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# Islam in Europe

*Case Studies, Comparisons  
& Overviews*

Editors:  
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# Islam in Europe

## *Case Studies, Comparisons & Overviews*

Cover: Muslims praying on Westminster Bridge, London, 1989  
*(Getty Images)*

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## CONTENTS

Foreword 5

Introduction 7

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### Part I: *Case Studies*

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Elements of Germany's New "Islampolitik" 13  
*Andreas Jacobs and Maria Elisabeth Rotter*

Multiculturalism, Identity Politics and the Rise of  
Radical Islam in Britain 19  
*Kenan Malik*

Coexistence of Religions:  
BiH a Model for Europe? 25  
*Bernd Papenkort*

"Jihadism" as an Obstacle to Integration 33  
*Dave Rich*

Islam in Berber Translation: Laïcité, and Amazigh  
Activism, and the Politics of Pluralism in France 39  
*Paul A. Silverstein*

Why Concepts of Multiculturalism and  
Assimilation Have Failed in Germany 49  
*Wahied Wahdat-Hagh*

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### Part II: *Comparisons and Overviews*

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Europe Caught between Denials and Illusions 57  
*Bat Ye'or*

European Views of the Middle East: Perception, Prejudice, Projection <i>John Bunzl</i>	65
Unifying Islam in Europe: A Comparison of the French and German Approaches to Their Muslim Minorities <i>Albrecht Fuess</i>	73
Lafif Lakhdar: A European Muslim Reformist <i>Menahem Milson</i>	85
On Radical Islam in Europe: Aspects of Conflict, Attempts at Accord <i>Amikam Nachmani</i>	103
De-Mythifying Islam: A Novel Hermeneutical Approach to the Relations between the Three Religious Traditions of Europe <i>Angelika Neuwirth</i>	119
A Negotiating Minority within Minorities: West African Muslims in France and the United States <i>Monika Salzbrunn</i>	133
Contributors	161

# Foreword

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This publication is the outcome of a conference organized jointly by the Helmut Kohl Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University and by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in December 2006.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is a political foundation that operates in Germany and about one hundred countries worldwide to promote democracy, freedom and social market economy.

The heritage of Konrad Adenauer is not only his efforts to establish a strong democracy and a social market economy in Germany, but also his conviction that Germany had an ongoing moral and political obligation towards the State of Israel. Furthermore, he was one of the architects of the European Union, i.e. the economic, but also the political integration of the European states in order to overcome centuries of hostilities and wars.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Jerusalem is not only continuously promoting religious tolerance and human rights, but also consistently provides a platform for discussions on Israel-Europe relations, the place of religion in the modern world and the intertwined relations between ethnic and religious minorities.

It is thus only natural that the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Helmut Kohl Institute should join hands in addressing the topic of “Islam in Europe” and presenting the academic and public audience with an in-depth analysis of this burning issue.

As organizers we encourage open discussion about this issue – we know that many aspects of this discussion are quite controversial. The very different opinions expressed in the conference as well as the content of the contributions to this publication are not necessarily shared by the organizers – in fact, the responsibility lies solely with the authors.

The organizers wish to thank Professors Reuven Amitai and Amikam Nachmani for editing the volume and Pnina Arad for organizing its publication.

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# Introduction

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Since the Second World War (WWII) there has been an increasing Muslim presence in several countries in Europe, fueled, to a large degree, by both the need for labor and the process of decolonization. These Muslim communities, found notably in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium (but small – and growing – communities are present elsewhere), vary in their composition, internal dynamics, cohesiveness, and integration into their host societies. It is difficult, therefore, to speak of “Islam in Europe” as a monolithic entity, and preferable to use terms such as “Muslims in Europe” or “Muslim communities in Europe”.

That being said, some observers, including scholars, discern common features across the various communities in different countries, among which is a certain failure to integrate into the larger society, perhaps caused *inter alia* by a refusal of many Muslims to desire integration, together with a growing radicalism and even an increased support for terrorism. Even those scholars looking for a more nuanced approach share many of these apprehensions. However, this latter group of observers also tend to see part of the problem of the lack of success at integration in the attitudes and actions (or lack thereof) of host societies.

Yet, some might counter that it was the attempts at providing cultural autonomy, inspired by a belief in multicultural relativism that actually strengthened the anti-assimilationist and radical tendencies among Muslims. Nevertheless, even rigidly non-multicultural France has not succeeded in integrating the children of its mainly North African Muslim communities. A case can be made that ongoing discrimination towards members of these communities has significantly contributed to the alienation evident between Muslims and French society, and perhaps provided fertile ground upon which radical Islam has grown.

Some observers have argued that there is an all but irresistible process of Islamization in Europe, abetted unknowingly or otherwise by a policy of

appeasement and multiculturalism. This apocalyptic view has been expressed most forcefully in the writings of the Swiss author Bat Ye'or; the title of her book, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, being an inspiration for part of the name of the conference described below, papers of which are collected in this volume. Yet many students of Islam in Europe do not share this pessimistic view, suggesting that reality is more complex and the future is not so bleak. Without denying disquieting and negative ideas and actions among Muslims in Europe, these scholars and others remind us of the relatively small proportion of Muslims within the general population, the positive contributions of most Muslims to the economy of Europe and its societies, and many examples of integration. Certainly, Islamophobia and Europhobia are not the entire picture. Without turning a blind eye to real problems, these observers caution against apocalyptic visions of Europe's future and wholesale xenophobic attitudes. It should be mentioned, however, that not all are convinced by this somewhat optimistic analysis.

Europe and its Muslim minorities is a central issue discussed both in Europe and outside it. The readiness of the Continent to coexist with its Muslim communities, to include them in its culture and wealth, to try to Europeanize them (or alternatively, to permit them to preserve their own cultures and languages) are issues that are repeatedly raised. At the same time, the ability and desire of the immigrants to change and to adapt themselves to European standards and to Western culture is frequently questioned. Europe has never been too tolerant towards immigrants and a case could be made that it has a long history of antipathy to the non-European "Other". At the same time, the immigrant Muslims do not come from societies characterized by multiculturalism and religious and cultural pluralism, let alone a tradition of democratic toleration. There is therefore plenty of room for intercultural misunderstanding and tension even without matters of post-colonial memories and guilt, poverty and discrimination, on the one hand, and radical and uncompromising religion, lack of education and skills, and an unwillingness to leave the old country behind in order to assimilate to the new, on the other.

The contemporary general antipathy in western and northern Europe towards religion, the relatively marginal status and small influence of organized faith, along with a recent, sharp decline in the power of secular ideological zeal, have led some to observe (vide the Vatican – and others, not only from the Church – on the subject) that secular Europe is morally unarmed when it faces the energetic Muslim religion. The possible inclusion of Turkey in the European Union – one of every four Europeans, perhaps three, would then be a Muslim (and, according to some, non-European) – further accentuates Europe's difficulties in dealing with its Muslim immigrants. Thus, the presence of Muslim communities in Europe, and the aspects and problems associated with it, has become an emotive and politically charged issue. The attacks by

radical Muslims in various European countries have highlighted the existence of a deep cultural contrast between Muslims and their host countries.

However, Islam can mean different things to diverse individuals and groups, in disparate countries. Muslims in Europe do not represent one united group nor one “Islamic Nation”. There is no “monolithic culture” in Muslim countries; there is diversity of Muslim communities, often within a single country, and there is diversity in their individual interactions with European countries. A clear distinction should be made between the small, yet dangerous, radical Muslim minority and between the vast numbers of secular or even practicing Muslims who subscribe neither to the theology nor politics of the radicals. Likewise, as mentioned above, individual European countries have their own policies for dealing with Muslim immigrants and on the whole there is no consensus in Europe on how to deal with the influx of immigrants from Muslim countries and policies to tackle the political, social, religious and economic problems associated with their absorption.

Although, in recent years, attention has mainly focused on post-WWII developments, we should not forget that Muslims have been in Europe since the early eighth century CE, in Spain following the Arab conquest, and in the subsequent centuries in Sicily and southern Italy. The fourteenth century, in the aftermath of Ottoman advances, saw the first Muslim presence in the Balkans, and until this day large Muslim populations are found in this part of Europe. Throughout the centuries there has been almost continuous interaction between Muslims from the southern and eastern Mediterranean and Christians from Europe. Although much of this contact has been of a military nature (Crusades from the West, and Muslim raids and invasions into Europe), there was also a great deal of trade and cultural communication. The advent of modern colonialism brought further contact, usually not on equal terms, but led to a Muslim presence in many European countries, laying the groundwork for a much more massive influx in the second half of the twentieth century.

On 10-11 December 2006, the European Forum in cooperation with the Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University, and with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, held an international conference on “Islam in Europe: Eurabia or European Islam”. The organizers attempted to steer a middle course between polemics and apologetics, while permitting and encouraging a broad range of views that reflect the different opinions among scholars, other observers and the wider public. Some of the European participants expressed surprise at the degree of interest of Israelis in the question of Islam in Europe. This, however, should not astonish our European colleagues, not least given the number of Israelis of European origin. More fundamentally, here in Israel we – students of modern Europe and Islamic studies – have realized that this is a significant and interesting subject, which lacks much research. Perhaps some of our colleagues, moreover, were

surprised that the tables had been turned: not only do Europeans study the Middle East, but people from this region look at Europe – including the role of Muslims communities in it – as a legitimate and important subject of inquiry.

At the conference a wide range of views were presented, and many of these are expressed in the papers collected in the present volume. It should be clear that not all of them represent the opinions of the editors, but we felt that an open and honest exchange of ideas is the best way to advance the study of Islam in Europe in the past, today and in the future. It is our hope that these papers will stimulate discussion in Israel, Europe and elsewhere about the Muslim communities in Europe, and contribute to a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to this subject.

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Part I

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*Case Studies*

# Elements of Germany's New "Islampolitik"

*Andreas Jacobs and Maria Elisabeth Rotter*

To identify elements of an explicitly new approach to Islam, one has to look back at past policy as well. Until the 1990s, two assumptions about Muslim immigration in Germany prevailed: either they would return to their country of origin (re-migration) or they would become "just like us" (assimilation). Both proved to be wrong: in fact many Muslim immigrants decided to stay and decided to stay different – at least to some extent. Therefore, German politics today faces the challenge of managing religious and cultural diversity based on constitutional provisions and the rule of law.

To accept Islam as part of Germany's "present and future", as German secretary of the interior Wolfgang Schäuble pointed out in a government policy statement in September 2006, has become a first step in taking up this challenge. Although it is too early to speak of a coherent approach, i.e. a conceptualized "Islampolitik", there are some new policy initiatives which may lead towards something like a "naturalization of Islam" (*Einbürgerung des Islam*) in Germany one day. To underline this argument, this paper describes three categories of current policy-making. To understand their significance for dealing with German Muslims, however, we will first sketch the structural set-up in Germany concerning the relationship between the state and religious groups in general, and Muslim organizations in particular.

## Religion and State in Germany

Germany, as many other states within the Western Hemisphere, is a secular state. Its understanding of "secularism", however, differs to some extent from that in Britain, France or the United States. In the German context, the term secularism describes a relationship of "respectful non-identification" by the federal state with religious groups. In other words, the state is neutral but open to formalized cooperation with religious communities. In fact, as a result of a long historical process there is a finely woven network of state-church relations in Germany today. This system of a "limping division" (*hinkende Trennung*) manifests itself in a specific legal status that the different churches and the Jewish community enjoy. Under German public law they are treated

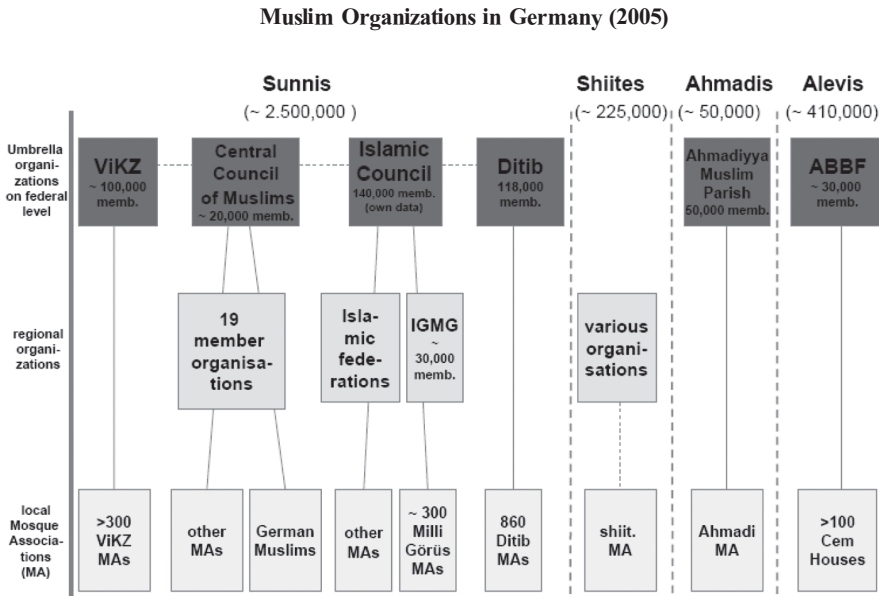
as public corporations (*Körperschaften öffentlichen Rechts*) which has quite substantial consequences for crucial issues such as political involvement, taxation and religious education.

This specific legal setting in Germany therefore raises the question of how Islamic religious communities can be integrated into a historically developed pattern of state-church relationship. This is rather difficult to accomplish because Muslim religious organizations do not relate to the German understanding of a “public corporation”. In fact, it is hard to precisely define representatives of Islam in Germany, even if focusing only on so-called “organized Islam”.

## Organized Islam in Germany

As the chart below indicates, there are three rather obvious problems concerning Muslim organizations in Germany:

**1. Low level of representation.** With a membership rate of fewer than 500,000 members out of around 3.2 million Muslims in Germany, Muslim organizations represent only 10-20 percent of German Muslims. Consequently, even the General German Automobile Association (ADAC) may have more Muslim members than all Muslim organizations in Germany combined.



source:bpb/Remid

**2. High level of heterogeneity.** As Islam in principle is not hierarchically structured like, for example, the Catholic Church, there are more than seventy Muslim associations, and 2,500 mosques in Germany. Additionally, most of the associations are concentrated in inner-city districts and former industrial suburbs of larger cities. Given this local concentration and multitude of organizations, a keen competition can be observed. This struggle for power and influence between Muslim associations themselves further complicates contacts between organized Islam and state representatives.

**3. Clear ideological or political bias.** Muslim organizations with voluntary membership principally attract active and politically interested Muslims. Organized Islam in Germany is hence influenced by conservative, orthodox and politically charged ideas. The average un-political Muslim, that is the vast majority of Germans with a Muslim background, has no representation.

Given these constraints, it becomes clear that there is no legitimate representation of the Muslim community in Germany. Although the major four Muslim organizations have repeatedly announced the aim of establishing a common umbrella organization, even the intended association will not give a voice to the majority of Muslims as it will not include either Shiites or Alevis.

Hence from a political point of view, the question is how state and society respond to this situation. Out of several policy initiatives, three areas seem to be of particular importance.

