loyalty.⁵

The media are where the one-sided and irresponsible coverage of things Muslim and Islamic have become a breeding ground for Islamophobic sentiments and acts. Muslim symbols and figures are ridiculed and derided in the print media. Negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims are presented as part of news reporting, TV debates, political speeches and religious sermons. Many of these comments would be unacceptable if they were directed at Jews, Blacks or other communities, but they are used freely for and about Muslims. As an American media expert pointed out more than twenty years ago, "you can hit an Arab free; they are free enemies, free villains – where you couldn't do it to a Jew or you can't do it to a Black anymore."⁶ In January 2004, a European journalist was able to write the following: "Arabs are threatening our civilian populations with chemical and biological weapons. They are promising to let suicide bombers loose in Western and American cities. They are trying to terrorise us, disrupt our lives".⁷ The irony is that the journalist who wrote these words believed that Iran was an Arab country.

One of the most disturbing manifestations of discrimination is the suppression of Muslim voices that call for moderation while maintaining their critical distance. From the print and visual media to public debates, such voices are either ignored, marginalized or rejected as mere apologies. Before and since 9/11, hundreds of Muslim scholars, intellectuals, politicians and public figures have condemned acts of terrorism and called for peaceful solutions to violent conflicts. But they have hardly been able to compete with Osama Ben Ladin's media success. The result is that only the most extreme and marginal voices get enough air time to dominate the discourse about Islam and Muslims.

Considering its current forms, Islamophobia has become a form of racism because it targets a group of people and incites hatred against them on the basis of their religious beliefs, cultural traditions and ethics backgrounds. With the rise of hatred and discrimination against Muslims, racism has come to combine not only race but also ethnicity, language, culture and religion all at the same time.⁸ In this sense, Islamophobia is not racially blind. The old racism based on biological inferiority resurfaces as ethnic, cultural and religious racism. In the case of Islam, such words as militant, uncivilized, oppressive, barbaric, authoritarian, promiscuous and violent are used as part of the religious beliefs and cultural practices of Muslims. The "racially inferior" is gradually replaced by the "religiously inferior".⁹ In this sense, it is impossible to separate Islamophobia from the ethnic and racial hatred of Arabs, Asians and Blacks.¹⁰

The definition of racism given by the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) confirms that Muslims are discriminated against on account of all the elements of racism combined. According to ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 7 of December 2002, racism means "the belief that a ground such as 'race', colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons". The same document defines 'direct racial discrimination' as "any differential treatment based on a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, which has no objective and reasonable justification".¹¹

The reason why Islamophobia is bad for everyone is not only because it is a form of racism but also because it is created and sustained by a view of the self and the other that sees clash and confrontation as the primary if not the only way of relating different cultures and communities. Whether through religious or secular arguments, the Islamophobic sentiment is derived from a set of values that need to be put into question.

Today, we're going through the pains of establishing a just world order. The transition from the bi-polar world of the Cold War to the uni-polar world of American dominance was not easy. In fact, it was never completed because the

American dominance was challenged by a process of globalization which even the most powerful nations can no longer control. The first Gulf War did not bring any order. Nor did the invasion of Iraq in 2003 make things any better. All attempts to establish a new world order within a uni-polar framework have failed. The American policymakers have failed to understand that they cannot remain a hegemonic power in a world with emerging centers and new regional and semi-global powers. The only way any nation can keep its power in today's world is through power-sharing. It is not enough to be powerful. One needs to be justified as well.

At the cultural and intellectual level, Euro-centrism continues to be a problem that hurts not only non-Western societies but also Westerners themselves for a uni-polar world only leads to the economic, political, intellectual or artistic marginalization of the vast majority of world populations. It strips people of a sense of meaning and purpose. Much of the current sentiment of dispossession and frustration we see in non-Western societies is a result of this.

A uni-polar and Euro-centric model of cultural and civilizational order can no longer provide a sense of security and participation for all citizens of the world. A multi-polar and multi-centered world has to arise to undo the misdeeds of both cultural isolationism and Euro-centrism. A world order that is no more than an excuse for the "White Man's Burden" cannot foster a culture of peace and civilized diversity. The future of the relationship between Islamic and Western societies will largely depend on the extent to which we go beyond the "us versus them" language. It will also shape the ways in which the large number of Muslims living in Europe and the United States will be allowed to be part of Western societies as equal citizens.

Multiple Identities, Multiple Worlds

A multi-polar and pluralist world is not a world without standards or values. It is a world in which all cultures and societies are seen as equals but are urged to vie for the common good. This is not a wishy-washy multiculturalism that runs the risk of eroding common grounds between cultures and creating parallel communities. Rather, it is an act of enriching oneself by recognizing others. Today, Muslims living in the West and Westerners interacting with Muslims have a chance to enrich themselves by recovering the middle path of preserving their identity while recognizing those of others. It is through such acts that we can foster an ethics and culture of coexistence that will not tolerate racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims as well as the demonization of Jews, Christians and Westerners.

Part of the problem lies in creating a conflict between an absolute self and an absolute other. Much of the language of clash today is based on such an oppo-

sition in which Islam is set against such values as justice, equality, human rights and human dignity. Many non-Westerners and Muslims among them make the same mistake in reverse in the name of indigenous oppositions, belated nationalisms or communal uniqueness. Speaking of the self and the other as a binary opposition, however, does not necessarily lead to an essential conflict. The distance between the self and the other can be construed as a healthy tension in expanding one's self-understanding and reaching out to the world around us.

There is a further danger in dissolving all boundaries between the self and the other: it creates a sense of insecurity and homelessness, which we see everywhere today from the streets of Cairo to Spain. Globalization has deepened this sense of insecurity. It is felt deeply especially in Muslim countries where the eroding effects of modernization have created a profound sense of mistrust and resentment towards the modern world in general and the West in particular. In short, a radical liberal view of the self leads only to a non-self, which, in turn, further exacerbates our sense of insecurity. This is the biggest challenge of the kind of pluralism with which we live today.¹²

Muslims living in the West face similar tensions. In the name of integration, they are asked to embrace assimilation and thus lose their identities. They are expected to become French, German or Danish, as if there are such neat identities that can be applied to all Europeans. Combined with the deep-rooted culture of mistrust and suspicion, this demand results in the further alienation of European Muslims and forces them to become a sub-culture within Europe.¹³

While the general attitude towards Islam and Muslims in the United States is not coloured by long historical memories and deep cultural claims as it is the case in most of Europe, the current trend is worrying. The hate campaigns launched in the name of fighting groups like al-Qaeda are laying the ground for policies of fear and intimidation. Such words as Islamic terrorism, extremism and now Islamofascism are finding their ways into the political vocabulary of presidents, top government officials, reporters, commentators, secular ideologues and religious pundits.

Islamophobia is a result of a set of deeper problems in our modern world. Whether Eastern or Western, all societies feel the pressure of coping with the new realities around us. The changes brought about by globalization create a sense of insecurity rather than presenting opportunities for collaboration across religious and national boundaries. Ordinary people feel dislocated and marginalized. We all feel we lost the center and we can no longer control our lives and the events around us. This creates a deep sense of alienation. As a result of deep-seated fears and uncertainties, people lose faith in culture, society and politics. They no longer believe in such universal values as justice and equality because they feel these concepts have lost their meaning in a world where powerful nations can afford to spend billions of dollars on weapons but cannot secure a humane order.

Yet no culture and civilization can afford to close itself up to others. There is more fluidity of cultures and a steady mixture of ideas today than ever before. A Muslim teacher in Cairo can no longer ignore the headlines in Western newspapers just as a French businessman cannot ignore what is happening in the Middle East. Unlike the previous centuries, it is impossible to stop the flow of ideas and perceptions moving from one end of the world to the other.

The steady flow of ideas and the constant interaction of cultures and societies at different levels present both opportunities and challenges. Yet in our world of global communications, perception defines reality. How people perceive something is more important than the facts on the ground. In fact, whoever controls perception controls reality. More than any other religion, Islam has suffered the most from the impact of false perceptions and stereotyping. It is therefore extremely significant to understand how perceptions and images concerning Islam and Muslims are created, formulated, shaped, transmitted, publicized and sustained.

When Perception Defines Reality

A good example of how perceptions shape reality is the coverage of conflicts in Muslim countries. Even though there are many violent conflicts around the world, the ones that get the most media attentions are the ones in the Muslim world. This is partly because most of them are tied to Western interests. While millions have been brutally and tragically killed in Africa, Latin America and Asia, the general impression is that the bloodiest conflicts always happen in Muslim lands. One can make the same argument about the status of women in Islamic countries. While Muslim countries' record on women's rights is troubling to say the least, it is not the only awful record which Western powers should be concerned about. Even a cursory study of the status of women in different parts of the world reveals that the mistreatment and suffering of women also take place in places other than Afghanistan and Pakistan. While the Muslim countries get the most coverage on this score again, one finds no such campaign concerning the status of women in other countries.

The second layer of the problem is that it leads to reductionist and essentialist claims about Muslim culture and religion. While other conflicts are covered and analyzed as political conflicts, the ones in Muslim lands are usually analyzed in connection with the Muslim tradition, beliefs and practices. Suddenly, the analysts become interested in going deeper to understand the root causes of violent conflicts. Even in the case of the Protestant-Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland where the conflict is as much political as it is religious, religion is not brought up as an element of political analysis. It is mentioned as a fact among others, and no further meaning is attached to it. In the case of conflicts in the Muslim world,

however, the whole argument takes a new turn. All kinds of religious, cultural, historical and even eschatological explanations are put forward to explain how and why Muslim culture is violent, irrational, backward, suicidal, and so on.

And the reverse never happens. None of the so-called Middle East experts or Islam analysts mentions the positive qualities of Muslim culture to explain the things that go right instead of wrong. A good example is the coverage of Iranian-born Anousheh Ansari's travel into space as the first Muslim woman. I haven't seen or read any analysis of her culture, religion or ethnicity that may have propelled her to take this extraordinary trip and make the headlines worldwide. Nor did we see anything different when the Bangladeshi banker Muhammad Yunis was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his ambitious and extremely successful project of giving small loans to help the poor. Like Ansari and countless other Muslim figures who have had their stories of success, Mr. Yunis is from the Muslim world and must have some connection with the cultural and religious history of the society in which he grew up. Is it assumed that when it comes to Muslims everything bad happens for a religious reason and everything good happens for a secular reason?

In short, how we perceive a conflict or a situation becomes more important than what the hard realities on the ground suggest. Therefore an effective study of the relationship between Islamic and Western societies will have to pay close attention to the construction and transmission of images and perceptions. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that people in the West are bombarded on a daily basis with the worst depictions of the Muslim world and thus cannot differentiate between what is normative and mainstream Islam and what is a distorted version of it. The western public can make a distinction between abortion clinics in the United States, Timothy McVeigh and David Koresh on the one hand, and what many Christians would consider to be mainstream Christianity. There is little need to explain the difference between violence committed in the name of Judaism and Christianity and the essential teachings of these religions. People do not link terrorism to Western religions because they know enough about them. But this is not the case with Islam.