## German Islam Conference

One example of a state initiative to address this situation is the German Islam Conference established by the Ministry of the Interior in September 2006. It represents an attempt to find and maintain a careful balance in the triangular relationship between society, Muslim communities and the state. Its institutionalized communication process is intended as a dialogue between the state and its citizens not between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Participants in this work-in-progress have been chosen on the basis of a complex formula to include and also to balance Muslim organizations. Therefore in the plenum, which meets twice a year, one-third of the participants are from Muslim organizations and two-thirds are so-called “independent” Muslims. In addition, four working groups with twenty participants each have been formed on “common values”, “legal rights”, “media and economics” and “security”. The working-group meetings, which take place six times a year, are private and confidential. Participants in these groups are invited as individuals and not as representatives of their respective institutions and may make recommendations to the plenum on their respective issues.

The establishment of the German Islam Conference has certainly helped political recognition of Islam in Germany by including a broad representation of the Muslim community. On the other hand, this inclusion of a wide range of voices – among them non-Muslims and critics of traditional Islam – has provoked criticism as well. Moreover, defining goals and competencies of the complex and ambitious endeavour of the German Islam Conference is still a work-in-progress.

## Islamic Religious Education

Another policy in the making is the establishment of state-financed religious education for Muslim children at German public schools on the basis of the constitutional provision for religious instruction in Article 7 of German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). What had been self-evident for Christian religious instruction from the first days of the Federal Republic of Germany, had in the case of Muslim religious instruction been suffering from a lack of established partners due to the heterogeneity of Islam.

First steps towards Islamic religious education in Germany had been taken by establishing so-called “consulate tuition” for Turkish guest workers in the 1970s and 1980s. That program, which is still run by DITIB on behalf of the Turkish consulate, was part of additional instruction of Turkish children in their native language. The new approach, however, introduces German as the language of instruction, an explicit curriculum and German teachers. Concerning the curriculum, two competing concepts are under discussion. Islamic Studies, on the one hand, would imply a non-faith based teaching of knowledge on Islam. Islamic Religious Instruction, on the other hand, is a faith-based program. By now, different local models have been tested in several federal states.

All approaches offer an alternative to traditional Koran schools and take Islamic religious instruction from backyards into the public sphere. Moreover, the high acceptance among parents of this new form of Islamic religious education is encouraging.

## Security Cooperation

Security cooperation between German state institutions and Muslim organizations was initiated by the Central Council of Muslims in July 2005 in reaction to the London bombings. It aims at the following key areas: crisis management, terror prevention, control of charity activities and incitement. This cooperation is maintained and fostered by working-group meetings entitled “Confidence-Building Measures” on both the federal and state levels. Participants in these meetings include police and intelligence authorities and

representatives of the Central Council of Muslims as well as DITIB. Further activities include training seminars in both mosques and police academies, local liaison imams and local liaison police officers who act as contact persons between the Muslim community and safety authorities, an Arabic/Turkish hotline and several other common actions. A model project on “Transfer of intercultural competencies”, for example, summarized the outcomes and conclusions of local dialogue initiatives and distributed thirteen thousand brochures on the topic to police stations.

The abovementioned measures have certainly promoted confidence building and interreligious tactfulness. The limited participation of only some Muslim organizations, however, has raised criticism of this program for working mainly *on* not *with* German Muslims. In addition, activities such as hotlines and control of local mosques have brought the project under suspicion of promoting a whistleblower mentality among Muslims.

## Conclusions

As this brief overview shows, Islam has hit home in Germany. New initiatives address questions concerning German Muslims in a variety of policy areas from religious education to terror prevention. Yet the unsettled legal status and the heterogeneity of Muslim organizations in Germany remain a challenge to a coherent “Islampolitik”. Future tasks for German policy-makers will be to solve the problem of representation of Muslims within the framework of German church-state law (*Staatskirchenrecht*) and provide further infrastructure to train German imams and Islamic religious instructors. Furthermore, an atmosphere that fosters active political and societal engagement of empowered Muslim citizens needs to be created. The establishment of the German Islam Conference and other recent initiatives signaled to the German people that the governing Grand Coalition has taken up this challenge. These are first attempts to provide the necessary infrastructure for Muslims in Germany to eventually become German Muslims.

# Multiculturalism, Identity Politics and the Rise of Radical Islam in Britain

*Kenan Malik*

It was February 1988. I was in Bradford, a few weeks after the demonstration in which a copy of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* had been burnt. I had gone there to interview Sher Azam, president of the Bradford Council of Mosques, and the man who had torched the book. Waiting to see him, I heard the familiar voice of Hassan, a friend from London whom I had not seen for a couple of years. "What are you doing here?" I asked him. He was here, he told me, to help silence Rushdie. And then he laughed when he saw the look on my face. "No need to look so shocked", he said. "I've had it with the white Left. I'd lost my sense of who I am and where I came from. So I came back to Bradford to rediscover it. We need to defend our dignity as Muslims, to defend our values and beliefs, and not allow anyone – racist or Rushdie – to trample over them".

The Hassan I knew in London had been a member of the Socialist Workers Party. Apart from Trotskyism his other indulgences were sex, Southern Comfort and watching Arsenal FC. We had marched together, chucked bricks together at neo-fascist marches, been arrested together. I had never detected a religious bone in his body. But here he was in Bradford, up in arms about blasphemy, encouraging the burning of books and ostensibly ready to kill Rushdie if necessary.

I tell this story for two reasons. First, because the debate about the rise of radical Islam generally focuses on the question "What is it about Islam that gives rise to such ideas". I want to suggest that we need to look not so much at Islam itself as at its social context, and not just at the issues that are usually taken to be important in defining this context, such as Western foreign policy, but rather at the way that the West's own self-image has transformed in recent years. The problems we need to address are not peculiar to Islam. Rather, radical Islam expresses in a particularly perverse way themes that have gained purchase in wider society too.

I also tell this story because Hassan embodied a transformation that has taken place within Muslim communities, and indeed, in wider society, too,

and I wish tell the story of that transformation. Muslims have been in Britain in large numbers since the 1950s. While their faith was important to them (and while the mosque played an important welfare role in communities that often were under siege from racism), few identified themselves primarily in terms of Islam. They thought of themselves (and were seen by others) as Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Kashmiris, Sylhettis and so on. In part this was because of the strength of secularism in those communities. Part of what defined the struggle of Bangladesh against Pakistan, for instance, was the greater sense of secular identity that Bengalis felt, and this was reflected within Bangladeshi communities in Britain too.

Today, “radical” in the Islamic context usually means fundamentalist in a religious sense. Twenty years ago it meant almost the very opposite. Radical referred to secularist movements within Muslim communities. Prominent among these in Britain was the Asian Youth Movement, which I will discuss later. Part of the explanation for the rise of what we now call radical Islam is the story of the expunging of such secularist traditions and organizations.

Hassan embodied this mutation from left-wing activist to Islamic militant. And he was not alone. A surprising number of the anti-Rushdie demonstrators in 1989 were young. Few were religious, let alone fundamentalist. Many did not attend mosque, only a handful could recite the Koran and most flouted traditional Muslim taboos on sex and drink. They felt resentful about the treatment of Muslims, disenchanted by left-wing politics and were looking for new ways of expressing their disaffection. While many began as secularists, they formed the pool of malcontents into which radical Islamic organizations dipped. In the two decades since the Rushdie affair, the collapse of the secular traditions has created a political void which radical Islam has been only too glad to fill. What has changed has not simply been a shift within Muslim communities from more secular to more faith-based notions of identity. Rather, the very meaning of identity has also been transformed. I will return to this later, but what is worth pointing out here is that thirty years ago identity in the sense of the narrow parochial meaning of the word today had far less purchase.

One of the myths of multiculturalism is that Britain has become a multicultural nation because minorities demanded that their differences be recognized. It hasn't and they didn't. Historically the question of cultural differences has preoccupied the political elite far more than it has Muslim, or other black or Asian communities in Britain. Only over the past twenty years has it become a major issue outside of elite circles. Multicultural policies were largely imposed from the top, but they have helped shape popular views and responses to the question of cultural differences.

There are three strands to this story that I want to discuss. The first is the transformation of black and Asian struggles in Britain from predominantly

political to predominantly cultural. The second is the role of multicultural policies, at both the national and local level, in facilitating this shift. Finally, I want to look at the impact of identity politics in entrenching a cultural view of social differences. The confluence of these developments helped create a space for the growth of radical Islam in Britain. And while I will be dealing solely with Britain, it is not hard to see how the argument has wider relevance.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, four major issues dominated the struggle for political equality: opposition to discriminatory immigration controls; the fight against racist attacks; the struggle for workplace equality; and, most explosively, the issue of police brutality. These struggles politicized a new generation of black and Asian activists and came to an explosive climax in the inner-city riots of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was against this background that the policies of multiculturalism emerged.

Local authorities in inner-city areas, led by the Greater London Council, pioneered a new strategy of making black and Asian communities feel part of British society by organizing consultation with local communities, formulating equal-opportunities policies, establishing race-relations units and dispensing millions of pounds in grants to community organizations. At the heart of the strategy was a redefinition of racism. Racism now meant not simply the denial of equal rights but the denial of the right to be different. Minorities, many argued, should not be forced to accept British values or to adopt a British identity. Rather, different peoples should have the right to express their identities, explore their own histories, formulate their own values, pursue their own lifestyles. In this process, the very meaning of equality was transformed: from possessing the same rights as everyone else to possessing different rights, appropriate to different communities. By the mid-1980s the political struggles that had dominated the fight against racism in the 1960s and 1970s had become transformed into battles over cultural issues. Political struggles unite across ethnic or cultural divisions; cultural struggles inevitably fragment. Since state funding was now linked to cultural identity, different groups began asserting their particular identities ever more fiercely. The shift from the political to the cultural arena helped entrench old divisions and create new ones.

The city of Bradford provides a very good example of how the institutionalization of multiculturalism helped redefine the relationship between Muslim communities and society at large. In April 1976, twenty-four people were arrested in pitched battles in the Manningham area of Bradford, as Asian youth confronted a National Front march and fought the police protecting it. It was seen as the bleeding of a new movement.

The following year the Asian Youth Movement was born – the most important radical movement within Asian communities of the past thirty years. AYM activists did not distinguish themselves as Muslim, Hindu or Sikh;

indeed many did not even see themselves as specifically Asian, preferring to call themselves “black” which they viewed as an all-inclusive term for non-white immigrants. They challenged not just racism but many traditional values as well, particularly within the Muslim community, helping establish an alternative leadership that confronted traditionalists on issues such as the role of women and the dominance of the mosque.

The AYM was at the heart of the largest conflict to engulf the city in the early 1980s, a conflict that had national reverberations – the trial of the Bradford Twelve in 1981. Twelve young Asians faced conspiracy charges for making petrol bombs to use against the National Front. They argued they were acting in self-defense – and won.

Faced with this growing militancy, the Bradford Council launched a program like that of the Greater London Council, drawing up equal-opportunity statements, establishing race- relations units and funding Asian organizations. A twelve-point race-relations plan declared that every section of the “multiracial, multicultural city” had “an equal right to maintain its own identity, culture, language, religion and customs”.

These multicultural policies helped transform the character of anti-racism. By the mid-1980s the focus of anti-racist protest in Bradford had shifted from political issues, such as policing and immigration, to religious and cultural issues: a demand for Muslim schools and for separate education for girls, a campaign for halal meat to be served at school, and, most explosively, the confrontation over the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. As noted, whereas political struggles unite, cultural struggles fragment, and with different groups more ardently asserting their particular identities, the shift from a political to a cultural focus helped foster a more tribal city. There had always been residential segregation between the black and white communities in Bradford, thanks to a combination of racism, and of a desire among Asians to find protection in numbers. But within Asian areas, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus lived cheek by jowl for much of the postwar period. In the 1980s, however, the three communities started dividing, living in different areas, attending different schools and organizing through different institutions.

All these developments had a devastating impact on secular movements, particularly within Muslim communities. Faith came to be seen as a key aspect of a community’s culture. Secular Muslims were regarded as betraying their culture (they belonged to the “white Left”) while radical Islam became not just more acceptable but, to many, more authentic. This process was strengthened by a new relationship between the local council and the local mosques. In 1981, the council helped set up and fund the Bradford Council of Mosques. By siphoning resources through the mosques, the council was able to strengthen the position of conservative religious leaders and to marginalize

secular radicals. As the secular tradition became squeezed out, the only place offering shelter for disaffected youth was militant Islam.

These developments were entrenched by another, related phenomenon in the 1980s to which I have already alluded – the rise of identity politics. The transformation in meaning of “radical” in the Muslim context was not something unique to Muslim communities but mirrored a broader transformation in radical politics, a transformation from a belief in secular universalism to the defense of ethnic particularism and group rights, or from the politics of ideology to the politics of identity. Or, to put it another way: where once radicalism meant the championing of Enlightenment rationalism and humanism as a means of transforming the world, now it more often meant decrying the Enlightenment as a Eurocentric project and worrying that social progress was undermining cultural authenticity. Many of the themes of radical Islam were prefigured here.

The roots of these ideas lay in the Romantic counter-Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were refashioned by radicals in the decades following the Second World War as a way of coming to terms with the trauma of Nazism and the Holocaust. Postwar radicals asked why it was that Germany, a nation with deep roots in the Enlightenment, should have succumbed so completely to Nazism. The answer seemed to be that it was the logic of Enlightenment rationalism itself that gave rise to such barbarism. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, founders of the Frankfurt school, put it in their seminal work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, “Enlightenment is totalitarian”.

“Testifying at the trial against barbarism”, the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut memorably observed, postwar intellectuals came to “identify the Enlightenment with the defense and not with the prosecution”. The roots of barbarism, many argued, lay in Western arrogance and the roots of Western arrogance lay in an unquestioning belief in the superiority of Enlightenment rationalism and universalism. Radicalism, therefore, came to be defined as treating all peoples and all cultures with equal respect, and seeing none as backward, primitive, irrational. Increasingly relativism, and an anti-Western nihilism, came to be a defining feature of postwar radicalism. These themes were at the heart of the New Left that emerged in the 1960s. Where the old Left looked to the working class as the agency of change, the New Left found new, surrogate proletariats in the so-called New Social Movements – Third World liberation movements, civil rights organizations, feminist groups, campaigns for gay rights, and the peace movement. Where the old Left talked of class and sought to raise class consciousness, the New Left talked of culture and sought to strengthen cultural identity. Culture was the defining feature of groups and the means by which one group differentiated itself from another. Every group, whether Cuban peasants, black Americans or women, had a specific culture,

rooted in its particular history and experiences. That culture gave shape to an individual's identity. For an individual identity to be authentic, collective identity must be too. That required the group to be true to its own culture, to pursue faithfully the traditions that mark out that culture as unique and rebuff the advances of modernity and of other cultures.

These ideas were deeply corrosive of political notions of identity and solidarity. The New Social Movements themselves had largely disintegrated by the late 1980s. But the belief that one defines oneself through one's differences, that such differences are cultural rather than political and that Enlightenment notions of universalism and humanism were a Eurocentric project, had already become deeply embedded in the political culture – or rather in the anti-political culture that had by then emerged. The development of multicultural policies on the one hand, and of identity politics on the other, helped shape the way that most social groups defined their relationship with other sections of society. It encouraged the development of a grievance culture – identity became increasingly defined in terms of the supposed harms done to a group – and of the claim that social justice requires that we treat not just the individual, nor even the group, but also that group's beliefs with equal respect.