A troubling result of this attitude is the treatment of Islamophobia as a non-issue by Western media. Insulting, intimidating and threatening Muslim individuals and communities and in some cases committing violence against them is presented as a reaction to what is described as Islamic extremism and terrorism. This leads many people to conclude that the violent reactions against Muslims have a reason and thus can be excused. Islamophobia is used to construct, justify and sustain racist and exclusivist political discourses to the extent that the motto "Islamophobic and proud of it" becomes an ideological mark. Islam is presented as an enemy and as an 'other' to construct purist and exclusivist national identities¹⁴ as well as to justify religious exclusivism.¹⁵

Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism

The insidious results of Islamophobia are numerous, and I shall refer only to two of them here. First of all, Islamophobic acts prevent Muslims from fully participating in the political, social, cultural and economic life of the societies in which they live. Islamophobia creates a constant sense of victimization and marginalization among second and third generation Muslims. It makes them feel foreign, distant and unwelcome. It creates parallel societies whereby the integration of different ethnic and religious communities into the society becomes impossible.

Secondly, the constant presence and pressure of Islamophobia bars Muslims themselves from open self-criticism. Confronted with frontal attacks of racist and Islamophobic attitudes, Muslims tend to shy away from criticizing fellow Muslims openly and end up defending some of the most extreme ideas and actions. They feel that they will be betraying their Muslim brothers and sisters in the midst of a war launched against them because of their ethnic and religious identities. Confronted with guilt by association and communal stigmatization, many Muslim individuals take refuge in the kind of group solidarity that makes self-criticism look like a self-defeating strategy.

What is to be done?

Islamophobia is only the surfacing of these deeper problems. To confront the issue, I would suggest a three-level strategy. The first is the discourse analysis of what we now call Islamophobia. We have to be clear about the terms we use when we discuss the phenomenon of discrimination against Muslims. What constitutes Islamophobia, what is honest criticism without racism, how we identify and report Islamophobia are all questions that need to be answered for a proper understanding and analysis of the numerous facets of discrimination against Islam and Muslims. Both Muslims and non-Muslims need to be educated about these issues so that we have a broad consensus on the terms we use. Particularly, the Muslim communities must take responsibility in educating their members about the larger questions of intolerance and racism so that they can fight against all forms of discrimination including Islamophobia.

The second level is mapping out the manifestations of Islamophobia. A monitoring and reporting program is essential to understand the extent and nature of discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities in Western countries. Annual country reports need to be prepared to measure the impact of Islamophobia. One cannot rely only on newspaper reports or anecdotal evidence to identify and record hate crimes and acts of discrimination. Proper and effective measures of monitoring, identifying and reporting such acts must be in place to raise awareness on the one hand, and train individuals and communities to seek their rights on the other.

The third level is designing a comprehensive strategy to curb and eliminate Islamophobia. Developing good practices is key for an effective and positive campaign against acts of discrimination against Muslims in Europe and the United States. A number of good practices are already in place to fight xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism, and one should consult them to develop effective measures. One should also seek to form alliances with those institutions that deal with the issues of racism and discrimination in general.

Endnotes

- 1 “The Collapse of Tolerance”, *The Guardian*, September 17, 2007.
- 2 A good example of how an Islam-related issue in Europe opens up much larger debates is the French government’s decision in 2004 to ban headscarves in public schools. At the time, the media campaign in support of the ban went way beyond girls covering their heads in public schools. The debate covered almost everything from the true spirit of France and Europe to violence against women, integration, assimilation and pluralism. For a good analysis of this debate, see John Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Service* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 3 See his Islam, Christianity and Pluralism, *The Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture Series*, Lambeth Palace and the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK, 2007), p. 7.
- 4 The question of multiple loyalties has been addressed by a number of Muslim scholars and intellectuals. For an engaging discussion, see Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For a discussion of British Muslims, see *British Muslims: Loyalty and Belonging*, ed. Mohammad Siddique Seddon, Dilwar Hussain and Nadeem Malik (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2003).
- 5 A good example of how racial and religious considerations get mixed up is Meryll Wyn Davies, a Muslim convert in Wales, UK. Every time she is interviewed by a journalist, she is asked the following question: “How does a nice, sensible Welsh girl like you end up joining a religion of militant fundamentalists who suppress women?” Quoted in *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges and Action, A Report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* (Stoke on Tren, UK: Trentham Books, 2004), p. 65.
- 6 Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy* (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1986), pp. 29, 30, quoted in J. Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, 1997), p.12. For the current perceptions of Islam, Arabs and Muslims in the West, see my “Roots of Misconception: Euro-American Perceptions of Islam Before and After

September 11th” in *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition* ed. Joseph Lombard (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), pp. 143-187.

⁷ Quoted in *Islamophobia: Issues, Challenges and Action*, p. 8.

⁸ As Tahir Abbas points out, “the British discourse on racialized minorities has been transformed from “color” in the 1950s and 1960s to “race” in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; to “ethnicity” in the 1990s and to “religion” in the present climate.” Tahir Abbas, “After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 21 (Summer 2004) No. 3, pp. 26-38. In a retrospective and troubling way, Islamophobic acts against have come to embrace all of the stages of modern racism.

⁹ Cf. Ramon Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants, “The Long-Duree Entanglement between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist/Patriarchal World System”, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, V, 1 (Fall 2006), pp. 1-12.

¹⁰ For an analysis of anti-Arab racism in the US, see Steven Salaita, *Anti-Arab Racism in the United States: Where It Comes from and What It Means for Politics Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

¹¹ *International Action Against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance in the OSCE Region*, (OSCE & ODIHR, 2004).

¹² Rowan Williams argues against the “all is the same” kind of religious pluralism in the case of Islam and Christianity because it not only ignores the obvious theological differences between them but also underestimates “their strong sense of the historical particularity of the origins of their faith and of the universal missionary imperative which their practice embodies”. For his penetrating analysis, see his *Islam, Christianity and Pluralism*, The Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture Series.

¹³ There are few comprehensive case studies of Muslim communities living in European countries and their experiences of cultural encounter. A good survey of Turkish Muslims in Holland is Talip Kucukcan and Veyis Gungor, *EuroTurks and Turkey-EU Relations: The Dutch Case* (Amsterdam: Turkevi Research Center, 2006). For Muslims in Britain, see Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims* (London: IB Tauris, 2002) and Tahir Abbas (ed.), *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure* (London: Zed, 2004).

¹⁴ The British National Party (BNP) is a good example of how the fear of Islam is used to launch a racist political campaign. BNP started its “Islam out of Britain” campaign in 2001 and widely distributed a leaflet entitled “The truth about I.S.L.A.M”. In the leaflet, “I.S.L.A.M” was used as an acronym for “Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson, and Molestation of Women”. For an analysis of BNP’s campaign and the state of Islamophobia in the 9/11 Britain, see Christopher Allen, “Justifying Islamophobia: A Post-9/11 Consideration of the European

Union and British Contexts”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 21 (Summer 2004) No. 3, pp. 1-25.

¹⁵ Of all the anti-Islamic Christian polemics in recent years, one of the most fascinating episodes was Orlando’s “Holy Land Experience” theme park. Founded by a Protestant ministry which seeks to convert world Jewry into Christianity, the Holy Land Experience Park introduced a number of extremely anti-Islamic themes after 9/11 and espoused an open confrontation and war between American (Protestant) Christians, Jews and Muslims. For an analysis, see Nancy Stockdale, “Citizens of Heaven” versus “The Islamic Peril: the Anti-Islamic Rhetoric of Orlando’s Holy Land Experience since 9/11/01”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 21 (Summer 2004) No. 3, pp. 89-109.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle of Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism

Mohamed Nimer

Definitions

Islamophobia and anti-Americanism denote hate directed at a faith community or a people because they happen to be Muslim or American. Such hate is expressed through vitriolic rhetoric and/or physical acts of violence and discrimination against objects or persons on account of their association with Islam, Muslims, America or Americans. To appreciate the grave dangers of Islamophobia and anti-Americanism, one must be clear about their essence – what they are and what they are not. A critical study of Islam or Muslims is not Islamophobic. Likewise, a disapproving analysis of American history and government is not anti-American. One can disagree with Islam or with what some Muslims do without ill-feelings. Similarly, one can oppose American policies without detesting America as a nation.

These demarcations may sound clear and simple, and yet both Islamophobia and anti-Americanism are on the rise. Anti-Muslim feelings in the United States have increased, especially after the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as 9/11). Between one-fourth and one-third of Americans hold negative views of Islam and Muslims.¹ Opinion leaders, especially on Internet blogs, talk radio, and cable television are increasingly using harsh language to refer to the Islamic faith. Franklin Graham, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, religious leaders often courted by elected officials and politicians, have called Islam "a wicked religion", the Prophet Muhammad "a terrorist," and Muslims "worse than Nazis." A global survey of world public opinion about the United States in November 2005 revealed that uneasy feelings were mutual. In five major Muslim-majority countries, from 51 percent to 79 percent of the respondents expressed unfavorable view of the United States.²

There is a circular cause and effect relationship between Islamophobia and anti-Americanism. Consider the following sequence of events starting arbitrarily with 9/11: the strike by Al-Qaeda left thousands of people dead and injured and triggered the most remarkable anti-Muslim violence in American history and the most vocal wave of anti-Islam rhetoric in the West. The attack is then used to justify the invasion of two Muslim-majority countries: Afghanistan and Iraq, where hundreds of thousands of people have been killed or injured. And this unleashed a wave of terrorist attacks against vulnerable targets of U.S. allies around the world

(the bombing of establishments frequented by nationals of U.S. allies in Bali, Indonesia, Casablanca, Morocco, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Istanbul, Turkey, Madrid, Spain, London, United Kingdom).

We've also witnessed increased American pressures on Muslims here and abroad, including human rights abuses and the use of torture in the name of national security. Revelations about such practices at Abu Garib and other U.S. holding facilities inflamed anti-American sentiments and may have contributed to the resurgence of al-Qaeda and Taliban in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So the pattern is clear: Terrorist attacks against Americans are followed by anti-Muslim rhetoric and policy. This in turn reinforces anti-American sentiment and provokes a new round of terrorist attacks. For those who seek to promote reconciliation, it is pointless to ask which of the two phenomena began first. What is more important is to recognize the positive relationship between the two, namely, as Islamophobia increases, anti-Americanism is strengthened and vice versa.

What factors have led to this unfortunate state of affairs? What remedies should be sought to ameliorate prejudice? Below I discuss the most salient misconceptions and real grievances fueling the current vicious cycle. I also outline the basic ingredients of solutions that may bring about its end.

Misconceptions

While Hollywood movies reduce Muslims into what Jack Shaheen calls the three B's: billionaires, bombers and belly dancers, many in the Muslim world view Americans in terms of the three R's: rich, ruthless and raunchy. Evidence shows that many Muslims do hold strong negative stereotypes of westerners in general and Americans in particular. A June 2006 Pew Research Center poll found "pluralities in all of the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed associate Westerners with being greedy, arrogant, immoral, selfish and violent. And solid majorities in Jordan, Turkey and Egypt – as well as a plurality of Muslims in Nigeria – view Westerners as being fanatical.³

The problem lies in the broad-brush generalization of Muslims and Americans as morally lax people who have ample means and will to harm others. This sweeping notion, which constitutes the crux of anti-Americanism and Islamophobia, is usually accompanied by demonization and justification of hostility.