But it was upon Muslim communities that these developments had the greatest impact. Multiculturalism created a space for radical Islam where none had existed before. Identity politics provided a language through which to define Muslim communities and beliefs in terms of difference from the rest of society. It also provided a language of anti-Western nihilism which radical Islam was only too happy to appropriate. The irony of the anti-Western, anti-modern message of many radical Islamic groups is that these ideas are as rooted in the so-called “Western tradition” as modernism itself. At the same time these developments helped create a political void into which radical Islam could step. Radical Islamic groups are able to appropriate the language of identity politics so as to promote a message of faux universalism as a seeming response to the social and political fragmentation to which identity politics is in part a response.

The rise of radical Islam in Britain, in other words, cannot be understood simply in terms internal to Islam, nor even in terms of the West's changing relationship to Islam and Islamic nations, but has to be understood more broadly in terms of the West's changing relationship to itself.

# Coexistence of Religions: BiH a Model for Europe?

*Bernd Papenkort*

## Setting the Scene: Aspects of BiH

### *“The Good Old Days”*

Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) as part of former Yugoslavia was the incarnation of a multi-ethnic society with a long history of peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Jews and other minorities. This harmony and multi-ethnicity made possible the hosting of the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, which left a deep impact among the inhabitants and in the world in general.

Because of its strategic location, throughout its history the country had seen the rule of different empires and powers. Starting with the Roman Empire in the first century BC, the country was conquered by the Ottomans in the fifteenth century (1463) and by the Austro-Hungarians in the nineteenth century (1878). It became part of Yugoslavia, which was created in 1918, and in 1941 came under the rule of Independent Croatia established by the Germans. Ustasas and Germans were fought by partisans and Chetniks, and eventually Josip Broz Tito established new Yugoslavia in 1945, of which BiH remained part until 1992 when it declared its independence.

From World War I onwards, the centuries-long peaceful coexistence started to unravel under the influence of political ideology. On 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Serb nationalist who was a member of Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia) – a movement dedicated to a Bosnia free of Hapsburg rule, which was a splinter group of the Serbian patriotic society Narodna Odbrana – assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. This event, which marked the beginning of World War I, yielded a figure who was cited as a national hero in history books influenced by Serb political ideology. Only in the 1990s, when this influence started to decline, did it become clear that he was nothing but a terrorist who was equipped with pistols and bombs by a Serbian terrorist organization known as the Black Hand.

This was one of the first examples of the political destruction of peace and stability, which began long before Milosevic. It ultimately resulted in a four-

year war in which Bosnia's three main ethnic groups turned on each other savagely despite decades of peaceful coexistence and intermarriage.

An important question is: what was the secret behind the peaceful coexistence in earlier times? What was the 'kit' that for many decades held societies in the old Bosnia and Herzegovina together?

## The Role of Religions in the Conflict, 1992-1995

The fighting that raged from 1992 to 1995 killed two hundred thousand people, made refugees of two million more and destroyed almost 60 percent of the country's infrastructure. War damages totaled more than \$60 billion, which is a magnitude of collapse not seen in Europe since World War II. Rape, torture and mass killings ended only with the U.S.-brokered 1995 Dayton peace accords.

A war destroys hearts, souls and minds besides all the physical devastation. This is not well known and often underestimated by politicians; it is frequently not realized by the military. Physical repair can be achieved relatively quickly, but souls, hearts and minds take decades to be healed. If one walks in the streets of Sarajevo today, one cannot believe that fighting which damaged 90 percent of the infrastructure had ever occurred there. But when one talks to its people, one immediately becomes aware of the wounds that the fighting left in their hearts, souls and minds. This is not only a lesson for politicians and the military, but must be in the minds of religious leaders as well, since they too have great influence over people.

However, the history of BiH tells a different story. When religious leaders link their interests with war activities, they tend to forget the above lesson. This is apparent from numerous examples in Bosnia. Thus, Serb paramilitary forces were baptized by Orthodox priests before they went to Bijeljina and Srebrenica where they killed thousands of Muslims. A recently discovered videotape showing priests baptizing "Red Scorpions" paramilitary forces before they committed atrocities against Muslims, which was broadcast on international channels, shocked the world while trials in The Hague are still proceeding. In the Muslim brigades, imams looked away when their soldiers committed atrocities in central and northern Bosnia in 1994-1995. Proof of this can also be found on videotapes which clearly show the killing of Serbs. The Franciscans, whom I met in 1995, fully supported the HVO (Croat army) which committed the crimes in Ahmici/BiH and killed over a hundred Muslims including women, children and elderly some of whom were burned alive. They destroyed all mosques and burned down the whole village.

When I came to BiH in late 1995, my impression was that the respective religions were backing the deeds of their clientele without any critical questioning. All the religions were deeply integrated in the respective political-

military frameworks and had become “part of the system”. Instead of staying neutral and leaving those issues to politicians and the military while searching for peace, reconciliation and tending to individuals, the religions had become tools of the respective political interests. It appears to be difficult for religious leaders in wartime to maintain a balance between alleviating the suffering of their own people and having the courage and wisdom to offer a broader view, which could provide hope for a common future with the enemy after the war. That is, it seems difficult for these religious leaders to realize that the time of war is not an end in itself but a passing phase of politics. In the case of BiH, none of the religions found this balance.

## The Challenge of Post-Conflict Reconstitution

When the guns are silent, the religions face the very complex tasks of repairing damaged souls, facilitating reconciliation, helping in reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure and smoothing the progress of nation building.

In the case of BiH, all the religions invested great efforts in building their own institutions and reconstructing their own infrastructure. After the war ended and the country started to rebuild its infrastructure, money poured in. Muslims received donations from Saudi Arabia and others, Roman Catholics from the West, and Orthodox from sources such as Serbia. Seemingly, a race between mosque and church building had begun. For example, the largest mosque in the Balkans was built in Sarajevo, and the highest church tower in Mostar. It is questionable whether all these facilities can be filled with faithful prayers. The large sums could much more effectively have been spent for social purposes. Even to spend them for building factories would have increased employment opportunities, in a reality of 40 percent unemployment, and in turn could have generated resources for independent building of religious shrines.

One could even say that the religions continued – albeit with different means – the fight which ended politically and militarily in Dayton in 1995. Moreover, religious leaders in BiH do not hesitate to interfere deeply in politics. The Roman Catholic Cardinal “speaks for Croats”, and recently questioned the legitimacy of the elections which were held under OSCE/EU supervision and posted Zeljko Komsic, a member of a non-national party and not one of the nationalistic hardliners, as a Croat representative in the presidency of BiH. The Reis, as head of the Muslim community, sits in the front row of a Muslim-party meeting and calls in daily newspapers for believers to vote in the elections for parties closely linked with him. The Orthodox Patriarch commits himself to Chetnik hardliner meetings of radical Serb parties.

There was great hope in BiH that a so-called Interreligious Council, which was established by the four major religious communities (Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox and Jews) in BiH in order to maintain dialogue and respect for

religious expression and belief, and to promote tolerance and coexistence, would become a platform to achieve peace through reconciliation. This council was supposed to:

- Facilitate regular meetings between the religious leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Strengthen relationships between the religious communities of BiH
- Clarify shared moral principles and advocate adherence to them
- Develop a process to promote interreligious activity for social reconstruction in BiH

However, the hope that the council would become a platform for reconciliation failed to materialize. Instead its members began to use it for manifold purposes but without any deep impact on public issues. As for why this happened, in all politics there is a saying which applies to religious leaders as well. It is harsh but contains much truth: “Those who were leaders in the war and played crucial roles, are very often incapable of designing and implementing the subsequent peace.”

In former Yugoslavia, after the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no change of leadership. The Tudjmans, Izetbegovics and Milosevics continued with their old networks and all saw themselves as winners. The same was unfortunately true for religious leaders. Too many of those who legitimized political and military actions during the war are still in the front ranks of national political parties. They seem to have difficulty placing forgiveness above hate, striving for cooperation with the former enemy and designing a new agenda of peace and reconciliation.

In light of these experiences, it may appear that BiH of 2006 is hardly a model for Europe. However, the BiH of the “good old days” could become a model and the results of the 2006 elections could indicate a change for the better. For the first time after the war ended, not a single member of nationalist parties representing the three major ethnic groups was elected as a presidency member. The question still remains: can the situation in BiH serve as a model for Europe? Is there still hope? Although clearly there is change, it is too early to make a final assessment.

## Lessons Learned in BiH

### ***Lesson 1:***

Religions are an anchor of continuity and stability for individuals amid the upheavals of politics.

BiH was always in the geostrategic glaxis between different empires and was always shaped by external powers, whether Turks, Austrians or others. Today, after the war period, the same situation has continued under the High Representative of the United Nations with numerous international organizations working on the ground in the country.

For the people of BiH, the situation has at all times been highly fluid. Politics, economy and culture have always had a deep impact on their living conditions. The only thing that has been not fluid and changing in times of high uncertainty, the only anchor that provides continuity, is the religion of the people, whether they believe in God, Allah or another power. In regard to basic principles of humanity all religions are equal; Judaism, Islam, Christianity or Hinduism all share these principles. Deep individual belief in the benign fundamentals of religions is still present in BiH today, and this, along with some other aspects, could provide the key to peaceful coexistence in the future.

On a more global level as well, religion remains highly influential. This is evident in the problems of the relationship between the West and Islam, and in the related political turmoil from the Israel/Palestine question to the situations in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The religions have always been part of the geopolitical scene whether they like it that way or not.

After Pope Benedict XVI's speech in Germany in late 2006, the response by Islamic religious leaders and their proposal for a new dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Islam is a promising sign. Also a very important indication is that Reis Ceric of BiH was one of the drafters of this letter. The Interreligious Council in BiH, though so far not very active, still has moral and symbolic weight and can be used as a starting point for such dialogue in BiH as well.

### ***Lesson 2:***

The path to reconciliation ultimately requires a turnaround in the political establishment and in the religious establishment.

Unfortunately, the deep wish of individuals for peace, reconciliation and stability is not reflected by the current political and, often, religious establishment in BiH. Many are too deeply anchored in their historical commitments and thus are not free to seek change.

Instead of only reconstituting their own religion, religious leaders should see the need for common understanding, leading to peaceful coexistence,

as a basic issue of the twenty-first century. This requires management and leadership, certainly on the political side and sometimes on the religious side, as well a “major turnaround” in business terminology.

***Lesson 3:***

The seeds of reconciliation must be planted by politics, but their fruits will emerge from efforts within the civil society.

The force of arms (NATO/EU) can be used to impose a peace of swords. But real healing in this divided country is still a distant prospect, hopefully not an illusion. It is not that one cannot imagine logical means to resolve the problems in BiH; but sometimes it seems that the required psychological and emotional framework does not currently exist.

An important point to bear in mind is that nobody can force forgiveness on those who have suffered most. The trauma inflicted by atrocities is deeper than anyone outside the conflict can imagine. Those who suffered need to prepare themselves to forgive, and those who committed wrongs need to recognize this and apologize. This may take time, as it is still early to put aside some of what happened during the war. Examples from similar historical events indicate that this could take somewhere from two to six decades.

In 1972 in Warsaw, German chancellor Willy Brandt knelt before a Polish Jewish genocide monument and apologized for the atrocities committed by his nation. This event was marked as a great, historic apology. It is not the sort of thing that happens often. Another dramatic gesture occurred in 1984 when French president François Mitterrand and German chancellor Helmut Kohl held hands and walked through the cemetery of Verdun, site of Franco-German battlefields. All these important symbolic gestures laid the groundwork for processes of reconciliation and the peaceful coexistence of nations.

Thus, politics at the highest level must provide the necessary framework to enter the path towards peace. Successful reconciliation, however, requires decentralization to all levels of public life. German-French rapprochement began with the symbolic handshake of de Gaulle and Adenauer before the cathedral in Cologne in 1954. Adenauer also negotiated a compensation agreement with Israel in recognition of the horrors perpetrated against the Jews by Hitler and Germany. His efforts towards conciliation and atonement helped give moral authority to the fledgling West German state. After such beginnings, the lower levels in politics, business and public life can develop their own initiatives. Between Germany and France, for example, a stable platform of cooperation was established which endures even when the two governments start quarreling again.

In BiH not many top politicians have this capability. The same applies, with few exceptions, to Serbia. Much is being done, however, at the grassroots level. And here my experience in BiH gives hope: when politics is ready for

such progress and does not interfere very much, citizens still have capabilities of forgiving and apologizing.

## Outlook

My experiences in BiH indicate that two short sentences are most important. Without them there can be no real progress towards reconciliation and no peaceful coexistence. These short sentences are: “I deeply regret”, and “I can forgive” – and they must come in that sequence.

The history of German-Israeli relations offers proof of this. After the Jews’ great suffering in World War II, the German nation needed to recognize the reality and ask for forgiveness. And I bow my head to those of your people who lost their loved ones and nevertheless were ready for reconciliation.

This is the only way forward to peace and harmony.

# “Jihadism” as an Obstacle to Integration

*Dave Rich*

The growth of radical Islamist activity in Europe poses two different, but related, challenges: the deadly danger of Islamist terrorism, as materialized in Madrid and London; and the more long-term problems of community cohesion and social division. The connections between the two are not always as obvious as they might appear. For example, it is too simplistic to say that radicalism leads to separatism, and separatism leads to terrorism, and recent evidence from Britain shows that Islamist terrorists are just as likely to come from mixed neighbourhoods as from segregated ones. On the other hand, there is a prophetic cycle of perceiving a connection between, for instance, the increasing number of British Muslim women who wear the veil, and the increasing number of British Muslim men involved in terrorism. Moreover, there is no doubt that terrorist activity, whether successful bombings or those foiled by the police, feeds suspicion of all Muslims and intensifies division between communities. But in some ways it is the more subtle connections between these parallel problems that have had a more profound impact on the relationships between European Muslim communities and their wider societies.

Jihad is of course a term with many different meanings and interpretations. For the present purposes, though, there are only two that are relevant. The first is the Islamist view of jihad as conflict, both violent and non-violent, between Muslims and non-Muslims, and as an external struggle to impose their ideology on others, rather than an internal, personal struggle for each individual Muslim. The second is the common misperception among non-Muslims in the West that jihad is an exclusively violent, militaristic activity.

The political leadership of the British Muslim community is dominated by Islamists who hold a romantic view of jihad as a noble struggle against oppression. This has consequences far beyond the British Muslims who have travelled to Bosnia, Kashmir or elsewhere to train and fight, and the small, but significant, number who have graduated to the global jihad, which they have then brought back to British shores. This attachment to jihad has shaped domestic Muslim political activism and provides the nexus by which violent jihadis and non-violent Islamists complement each other's work.

For British Muslims, the beginnings of “jihad consciousness”, and adherence to the ideology of “jihadism”, took root in the early 1990s, due to the confluence of several factors that generated deep feelings of insecurity. First, the Rushdie affair in the late 1980s focused and energized the previously disparate Muslim political activity in Britain: it was the moment when the community’s political leadership fell into the hands of Islamists, and when many British Muslims, shaken by the wider society’s hostility to their point of view, asserted “Muslim” as their primary identity. Second, the massacres of Muslims in Bosnia, and the reluctance of most Western governments to intervene on their behalf, had a profound impact. And third was a wave of racist violence in Britain from a strong and growing far Right, of which the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 was the best-known example.

The fourth ingredient in this mix was the gathering of jihadist exiles in Britain under what is now derisively known as the “Londonistan” policy. For a community that felt so insecure, so threatened, isolated from mainstream society and unsure of its basic identity, these exiles provided an attractive role model. Here were living examples of – according to their own propaganda – Muslim strength; Muslim unity; Muslim honour; and Muslims who fought back in defense of their communities, their families and their faith. Of course the reality of their jihadi activities in their own countries was often very different, but this reality was not the image portrayed on the propaganda videos, or in the inspiring accounts of jihad available in Muslim bookshops or at Islamist conferences and rallies.

The younger generation of Muslims lapped up this affirmation of contemporary Muslim strength. British Muslims started to travel to Bosnia to train and fight in the jihad, in a way they had not done previously to Afghanistan. Although their numbers were relatively small – a few thousand at most in the past ten to fifteen years – there was much wider political and emotional support for their activities, and their example provided an escapist fantasy for many young British Muslims. But this was not escapism from poverty or the drudgery of daily life. It was escapism from the collapse of both parts of their identity: their rejection by British society on the one hand; and the weakness of the Muslim world on the other. By contrast, the jihadists were fighting on behalf of a virtual ummah to which they were all welcome, and which offered a self-contained identity that would insulate them from that reality.

This growing interest in fighting foreign jihads obviously encouraged Muslims to think of themselves as part of the global ummah, rather than primarily British. This idea is actively promoted by Islamists: Azzam Tamimi, the most high-profile supporter of Hamas in Britain, told a Muslim conference in Manchester earlier this year: “I don’t ever believe that there is something

called European Muslims. We are Muslims in Europe not European Muslims. We have an identity, we have our *aqidah* [creed] we have a *shariah* and we have an *ummah* that we are proud of”.<sup>1</sup>

Of course this model of one *ummah*, where if any part of it is attacked then all Muslims should feel the pain and rally to its defence, has a reverse effect: that all Muslims are equally vulnerable, and the jihadists in Bosnia, Algeria or Palestine are also fighting to defend British Muslims.

This also undermines the idea that Muslims need to engage with the institutions and procedures of secular politics to achieve their goals. European democracies long ago took the right to use force away from individual citizens and placed it exclusively in the hands of governments. By sidestepping this principle, the British jihadists and their supporters were placing themselves outside the normal processes of British politics. Their answer to their unhappiness with British foreign policy was to make an alternative policy of their own, and take up arms to implement it. It is easy to see how this could have led to British Muslims fighting against British forces in Afghanistan in 2001. This attitude was taken to its logical conclusion by the Islamic Human Rights Commission, a pro-Khomeini’ite body in the UK, which complained about government plans to prosecute British Muslims who, in the words of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, “want to attack, however legitimately, US or British interests overseas”.<sup>2</sup>

These foreign adventures have profound implications for social cohesion at home, containing as they do the seeds of the much wider alternative social structures established by Islamist movements in Muslim countries. This was made explicit in the programme of the Muslim Parliament, one of the most active British agitators for the Bosnian jihad. They organized conferences, raised funds and advertised for recruits for the Bosnian mujahideen (< Arabic: *muhājīdūn*, “holy warriors”). At the same time, they called on British Muslims to establish institutions that, on a small scale, could operate as a parallel society – a state-within-a-state – in Britain itself.

However, the Muslim Parliament’s overt separatism was not well received by British Muslims, and the community has now developed institutions that engage with secular politics. But still, their approach contains more subtle barriers to integration. These institutions are run by Islamists who use the language of jihad to present and define their political work. Mohammed Abdel Bari, a former activist in the Bangladeshi *Jamaat-e-Islami* who is now head of the Muslim Council of Britain, and is generally seen as the leader of the British Muslim community, has written: “The five pillars of Islam prepare the Muslims for a collective Jihad. It is the lifeblood of the Muslim Ummah and the source of Islam’s dignified world-role”.<sup>3</sup> This approach is twinned with the idea that anything that runs contrary to what the Islamists see as Muslim interests forms part of an attack on Islam itself, and is therefore by

definition Islamophobic. MPAC UK, the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, is a lobbying group that repeatedly describes its work as a “political jihad”. Zulfiqar Bukhari, their CEO, places their work firmly in the front line of the global defence of Islam, saying: “This is a war on Islam. MPAC make no distinction between the rituals, spiritual, theological and political aspects of Islam”.<sup>4</sup>

This is similar to the thinking of Sheikh Qaradawi of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who ruled: “A Muslim steadfastly abiding by his religion sees every conflict he is to go through as directly related to Islam”.<sup>5</sup> But whereas Qaradawi is from the Muslim Brotherhood, and Abdel Bari is a follower of the Jamaat-e-Islami, MPAC are a new generation of British-born Islamists who use a deracinated, Westernized concept of jihad. They have a religious consciousness but do not often quote directly from religious sources; theirs is an uneasy mix of jihad in a secular British setting, and forms part of the developing British Muslim identity.

A particularly egregious example of this came after MPAC campaigned for the successful candidate in a parliamentary by-election in London in 2003. MPAC described their success in these terms:

This is proof that when Muslims take up Jihad for the sake of Allah, Allah grants us victory over those who would harm us! Allah is Great, and all victory is from Him alone. Those who bothered to vote on the day, did so in protection of the Ummah, not only in India and Iraq but also Palestine. It was a Fard [religious obligation] duty upon them to protect the Ummah and by Allah they did.... We want to thank every Muslim who voted against the Labour candidate; we want to thank all those who have sent us messages of support and especially all the Muslims who sent in donations.... Jihad to protect the Ummah is Fard (ayn) [*< Arabic `ayn, a religious obligation incumbent on every individual Muslim*] on us all and let Allah be the Witness of those who took part in this campaign on the Day of Judgement.<sup>6</sup>

Claiming that putting leaflets through doors or canvassing for votes is a religious duty on which depend the lives of Muslims around the world, may help to motivate activists, but introducing the language of jihad to democratic politics has other consequences. Much of democratic politics involves trying to settle conflicts and differences between individuals and groups in society. It also requires the minority, sometimes, to submit to the will of the majority – albeit with protections in place for minority interests. Adding this layer of religious significance militates against compromise and makes the most mundane disputes more difficult to resolve. Insisting that this is part of the global jihad to defend Islam escalates the potential for conflict that already exists within democracies to an unacceptable level. It encourages the sense of

victimization and exclusion that many Muslims already feel, while frightening non-Muslims who hear the word jihad and think of suicide bombers and decapitations. It frames every dispute in absolute terms of victory and defeat; it is difficult to acknowledge that the other side may actually have a point, when you see yourself as a mujahid defending the honour of your faith and the lives of your fellow Muslims.

In addition, the other side of the political argument is no longer simply a fellow citizen exercising his or her democratic rights, but becomes instead the local proxy of the global conspiracy against Islam. This encourages the demonization of one's political opponent: it plays a role in the ubiquitous anti-Semitism in Islamist anti-Israeli rhetoric throughout Europe. It also encourages a focus on foreign affairs, and distracts attention from the very real domestic problems faced by many Muslim communities.

Another point to consider is that jihad is exclusively a Muslim activity, albeit one that can involve alliances with non-Muslims. This is, therefore, engagement at arm's length and on Islamist terms only. The current coalition between Islamists and the Left in many European countries should not be mistaken for a repeat of the anti-racist coalitions of the 1970s and 1980s. This contemporary variant of cross-communal unity is opportunistic and superficial, and when it crumbles, as it will, Muslims will find themselves politically isolated once again, having rejected the universalist values of genuine anti-racism in favour of a particularist Islamist agenda.

The idea among non-violent Islamists that their political work is a continuation of, and complement to, violent jihadi activity elsewhere is one reason why distinctions between the different parts of the Islamist spectrum are, in this context, of limited value. The level of support for violent jihad among non-violent Islamists in Britain was evident in their reaction to recent anti-terrorist legislation that has made it illegal to support violent activities overseas. Leading Muslim bodies such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain have been extremely vocal in opposing these laws and insist on the right of British Muslims to support what they see as legitimate armed struggles. These organizations may not be representative of the majority of British Muslims, but they have dominated their political leadership and it is their Islamist voice that has until recently been presented as the mainstream view. It seems that for them at least, the jihadist dream is one that is too hard to give up.

Others, though, have managed to make the necessary political journey. The current leader of the Muslim Parliament, which did so much to encourage jihadism in Britain in the 1990s, is Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, a graduate of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan. Since 9/11 he has turned his back on the language and ideology of jihad, speaking out against its destructive effects on Muslim life in the West. His reaction to the London bombings last year was to call

for the Muslim community to identify “the promoters of ‘jihadist’ ideology”<sup>7</sup> in Britain. Even before the bombings, he had challenged Muslims to begin a debate on the role they played in what he called “destabilising the world”, accusing Muslim leaders of, in his words:

naivety in continuing to call the CIA-sponsored war against the Soviet Union a jihad...once the Soviet Union collapsed the world became unipolar. The religious right among Muslims still prides itself on its role in defeating one superpower. What it does not recognise is the consequences of its complicity in that defeat. It has made the world a dangerous place and turned Islam into a religion of violence.<sup>8</sup>

The true significance of Siddiqui’s words, though, is that he is also a leading figure in the British anti-war movement and a fierce critic of the “War on Terror”. But his opposition to British policy is expressed in secular terms, without recourse to the language of jihad, or the idea of a war on Islam, or using religious texts to justify his opinions. He is living proof to angry young Muslims that rejecting Islamist discourse does not have to mean becoming a supporter of Western governments’ policies. It is this path, stripped of the ideology of “jihadism”, down which true integration lies.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Justice a Call to Humanity – Dr. Azzam Tamimi”, <http://www.islamicforumeurope.com/live/ife.php?doc=articleitem&itemId=327>, accessed 29/11/06. Punctuation and spelling as in the origin.

<sup>2</sup> Faisal Bodi, “Legislating against Terror or Breaking Dissent? National Anti-Terrorism Laws 1998-2001” (London: IHRC, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Dr. M. Abdul [sic] Bari, “Unity: A Crying Need of the Ummah”, [http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/AB\\_Untity/default.htm](http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/AB_Untity/default.htm), accessed 27/7/06.

<sup>4</sup> “Zulfiqar Bukhari Q&A”, MPAC Forum, <http://www.mpacuk.org>, 6/9/06.

<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, “Is the Muslims-Jews Conflict Creedal or Political?”, *Islam Online Fatwa Bank*, 14/2/04.

<sup>6</sup> “Success: MPAC makes history”, <http://www.mpacuk.org/mpac/data/3697ae11/3697ae11.jsp>, accessed 23/9/03.

<sup>7</sup> “Press Release – Siddiqui Tells Muslim conference: Confront Extremism”, <http://www.muslimparliament.org.uk/confrontextremism.htm>, accessed 16/3/06.

<sup>8</sup> “Jihads and Crusades”, *The Guardian*, 24/8/04.

# Islam in Berber Translation: Laïcité, and Amazigh Activism, and the Politics of Pluralism in France

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France, with its estimated five million Muslim residents, has become the repeated reference for both utopian and dystopian visions of Islam in Europe: as either the central province of a future Islamist Eurabia (Bat Ye'or 2005); or the locus of civilizational reconciliation and the creation of a secular, humanistic Euro-Islam (Tibi 2001). Extremist visions of an Eiffel Tower topped with an Islamic crescent (as featured on the cover of a June 2006 edition of *The Economist*) contrast with (arguably) equally extreme hopes of a multi-confessional football side leading France to the brink of World Cup victory (insofar as the team was heralded as proof of the intrinsic virtues of the Republican model of religious integration). As an anthropologist who has worked with various Muslim communities in France, I find both positions difficult to reconcile with the empirical worlds in which French Muslims live – in part because the two positions both presume a categorical opposition between French-ness and Muslim-ness in spite of the everyday ways in which thousands of people live and understand their lives as simultaneously and inseparably French and Muslim (which is not to say that their lives are always particularly easy, or that they do not experience embedded racism and discrimination, their French belonging often treated as suspect, but rather that such discrimination does not mitigate their Frenchness in their social practices or self-perception); and in part because the two positions (of Eurabia or Euro-Islam) ignore internal national, ethnic, and racial divides which defy any attempt to posit a singular French Muslim “community”. In this essay, I explore these two aspects of the French Muslim experience writ large, focusing in particular on how Muslim Berbers (or Imazighen) in France present their own religious distinctiveness within Islam, and, moreover, how both they, as well as those from whom they explicitly distinguish themselves – namely “Arabs” or “Islamists” – come to represent themselves through the same hegemonic language of state secularism and within the same dominant political culture of Republican citizenship. In

the end, what I want to argue is that we are witnessing neither the Islamization of France, nor the Frenchification of Islam, but rather the ongoing redefinition of both French-ness and Muslim-ness, two identity formations which have been always historically intertwined and mutually constituted.

In general, struggles over state secularism (or *laïcité*) and the public expression of Islam in France have created strange bedfellows, bringing together leftist intellectuals, law-and-order conservatives, feminists, and a variety of French Muslims in defense of radical *laïcité*; as well as an equally heterogeneous group of conservative Catholics, anarcho-syndicalists, and an alternate variety of French Muslims in support of a more open interpretation of French republicanism. What is important to note is that even the most ardent critics of *laïcité* have articulated their claims through a universalist language of rights and in the idiom of citizenship. Indeed, in a set of poignant, performative acts, women wearing hijab demonstrated throughout France against the 2004 law banning religious dress from public schools, carrying French flags, marching with banners evoking “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, *Laïcité*”, releasing blue-white-red balloons, and even wearing headscarves emblazoned with the French tricolor. They faultlessly sung the Marseillaise including, as reporters remarked with amazement, verses seldom heard at national celebrations. Their verbal acts similarly deployed the language of citizenship, with protestors declaring themselves “proud to be French and Muslim”. In perhaps the most evocative display of citizenship, demonstrators throughout the country waved their national identity cards while invoking some version of “one headscarf = one vote”.

Similarly, the young suburban housing project residents (many of whom were Muslims) who took to the streets across France in November 2005 in their own enactment of the storming of the Bastille engaged in a similar performance of citizenship in spite of their avowed contempt for the French “system”, waving their French identification cards to the ever-present television cameras. Even hardcore rap artists, who have made their fortunes calling for violence against the police and the destruction of the state, adopt such Bastille imagery and portray themselves as speaking for the new *sans-culottes*. In the aftermath of the 2005 uprising, the largely North African group Sniper rapped that the best way to “incinerate” racist leaders was to vote them out of office. Indeed, the music video of their testament to the uprising, “*Brûle*” (or “*Burn*”), features the trio and their posse waving their voter registration cards and closes with a black screen and the words: “2007 Vote!” In like fashion, Diam’s 2006 *Dans Ma Bulle* album was issued with a manifesto describing in detail how to register to vote - a veritable call-to-citizenship: “We, children of the republic, whether by birth or by adoption, are neither represented nor understood by the politicians who run our country. 1 vote = 10 Molotov cocktails.... 2007 presidential elections: We will vote” (see Silverstein forthcoming).