Beyond agreeing with negative statements about Americans and Muslims, there is agitation that invokes antagonistic emotions. Pat Robertson has repeatedly said on national television that al-Qaeda militants are only carrying out Qur'anic commands to kill Jews and Christians. Such accusations were echoed in other forums beyond the so-called Christian Right. For example, the Simon Wiesenthal Center hosted an event at the University of Toronto countering the

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UN Secretary General seminar on Islamophobia in December 2004. The Canadian event featured Bruce Tefft, a former CIA official, who blamed Islam for terrorism. He stated in his lecture:

*"Islamic terrorism is based on Islam as revealed through the Qu'ran.... To pretend that Islam has nothing to do with Sept. 11 is to willfully ignore the obvious and to forever misinterpret events.... There is no difference between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, which is a totalitarian construct."*⁴

This extreme form of associating Islam with violence also suggests treating Islam not as a religion but as an aggressive ideology. This message has had resonance in some conservative circles. Most recently Oklahoma state legislator Rex Duncan (who is Republican) refused a gift of Islam's holy book saying, "Most Oklahomans do not endorse the idea of killing innocent women and children in the name of ideology."⁵

Anti-American agitation by Muslim radicals often takes the form of blaming America for most of the Muslim world's problems, even in areas where America is not a player. For example, Bin Laden repeatedly held American imperialism responsible for the persecution of Muslims in the Indian state of Assam. Bin Laden's faulty rationale goes like this: the exercise of American power has left Muslims unable to support vulnerable Muslim minorities, such as those in India. But there is no link between the rise of American power and the persecution of Muslims in Assam. In fact, the general weakness of Muslim-majority countries predated the rise of America in global affairs.

This spurious association is also evident in linking Iraq to 9/11, where the real connection is the broad demographic characteristics of religion and ethnicity. Perhaps mindful of the sensitivity of this linkage, the Bush Administration first said that in the post 9/11 world, America cannot afford to let Iraq keep weapons of mass destruction. The administration also accused the Iraqi government under Saddam of having had links with al-Qaeda. Of course, evidence for such claims was lacking from the start. Yet U.S. government officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, testified in U.S. and international forums, that the U.S. possessed intelligence confirming these reports.

In both cases – the invasion of Iraq and the attacks on Americans and their allies – the justification of violence is made via ideology-based views on history and world affairs assigning responsibility for events not on the basis of relating actors to actions but on grounds that selectively mix geopolitical analyses and visions with ethnic, religious and/or national affiliations. In other words, Bin Laden's stretching the line of logic beyond reason and fact in blaming America is clearly anti-American, just as the Bush's justification of the War in Iraq on grounds of 9/11 is Islamophobic.

Real Grievances

In addition to misconceptions, Islamophobia and anti-Americanism have been fueled by real grievances. Unjust American policies cause anti-American feelings, while terrorism stirs up Islamophobia. University of Maryland political scientist Louis Cantori reports on attending a public meeting in 2004, at which returning members of the American occupation administration in Iraq expressed exhilaration regarding what they saw as successful American imperialism.⁶

But many of the world's Muslims perceive such American policies as increasingly a leading factor in stifling their progress and denying them genuine political reform. There is no doubt that the American invasion of Iraq has reinforced this perception, which is viewed by many as a campaign having the broad aim of weakening Muslims.

Clearly, Islamophobia and anti-Americanism reflect the sad state of U.S.-Muslim world relations. The U.S. has inherited and maintained the status quo of a Muslim world divided by colonial European powers. For long the U.S. has invested in relations with Muslim-majority states, which are controlled for the most part by rulers who have marginalized civil society. Yet supporters of this untenable set of relationships are the most vocal in demanding that Muslims, who are rendered powerless, turn inward and band together in order to uproot terrorists.

Yet Islamic activists across the globe condemned 9/11 in no ambiguous manner. American Muslim leaders and major Islamic centers signed on an anti-terror fatwa (religious opinion) issued by major Muslim jurists.⁷ And Muslim public affairs agencies have maintained regular contacts with law enforcement agencies. American Muslim organizations encourage the recruitment of Muslims in law enforcement agencies.

But if the criteria for a good Muslim cop include the requirement of holding the Muslim community suspect, then there is a serious obstacle facing Muslim involvement in law enforcement. After 9/11 profiling of Muslims has become rampant. In August 2007, the New York Police Department released an Islamophobic report implicating the whole Muslim community in the promotion of radical tendencies. It even suggested that a young Muslim who quits smoking and starts attending mosque may have entered a radicalization funnel.⁸ No wonder then there are 750,000 people on the U.S. government terrorist watch list.⁹ And there is no surprise that many Muslims in America express frustration regarding the suspicious treatment they receive at the nation's airports.

Legitimate grievances must be addressed to dry up the sources of anger. This is not a call for the United States to let its guard down or to relinquish its advantageous military and economic positions to appease others. Nor does it mean that governments in Muslim-majority countries should censor speech in order to prove that they are cracking down on extremism. It means that the

American government should work to resolve or, at the very least, refrain from opposing national liberation movements, because this hostility feeds legitimate resentment against it. Michael Scheuer, former CIA Head of Bin Laden Unit, may caution, however, that this may not happen so long as the U.S. government is in the grip of those who believe in an imperial America.¹⁰

Ultimately, controlling terrorism is a task best handled by security agencies. Muslim-majority countries should not only work to curb terrorist activity, but should also guarantee freedom of speech and association so that extremist ideas can be recognized and isolated by mainstream Muslim opinion. This prospect could prove more effective than American military adventures. Only the hope of a better future can temper the frustration of increasingly desperate Muslims.

Remedies: Dialogue and Reform

Dialogue for the purpose of exposing myths and forging a common understanding is a must to assure a peaceful future. Richard Cizik, a leader in the National Association of Evangelicals movement warns Muslims against equating evangelicals with fundamentalist Christians.¹¹ Muslims have complained for so long that Western academics and journalists invented the term *fundamentalist Islam* and equate its characteristics with profiles of practicing Muslims, equate those with extremists, and extremists with terrorists. Following the Iranian Revolution in 1979 such assumptions were applied to Shia Muslims and after 9/11 Sunnis became the main villains.

Charting the way out of stereotyping and communication based on ignorant profiling, Muslims, Christians, and Jews must acknowledge their Abrahamic roots as one strong foundation for communication between all followers of these three religions. Religious scriptures of all major world religion enunciate the golden rule, which simply recommends treating others as one would like to be treated. This universal principle offers a solid moral ground for peaceful coexistence.

Political realists may think such a lofty idea will not change the nature of international relations, which, in their view, are based on mistrust, power and interest. But those who believe in the free will of human beings may disagree. Therefore, there is reason to support a global discourse premised on a shared future. Within this framework, various sub-discourses may prove fruitful.

One conversation should deal with the notion of world domination. Neither the Qur'an nor the Bible justifies domination and oppression. Princeton scholar Richard Bulliet argues that Islamic and Western civilizations are more interlinked than many are prepared to acknowledge.¹² Michael Morgan underscores the fact that today's digital age would not have been possible without the contributions of the Muslim mathematician Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khw_rizm_ (780-850) to algorithm.¹³

Another exchange in the global dialogue revolves around interfaith relations. There are some who criticize conventional, feel-good interfaith meetings, believing they have produced few tangible results. They believe fruitful engagements must appreciate differences as well as agreements between faith communities. Yet contacts between American Muslims on the one hand and Catholics and mainline Protestants on the other have gone beyond pleasant exchanges of good ideas and intentions. There have been joint responses to crises, including political alliances to defend civil rights and oppose unjust wars. Still, relations between Muslims, Jews and Christian Zionists are very tense and conflict-ridden. And increasingly anti-Muslim sentiment is finding a place in certain segments of the American conservative movement, including some think tanks and Republican politicians and activists.

Unfortunately many Muslims mix criticism of Israel with ambivalence or even prejudice against Jews. On August 31, 2007, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President of the Union of Reform Judaism, a movement that claims 1.5 million members, raised this issue in his address to the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).¹⁴ The ability of ISNA leaders to bring about this change will be strengthened if they could show their Muslim brethren that their Jewish counterpart is equally willing to acknowledge the faults of organized Jewry that goes the extra mile in justifying Israel's repression of the Palestinians. American Muslim leaders have repeatedly criticized Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians. It is time American Jewish leaders delivered a credible criticism of the Israeli brutal occupation.

Another discussion involves Muslims in the West and the rest of the *ummah* (worldwide community of believers). There are good ideas which Western Muslims are sharing with their fellow Muslims across the globe – ideas that may contribute to reform capable of giving hope and blunting radicalism. For example, Jamal Badawi, a reputable Canadian Muslim scholar and activist, differentiates between secularism and secularity.¹⁵ The former is an anti-religion ideology, which Muslims would oppose, whereas the latter is a principle that allows the creation of effective polities, which Muslims may view as good. He argues that the American model of separating church and state follows the secularity concept. If this understanding becomes a basis for political reform in Muslim-majority countries, it would demonstrate that American principles are consistent with Islamic ideals.

But there are voices arguing that Muslims are not ready for democracy or that Islam and democratic ideals are not compatible. Such rhetoric may manifest Islamophobia. Essentially, it suggests that Muslims are prone to violence and prefer war over negotiations to settle their differences. American civil society groups should engage their counterparts in Muslim-majority states, rather than justify

denying them a place at the political table. The debate over Islam and democracy must be seen in a new light: subscribers to the notion that the two are incompatible are those who would like to see the West clash with the Muslim world. In other words, the question of compatibility is not answerable through a positivist scientific discovery. Rather, it is subject to one's preferences regarding East-West relations. Those who opt for conflict would welcome the intensification of Islamophobia and anti-Americanism.

Obstacles and Catalysts for Change

Serious obstacles limit the chances of a meaningful conversation. Denial is major complicating factor. Insisting that the CIA hatched the 9/11 attacks to justify the subsequent wars only widens the gap of understanding. The same effect results from denying that Islamophobia exists or that anti-Americanism is related to America's unjustified militarism and support of oppression.

Despite the existence of stereotypes in Muslim perceptions of Americans, most recent surveys show that majorities in Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia – four of the most heavily populated Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, North African, South Asia, and Southeast Asia – oppose attacks on civilians, support the application of Islamic law in their countries, favor democratic governance, and see value in openness to global exchange.¹⁶

But condescending attitudes toward others eliminate the prospects of building relationships of trust necessary for a fruitful engagement. Muslims who speak of America as a sick culture contribute to the reinforcement of mistrust. Another form of denigration is common among pundits who use the views of former Muslims as a yardstick for "moderate Islam," which implies the intolerant position that one can dialogue with Muslims only when they renounce their faith. Neither Islamophobia nor anti-Americanism is destined to dominate American-Islamic relations. But if mainstream voices cave in to the loud noises of fanatics and zealots, then the self-fulfilling prophecy of the clash of civilizations will become the order of the day.

Endnotes

¹ Such findings are supported by public opinion polls commissioned by CAIR in 2004 and 2005. See CAIR, *American Public Opinion about Islam and Muslims* (Washington, DC, 2005). A Gallup/USA Today poll in 2006 found four in ten Americans admitting prejudice against Muslims. See http://www.beliefnet.com/story/197/story_19765_1.html, (November 1, 2007).