However, perhaps the most outspoken group of French Muslims who have deployed republican universalist discourse are Berber (or “Amazigh”) activists, who have transnationally advocated for the cultural and linguistic expression of Tamazight in the face of what they decry as “Arabo-Muslim imperialism”. While often practicing Muslims themselves, these activists have rejected Islam as their paramount mode of identification; have defended Muslim heteropraxy; have made concerted efforts to recover their ante-Islamic, Judeo-Christian heritage; and have even espoused reconciliation, if not symbolic identification, with Israel (Ben-Layashi 2007). Beginning in the early 1990s they publicly advocated for French government support of Berber culture as the primary and preferred means for the “integration” of the children of North African immigrants into French national citizens, arguing that Berber-ness can serve as a bulwark against the perceived rise of Islamism in France (Maddy-Weitzman 2001; Silverstein 2003, 2007).

## The Kabyle Myth

It is important to recognize the colonial genealogy of this Amazigh discourse on Islam, its relationship to a set of colonial myths that posited an inverse relationship between the Islamic piety of different indigenous populations of North Africa and their potential for cultural assimilation. Following the conquest of Algiers in 1830, French military ethnologists and linguists published hundreds of ethnological and linguistic studies that effectively outlined an ethno-racial boundary between Arabophone and Berberophone populations in North Africa (Lorcin 1995). In general, military scholars repeatedly reified Arab society as principally and primarily Islamic, and perceived an incompatibility of their Islamic civilization with French (Christian-secular) modernity. In colonial discourse, Islam served as the prime trope for explaining two opposed characteristics of the observed Arab personality: on the one hand, their bellicose, hostile nature, attributable to their religious fanaticism; and, on the other hand, their inveterate laziness, resulting from their reverent fatalism.

French administrators perceived this essential religiosity of Arabs as an inherent stumbling block to their administrative or legal assimilation into the French nation. According to colonial legal scholar Emile Larcher, writing in 1903, “In the Mahometian civilization, religion and law are too intimately confused for the juridical condition of Muslims to be identical to that of Frenchmen or Europeans” (Larcher 1903: 16). The loyalty of Muslim subjects was considered inherently suspect, as it was claimed that they owed principal allegiance to a set of political-legal orientations derived from Shari`a courts, religious fatwas issued by imams, and an absent (if potentially re-constitutable) caliphate. Such assumptions led to the effective suspension of

laïcité in Algeria, in spite of the fact that the colony was officially an overseas department, and hence should normally have been subject to the same legal and constitutional regime as the metropole. Muslim Algerians were denied French citizenship unless they renounced their religious “civil status”, unless they publicly apostatized themselves.

## Kabyle Republicanism

While Muslim Berberophone populations in colonial North Africa – and in particular Algerian Kabyles – were subjected to the same juridical canon that maintained their second-class status, they nonetheless were considered by French colonial officials to be more potentially assimilable into French modernity. Less fanatically attached to Islam, Kabyles were argued, in the words of General Daumas writing in 1847, to “have accepted the Koran but... not embraced it” (Daumas and Fabar 1847 (I): 77). From their observed worship of saints and reliance on marabouts, to their inconsistencies in observing daily prayers, Ramadan fasts, and prohibitions on alcohol and pork, “the Kabyle people are far from the religious ideas of the Arab people” (Daumas and Fabar 1847 (II): 55).

Moreover, their lack of religiosity was symbolized by the treatment of women. According to what was later denoted as the “Kabyle Myth”, scholars argued that the Kabyles held their women in high respect. Kabyle women generally went unveiled and were seen to “have a greater liberty than Arab women” (Daumas and Fabar 1847 (I): 40). Moreover, Kabyle society, colonial scholars emphasized, did not practice the polygamy, and, indeed, was at its base matriarchical. In the end, then, the Kabyles seemed to approach French Christian morals in their practices, proving that their “Islamization” had always been superficial. Or, as Daumas metaphorized, “Beneath the Muslim peel, one finds a Christian seed” (Daumas and Fabar 1847 (I): 77). As such, the Kabyles were constituted as the natural ally of the French colonizers, and were hence singled out as the privileged targets of the mission civilisatrice. With Islam constituting for Berbers but a “superficial varnish, a simple stamp... a feeble imprint” (Anon. 1924: 216), their transformation into colonial subjects would be comparatively unencumbered.

## Amazigh Islamophobia

Berberophone inhabitants – conservatively 25% of the Algerian and 40% of the Moroccan populations – obviously never became the colonial toadies that French military scholars imagined and later Arab nationalists accused them of being. Berber speakers were at the forefront of anti-colonial resistance both in Kabylia and in peripheral Morocco. In general, Kabyle revolutionary leaders

advocated for an *Algérie algérienne*, a multi-ethnic and secular nation-state; however, they were subsequently marginalized from a nationalist movement that came to be monopolized by the National Liberation Front (FLN) with an ideology of Arab nationalism and Islamic unity (see Chaker 1990, Stora 1995).

With the growing hegemony of the FLN in Algeria and the Istiqlal party in Morocco, the locus of Berber struggle shifted to France. Activists within the Berberophone community, itself constituting the majority of Maghrebi immigrants in France, actively voiced their support for Berber language and culture. Calling themselves *Imazighen* (literally “free men”), they founded cultural associations in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Roubaix to promote Berber culture to generations born in France, as well as to standardize and disseminate written Berber (Tamazight) (Slimani-Direche 1997). In the wake of the Algerian civil war, Amazigh militants in both France and North Africa have increasingly adopted a virulent pro-secular, anti-Islamist discourse that at times can approach virtual Islamophobia.

## Amazigh Laïcité

In the first place, Kabyle political parties like the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), operating in France through their allied cultural associations, present political platforms which consistently avoid references to Islam, preferring categories of “democracy”, “republicanism”, “citizenship,” “social justice”, “human rights”, and “secularism” drawn directly from French universalist discourse. The Amazigh movement in France has deployed such public avowals of *laïcité* to argue for state support of Berber culture, seen as the key to the future “integration” of Franco-Maghrebis. In 2004, in a letter published by the Amazigh press across the globe, the president of the Federation of Associations of Berber Culture in France, Areski Sadi, congratulated Jacques Chirac on behalf of all “the Berbers of France” for his decision to press for a legal ban on the “veil” in public schools. Claiming that religion is an “affair of individual conscience and spirituality”, Sadi championed the proposed law as protecting young women against the “pressure of politico-religious groups”, and schools against the “rampant plague (fléau) of Islamic fundamentalism (intégrisme)”. Sadi averred that the identity of Berbers in France could not be reduced to a “simple religious subjectification”, and ended his letter with an evocation of the spiritual assimilation of French *Imazighen*: “Because France is our country, her interests are ours and our interests are hers.

Women Amazigh militants have been likewise publicly outspoken in their denunciations of the “veil” and the Islamist interests supposedly behind its multiplication. In my discussions with Kabyle activists in Paris, many

young women harshly criticized their peers for adopting the headscarf as a sign of protest. Sonya, a Franco-Kabyle schoolteacher outside of Paris who herself abstains from alcohol and pork and fasts during Ramadan, told me that wearing the hijab was tantamount to rejecting France: “If you don’t want to live here, go home. If I felt so out of place in France, I wouldn’t stay” (see Silverstein 2004). In a similar vein, Khalida Messaoudi, a Kabyle feminist and former RCD member and Algerian cabinet member who has received death threats from Islamist militias, decried the “veil” as a “uniform marking the segregation of women and their lifelong status as minors”. Famously comparing headscarves to Jewish yellow stars, she warned that if France accepted the hijab, it would embark on the same slippery slope to Islamic totalitarianism that had occurred in Algeria (Le Figaro 29-30 October 1994: 27; cf. Messaoudi 1995).

## Religious Heteropraxy

Given their pitched battles against Arab nationalism and Islamism in North Africa, it is not particularly surprising that Amazigh activists would take strong public anti-Islamist positions, or that they would explicitly encourage the French state's imposition of radical secularism and a larger post-September 11th “war on terror”. By and large, they tend to see Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden as part of the same scourge of “Arabo-Muslim imperialism” that threatens their cultural particularity, not to mention the world at large. Members of the Amazigh movement in Morocco are particularly proud to have been among the first to offer their public condolences to the American ambassador in the days immediately after September 11th. While opposing violence in general, they later came out strongly in favor of the American invasion of Iraq and were beside themselves with joy over news of the capture of Saddam. In southeast Moroccan town where I work, residents even joked that Bush himself must be an Aït Mughard, going as far as creating a fictive genealogy to incorporate him as their symbolic brother (see Silverstein and Crawford 2004).

Such tacit Americanophilia represents but an instance of a larger contrarian attitude taken by many Amazigh militants in France and North Africa. To a great extent, such an attitude derives from a general rejection of orthodox Islamic social norms which Amazigh activists argue are the imposition of an Arab culture prone to extremism. In point of fact, Amazigh activists incorporate a wide variety of religious beliefs and practices into their everyday lives, with some militants engaging in regular prayer and following Islamic dietary restrictions, while others going as far as excising all references to Allah from their spoken language and harboring scarcely hidden contempt for the believers amongst their ranks.

However, even the most extreme atheists outwardly defend “traditional” forms of Berber Islamic practice that they claim to be flexible in application and perfectly integrated into larger cultural forms. They highlight the continued prevalence of *marabouts* (or *igurramen*) in Berber-speaking areas. They uphold the pilgrimage to the tombs of ancestors and saints, as well as to other natural sites endowed with sacrality, as efficacious in the healing of physical ailments and infertility – all as integral elements of “Berber culture”. Moreover, they defend the republican and secular nature of Berber political institutions, highlighting the democratic decision-making in the tribal council (or *tajmaat*).

Secondly, like colonial ethnologists, Amazigh activists insist on the matriarchal base of Berber societies, claiming that contemporary patriarchy and institutionalized misogyny are but recent Arabo-Islamic impositions. They indicate the centrality of women in the domestic life of Berber villages, highlighting their role as the preservers of the mother language and culture. They underline the relative freedom of women in Berber society, claiming that social codes of female modesty have never led to the cloistering of women or the imposition of the “veil”.

## Berberism

The Amazigh discourse on Islam, while underlining the local flexibility of Berber religious practice, occasionally results in the espousal of extremist secular positions that blame Islam in *toto* for the current marginalization of Berbers, and of North Africa in general. In the talk and writing of certain militants, such a position leads to symbolically-charged claims of religious ignorance, of never having prayed or read the Qu’ran. One of the foremost symbols of contemporary Amazigh resistance, the assassinated Kabyle singer-activist Lounès Matoub, is a poignant figure in this rhetoric. Considered by activists across North Africa and the Berber diaspora as a martyr to the Amazigh cause, Matoub was famous for being a self-described “rebel”, for never submitting to social or political authority. His 1995 autobiography explicitly juxtaposes his commitment to the Amazigh cause to his lack of religiosity. In addition to somewhat incredulous claims concerning his lack of understanding of Arabic, the book emphasizes his refusal to lead a pious life, even when threatened at gunpoint by his Islamist kidnappers in 1993. As if to emphasize this point, the autobiography is peppered with scenes portraying Matoub's drinking prowess, if not debauchery (Matoub 1995).

Drinking alcohol is indeed a potent symbolic act for Amazigh (male) activists. Events sponsored by Amazigh associations often include alcoholic beverages, in spite of the militants' knowledge that many of the laity in attendance will not drink. More centrally, Amazigh militants tend to convene

their meetings in bars, reveling in the fact that such spaces are the object of Islamist ire. During the 1990s, members of the ACB, the largest and most important Berber association in France, referred to the bar across the street from the association locale as their “headquarters” (quartier général), and on any given evening one could find it filled with local activists and artists, as well as visiting militants from Kabylia. In Rabat, activists in the Amazigh Movement reunite nightly at the Capri, a central bar run by a Berber family that militants claim has been the informal meeting space for three generations of activists. When I commented to one of the militants that I found it symbolically appropriate that they meet in a bar, he replied, “Yes, Paul, we are no longer ‘Berberists’, we are ‘Beerberists’ (bièreberistes)”.

## Philo-Semitism

In a similar contrarian vein, transnational Amazigh activists have rejected the generalized anti-Zionist politics of the Islamic world, adopting instead an avowedly philo-Semitic (if not pro-Zionist) discourse. While by no means the agents of the Israeli state that Islamists occasionally accuse them of being, Amazigh militants have actively sought to reconcile Jewish and Berber populations, and have publicly advocated a normalization of relations with Israel. They generally see in Israel a direct parallel for the Amazigh struggle: a minority people who succeeded in codifying and saving a threatened language, gained territorial autonomy, and is currently likewise threatened by a surrounding Arab majority.

Beyond the politics of Zionism, Amazigh militants and sympathizers have likewise sought to reconstruct the close relations that previously existed between Berber and Jewish populations in North Africa. They are fond of pointing out the ante-Islamic, Jewish origins of various Berber cultural practices and historical figures, including most notably the Dihya Kahina who led her people to battle against Islamic armies of invasion during the seventh century. They recount stories of their parents’ close relations with Jewish neighbors, of the sharing of meals and mutual aid, and welcome the occasional “homecomings” of Israeli émigrés. Indeed, when I finally admitted to one of my close Kabyle militant friends in Paris that I was Jewish, he exclaimed jubilantly, “I knew it all along! There was always something in common between us. You see, we’re cousins.”

## Conclusion

Amazigh philo-Semitism is perhaps an extreme example of Islamophobia from within, but it nevertheless nicely indicates some of the fractures within the putative French Muslim “community”. That such politics dovetail nearly

perfectly with current French ideologies of *laïcité* results as much from the particular historical conjuncture of consonant French and Amazigh anti-Islamisms, as it does from any supposed cultural resemblance between the two peoples as postulated by colonial ethnologists. Such radically secularist discourse of the Amazigh movement, and its growing prevalence among young French North Africans, indicates that debates over the place of Islam in an expanding Europe cannot be reduced to a rhetoric of a “Eurabia,” of a presumed reverse colonization of Europe by Muslim immigrants. The Amazigh discourse on Islam points to important divisions within the Muslim *umma* that transcend the borders of Europe, as well as those of individual North African nation-states. Indeed, any analysis of European Islam today requires a rejection of reified formulations and an embrace of the historical and transnational contexts that multiply and divide Muslim polities, that make and re-make the entity which we today call “Europe”.

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# Why Concepts of Multiculturalism and Assimilation Have Failed in Germany

*Wahied Wahdat-Hagh*

I will first present the integration concept in Germany. The second section offers data on the numbers and organizational structure of the Muslims in Germany, and the third section addresses certain problems. I will then consider why some of the problems have become more virulent. It must be recognized that the immigration problem in Germany and in Europe is part of a global problem, and must be seen in the context of a cultural and political conflict with political Islam.

## The Integration Policy of the German Government

The German government regards integration as a policy to turn the immigrants' culture and religion into factors that can potentially make the society economically and even culturally richer. In the official depiction immigrants are understood to be in "partnership" with the German society, as usable potentials – what economists would call human capital – for developing the German economy. State and family should promote the education of the young immigrants. Various declarations indeed describe culture and religion as bridges.

On the other hand, there are certain rules which the immigrants are expected to follow:

- The immigrants have to accept the democratic constitutional structure of the state and the values of democratic societies.
- The immigrants have to learn the German language. Nevertheless, for a long time the state did not finance language courses for the former so-called "*Gastarbeiter*" (guest workers), who had been expected to return to their home countries but, in many cases, remained in Germany.

Although state and politics set the basic framework for integration, the citizens have social tasks of integration to perform. The government expects

problems of violence, racism and hate propaganda in the multicultural society to be dealt with on the social, civilian level. Thus, on the one hand, the state promotes cultural variety; on the other, it expects the modern values of human rights and civil rights to be accepted. At the same time, modern societies are constantly discussing and changing their value system in the framework of their cultural and political history.

In the first German Islam Conference in September 2006, the state made clear that the modern values of democracies are binding for Muslims as well. It was acknowledged that Muslims still have problems of learning the language, and that even children and students who have been born in Germany need to learn the German language better. In particular, young Muslims need to be better integrated. According to the German Islam Conference, the modern values of democracies include: equal rights for men and women; political participation; pluralism; secularization; separation of church and state; and coeducation (sports and sex education).

## Muslims in Germany

More than three million Muslims live in Germany. About four hundred thousand of them are converts to Islam.<sup>1</sup> The majority are immigrants, mainly from Islamic states.

Immigrants from Islamic states may have belonged to a non-Muslim minority in the respective state. Therefore, statistics which only refer to national origin do not give exact information on the religion of the immigrants from Muslim countries.

- Approximately 2.5 million Muslim immigrants live in Germany. Some 1,764,799 are from Turkey and 628,000 are Turks who have German citizenship. Approximately 500,000 of the German citizens of Turkish background belong to the Alevi group.
- Over 100,000 of the Muslims in Germany come from Asia, mainly Afghanistan (65,630) and Pakistan (35,081).
- About 80,000 come each from Iran and Iraq. They are both Shiite and Sunni.
- Another approximately 100,000 are from Tunisia and Morocco, which had labour contracts with Germany from the 1960s.
- Some 90,000 come from remaining Arab states, which had no labour contracts with Germany.

- Indeed, there is no fixed Islam. People who come from urban environments usually behave differently than people who come from rural ones. The majority of the Muslim immigrants in Germany come from still-secular Turkey, having arrived as migrant workers from Turkey in the 1960s. From the 1970s there was increased immigration of Muslims (refugees and students) from Arab, Asiatic and African countries.
- Some 90 percent of the Muslims in Germany are Sunnis, and there are approximately 80,000 Shiites.
- Some 9 percent of the Muslims are Alevis (500,000-600,000) and there are 50,000 Ahmadiyya.

## Different Attitudes

People who immigrate to Germany (and other countries) can conserve, pluralize or modernize their attitudes. Those who hold conservative their religious attitudes usually come from less educated rural areas. Usually, young people who have grown up in Germany recognize the advantages of the plural society. They call themselves “cultural Muslims” and observe the religion only as far as possible.

Modernization has not meant accepting democratic values. It can mean the instrumentalization of democracy in order to retain traditional values but in modernized form. There is a phenomenon of modern fundamentalism. For example, “pop Muslims” reject “Western decadence”, listen to the Koran on CDs, hate the United States and Israel and transmit the hatred via modern music, films, DVDs and satellite broadcasts. Antisemitic tendencies are particularly evident among the self-confident, “modernizing” young people. Hip-hop can become a means of expressing hatred and not only a liberating musical medium.

## Problems of Multiculturalism: Islamism and New Antisemitism

Antisemitic attitudes are found among the young people whose origins are in Muslim societies, particularly Arab ones. Jewish students have been physically attacked by Muslim students and jobless Muslims. There are locales where no Jew dares to enter, such as the Neukölln quarter in Berlin.

- Basic elements of political-extremist Islamism are enmity towards Jews, anti-Zionism and the denial of Israel’s right to exist.

- Islamic youth, immigrants and refugees are under a direct Islamic influence from abroad. The Iranian regime, for example, is able to influence minds in Germany and Europe in general. Satellite broadcasts from Iran or Lebanon (Al-Manar TV) poison the Muslims in Germany with hate propaganda, as does the translation into Turkish of Zahra's Blue Eyes, an atrocious film made in Iran that sells briskly in Turkish video shops in Germany. It is part of the Islamic conspiracy propaganda which demonizes Jews and Israelis. In the story an Israeli military officer orders an organ transplant of the blue eyes of a Palestinian girl for the officer's son. This fabricated tale serves to legitimize a terrorist attack.<sup>2</sup> In the German multicultural society, such films are popular in the Turkish, Arab and other domains.

- The exported antisemitism from Islamist states and movements poses a danger to the integration policy in Germany and other open societies of the West. Totalitarian ideologies are successfully transmitted through satellite broadcasts, DVDs, videos and some of the mosque preachers.

## Why Integration Does Not Work

Whereas the concept of integration is more or less official, the deep cultural and political dimensions of the problems are not sufficiently appreciated.

- There is no concept of putting an end to such disintegrative goings-on.
- We are far from integration and a solution for such cultural-political differences. Combined with the problems of integration are conflicts between totalitarian and democratic ideas. Today the problems run deeper than in the 1970s.
- I am only addressing here the problems of growing Islamism in the multicultural society and not the radical right-wing and left-wing antisemitism and racism, which more than occasionally reach the German middle classes.
- Whereas governmental efforts aim at solving the problems connected to language, the cultural and political problems need to be solved as well. It certainly is not too late, but there is too much resistance to recognizing the fact that Germany is *Einwanderungsland*, a country of immigration with all the consequences entailed.

Last but not least, a regional federation of Islamic groups in Hamburg, the Shura, is a member of an active interreligious roundtable that aims at dialogue. The Shura has a veto as the other members have. But the veto should support democratic attitudes and not the opposite. Although there are different Islamic groups within the Shura, all clearly obey actors which are under the rule of the Iranian regime. The Shura, for instance, has decided not to allow representatives of the Baha'i faith onto the roundtable because the Islamisches Zentrum Hamburg, which is controlled by the Iranian regime, opposes Baha'i participation – even though most of the Baha'i in Germany are Germans rather than Iranians, and even though interreligious dialogue is a strength of the Baha'i community. Although the Christian, Jewish and other representatives, for their part, favour Baha'i representation, the Shura abuses its veto to exclude them.

How can civil society solve integration problems as the German government demands when the Islamic Shura in Germany discriminates against the Baha'i? This reflects the practices in most Islamic societies where Baha'i, "Zionist" Jews, secular parts of the society, women and others suffer persecution.

German immigration policy must take into account that the unsolved problems of cultural pluralism in Germany are part of the unsolved problems of the conflict between democracy and new totalitarianism at the global level.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Editor: Cf. this figure with the one provided in A. Fuess's article below.

<sup>2</sup> Memritv.org, #508, "Zahra's Blue Eyes: Episode 7: Zahra Is Blinded, Rest of Characters Are Killed," [http://switch5.castup.net/frames/20041020\\_MemriTV\\_Popup/video\\_480x360.asp?ai=214&ar=508wmv&ak=null](http://switch5.castup.net/frames/20041020_MemriTV_Popup/video_480x360.asp?ai=214&ar=508wmv&ak=null).

## Part II

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### *Comparisons and Overviews*

# Europe Caught between Denials and Illusions

*Bat Ye'or*

Europeans are today waking up to realities that have been conveniently put aside or obfuscated by European strategists during the past twenty years. The period after World War II saw Europe's loss of its huge Muslim and other colonies in Asia and Africa and the traumatic restoration of a Jewish state in 1948. Nazism, fascism, communism, antisemitism and racist ideologies had been predominant features of European political life until 1945, and thereafter despite the Allies' victory which imposed a new world order. Many adherents of the defeated regimes then joined the communist and leftist parties, bringing with them their anti-Americanism and antisemitism, their totalitarian orientation, as well as their revulsion towards a Church rooted in Judaism. On the religious-political spectrum, theological antisemitism and anti-Zionism fueled the rejection of Israel by some churches, and thereby increased their support for the Arab strategic war against Israel. Bonds with the Arab world, forged in the colonial era by a common struggle against Zionism, and which had been reinforced in the fascist and Nazi decade, were maintained after the war. From the 1970s these anti-Zionist currents that were dormant, supported by economic, strategic and oil interests, brought together a Euro-Arab alliance against Israel and America which developed on strategic, cultural and media tracks.

As a consequence, the European Community (EC) correlated a massive Muslim immigration to an Arab strategy linking peace and stability in the Mediterranean to economic development, soft diplomacy and multiculturalism.<sup>1</sup> This trend was duplicated from the policy that fostered European integration, despite the difference in culture and political ideologies between Europe and the Muslim South Mediterranean. It was in fact the same ideological pattern applied in two different contexts: the European and the Muslim, as if the Muslim-Arab world was similar to that of the European states of the EC. The two dynamics – European integration and Euro-Arab partnership – were conducted by specified networks under the supervision of the European Commission and the Arab League – the latter being the equivalent and the partner of the European Commission. In 1974, when this policy started, the

two blocs together represented thirty-one countries, plus the PLO whose delegate was often the president of the Arab delegation.

In the EC's Arab policy, Muslim immigration in Europe is welcomed as an element of a Mediterranean geo-strategy conducted as a partnership with the Arab-Muslim world. This conception combines soft diplomacy, compromises and a pacifism based on the assumption that the Arab world shares with Europe a revulsion for war. It includes as well an ongoing European funding and services provided to the Arab world similar to the funds given to underdeveloped EC Member States.

In 1993, the EC became the European Union (EU) whose goal was continual expansion, Turkey's integration and the elimination of European borders. Former Swedish foreign minister Carl Bild wrote in a recent *International Herald Tribune* article that Europe should never stop enlargement, because when it stops it will die. It is clear that if we enlarge, we must make room for the newcomers and accommodate them. It is this policy of accommodation and moral relativism that has led to the grafting onto European societies of an Islamization process that aggravates the destruction of European nationalisms, history and cultural identities. Those three processes are integrated into the European enlargement policy and the acquisition by the EU of supra-national powers.

The concept of European integration implies the destruction of national and cultural identities – and this same concept presides over the creation of a Euro-Arab society. These two dynamics are two similar, overlapping and intertwined processes, but in Europe they are functional at the inter-governmental level, while in the Euro-Arab symbiosis policy it is a one-way dynamic since the Muslim countries increasingly proclaim their Islamic and nationalist characters which of course impinge on Muslim migrants. Yet “Eurabia” continues to plan its new Mediterranean society where the identity will be “us” or “we”, thereby destroying a social cohesion linked to Italian, British, French or German history and culture, in order to replace it by a denationalized Mediterranean entity sprung from multiculturalism.

The template of the Mediterranean society and the means to implement it in Europe were exposed in a European Commission document of October 2003, *The Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*. It was accepted and funded by the EU. This is logical since the EU established its concept of peace and increased its supra-national powers by destroying European nationalisms, a dynamic also at work in the Euro-Arab context. Hence its hostility towards American and Israeli nationalisms. Europe is “universal” like communism, open to the world, as it proclaims. The “us” of the Mediterranean society is, in fact, “us” against America, while Europe's satellization by the Arab/Muslim world divides the West and weakens it.

On 19 February 2004, in an interview with *Le Figaro*, the then French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin said that the Mediterranean Partnership “should take into consideration all the political, economic, social, cultural and educational dimensions” – in association with the Arab countries – “for peace and progress”. This intercultural dialogue thus requires that the Europeans re-invent their identity, modify their education system and history in order to integrate the Muslim migrant populations. The Anna Lindh Foundation is the body that was created in December 2003 exactly for this purpose. It will implement, under the supervision of the European Commission, the new Mediterranean society and culture through the EU control of policies, culture, books, publications, teaching, universities and media. This policy was already clearly stated in the Report of 8 November 2002, presented by the Spanish Socialist delegate Luis Maria de Puig, at the European Parliamentary Assembly where he called for a new Euro-Arab writing of history, intensive exchanges of students and teachers, a Euro-Arab university and parliament, a strong symbiosis between intellectuals, a network of complicities, actions and synergies between politicians, writers, artists, communicators, opinions leaders, NGOs and every artistic sector such as theatre, song and film, in order to glue together the Mediterranean society and to create this new Mediterranean civilization. His report was accepted by the EU in January 2003.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to explain what I mean by “Eurabia”. This concept does not refer to Muslim immigration only. It describes a whole European mindset and policy of which Muslim immigration without integration is the consequence. It refers as well to an EU totalitarian control over a common foreign and domestic policy, as well as over the culture and media of nearly half a billion Europeans. It is therefore a soft fascism, as is evident by the wide gap between the EU apparatchiks and the Europeans at large, particularly in relation to Turkey’s integration into the EU, the setback for the EU Constitution, the total ignorance of the Mediterranean Partnership strategy and the widespread hostility towards the EU.

The creation of Eurabia has been possible because the EU body has assumed supra-national powers which prevail over the national democratic institutions controlled by the local people, although all the European parties from the Right to the Left were involved in the Euro-Arab policy. Hence, within Eurabia we see a conflict between local nationalisms and identities on the one hand, and EU hegemonic ambition on the other. For me the question is not: are we going towards Eurabia? We are already in Eurabia, we live in Eurabia, in a culture that fosters disinformation, lies, unaccountability for criminals and the perversion of truth as ethical principles, because our political perception is modified by the prism of jihad which is central to Islam and has been unconsciously internalized by the European culture through

multiculturalism. This is the very definition of Eurabian culture. The question is: can we get out of Eurabia? Frankly, I doubt it.

Having said that, I will examine the main problems related to mass Muslim immigration and I will just evoke them without going into detail. I will not speak of the economic jihad, or the military jihad, which is a strategy of conquest and domination using foreign as well as home-grown terrorism. I will only speak about the cultural jihad, the war of ideas, which Europe has already lost. In this context I will speak of the contradictory views of history.

1) Is there a clash of two visions: the European view of history and the Islamic one? Every historian will recognize that human history is full of massacres perpetrated during most wars everywhere and that genocide, although the term is a recent notion, is not new. That said, from a Western viewpoint, jihad is a genocidal war. Cities have been razed, populations have been deported, enslaved, forced to convert or massacred in all jihad battles. There are thousands of written testimonies over the centuries from Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and others to prove it. However, this is not the Muslim view as it was clearly stated at the United Nations in Geneva on 21 September 2006 by Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the second session of the new Human Rights Council on “Incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance”. In his oral statement circulated at the plenum, the ambassador referred to the recent lecture by Pope Benedict 3 and stressed 1) that “Islam was not spread by the sword”; 2) that Islam forbids violence in all its forms; and 3) that jihad is an individual’s quest for spiritual reform or the right to self-defense.

Others say that jihad offers an opportunity for non-Muslims to enter into Islam. European historical studies on jihad are considered Islamophobic and an incitement to hate. Should Europeans renounce their long-established academic discipline based on the study of documents and facts? This is a rhetorical question because European politicians have already adhered to the Muslim view and are promoting a rewriting of history by joint Muslim and European teams. This is a fact and a characteristic of Eurabia. Thus, history and therefore culture is controlled by politics. This point is important because if we excuse the genocidal aspects of jihad we encourage and legitimize its repetition against the West. Europe has been under jihadist attacks since the eighth century. If we deny it, we deny a millennium of European history.

2) The second point is: how should we judge Shari`a ? A meritorious and divine governance? In this case, we should accept its principles in Europe. And what is dhimmitude: a model of tolerance or a system of exploitation and oppression imposed by Islamic imperialism? These points are now simply overlooked in Europe, if not denied. Again this is a Eurabian policy and mentality.