- ² <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/6/arab-and-muslim-perceptions-of-the-united-states>, (November 2, 2007).
- ³ <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?PageID=831>, (November 2, 2007).
- ⁴ "Islamic Terror Based on Qu'ran: Ex-CIA Official" <http://www.cjnews.com/viewarticle.asp?id=5056>, (December 10, 2004).
- ⁵ http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=071023_1_a1_spnc46170, (October 31, 2007).
- ⁶ *Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism*, pp.67-68.
- ⁷ <http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/AntiTerrorism/FatwaAgainstTerrorism.aspx>, (November 5, 2007).
- ⁸ New York Police Department, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (City of New York, NYPD Intelligence Division, August 2007), p.31.
- ⁹ NBC News, October 24, 2007.
- ¹⁰ Anonymous (pseudonym) *Imperial Hubris* (Washington, DC: Brassey's Inc., 2004).
- ¹¹ *Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism*, pp.115-118.
- ¹² Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004).
- ¹³ Interview by Riz Khan with Michael Morgan, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEK16-7Qafw>, (November 5, 2007). Also see Michael Morgan, *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers, and Artists* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Books, 2007).
- ¹⁴ See the text of the address at: <http://www.shalomctr.org/node/1302> (October 29, 2007).
- ¹⁵ *Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism*, p.56.
- ¹⁶ PIPA, *Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda*, (Washington, DC, 2007). The poll was conducted in April. See at: http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf, (November 5, 2007).

Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy

Juan Cole

Among the more pressing foreign policy problems facing the United States are its relations with the Muslim world. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the administration of US president George W. Bush decided to play the Islam card, making a “war on terror” central to the subsequent political campaigns. By late summer of 2006, as public opinion began turning against the Republican Party in the US, a desperate Bush led the way in redefining the enemy as “Islamic fascism.” This ploy, which failed to excite the American electorate, provoked widespread protests from Middle Eastern governments and newspapers. The phrase nevertheless entered the Republican political lexicon, affecting the way the US is perceived in the region. A perceived Islamophobia in American political rhetoric has become a substantial irritant in United States’ relations with the states that make up the Muslim world.

The Bush administration has attempted to have its cake and eat it too in identifying a “Green Menace” that could substitute for the old “Red Menace” of the Soviet Union and international communism that had served US politicians on the right so well since the late 1940s in their fear-mongering and assault on US civil liberties. Thus, Bush identified Islam as a “religion of peace” and discouraged scapegoating Muslims for the September 11 attacks. Yet at the same time, he constantly linked the Muslim world to terrorism and depicted it to the American people as a threat to US national security. He spoke of small, weak countries such as Saddam’s Iraq, as well as Syria and Iran, as existential threats to the US. Two of the three had a secular, nationalist government rather than an Islamist one.

The easy prejudices and bigotry of some in the Bush inner circle are apparent in the memos of former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, a master of misdirection. Robin Wright of the Washington Post reported on Rumsfeld’s memoranda or “snowflakes” late in 2007.¹ When Rumsfeld was criticized in April 2006 for his conduct of the Iraq War by retired generals, he wrote in a memo, “Talk about Somalia, the Philippines, etc. Make the American people realize they are surrounded in the world by violent extremists.” Rumsfeld was apparently referring to the tiny Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines, which is estimated to have 200 members. It is more a criminal gang than an Islamic movement. As for Somalia, it is a failed state wracked with tribal violence, little of it explicitly religious in character. It is difficult to see how 200 people in the Filipino jungles and some warring tribes in the Horn of Africa can have the world’s sole superpower “surrounded.” The only thing the two phenomena have in common is that the

Moro Filipinos and Somalis are largely Muslim populations. Muslim apparently equals dangerous. Rumsfeld's is classic fear-mongering.

Rumsfeld's theory of Muslim radicalism in the Gulf depended on pop sociology of a breathtakingly glib sort. He thought that petroleum wealth had detached Muslims "from the reality of the work, effort and investment that leads to wealth for the rest of the world. Too often Muslims are against physical labor, so they bring in Koreans and Pakistanis while their young people remain unemployed. An unemployed population is easy to recruit to radicalism." He added that if radicals "get a hold of" oil-rich Saudi Arabia, the US will have "an enormous national security problem."

Most Muslims, of course, do not live in petroleum states. Egypt, with a population of 79 million, has very little petroleum, and the largest Muslim country, Indonesia, has become a net importer of oil. Saudi Arabia does suffer from high male unemployment (30% in early 2008), but it has to do with high population growth rates and a distorted economy (oil income hardens the currency and hurts exports of agricultural and manufactured goods). The state-owned oil wealth is very unevenly distributed, and difficult to inject into the economy without producing high inflation. The unemployment is not voluntary. Nor is dependence on guest workers for manual labor specific to Saudis. The United States imports large numbers of foreign workers for manual labor, as well, but Rumsfeld does not appear to see this tendency as an indictment of Christianity. The idea that "Muslims" are "against physical labor" is just daft, and Rumsfeld contradicted himself when he said that they "bring in" "Pakistanis." What religion did he think the Pakistanis followed? When American politicians look out at the US or Europe, they explain economic phenomena through economics, but the Muslim world is apparently a mystical realm where national character flaws explain everything.

Rumsfeld's anxiety about terrorists taking over Saudi Arabia was, to say the least, exaggerated. In fact, recent polling in Saudi Arabia found that 88 percent of the population approved of the government security forces pursuing al-Qaeda activists.² Some 90 percent say that fighting terrorism is among their top priorities (even the small numbers of Saudis who still have a favorable view of Usama Bin Laden are worried about terrorism, an indication that they do not believe he is a terrorist, which is why they can still admire him.) Two-thirds of Saudis support stronger relations with the United States, and most say that their view of America would improve dramatically if it withdrew troops from Iraq. The Kingdom looks nothing like Rumsfeld's fantasy.

Rumsfeld's Islamophobia led him to see the US as "surrounded" by violent Muslim movements, even if those were tiny and without popular support in their own contexts, and even if their focus was on local goals rather than on geopolitics.

He depicted Muslims as intrinsically extremist, menacing and “surrounding.” At the core of their pathological behavior he found a lack of any Protestant Ethic, a moral laziness that created idleness, unemployment and extremism. This lazy road to terrorism threatens the US not only through violent attacks but because it menaces the stability of Saudi Arabia, the world’s large exporter of petroleum and therefore a key support for America’s hydrocarbon economy.

As Republican domestic fortunes began to sink in the run-up to the 2006 midterm elections, party leaders appear to have made a decision to push a new rhetoric, replacing the “global war on terror” with a struggle against “Islamic fascism.” Rumsfeld accused democratic critics of the Iraq War and the war on terror of trying to “appease” a new form of “fascism.”³

Bush himself picked up this diction with alacrity around the same time. In late summer of 2006 he said that arrests of suspected terror suspects in Britain were a “stark reminder that this nation is at war with Islamic fascists who will use any means to destroy those of us who love freedom, to hurt our nation.”⁴ It was rather grandiose to depict the US as “at war” with a handful of radicalized British youth, and it was unfortunate that Bush called the problem “Islamic.” Putting “Islamic” in front of another word implies that it is intrinsic to or characteristic of the Islamic religion or civilization. Islamic ethics are those of the Muslim scripture and religious teachings, for instance. Not all Muslims are ethical, and if we looked at the Muslim community as a whole it might have consistent human lapses. It would not be objectionable to speak of Muslim failings or Muslim terrorists. But what follows the word Islamic, whether most English speakers realize it or not, pertains to the religion itself.

Saudi Arabia, which has old and warm relations with the Bush dynasty, reacted immediately to the new demagoguery. A cabinet statement carried by the Saudi Press Agency “called on everyone to realize that terrorism has no religion or nationality.” It “warned against hurling charges of terrorism and fascism at Muslims without regard to the spotless history of Islamic civilization,” and added, “What Islam is being accused of today, like fascism, is primarily a Western cultural product.” The Saudi cabinet called for close international cooperation to combat terrorism.⁵ A very popular Saudi newspaper ran a vehement opinion piece by Abdallah al-Jafry that noted the cabinet’s response and lamented, “Thus, Bush’s hatred for Islam has reached this extent!”⁶

Indonesian intellectual Muhamad Ali wrote of the phrase in the Jakarta Post soon after it began being deployed, pointing out that “when Islam is attached to an extreme ideology, it may imply that Islam plays a part in the creation of such extremist ideologies.” He observed that none of the radical Muslim movements invokes fascism as part of its political genealogy. He deplored a similar tendency in the Iranian press to compare Bush himself to fascist leaders such as Mussolini.

He advised Washington, "If they want to refer to group of terrorists, they may name them, such as al-Qaeda, Jamaah Islamiyah, Islamic Jihad, HAMAS, Hizbollah, etc. instead of using the word Islamic for any ideology emerging from the Muslim tradition and history without a clear definition and full understanding of the characteristics and diversity of Muslim movements."⁷ The reaction from Muslim op-ed writers and editorialists was often less polite, and frequently not only involved condemnations of Bush for using that diction, but also threw the phrase back in his face, with enumerations of his own alleged misdeeds. The Saudi and other governments in the region warned against the use of the term.

As well they might. While there are Muslims who feel themselves at war with the United States, they form a tiny set of shadowy organizations and are not representative in any way of the some 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. Nor is it clear that they have anything in common with the fascist movements of interwar Europe, which were crafted by persons of Christian heritage but sometimes moved toward pagan or secular emphases. Because of its tendency to express local grievances in nativist language, fascism is notoriously difficult to define. But surely it has to do with a virulent nationalism and the establishment of racial hierarchies, with a celebration of violence and struggle for its own sake, and with the idolization of a dominating elite and contempt for the weak. Most Muslim extremists of the al-Qaeda variety, in contrast, reject nationalism, establish multi-ethnic alliances, and think of themselves as defending the oppressed Muslim masses. Even if one could establish that their ideas had any similarity to European fascism, they should be called Muslim fascists and not Islamic ones, since Islam as a religion is universalist in character and therefore anti-fascist. The neologism "Islamofascist" is particularly inappropriate, since it literally yokes European authoritarianism to Islam as a religion.

The imagining of an implacable Islamic enemy that licenses US aggression is clear in a number of speeches by US Vice President Dick Cheney and by Bush. Bush warned, "The extremists are fighting to take control of Iraq so they can establish it as a base from which to overthrow moderate governments in the region and plan new attacks on the American people. If we fail in Iraq, the enemy will follow us home." Bush thus configured the Sunni Arab population of provinces such as al-Anbar and Diyala as part of a conspiracy to attack the United States and to overthrow the "moderate" Shiite government Bush had installed in Baghdad. Yet every indication is that the Iraqi Sunni insurgency was simply a nationalist movement fighting for nationalist independence from a foreign occupier and its Shiite and Kurdish allies. It was not even apparently very dedicated, since many of its members later agreed to take a salary from the United States to form citizen patrols called Awakening Councils. Bush's diction, however, inevitably configures the Muslim as an inexplicably sinister bogey man who would "follow us home"⁸ unless the US kept an army boot on his neck.