And what about the obfuscation of slavery? Slavery is certainly a criminal system. It was practiced throughout history. Europeans and Americans have apologized for this racist and inhumane policy. But Muslims, who have practiced religious slavery on an enormous scale on all continents, including in Europe, from the beginning of Islam, refuse to acknowledge it – even in Southern Sudan where it has been practiced by the current Islamist regime for two decades. Is Islamic religious slavery therefore legitimate?

The dilemma we are facing is: whether we state the historical truth or adopt a historical integrative vision built on denial that legitimizes our own dehumanization. Eurabia has chosen the latter while enjoying self-flagellation for the Crusades. Again, this dissymmetric relationship is typical of dhimmitude. Moreover, if we support the West European view of history, is that Islamophobic? Is there still freedom of opinion and expression in the West?

There are two other important points: Eurabian leaders support Islamic cultural imperialism and state that Islam is part of Europe. This affirmation is necessary to the Euro-Arab symbiosis of the Mediterranean project which – according to Eurabian belief – guarantees peace as Foreign Minister de Villepin stated. Peace in this view is a matter of continual European cultural concessions and disintegration. Yet the definition of European identity is very important because if it includes an Islamic component it will legitimize the development of mosques, madrassas and a Shari`a culture and policy in Europe. In other words, is Islam rightfully returning to its European homeland or does it represent a foreign immigrant element that must integrate into the majority? Do we have to deny that the roots of European civilization are Judeo-Christian along with the Hellenistic and secularist heritage?

The other feature of Eurabia is the denial of Islamism and of its dangers; this denial is fundamental to Eurabian policy. The reason is that the EC's creation was based on a definitive refusal of inter-European war. So this same European consensus for peace was transferred to another context, namely Europe's relations with its Arab neighbours. However, Muslim societies do not share the European conception of peace. The Eurabian desire to deny the jihadist threat, motivated an appeasement policy and a peaceful surrender to jihadists while pretending that Europe's enemies were American, and above all Israeli, policies. Yet the main trigger of Eurabian policy is a traumatic fear of growing Arab/Muslim jihadism.

## Europe and Israel

The relations between Eurabia and Israel are quite complex and I will speak of only one aspect which covers an extensive field. This is Palestinianism, a Euro-Arab political ideology that transfers onto the very existence of Israel

the responsibility for jihadist terrorism against the West. This implies: suppress Israel and you will suppress terror. Palestinianism rests on two pillars: 1) the denial of the history of jihad and dhimmitude against Jews and Christians; 2) the justification of jihad against Israel based on a replacement theology and policy: a holy Palestine replacing a demonized Israel.

Palestinianism is a European construct initiated in France. It combines a Euro-Islamic Nazism with European traditional antisemitism and racism. Under Presidents Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing in the 1970s, French pressures managed to impose Palestinianism as a unified EC Arab policy, which took a definite form in the Venice Declaration of 1980. Palestinianism provided the basis on which the European Community has built its whole strategic, cultural and economic policy of symbiosis with the Arab and Muslim world at large against Israel and America in order to fulfill its ambition: the withering away of Israel through a campaign of demonization and delegitimation, the weakening and isolation of America, an extensible Euro-Muslim world domination and, above all, European protection from jihadist terrorism.

Palestinianism is the only European obsessive political passion. The reason is that the Brussels political networks and most of the media feed Palestinianism to Europeans almost day and night. It has become a powerful institutionalized policy that dominates all Eurabian politics simply because, for Europe, it is the equivalent of the question: to be or not to be. Why? Because Europe lost the war against terrorism when it surrendered in 1973 to Palestinian terrorism, denied it, and instead invoked Israeli self-defense as the trigger of terror. Europe paid billions to the PLO as protection money. Palestinians proved by their votes and their policy that they do not want peace but, rather, the destruction of Israel; however, they continue to receive European subsidies through different organizations for fear of terrorist reprisals. In fact, Palestinians and Europeans are wedded together by the Eurabian maelstrom of antisemitism, cowardice and fear. It is ironic to see that anti-Zionism – that is Palestinianism – was the tool that led Europeans to internalize dhimmitude by self-imposed concessions, thus obtaining security via ransom.

Thus Palestinianism represents a strategy, a policy, a culture and an ideology – even a fashion. It rests on clichés: peaceful Europe versus militarist Israel; a denationalized open-border and ever-larger Europe versus a small, nationalist, closed Israel; a secure, generous Europe practicing multilateralism versus an armed Israel living in perpetual fear and insecurity. Palestinian victimhood and “crucifixion” are lamented as opposed to Israel’s Herodian cruelty and military might. Why rely on power, armies and borders, say the Eurabian spokesmen to Israel? Give it all up and seek peace and love, as we did. And this is how Europe has become Eurabia.

In conclusion, three questions: first, who are those mainly responsible for this situation? I would suggest: the heads of state, the foreign ministers, the

European ambassadors in Muslim countries and the European Commission which is the inspirer and executive power of the EU.

Second, is there any chance that this will change? I doubt it. On 19 June 2000, the European Council adopted a Common Strategy on the Mediterranean region.<sup>4</sup> This strategy states that “particular attention will be paid to the media and universities”, in other words it institutes political control over information, education and culture. The document stipulates that each incoming Presidency should implement the Common Strategy to reinforce the political, strategic and human links between the South and the North of the Mediterranean.

Will the European movements to affirm constitutional rights succeed? It is unlikely. In France the philosopher and teacher, Robert Redecker who published a critic of Islam<sup>5</sup>, received a death fatwa and was abandoned to his fate. We have not seen millions, even hundreds, walking in the streets to support him. The Danish cartoons affair (from October 2005) ended when several governments offered their public excuses. The UN sponsored new Alliance of Civilizations stated that the Arab-Israeli conflict is at the core of Muslim hostility towards the West. Heads of state who are friendly to America and Israel are ridiculed: Aznar (Spain), Berlusconi (Italy), Blair (Britain), Merkel (Germany).

Eurabian networks that for three decades have been built into Europe’s strategic, economic, political, cultural, media and social structure are all-powerful. In the name of peace and multiculturalism they work to replace the European values and national cultures with those of the new Euro-Arab Mediterranean society. And the question of this conference: are there Europeanized Muslims? Yes, certainly there are, and more European than the Eurabians. These are Muslims who genuinely support our values and our freedoms because they are universal. But they are an insignificant minority, because Eurabia prevents the emergence of a Europeanized Islam. That is also the view of Prof. Bassam Tibi when he affirms that Europeans must remain firm in their values. This is essential for the survival of our freedom and our civilization.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia. The Euro-Arab Axis*. Madison NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Assemblée Parlementaire de l’Europe, Recommandation 1590 (2003) Coopération culturelle entre l’Europe et les pays du sud de la Méditerranée,

<sup>3</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/TA03/FREC1590.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> 12 September 2006 at the University of Regensburg.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal Officiel des Communautés européennes*, 22 July 2000, pp. L183/5-/10.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Figaro*, 19 September 2006.

# European Views of the Middle East: Perception, Prejudice, Projection

*John Bunzl*

## Introduction

My central proposition in this essay is that perceptions of the Middle East result as much from realities on the ground and their reflection in the media as from psychological needs. The latter are so crucial in this sphere because Israel and Palestine evoke deep emotions transcending current events. I refer here not only to the more than one-hundred-year-old conflict between the modern Zionist movement and the Arabs of Palestine, but mainly to the associations with concepts such as: Holy Land, Christianity, Islam and above all Judaism. Israel is not *in* but *from* Europe. Awareness of European Christian antisemitism culminating in the Holocaust could be considered the single most important element affecting European emotions towards the Middle East. In order to evaluate the influence of this element, I find the psychoanalytic concept of *projection* most useful. The term can be defined as attribution of one's own attitudes, feelings or memories to others.

A second observation is that according to my experience, scholars of (European) antisemitism often know close to nothing about the Middle East, but it is also frequently the case that specialists of the Middle East are not sensitive enough to phenomena of antisemitism. Speaking of projection in this context, I would consider it a grave methodological error, for example, to assume that modern Judeophobia in the Middle East could be reduced simply to a re-incarnation of European antisemitism.

Projective views of Israel in Europe could be divided (very) schematically into four (often overlapping) categories:

- 1 .Israel is bad because it is Jewish.
- 2 .Israel is good because it represents European (Western) values.
- 3 .Israel is bad because it represents Western (European) interests.

## 4 .Israel is good because it is Jewish.

## On the “New Antisemitism”

Although it is of course true that especially since the Second Intifada erupted in 2000, verbal and sometimes physical attacks against Jews have increased in some European countries, it is problematic to describe these disturbing phenomena as “New Antisemitism”. Why? Because despite the word new, it implies the continuity and/or transformation of a traditional hostility – even, as is sometimes conjured up, a return to the 1930s. But this diagnosis ignores the objective situation of Jewish communities and the fact that the European Union perceives itself, after all, as an antithesis to Nazism and the Holocaust. No state or relevant party has an antisemitic platform. Even right-wing parties court Jewish candidates or votes and see them (as well as Israel) as (potential) allies against an Islamic threat. Jews are seen as Europeans, while Muslims are not. *Philosemitism* is quasi-official, manifested in memorials, museums, culture.

Branding hostilities emanating from Middle East automatically or intentionally as antisemitic is dangerous because doing so would banalize and trivialize genuine antisemitism. It would, I suggest, also constitute a misjudgement of hostility by Muslims. Antisemitic prejudice and bigotry of the Christian-European variant is not driving the large majority of Muslims and not even the few perpetrators of violence. The hostility towards Jews is rather a regrettable by-*product* of more recent events in the Middle East and the world. A more detailed analysis would yield more specific results according to country, origins of immigrants, social status, area of residence and so on. To attribute antisemitism to non-Europeans might also conform to mechanisms of projection and/or externalization mentioned above.

In evaluating recent tendencies among Muslims in Europe the *global* context should not be underestimated. Talk about a “clash of civilizations” became widespread after the end of the Cold War, but especially after 9/11. The atrocity of that day and other acts of “jihadist” violence, often attributed to “Islam” created a climate in which Muslims could feel collectively stigmatized through a “guilt by association” mechanism. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon could obviously be perceived as a “crusade” led by the Bush administration. And the same government with its neoconservative and Evangelical allies could easily be perceived as following a (right-wing) Israeli agenda towards Palestine and the Middle East.

Add to this the globalized media, and one can imagine how pictures from all these fronts would affect an average Muslim audience. Aspects of the debate on *Turkey's* relationship with Europe contribute to the uneasiness as

well. I will return later to the issue of “Islamophobia” but will now focus on another dimension of the “New Antisemitism”.

## Aggravation

An aggravation of the dilemma results from the fact that Israel defines itself as the state of the Jewish people. Official Jewish communities accept this definition – and act accordingly. So it is not true that only antisemites associate Jews with Israel (although in an accusatory way).

Another complication derives from an Israeli need to delegitimize critique, opposition or resistance. This need is as old as the conflict in and over Palestine itself. Arab objection to the Zionist colonization of Palestine was “explained” for internal and external consumption not as a rational and predictable behaviour but as groundless hatred deriving from culture, religion and – antisemitism. Although leaders like Ben-Gurion or Jabotinsky knew better, they used a mechanism of *projection* as well: experiences from antisemitic persecutions in Europe were transferred to the Middle East. Even today we often hear that settlers or soldiers are not attacked because they represent an occupation regime but simply because they are Jews.

A similar mechanism is used in an attempt to de-legitimize accusations in Europe against Israeli state behaviour. In a vicious circle, then, the diagnosis of a “New Antisemitism” is used to prove the justice of the Zionist cause: Jews should leave Europe for a “safe haven” in Israel/Palestine.

## Consequences

European views on the Middle East should be studied carefully before passing judgement on their significance and character. First of all it is necessary to ask the question: who is saying what, when and why? In other words: an examination of the speaker’s *motivation* is crucial.

An antisemitic motivation is evident if and when Israel is attacked “because” it is associated with Jews. In a similar vein, equalizations between Israeli and Nazi behaviour (when made by Europeans, especially Germans or Austrians) amount to an attempt to reduce feelings of guilt or responsibility for crimes committed against Jews during the Holocaust or even to justify such crimes. Here again a clear process of projection is at work. There was no “conflict” between Nazis and Jews. In Israel/Palestine we do not deal with an act of genocidal madness. Basically Israelis fight Palestinians not because they are Arabs and Palestinians fight Israelis not because they are Jews. What we have here is rather a colonial conflict *sui generis*. But because of the long duration of the conflict a legitimacy superstructure developed on both sides. And in this process stereotypes, stigmata and prejudices of various origins served to

demonize the opponent even further. This is, moreover, the most important context for Judeophobic as well as Holocaust-denying statements by Arab and/or Muslim spokespeople – although other elements such as imports of European antisemitism or exploitation of anti-Jewish passages in the Koran should not be underestimated.

The “equalizers” ignore the character of the conflict – and they do so not out of sympathy for Palestinians: first of all they ignore the fact that Palestinians became indirect victims of European-Christian persecution of and violence against Jews. Thus: no reduction of guilt and responsibility. Second, psychological needs lead to an (undeclared) wish that Palestinians *should* become the “Jews” of the Jews. Therefore terms such as “final solution”, “deportation” or “genocide” are gleefully attributed to Israeli policies.

## Recommendations

While any form of demonization should be avoided, it proves counterproductive to deny serious, even structural, violations of Palestinian rights. It is of course absurd to assume that these violations constitute a *reason* or even a *justification* for antisemitism because – as is well known – genuine antisemites will use any pretext to demonstrate their passion. But denial is not the answer. We have to establish a legitimate discourse that reflects realities on the ground, is guided by a perspective of equality and justice for both sides and takes historical responsibilities seriously into account. Such a discourse has to be distinguished from mechanisms of projection which use the drama in Israel/Palestine in order to feed old hatreds or serve new identity constructions. We have to denounce such patterns not only because of their self-centred and projective character but also because they tend to perpetuate mutual stigmatizations, violence and tragedy.

## Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Many observers, including former prime minister Ariel Sharon, attribute the emergence of a “New Antisemitism” to the increased presence of Muslims in Europe. According to the problematic assumptions associated with this term, implicitly or explicitly they support theories and practices directed against an assumed “Muslim” threat. In the name of combating terrorism, policies are endorsed which establish a link between Islam and/or Muslims collectively and violence. As mentioned above such generalizations tend to ignore specific circumstances, reasons and tensions which explain outbreaks of violence much better than just the adherence to a certain religion. Unfortunately such reasoning plays directly into the hands of a xenophobic Right which would use any

pretext to advocate a “return” to racial and cultural purity. Thus Islamophobia does not constitute an antithesis to Antisemitism but, regrettably, a legitimate or illegitimate brainchild of the “eternal hatred”. This observation can be demonstrated by taking a closer look at the spectre of “Eurabia”, by focusing on *analogies*, without of course disregarding significant differences between the objective situations of past Jewish and present Muslim communities.

In disturbing analogy to notorious conspiracy theories it is assumed that sometime, somewhere a decision was made to invade Europe with Muslim immigrants in order to Islamize and subjugate the old continent. Those immigrants who actually belong to the poorest and least powerful strata of society are presented as mighty and capable of turning the non-Muslim populations into “dhimmis”, a term signifying the subordinate status of Christians and Jews in classical Islam.