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Dick Cheney in his March 2007 speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the powerful coordinator of lobbying for Israel with Congress and other branches of government, used many code words to denigrate Islam. These passages are worth quoting at length:

Progress in the cause of security and long-term peace never comes easily. Yet the United States and Israel persevere in that cause. We understand, as Ariel Sharon put it, the right and responsibility of every democracy, if it wishes to survive, to protect itself and its values. Doing so requires moral clarity, the courage of our convictions, a willingness to act when action is necessary, and a refusal to submit to any form of intimidation, ever. (Applause.)

These qualities are a credit to the American and the Israeli people. And these qualities are tested every day as we wage the war on terror. Israelis know this because rockets are shot at them and three Israeli soldiers are now being held hostage, two by Hezbollah, one by Hamas, even as we meet here today.

We are the prime targets of a terror movement that is global in nature and, yes, global in its ambitions. The leaders of this movement speak openly and specifically of building a totalitarian empire covering the Middle East, extending into Europe and reaching across to the islands of Indonesia, one that would impose a narrow, radical vision of Islam that rejects tolerance, suppresses dissent, brutalizes women and has one of its foremost objectives the destruction of Israel. Their creed is extreme and backward looking, yet their methods are modern and sophisticated. The terrorists use the Internet to spread propaganda and find new recruits, and they're employing every other tool of communication and finance to carry out their plans.

It's odd to think of ideologues out of the Dark Ages having a modern media strategy, but the fact is they do. They take videos of their attacks and put them up on the Internet to get them broadcast on television. They send messages and images by e-mail and tell their followers to spread the word. They wage war by stealth and murder, disregarding the rules of warfare and rejoicing in the death of the innocent.

And not even the instinct of self-preservation is a restraint. The terrorists value death the same way you and I value life. Civilized, decent societies will never fully understand the kind of mindset that drives men to strap on bombs or fly airplanes into

buildings, all for the purpose of killing unsuspecting men, women and children who they have never met and who have done them no wrong. But that is the very kind of blind, prideful hatred we're up against.

And their aim, ultimately, is to acquire the means to match that hatred and to use chemical, biological or nuclear weapons to impose their will by unspeakable violence or blackmail.

An enemy that operates in the shadows and views the entire world as a battlefield is not one we can fight with strategies used in other wars. An enemy with fantasies of martyrdom is not going to sit down at a table for negotiations. Nor can we fight to a standoff - (applause). Nor can we fight to a standoff, hoping that some form of containment or deterrence will protect our people. The only option for our security and survival is to go on the offensive, facing the threat directly, patiently and systematically, until the enemy is destroyed.⁹

Cheney began his screed by identifying the common Israeli and US challenge. In both cases, these societies are called to a "war on terror," and Cheney goes on to amalgamate a Shiite regional movement of south Lebanon, a Sunni slum movement of the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip, and a shadowy Saudi-Egyptian network that originated in the Reagan administration's covert Islamist war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. That is, Israel and the United States face the same enemy, and it is somehow Islamic, protean, ambitious, grasping, malevolent and irrational. In the Middle East itself, however, Hamas and Hizbullah would be seen as religious cum nationalist movements against foreign occupation, while al-Qaeda's popularity has plummeted as it has come to be seen as merely a terrorist movement. That is, most Middle Easterners would not accept Cheney's identification of the three.

Cheney unwittingly reveals one conceptual source of his anxiety about the terrorists, in that "Their creed is extreme and backward looking," and nevertheless "their methods are modern and sophisticated." This configuring of Muslims as somehow out of place in modernity helps him to explain why they are so dangerous. They are medieval (from the "Dark Ages") and yet diabolically advanced. Their very fearlessness in the face of superior military might, their unconventional methods that make it impossible to contain them, leave the United States no option but to go on the offensive, i.e., to wage a series of aggressive wars in the Muslim world. Cheney by his diction arranges for al-Qaeda and other terror groups to make the entire Muslim world hostage to US anxieties, such that any Muslim state is at risk of unilateral, preemptive US attack to deter the shadowy terrorist networks that Cheney perceives as potentially enormously powerful.

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The Republican field in the 2007-2008 presidential campaign picked up the Bush and Cheney rhetoric and often took it to new heights. Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney said he would not put a Muslim on the US cabinet. Arizona Senator John McCain even attributed his run for the presidency to his concern about “radical Muslim extremism.” Michigan Republican activist Victor Ghalib Begg complained to the *Detroit Free Press*, “They’re all falling over each other to demonize Muslims and Islam . . . They’re trying to appeal to the power of prejudice and hate. . . . And it’s brainless. Everybody knows we have a problem with terrorism. Let’s focus on how to deal with it, instead of focusing on a faith or a people.”¹⁰

One of former New York mayor Rudi Giuliani’s campaign advertisements showed angry Muslim men and women with a voice over that said “a people perverted.” A state co-chair of the Giuliani campaign in New Hampshire, John Deady, praised the mayor for being able to stop “the rise of the Muslims,” whom, he said, it was necessary to press until “we defeat them or chase them back to their caves, or, in other words, get rid of them.” When asked if he was really condemning all members of the religion, Deady replied, “I don’t subscribe to the principle that there are good Muslims and bad Muslims. They’re all Muslims.”¹¹ He was forced to resign from the campaign, but it was predictable that Giuliani’s overheated rhetoric would attract persons with such views.

Unlike Deady, Bush and Cheney have insisted that they distinguish between proponents of “Islamic fascism” and ordinary Muslims. But how their rhetoric is received in the Muslim world was revealed in the press commentary on Bush’s visit to the Gulf in January of 2008. The columnist Yusuf al-Kuwaylit, writing in the Saudi daily al-Riyadh, remarked, “Perhaps President Bush, through his visit to the region, has seen the reality of the people there - that they are not bad, hypocrites or terrorists fighting civilization and development. On the contrary, we are the ones who seek to fill the gaps between developed countries by lighting the paths between us. The USA is the biggest and most important partner, capable of rectifying mistakes and directing them towards constructive and moral actions.”¹² Bush’s resort to the rhetoric of “Islamic fascism” had been read by local intellectuals as a condemnation of “the people there” in general, as barbarians, medieval romanticists, terrorists and just “bad.” Even with all this rhetorical excess, al-Kuwaylit is convinced that the US can still rectify its mistakes.

Not everyone agreed, of course. The Arab nationalist tendency lambasted Bush’s visit as a humiliation for the supine Arab regimes. An independent member of parliament in Egypt, Mustafa Bakri, according to Aljazeera, “called on the Egyptian authorities to prevent Bush from entering the country, describing him as ‘a war criminal’ and holding him responsible for killing more than one million Iraqi citizens and encroaching on the sovereignty of a brother Arab country.” The

Doha-based satellite television channel added, "In an urgent request to the speaker of the parliament on the visit, Bakri depended on what he termed the US President's interference in internal Egyptian affairs."¹³ Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq deeply damaged the standing of the US in the eyes of Muslim publics, and respondents to opinion polls consistently say that a withdrawal of US troops from that country would much improve its image. While Bush configured the Iraq War as a liberation of Muslims, in the Sunni Arab world it has largely been seen as an attack on Islam.

The oddest thing about the Bush administration's (and much of the Republican Party's) attempt to reconfigure swathes of the Muslim world as the successor to the Soviet Union as a threat to the United States is how flagrantly it flies in the face of reality. Arguably, no region of the world outside Europe is so full of regimes friendly to or closely allied with the United States. Turkey is a NATO ally of the US. The US has designated Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Pakistan as major non-NATO allies, a foreign policy category created in 1989. This status exempts them, as with NATO members, from the restrictions imposed by the Arms Export Control Act. They can conduct cooperative research and development projects with the Department of Defense on a shared-cost basis, participate in counter-terrorism projects, enjoy priority shipping of military surplus goods, receive reciprocal training, have special access to space technology, and have permission for their corporations to bid on Department of Defense contracts to keep up and repair US military equipment abroad.¹⁴ Other states in the Muslim world, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Gulf oil states and most of Central Asia, have close diplomatic, economic and military relations ties to United States.

Even Sudan and Syria, which have indifferent relations with the US, have at some points been lauded for their help in the "war on terror" by Bush administration officials. Washington's conflicts with Iran are more serious and long-standing, but both countries have at various points in recent history reached out to one another, and they have not been on a war footing. Iran cooperated with the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001 and with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in early 2003. Iran's public expresses high regard for the US in polls, so that what conflicts there are appear to be regime-driven rather than populist in character. In any case, Iran, a country, with a population of 70 million, constitutes less than five per cent of the Muslim world.

Bush administration aggressiveness has deeply damaged the image of the United States in the eyes of Muslim publics, as well as other publics. The invasions and military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah, and the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, all took their toll. In 2000, some 75 percent of Indonesians had a favorable view of the United States. By

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2006, it was only 30 percent, and after the invasion of Iraq it had fallen to as low as 15 percent. In 2000, 56 percent of Turks reported a favorable view of the US. In 2007, it was 9 percent. In Jordan, positive views of the US fell from 25 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2006.¹⁵

The foreign policy of the Bush administration toward the states of the Muslim world has been characterized by a key contradiction, which has limited its effectiveness and profoundly harmed the image of the US in the region. Washington has pursued close relations with Muslim-majority states. The US military regularly conducts joint exercises with the Egyptian military, for instance. It depends heavily on Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait for logistical support. The Gulf oil monarchies are central to US energy security. It arguably has more close allies, and fewer regime critics, in the Middle East of 2008 than it does in Latin America. Yet the Bush administration has attempted to depict Islam and the Muslim world as a bogeyman menacing US security. Bush misrepresents a movement of ethno-sectarian regionalism like Hizbullah as an international terrorist organization. He demonizes Iran, Syria and the Sudan. Rumsfeld's instinct when under attack for his mismanagement of the Iraq War was to brandish at the American public the tiny Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines and the petty warlords of Somalia.

Although Bush and his officials have maintained that they distinguish between Islamic fascism and the beliefs and practices of ordinary Muslims, a significant proportion of the Muslim public does not believe them. Indeed, even those Muslims who do not view Bush as a "war criminal" generally find the diction of "Islamic fascism" extremely offensive and a sign of bad faith. Still, the recent poll of Saudis makes it clear that its citizens are eager for better relations with the US and that many concur with al-Kuwaylit that the US can still "rectify" its "mistakes." If the next administration abandons the rhetorical excesses and Islamophobic diction of the Bush administration and many in the Republican Party and finds a way to end the US military presence in Iraq, the prospects for such a rectification are entirely plausible.

Endnotes

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⁸ Niraj Warikoo, "Political ads make Muslims uneasy: Campaigns sound bigoted, some say," *Detroit Free Press*, January 13, 2008.

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¹⁵ "America's Image Slips, But Allies Share U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas; No Global Warming Alarm in the U.S., China," Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 13, 2006 at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>.

Muslims, Islam(s) and Race in America

Sherman A. Jackson

In his important work, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Professor Matthew Frye Jacobson notes that, “It is America that produced the distinctly racial understanding of ‘difference’.”¹ Indeed, race, as a marker of authentic versus inauthentic Americanness is perhaps much more operative than meets the casual eye. As such, at some point, any journey to full indigenization and complete belongingness may *have* to pass through the Feuerbach of American race. Yet, this reality has proved difficult for sizeable numbers of Muslim Americans to come to terms with. For even as they continue to nurse their own racial biases and prejudices, Muslims – especially immigrant Muslims – have tended to approach America through the prism of an inscrutable racial agnosia, an agnosia reinforced by the half-hearted commitment to the dictum that Islam does not do race. If, however, as I have suggested, race is integral to the enterprise of American belongingness, it may be time for Muslims to reconsider this posture. For even if Islam does not “do race” as an ideal, it certainly “does reality,” including reality of which race is an identifiable constituent.

By general consensus, American blackness implies a relationship of contested subordination vis-à-vis American whiteness. This subordination is not necessarily overt. In fact, in many ways it is sustained by the very ‘invisibility’ of American whiteness. Whiteness, in other words, derives much of its power from the fact that, as Richard Dyer observes, “white people claim and achieve authority for what they say by not admitting, indeed not realizing, that for much of the time they speak only for whiteness.”² In the end, however, the cumulative effect of this conflation of whiteness with American-ness both conceals and asserts itself in such declarations as that of a noted American intellectual to the effect that “We” Americans, are, as he put it, “Anglo-Protestants.”³

Islam, on the other hand, at least in theory, is a racially undifferentiated construct in which all Muslims have, *ceteris paribus*, an equal claim to the Faith. In concrete terms, however, Islam’s self-understanding is not an ontological given, but rather the result of a process of negotiation undertaken by real Muslims in real time and space. This renders Islam subject to the same kinds of internal competition that any other hybrid entity has to face. And, depending on where, when and among whom this competition unfolds, the prospects and incentives for hiding perspective and subordinating others in the ostensibly neutral names of “Us,” “We” and “Them” may be as high in Islam as they are anywhere else.

In the more specific context of America, this picture is further complicated by the racial and ethnic make-up of the Muslim community in tandem with two often obscured but no less operative realities. The first of these is the perduring authority-disparity between immigrant and indigenous Muslims. Rather than formal religious training, ethnicity – or more specifically, olive skin – routinely functions as a proxy for religious knowledge and authenticity. While this does not completely restrict religious authority to immigrant Muslims, it does reflect a *prima facie* presumption that no one else enjoys. Second, there is what appears to be a very peculiar, indeed a peculiarly agnostic, relationship between the Muslim world – and thus those *from* the Muslim world – and American whiteness.

Within the United States, American whiteness is a racial category. Outside America, i.e., in the Muslim world, this whiteness loses much of its racial connotation and becomes a marker of civilization, “the West.” In this capacity, the standards and ‘achievements’ of the West come to represent either the anti-thesis of true Islam or the benchmark by which Islam in its truest expression must be measured and lived, the former tendency dominating among so-called fundamentalists, the latter among liberals, “progressives” and those to the left – neither group, however, being totally consistent in this regard.

In all of this, blackness sustains a palpably liminal role, at once part and not part of “the West.” On the one hand, blackness reflects the underbelly of the West, the scarred and pitied victim of its moral bankruptcy and historical sickness. On the other hand, and precisely in this capacity, blackness is imagined to have made no substantive contributions *to* the West. This is significant, considering that Western civilization is now *the* civilization via which the Muslim world seeks to redeem itself, either by frustrating Western power and impugning the Western ideal or by currying Western favor and securing its validation.⁴ In either case, the concerns of Blackamerican Muslims, *qua* Blackamerican Muslims, are either viewed with suspicion and/or contempt, as annoying little by-products of Western misguidance, or they are dismissed as irrelevant where not antithetical to the cause of civilizational redemption. In this context, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for a Blackamerican Muslim to express any serious interest in issues of race without calling his or her Islamic *bona fides* into serious question or being pitied as a victim of false Islamic consciousness. By comparison, gender, to take just one example, is firmly established as a proper object of Muslim religious contemplation and intellectual effort.

What all of this ultimately amounts to is an “imagined Islam,” an “imagined America” and an “imagined West” in which race is confronted agnostically. People with black skin exist, but there is nothing civilizationally, epistemologically or existentially valuable, relevant or even urgent in their hue. In fact, for perhaps a majority of immigrant Muslims, the most immediate valuation of black-

ness resides in its status as non-whiteness. As for whiteness, it can be engaged and responded to in its invisible form, i.e., as a civilization, a class or even a national identity – “American”; -- but it is rarely responded to or even acknowledged in its visible form, i.e., *as a race*. Ultimately, this “racial agnosticism” ends up exerting the insidious effect of reinforcing the invisibility of American whiteness, this time, however, in the very name of Islam.

It may come as no surprise that part of my concern in all of this is the extent to which it facilitates and effectively collaborates, however ‘innocently,’ in the subjugation of blacks. Beyond this, however – and this is the point that is even more difficult to make – I have a disquieting suspicion that this particular perspective on America, Islam and the West is ultimately bad for immigrant Muslims as well (not to mention the rest of America). This is grounded in my belief that it is only to the extent that America remains conscious of what Theodore Allen describes as its most peculiar institution, i.e., American whiteness,⁵ that Americans are likely to arrive at anything approaching self-understanding or self-control. We must remain clear, in other words, about the historical evolution and contemporary meaning of American whiteness – which has always connoted a will and a presumed right to define -- if we are to avoid the folly of equating actual reality with the sum of our fears, projections and unearned legacies, alongside the acquiescence of those whom we are able to silence. For only through the kind of vigilance born of such a consciousness can the dominant culture in America sustain any meaningful commitment to denying itself the comfort of innocence in the face of intentional campaigns, to use the expression of Toni Morrison, to “dirty” others, especially in a post-9/11 world.

In this context, the “Islamicized, racial agnosticism” of America’s immigrant Muslims, in their capacity as the Islamic authority in America, can be seen to bespeak not only a subtle disassociation from their Blackamerican co-religionists but a profoundly problematic understanding of the psychological history of America. Ultimately, however – and this is my main point here – this racial agnosticism, itself exacerbated by the effects of Islamophobia on immigrant Muslims, threatens the interests of the latter no less – and perhaps even more – than it does those of Blackamericans. For it aids and gives comfort to America in her perennial quest for innocence through historical amnesia. The smile, the boldly stamped passport, the box checked “white,” the small business loan – all of these are imagined to have greeted *everyone* who found their way to American shores. The pre-9/11 immigrant Muslim experience, in other words, is taken to represent the American experience as a whole. And from this vantage-point, the only ones who are marginalized, diminished or left out in America come to be seen as those who either choose or deserve to be. Overlooked is the possibility of a very different past and the fact that for America simply to “forget” her racialized and racial-

izing path to self-definition might be more akin to Germany's forgetting the Holocaust. For, on such a development, America might become more rather than less likely to produce, without the slightest twinge of conscience, another "problem people" who are maligned, defined, circumscribed and detested as were the Negro and the "non-Aryan Jew." It may be even easier, however, to shift responsibility for this state of affairs to this new problem people than it was to blame the Negro for being hated. For whereas every negative epithet and stereotype that could be hurled at the Negro ever so subtly indicted its user, no such stigma attaches to warning American society about "terrorists," "extremists," and "threats to national security."

Part of what I am suggesting here is that there is an unconscious element to these American nativist reflexes, a sort of pre-conscious, un-thought (often) non-aggressive impulse that eggs on the dominant culture, as if driven by a survivalist instinct. This results in a perduring threat of circumscription that looms over non-whites. Where there are effective ways of dealing with this – usually some form of indigenized, identity-in-difference – this can be successfully managed. But where there are no such mechanisms – and this is increasingly the case for immigrant Muslims, especially second and third generations, as their effective exclusion from social (to be distinguished from legal) whiteness leaves them "un-raced" in a society where authentic belongingness has always implied race, the consequences can be far-reaching where not devastating. Let me pause here to give you a brief example of what I am talking about.

A few years ago, I was invited by the Muslim Students' Association of a mid-western university to give a talk. After the talk, they invited me out to dinner, where I stumbled into a conversation with a Pakistani med-student. This young man had a huge beard but spoke with no accent. He kept complaining, however, about how he could not see himself as an American and about how he was Pakistani. Now, I had heard all of this before, and being a little tired after the lecture my patience was in short supply. So I decided to let him have it. I fired at him, "You are *not* Pakistani, you are not socialized as a Pakistani, you cannot eat the food, speak the language or deal with cultural idiosyncrasies or responsibilities in Pakistan. You are an American and you should simply accept that." He strongly protested, however, that as a Muslim, he could not see himself as a *bona fide* American.

Clearly, this young man knew that *I* was an American, and he respected my Islamic *bona fides*, as he did those of Hamza Yûsuf or 'Umar Fârûq 'AbdAllâh (prominent white American Muslims). Thus, his real problem was not with reconciling *Islam* with America; this was just his trump-card, his would-be unassailable justification for his rejectionism. His real problem lay, rather, with reconciling his *self* with America. But why couldn't he be an American? Because, on the

one hand, he wasn't white, and because, on the other hand, he was unwilling to be assimilated into some jive, subaltern, "honorary" whiteness. I explained to him that this was not necessary, that America had not one but at least *two* authentic proto-types, one white, the other black. I explained to him that he didn't have to be black (though why not), and that the existence of multiple American authenticities held out the possibility of alternatives to subaltern whiteness. Our conversation ended that night in what I took to be a rather entertaining waste of time.

The next day, however, as I was being escorted to the airport, this same young man approached me and handed me an envelope. I stuffed it in my jacket-pocket, and when I got up to the airport I opened it up and found a hand-written letter. This is partly what it read:

I wanted to thank you for talking with me...[T]hese past few months I had a lot of radicalness [sic] in me. Honestly, its not because I love to fight or something, but I am truly lost. I see no clear path to success and then just think of taking out the aggressor of the Muslims. I mean, my brother, my brother, you hit a homerun in describing us second generation Muslims. We don't know where to go, what to do, how to do it and are getting so lost that all we see is jihad. And this isn't just me. I know so many people like this... SO MANY [sic]. And you really shook me down, just by being direct, straight to the point and putting me on the spot...[T]he youth need your approach...They need to be questioned and shook, [sic] so they snap back into reality....

Clearly, the color-blind-America model was not working for this young man (nor, I presume, for the many like him of whom he spoke). What relieved him, however, of his agony was the idea that there were alternatives to whiteness as *the* signature of authentic American-ness. Ironically, however, it was American blackness that both proved and represented this possibility. And here we come to the great paradox of both undifferentiated America and undifferentiated Islam: we simply cannot have blackness if we cannot have race! And without blackness, there is no reason to believe in any credible alternative to whiteness as authenticator. Thus, far from undermining the interests or integrity of Islam or America, blackness and race can actually function to the benefit of both, much, perhaps, like the construct of tribe or clan operated in the Arabia of the Prophet.⁶

This is part of what the imagined Islam and the imagined America of immigrant Muslims fails to recognize or appreciate. Having said this much, however, let me rush to say that I concur with Gadamer's notion of the "historicity of understanding." In this light, much of the Blackamerican-immigrant Muslim

divide must be seen as resulting from differences in perspective born of differences in experience. To be sure, part of what I have been suggesting is that the historical perspective of blacks *in* America is epistemologically superior to that of Muslim immigrants *to* America. Blackamericans, in other words, know the grammar and semiotics of white privilege *and fear*; they know how to be authentically American without being white; they know how to survive – even fight! – under circumstances far more severe than those spawned by 9/11; they know that while the efforts of a Martin Luther King Jr. may heighten the dominant culture’s awareness of its own psychological predisposition, this is far less likely to succeed in the absence of a Malcolm X; they even know that Hip Hop is not some inscrutable mental disease but the result of what happens when youth come to see the identity and morality that has been bequeathed to them as false, cowardly and ultimately the result of their fathers’ having accepted the dictates of another’s will.

My point in all of this has not been to indict the perspective of immigrant Muslims. I have an indictment, but it is not that they have a historical perspective and an existential epistemology that differs from my own. My indictment, rather, is of their universalizing tendency backed by their claim and presumption, both subtle and overt, of the ultimate right and authority to define the face and agenda of Islam in America, on the basis of a particular perspective informed by a particular existential epistemology, both of which they imagine to be universal.⁷ My indictment, in short, is of the finality imputed to the claim that, “Islam simply does not do race.”

Of course, any insistence that race be included as an element of the prism through which Muslim-Americans view American reality might also be deemed an exercise in invoking a false universal, of using the fact that blacks are inextricably “raced” as an excuse or justification for trying to racialize everybody. I would submit, however, that the fact that one is paranoid does not prove that one is not being followed. Almost from its inception, America has embraced a racialized identity (which is why the only people in America who are not routinely asked, “Where are you from?” are black people and white people). Race, in this context – not religion – has for this very reason rested at the core of America’s perduring pursuit of redemption and innocence. In a word, America cannot redeem herself without somehow atoning for or overturning the excesses of her commitment to difference in race. Unraced peoples, however, qualify neither for true American authenticity nor for the benefits of America’s pursuit of redemption.⁸ In this context, it may be time and worth the while for immigrant Muslims to reconsider the dictum that “Islam does not do race.”⁹

Endnotes

¹ *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 143.

² See his, *White* (London, New York: Routledge Press, 1997), xiv.

³ See S. P. Huntington, *Who Are We?*----

⁴ One need only ponder the response to the Danish cartoons had they been penned by Ecuadorian or Congolese cartoonists. Similarly, one might ask why a godless China, e.g., is castigated neither as a great nor even as a non-great Satan.

⁵ See Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2 vols. (New York: Verso, 1994), 1: 1-51.

⁶ If the Prophet had invoked a “tribally blind” Islam, he would never have been able to avail himself of the *‘asabiyyah* (group solidarity) that conferred upon him the protection of his Uncle, Abû Tâlib, nor would he have been able to appeal to neighboring tribes, including those from Medina, for protection.

⁷ Note, for example, their ‘corrective’ responses to Mahmoud Abd al-Ra’ûf during his 1999 spat with the NBA over refusing to stand for the national anthem. Abd al-Ra’ûf was consistently depicted as a well-meaning convert who simply did not have an adequate understanding of Islam. For an epistemological insight common, however, to Blackamericans – and now increasingly immigrant Muslims -- one might consider the following: It is a rainy night outside metropolitan Anywhere, USA. One’s car breaks down, one does not have a cell-phone, and so one will have to knock on a suburban or semi-rural door for help. One comes upon two houses, one with a flag outside, the other without. Which house does one pick? Whenever I have posed this hypothetical to a Blackamerican audience, regardless of class, they have consistently chosen the house without the flag!

⁸ Imagine, in this context, what would happen if the U.S. government decided to sequester, even on terrorism charges, dozens of blacks in Guantanamo Bay without trial or charges for years. Quite simply, the collective American psyche would never tolerate this. Imagine, on the other hand, what would have happened to Majority Leader Trent Lott, had he said, “We should have never prorogued the National Origins Act (which opened up immigration from the Muslim world) and we would not be having some of the problems we are having.”

⁹ Presently, immigrant Muslims appear to engage in a rather strange contradiction: on the one hand they complain vociferously about racial profiling; on the other hand, they refuse to be seen as a race.

Islamophobia: Old Wine in New Bottles?

Dilwar Hussain

Introduction

This paper looks at the notion of Islamophobia in Europe, particularly in the British context. Islamophobia is a very complex subject, and a contested term, that appears to have elements of racial and cultural prejudice associated with it, but some argue that it is a distinct form of prejudice like anti-Semitism, racism or homophobia: a specific form of prejudice that targets Muslims not because of the colour of their skin or because of the cultural background of their land of origin, but because of their religious affiliation. This seems to be highlighted in testimonies of some converts to Islam who have faced prejudice after conversion, a factor which may indicate it has little to do with race or colour difference. However, critics of the term contest that it is inappropriate for a number of reasons including its unclear definition and the 'political' usage of the term to deflect what can be seen as legitimate criticism of Muslim behaviour.

Islamophobia

In the UK context, it was the Runnymede Trust that popularised the term 'Islamophobia' with the launch of its report in 1997, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all*. However, the Runnymede report has not been alone in pinpointing the direct and indirect discrimination that Muslims have argued that they face in British and European society. The issue was also highlighted by the University of Derby's *Project on Religious Discrimination* in 2000, commissioned by the UK Home Office, and a report by the University of Cambridge in 2001¹, published by the UK Home Office. The subject was raised by the Parekh Report on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* in October 2000, and a paper launched by the Psychology Department of Leicester University in 2002 also concluded that there have been increased experiences of discrimination against the British Muslim community after September 11th 2001. On a European level, The European Union Monitoring Centre (EUMC) on Racism and Xenophobia identified in a report² that there has been a significant rise in physical and verbal attacks on Muslims, as well as a heightened climate of discrimination, after 9/11. The EUMC, the Open Society Institute, the European Network Against Racism, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and more recently Organisation of Islamic Conference, have all continued to monitor and document the phenomenon of anti-Muslim prejudice, particularly over the last ten years.

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Since the launch of the Runnymede Trust's report there has been a growing debate around the concept of Islamophobia, literally meaning a fear of Islam, Muslims and matters pertaining to them. This debate has mainly revolved around the following points:

1. Whether Islamophobia is an inappropriate term. Professor Fred Halliday, for example, argued that the term 'anti-Muslimism' is more accurate³ because the fear or prejudice is directed towards people and not mainly the religion.

2. Another point is whether Islamophobia is a new phenomenon facing migrant Muslim communities in Europe – i.e. post-20th century migration, or whether it is a new name for a form of prejudice that has long existed?

3. A third point of discussion has been that Islamophobia cannot be distinguished from other types of prejudice such as xenophobia and cultural racism – therefore we cannot really talk of Islamophobia in any meaningful sense, as we can for example about 'racism' or 'anti-Semitism'.

4. Another point relates to Muslim prejudice and hostilities towards the West – is it possible to engage in a true discussion about stereotypes towards Islam and Muslims without addressing the flip-side of the coin? And how do we do that in a way that doesn't detract from the initial discussion of looking at anti-Muslim prejudice? Do power relationships matter in such a discussion?

5. Is the discourse on Islamophobia used to bolster identity politics and potentially develop a reified sense of Muslim identity in the West, even leading to greater alienation of communities?

6. And the final point I wish to raise here is related to how an emergent discourse on Islamophobia may hinder legitimate criticism of Islam or Muslim behaviour.

My purpose is not necessarily to answer these questions but to show that there is a debate occurring and there is need for discussion of these issues. Whatever the final answers – and no doubt different schools of thought will emerge – the important fact remains that the reporting of Islamophobic incidents over the last few years seems to be on the rise.

Over the last three decades (especially since the Iranian Revolution), there has been a heightened sense of awareness of the Muslim world and global political events. This, coupled with the migration and settlement of Muslim communities into Europe, has meant that those who are discerning could see and differentiate between different types of so-called 'threats'. One can therefore see that while the first generation of migrants to Britain faced abuse on the basis of their skin colour, their food or their clothing being different, the experience of second and third generation Muslims seems to be more varied. A number of cases are reported relating to specifically religious, or perceived religious, issues. Hence while graffiti outside a mosque may have once said "go home Pakis" it may now

read “go to Iraq” or a comment about bin Laden, or more specifically about a religious symbol like “Allah”. The pattern seems to be one of increased generalisation towards the more global and the thread used to generalise is Islam and the events occurring around the Muslim world.

The British National Party (BNP), a racist political party, organised an anti-Muslim campaign after 9/11 and even tried to forge alliances with Hindu and Sikh groups to create a common enemy – the Muslim community. There was very little support from those communities but the fact that the BNP was i) consciously putting aside its differences with other racial and religious groups to target the Muslim community and ii) able to do this perfectly legally shows that this prejudice is not simply an irrational fear but a well thought out and well planned initiative.

No doubt the term Islamophobia is not perfect, but then few such terms are. Take for example ‘racism’ – when the word racism was first used in English law it was left undefined due to the problems in finding an accurate way of encapsulating the word. Instead it was left to the discretion of judges to use the term as it seemed appropriate. The term ‘anti-Semitism’ poses a greater difficulty, for it is used to refer exclusively to anti-Jewish sentiment whereas in fact the Arabs are also a Semitic people and ironically, the term is often used to pinpoint Arab opinion about Jews. Halliday’s point about prejudice directed at people not the religion could be true in most cases, but one could argue that while prejudice against people may be the chief manifestation of Islamophobia it is also possible that the originator of the problem is specifically fear of the religion and/or values attributed to Islam itself, at least in some cases. This primary fear or prejudice then manifests itself as attacks or abuse mainly against people – however not just on people, but also on buildings, institutions, ideas and values. Some therefore argue that while the term Islamophobia has gained popular usage, it is better to keep it in circulation and perhaps build an intellectual framework behind it to incorporate appropriate definitions.

So is Islamophobia a new phenomenon, or a matter of ‘old wine in new bottles’? One can quite easily refer to anti-Muslim sentiment over the ages, whether this can fit into the current discourse is a complex question. Rather than look at Islamophobia as a constant, single thread working through history, which is difficult to prove, it may be more helpful to talk of ‘Islamophobias’ in the plural. It is likely that these phenomena have taken different forms and shapes at different points in history and in different locations, and also that they have performed slightly different functions. Yet the various Islamophobias seem to somehow borrow from each other, especially in terms of imagery and narrative. It may be relevant to mention here the well documented tensions that have built up between Europe and the Muslim world over their fourteen centuries of interac-

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tion⁴. This may partly be due to the historic presence of Muslims in Spain, Italy, France, Austria and other parts of southern Europe as a very visible 'Other', or during the crusades for example – a historic legacy has been built up that is characterised by suspicion, misinformation and often enmity. Some of the images of the Muslim 'Other' could be typified by the following examples:

- John of Damascus (675 – 749) stated that Muhammad was an impostor who wrote the Qur'an borrowing teachings from the Old and New Testament.
- Peter the Venerable (1094 – 1156) described the Prophet as a disciple of Satan. (Peter the Venerable charged Robert of Ketton with translating the Qur'an. The translation contained nine extra chapters!)
- The epic French poem, *La Chanson de Roland* (The Song of Roland) (c. 1100 CE) describes Muslims as pagan idolaters.
- Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321) in his *Divine Comedy* describes Muhammad and Ali (the cousin of Muhammad) being punished in Hell. The Prophet is in one of the most central circles, close to the devil himself.
- Voltaire (1694 -1778) in *Mohammed and Fanaticism*, charged Muslims with extremism, violence and fanaticism.
- Constantine de Volney (1757 – 1820) in his *Travels in Egypt and Syria*, wrote about the Qur'an: "...of all the absurd creations of the human mind none is more wretched than this book."

In addition to these examples a whole host of 'scholarly' and popular writings, oral narration, plays etc. helped to create a fixation with the Muslim Orient. The images created by this legacy continue to linger in the West, sometimes perhaps in the sub-conscious, even now in a time when academic approaches to Islam are becoming more objective. Edward Said in his seminal work on *Orientalism*, very powerfully critiqued the way in which the eastern (Arab/Muslim) 'Other' has been viewed through a Eurocentric lens. Such 'othering' of a civilization, culture or religion, could eventually lead to a highly problematised relationship, in which the inferior other is exoticized beyond acceptance, or dehumanized beyond (proper) existence.

One should also acknowledge that if Islamophobia is partly a result of centuries of interaction between Europe and the Muslim world, it also follows that there may be a parallel phenomenon which could be termed as 'Westophobia'. After all, it seems too coincidental that the words *Gharb* (West) and *Gharib* (strange, other) share the same linguistic roots! This discussion

deserves a paper of its own, but perhaps for our context here it is important to think of the power-relationships at play. It has often been argued by theoreticians and activists of the anti-racism movement that prejudicial views of black people held by white people are more pernicious in their effect than views held vice-versa primarily due to the impact of the power differential between the two groups. This of course does not detract from the moral indignation that can and should be levelled towards any form of prejudice.

Fear of the discourse of Islamophobia being used to feed into identity politics, or deflect criticism of Islam or Muslims, can have some foundations. But it should also be considered that such debates also occur within discourses of racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism. It is not an exclusive concern vis-à-vis Islamophobia. In the current political climate there is a live debate about the nature of anti-Semitism and whether criticism of Israel constitutes an anti-Semitic gesture. There must be room, in a free society, for people to criticise what is considered to be unjust or inappropriate actions whether this is about the behaviour of people who happen to be Muslims or Jews.

Tackling Islamophobia and Raising Awareness

Throughout the ten chapters of the final, 69-page report of the Runnymede Trust Report, a cogent argument was made for the recognition of Islamophobia in British society and legislation to prevent it. The document started by looking at the history of the Muslim presence in Britain and examined the problems and challenges Muslims currently face there. It emphasised that Muslims are not a single monolithic block, but are a very diverse group. It also showed that the presence of Islamophobic attitudes can create disruption and disorder not only for Muslim communities but also for the whole society. The role of the media in reinforcing Islamophobia was addressed, as well as the responsibility of journalists in reporting matters accurately and sensitively. The report ended with a list of 60 recommendations to various public and private bodies in order to combat the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

Among these recommendations:

1. Review equal opportunities policy in employment, service delivery and public consultation, and ensure that these refer explicitly to religion as well as to ethnicity, race and culture.

14. Make discrimination on religious grounds unlawful.

17. Amend the Public Order Act 1986 to make incitement to religious hatred unlawful.

18. Review legislation on blasphemy...

27. Scrutinise measures and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and

inequality, for example through the Social Exclusion Unit and the Single Regeneration Budget, with regard to their impact on Muslim communities.

55. (To Press Complaints Commission) Review the wording of its code of practice, and consider modifying and strengthening the statement about avoiding racial and religious discrimination.

A key issue in this report and also noticeable from the lobbying efforts of Muslim organisations has been legislative reform, and how this can protect Muslims. Challenging Islamophobia has at least four dimensions: one is to educate, inform and remove misunderstanding and stereotypes so that fewer people would engage in subconscious anti-Muslim prejudice. A second dimension is to influence political opinion so that a climate can be created that is conducive to change at the institutional level. Thirdly, for Muslims themselves to integrate more fully into European society and develop a sense of being European Muslims, as accommodation has to occur in both directions. The fourth dimension is legislative action. In this paper I will not address the third dimension as it would broaden the nature of this discussion too wide. While all of these dimensions have taxed Muslim thought in recent years, the issue of legislative reform has been a primary pursuit for Muslim activists in Britain for over ten years, the argument often presented in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. who famously asserted that, "The law does not change the heart, but it does restrain the heartless". While this may not be a major issue in other parts of Europe, UK legislation has been remarkably lethargic in addressing religious discrimination comprehensively. In 1951 Britain ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, but this was only incorporated into English Law in 1998 with the Human Rights Act, which took effect in 2000. This is not a free standing piece of legislation and also is limited in that it applies to public authorities only. In 2000 The European Council's Employment Directive was introduced forcing the Governments to introduce legislation no later than December 2003 outlawing religious discrimination in the fields of employment and occupation. The Anti-Terrorism, Crime & Security Act 2001 extended the remit of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998⁵ to cover religiously motivated attacks on individuals or property. Some of the points raised by the Runnymede Trust Report seem to have been taken up (even if not directly due to the report), though the debate continues – for example, currently the idea of extending positive duty for tackling discrimination from race to cover religion and belief is under consideration. This would create an onus on institutions to proactively tackle discrimination. Part of the endeavour in the UK has been to harmonise laws covering racial minorities with those covering religious minorities. Any society has the right to demand the loyalty of all its citizens, but for this to have full moral effect citizens need to feel that they stand equal before the law and are afforded the same rights and privileges across the board. For this reason, any

possible anomalies in the legislative framework, which create an unequal playing field need to be ironed out.

Some 15-20 million Muslims now live in Western Europe alone, for most of whom Europe is home. One key difference between Muslims in Europe and the US in their socio-economic status. The first generation who migrated to the US were largely skilled workers or persons seeking education. The first generation settling in Europe came from rural parts of Asia, with low levels of literacy and education. This has created a stark difference between the two continents' Muslims – in the US, the average Muslim household income stands above the national average, while in Europe it is still significantly lower. This naturally has a knock on effect in employment, education and even crime and delinquency. For example, Muslims currently account for 10% of the UK prison population while they comprise 2.7% of the country. The figures are thought to be even worse in France. But the situation that confronts Muslims in Europe is far from one of doom and gloom. What are often ignored are the many points of interface in history between Islam and Europe where positive relations have developed. Both the Muslim World and Western World have learnt from one another and have influenced each other. In the rapidly changing world today, it is no longer a simple debate of Muslims *and* the West. Muslims are now a part of the West.

A number of important initiatives have been created in an attempt to tackle Islamophobia. Events such as Islam awareness weeks in communities and on campus, training courses and seminars to provide public education on Islam and printed materials and websites have all become commonplace. There are also specialist organisations such as FAIR (the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism)⁶ which was established in 2001 as an attempt to develop a specialist advocacy institution to address Islamophobia. It borrowed some of the practices of the US based, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). FAIR seeks to pursue the following aims:⁷

- To raise awareness of and combat Islamophobia through constructive and proactive educational means. To project a more balanced image of Islam, as practiced by the vast majority of British Muslims.
- To monitor and identify specific incidences of Islamophobia and issues affecting Muslim sensitivities and deal with them by appropriate case-specific means.
- To monitor and identify specific incidences of Islamophobic discrimination, harassment and violence and deal with them by appropriate case-specific means. To work towards the elimination of religious discrimination at all levels and to promote equality of opportunity for all.
- To advise relevant agencies on tackling Institutional Islamophobia and

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Muslim-alienating trends in society. To campaign and lobby to highlight and critique unjust laws affecting the Muslim community in Britain. To monitor the way the regime of anti-discrimination law is working and recommend improvements.

- To encourage good relationships between people and communities of different religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Conclusion

Such examples show that some considerable effort is being spent in tackling the prejudice that Muslims feel they face. Islamophobia is a very complex subject that has elements of racial and cultural prejudice associated with it, but it seems to be a distinct form of prejudice like anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia or other such notions, and evidence shows that it touches the lives of a significant number of people. Despite the complexity in dealing with this matter, some important strides have been made in the arena of influencing political opinion, formulating policy recommendations, educating people and raising awareness about Muslims' way of life. Racial discrimination was categorically addressed by the Race Relations Act 1976 which also led to the formation of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) which was able to offer advice, guidance, assist with cases and generally support those who were discriminated on racial grounds. The successor to the CRE, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) launched in 2007 has a 'religion and belief' dimension to its activities, the first such institution to do so.

It seems that part of the challenge in dealing with Islamophobia is that it raises uncomfortable debates on the notions of public visibility of religion and the role of religion in public life. In this debate Muslims must learn to be sensitive to the history of Europe and the West and be aware of the reasons for the rise of secular humanism. Yet at the same time secular Europeans need to acknowledge that many people, not just Muslims, feel passionate about their faith and in some cases could use it as a primary marker of their identity. Furthermore, the influence of global events, the rise of prejudice against religious minorities, the search for identity in an age of uncertainty along with a surge in identity politics are likely to heighten this sense of faith identity.

The debate on Islamophobia seems to have taken a new turn after 9/11 and in the UK after 7/7. The public backlash against Muslims could have been worse, but has been serious enough as documented in numerous reports. Furthermore a worrying factor has been the gradual lowering of the threshold of acceptability of criticism and a general lowering of the tone of debate when it comes to public discourse on Islam. The BNP's attacks of Islam and Muslims indicate this, but even

in more mainstream sections of society there are very worrying signs – the reactions to the Archbishop of Canterbury’s speech on Sharia show how much of a moral panic can be generated by certain words associated with Islam. The media is often described as tending to be sensationalist by nature, but even some politicians have entered the fray with comments that could not always be made about other communities. It seems that power relationships do matter, with the Muslim community being seen as a soft target. But in order to tackle this, Muslims must move beyond an entrenchment into victimhood. Rather than feeling alienated or disenfranchised further, it is only by being confident and active citizens who are prepared to struggle against discrimination, just as Irish, Jewish and Black communities before, that change can come. And it will.

Endnotes

¹ Bob Hepple and Tufyal Choudhury (2001), *Tackling Religious Discrimination: practical implications for policymakers and legislators*.

² Jorgen Nielsen and Christopher Allen (2001), *Anti-Islamic reactions within the European Union after the recent acts of terror against the USA*, European Monitoring Centre on Racism And Xenophobia.

³ Fred Halliday (1999), “‘Islamophobia’ reconsidered” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Volume 22 Number 5 September. Pp. 892–902.

⁴ See for example: Norman Daniels (1997), *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image*. Oxford: Oneworld Books, and Edward Said (1978), *Orientalism*, London: Routledge.

⁵ The original act only covered racially aggravated offences.

⁶ See: www.fairuk.org

⁷ Cited from the FAIR website.

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Gabriel Greenberg, originally from Boston, attended Wesleyan University in Connecticut, graduating with an honors in history. While working on Islamophobia, he moved to Israel, where he has been studying Judaism, as well as working for an organization that promotes co-existence in the Middle East. Gabriel is beginning rabbinical school in the fall of '08.

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