The same immigrants, many of them living for generations in Europe, are characterized as incapable of integration into the “host” societies because of their religion, culture or race and not because they either face a certain kind of hostility or (rather few) just do not want to give up their “identity”. No wonder that proponents of the “Eurabia” threat, in accordance with the extreme Right, re-interpret multiculturalism as suicide, lament a demographic decline of the superior “white” human species and demand either over-assimilation or expulsion. It is bewildering to see heirs of Nazi collaboration celebrate the “Judeo-Christian tradition” (which was invented after the Holocaust) as a bulwark against “Islam”. Recently a left-wing variation of Islamophobia was added to the arsenal of hostility. It is reminiscent of the antisemitic trends during the Age of Enlightenment when Judaism was attacked by secularists primarily as representing medieval obscurantism and/or reactionary (anti-) social behaviour.

Both variants see “Islam” as monolithic and essentialist. They focus only on negative features (which of course exist) and generalize them. They quote from the Koran as antisemites liked to quote from the Talmud in order to “explain” “Jewish” behaviour and “prove” the viciousness of Judaism. And just as there were some Jewish chief witnesses used to confirm antisemitic prejudice, we have today some Muslims who are exploited in a similar way. Even the “double loyalty” refrain has made it into Islamophobic discourse.

In disturbing analogy only negative characteristics are associated with the presence and/or immigration of Muslims, no potential for creative interchange, no chance for mutual benefit – only a threat to “European values” which are constructed and re-invented as an antithesis to “Islam”.

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# Unifying Islam in Europe: A Comparison of the French and German Approaches to Their Muslim Minorities

*Albrecht Fuess*

## The Formal Framework for Religious Communities in Germany and France

Germany has been religiously divided for centuries. This is due to the historical fact that in Germany neither of the two large Christian churches managed to gain the upper hand since the Reformation. After the stipulations of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 (Westfälischer Frieden), which ended the religiously motivated Thirty Years War, a system of compromise and religious freedom was agreed upon.<sup>1</sup> The development of a confessionally divided Germany also prevented German nationalism from clearly allying itself with any one Christian denomination. To the present day, a German cannot be classified automatically as Catholic or Protestant.

This religious undecidedness is mirrored by article 140 of the German constitution of 1949, which stipulates that there is no state church in Germany and religious communities should administer themselves independently within the framework of the existing law. Although this means in principle a clear separation between the state and the religious communities, they can more closely interact as partners if the religious community is recognized as a “corporation under public law” (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*). Such “corporations” benefit from certain specific rights: the state levies “church taxes” on their behalf; the corporations can employ people according to the status of a civil servant of the state; they participate in the federal agency censoring publications which are harmful to young people; they are recognized as official institutions caring for the young and the elderly; they receive land in order to construct religious buildings in new projects of urban and rural development; and they receive numerous tax privileges. There are further aspects of the rights of a “corporation under public law” where the state and

the religious community function as partners, as in the areas of pastoral care for the military or faith-based religious education in school, which the state provides in state schools in accordance with the religious community.<sup>2</sup>

Every religious community which already enjoyed the status of a “corporation under public law” in the constitution of the Weimar Republic from 1919 was automatically granted the same rights in 1949 after World War II. This meant at that time the Federal Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. Article 140 of the constitution states in addition that “other religious communities can be granted such rights, if they apply and if their constitution and the number of their members allows predicting the permanence of this religious community in Germany”.<sup>3</sup>

Some smaller religious communities, mainly outside the Christian spectrum, have been granted these rights over the past decades, but no Muslim community yet. The overall state-church system does not really make a clear-cut separation between state and religious communities. Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and jurists of state law therefore describe the German system as a “limping separation” between church and state.<sup>4</sup>

The first impression of the French system is that it is less complex. This might have something to do with the fact that in France there was never such thing as a religiously mixed system. The Catholic Church was always the dominant, almost exclusive factor in the religious sphere. Therefore the contemporary church-state relationship in France emerged via the struggle of French officials with the Catholic Church. Other groups remained marginal. The evolution towards a secularization of the society gained momentum after the French Revolution of 1798 and culminated in the law of laicity (*Laïcité*) of 1905 which provides for a strict separation between church and state in France.

The law recognizes the freedom of religion and the freedom of worship. Article 2 of the law states additionally that the French Republic does not provide salaries for church employees or other forms of subvention.<sup>5</sup> Churches which had been in the possession of the state before 1905 were to remain in it and the state had to finance their maintenance. The only exception is the region of Alsace-Lorraine as it had been under German rule in 1905. The religious situation of Alsace-Lorraine is still administered according to the concordat which was agreed upon by Napoleon and the Vatican in 1801. This stipulates that priests must be paid by the state and that the University of Strasbourg houses Catholic and Protestant theological faculties. However, Muslims were not included in this concordat and cannot join it now.

The following French organizations are recognized by the state as official partners in religious matters: the Catholic Conference of Bishops, the Protestant Federation, the Interepiscopal Orthodox Committee, the Representative

Council of the Jewish Institutions and the Buddhist Union.<sup>6</sup> In 2003 a Muslim Council came into existence.

However, despite the supposed neutrality of the state, there is still strong support for the Catholic Church in the educational sector, because state-funded religious schools do exist in France as a result of an agreement between the Catholic Church and the state at the beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore large numbers of Catholic “free schools” exist in France, besides a few Protestant and Jewish ones, educating almost one-fifth of the school-age population and being permitted to teach religion in school.<sup>7</sup>

The Catholics still constitute the largest religious community in France. The last census which asked about religious adherence was carried out in 1872.<sup>8</sup> Therefore proportions are hard to determine, but it is estimated that 82 percent of the sixty-one million French are Catholics. The second largest religious group is the Muslim community with approximately 8 percent of the population (four to five million) mostly of North African origin, followed by Jews and Protestants with around 1.3 percent each.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years it has been asked whether the Laïcité should be reformed in order to adjust to the new situation, meaning especially the Muslim immigration. But nothing has happened in this regard. The leading French political class is still very much committed to the Laïcité. A declaration of the State Council from 2004 reads: “*Un siècle après la séparation des Églises et de l’État, le concept de laïcité n’est pas contesté en tant que tel [et] fait maintenant partie du “patrimoine” national Français*” (“A century after the separation of church and state the concept of Laïcité remains undisputed in its functions and forms an integral part of the French national heritage”). The year 2005 was heralded as the year of the Laïcité because of the hundredth anniversary. Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin described the Laïcité in December 2004 as “the grammar which helps the different religions to talk to each other” (“*[Elle] est la grammaire qui permet aux différentes religions de parler entre elles*”).<sup>10</sup>

## Muslims and the State in Germany and France since the 1960s

The number of Muslims in Germany has increased more than two hundredfold over the past forty years. In 1961 around fifteen thousand Muslims were living in Germany; today there are around 3.2-3.5 million. Approximately 1.8 million are of Turkish nationality. The second largest group is the 800,000-900,000 German Muslims who are mostly of Turkish origin. The exact number of German converts is unknown but clearly accounts for less than 1 percent of the Muslim population. Around Ninety-five percent of the Muslims in Germany derive from non-Arab countries.<sup>11</sup>

In the case of Germany, labour migration was the main pull factor for the Muslim community. Treaties were concluded with several countries in the 1960s in order to maintain a steady influx of workers into Germany. Finally, the recruitment bureaus for the “guest workers” were closed down in 1973 after the oil crisis and the “invited” immigration stopped.<sup>12</sup>

A special problem in recruiting the “guest workers” lay in the fact that especially illiterate and unskilled workers from the countryside were recruited, because low-skilled workers were needed for factories or street-cleaning work. Therefore there were medical tests to ensure that the migrants were in good health, but no academic tests whatsoever. Thus the migrants not only had cultural problems because of their different religious background, but typical social problems of the underclass. This combination made their integration into German society even more difficult.

A great disadvantage for believing Muslims who were looking for a Muslim religious infrastructure after their migration to Germany was that there were no theological experts among the first-generation migrants. Moreover, the migrants did not understand the German legal system at all, especially not the law for founding associations. They therefore imported imams from their home countries to cater to their spiritual needs. This entailed a high financial burden and led to multiple conflicts between the Muslim families in Germany and these “import imams”, because the Muslims in Germany led, according to these imams, a very impious life.

Muslims initially had to organize as a “registered association”, like sports clubs. Lemmen remarks in this context: “The Muslim community is more than an association in the sense of the German association law. They can obtain legal capacity through building an association, but this can only be a provisional arrangement for the time being in order to be able to act as a legal person in the German society”.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile some of these early associations founded umbrella organizations. The Sunnis, for their part, have such a variety of associations that they have not yet found enough common ground to form a single, united one, as the German state desired. Therefore the history of organized Islam in Germany is a history of foundings, fusions and repeated separations.

Development towards a unified organization is apparently much easier for a homogeneous group with a single programme like the Turkish Alevis, who are a splinter group of Turkish Islam and count around four hundred thousand followers in Germany. The “registered association” called the Alevi Community in Germany has recently published the book *The Alevis: A Faith Community in Germany*. It constitutes a kind of founding document of a new religion. It is noteworthy that the Alevis published this in Germany as they would have difficulty publishing a similar work in Turkey. In Germany the Alevi creed was officially recognized in the summer of 2005 by several federal

states after an evaluation by religious and legal experts as a religion in its own right. In North Rhine-Westphalia there will be Alevi religious education in public schools within the next two years.<sup>14</sup>

However, for the much larger and more heterogeneous group of Sunni Muslims no similar development can be predicted for the near future. The landscape of associations is far too fragmented; moreover, the majority of Muslims in Germany do not belong to any kind of association at all. Among the organized Sunni Muslims the spectrum ranges from the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institution of Religion (Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion, DITIB), which is closely allied to the Turkish state, to associations which are clearly opposed to the Turkish state such as the Islamic Council (Islamrat). The large association Milli Görüş (“National Religious View”) is close to former Turkish prime minister Necmettin Erbakan; the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (Verein Islamischer Kulturzentren, VIKZ) strongly emphasizes traditional religious education and clearly opposes the innovations which were introduced in the Turkish educational sector by the revolution launched by the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk.<sup>15</sup>

Besides these Turkish-dominated associations there is an umbrella organization, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland), whose members are drawn more from Arab Muslims. It also has Shiite organizations as members, such as the Islamic Centre of Hamburg, which has close ties to the Iranian government. From 1978 to 1980 the centre was headed by Mohammed Khatami, who later became president of Iran. In any case, the Shiite element in Germany is not very strong and counts around 220,000 people who mostly are of Iranian origin.

Some of the Muslim organizations in Germany have applied in the past to be recognized as “corporations under public law”. The first application was made in the 1950s by the German Muslim League; another was made in 1994 by the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres and the Islamic Council of Germany.<sup>16</sup> So far all these applications were unsuccessful. German officials had reasonable doubts as to whether the organizations really had a long-lasting perspective (*Gewährleistung der Dauer*) and about the number of Muslims the specific organization represented. The state would have preferred having just one responsible party, as in the case of the Protestant or Catholic churches; especially Sunni Islam, however, has not formed church-like structures whatsoever throughout its history and certainly will not start to do so in Germany. Nevertheless, German authorities have often argued in the past that the main obstacle to state-Muslim relations was the lack of a unified Muslim representation. Lately, however, significant developments have occurred in the official attitude towards Muslims in Germany which will be explained later in this paper.

Turning back to France, the Muslim organizations do not have to get as involved in such legal affairs as their German counterparts. There is no privileged status for religious communities for which they could apply. All believers enjoy the general religious freedom as citizens regardless of the religious community they belong to. Still there are disadvantages for an immigrant religion like Islam in France. Muslims lacked any religious infrastructure when they came. There were no mosques and no religious specialists. They had to be imported from the countries of origin and had to be privately financed. This constituted a disadvantage in regard to the Christians and the established Jewish communities. Although Muslim migrants formed associations, it represented a major obstacle that foreigners were not allowed to do so, therefore they always needed French Muslim nationals to found these associations. When this restriction was rescinded in 1981, it led to a sharp rise in the founding of Islamic associations.<sup>17</sup>

As in Germany, in France the associations are divided mainly along ethnic or ideological lines and hardly cooperate with one another. The National Federation of Muslims in France (Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France, FNMF) has close links to Morocco; the Mosque of Paris (La Mosquée de Paris) and its affiliated associations are subsidized by the Algerian government; the Turks from the Committee of Coordination of Muslim Turks in France (Comité de coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France, CCMTF) is the French version of the German DITIB and has close ties to the Turkish state. Somewhat less ethnically specified is the highly influential Union of Muslim Organisations of France (Union des Organisations Islamiques de France, UOIF), but it is said to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood. One distinct aspect of the Muslim presence in France is that the countries of origin of many French Muslims have been colonized for decades by their new homeland.<sup>18</sup> Therefore the painful consequences of colonialism still play an important role in the relationship between Muslims and the French state.

Still, the French expected that the Muslim migrants would confine their religious practice to their private homes. The goal was to achieve a high degree of “Laïcité” in the behaviour of these migrants. Official bodies took the frequency of daily prayers as an index of assimilation into French society. In other words, the better-integrated Muslim was the one who prayed less.<sup>19</sup>

## Recent Developments in the Process of Unifying Islam in France and Germany

Once French officials realized that the religiosity of the Muslim migrants would not simply go away, they tried to fit the Muslims into the existing framework of the state-church relationship. First of all, the state tried to negotiate a unified organization among the religiously divided Muslim community, but

these attempts failed. Therefore the state decided to take action itself towards the founding of a representative body of French Muslims, the French Council of the Muslim Religion (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, CFCM). This CFCM would centrally coordinate the spiritual needs of French Muslims such as mosque-building, going on the pilgrimage and so on. Last but not least it would be the official partner to which the state would turn in case any problematic issue arises concerning Muslims in France.

Under the pressure of the then interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, elections were first held in April 2003 in 995 mosque parishes. The number of delegates who were assigned to each mosque depended on the spatial size of the mosque, as no lists of actual members of the mosque parishes existed. At the same time Sarkozy insisted that the moderate *Recteur de la Grande Mosquée de Paris*, Dalil Boubakeur, should become the first head of the newly elected council, regardless of the actual outcome of the vote.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately his organization obtained only six of the forty-one seats that were contested in the election.<sup>21</sup> Probably Sarkozy feared that someone else than Boubakeur would alienate the French majority public. Boubakeur is for example in favour of the head-covering ban in public schools whereas most other Muslim leaders in France are opposed to it.

Anyhow, contradictory interests between the Muslim organizations and conflicts within the associations themselves have largely hindered the work of the first elected CFCM, and since the second election in 2005 things have become even worse. Boubakeur remained president, but there was intense strife within the largest organization, the National Federation of Muslims in France which had gained nineteen of the forty-three available seats.<sup>22</sup> The problem concerned the question of official leadership of the National Federation of Muslims in France (FNMF). At a certain point two different men claimed to be the legal president of the organization. The quarrels lasted more than a year. The CFCM therefore was paralyzed and no work could be done until this problem was settled in September 2006.<sup>23</sup> The history of the CFCM since 2003 suggests it is more than likely that similar incidents will occur in the future.

What is very interesting in this context, though, is that in the process of constituting the CFCM it was openly asked whether the concept of *Laïcité* should not be adjusted when dealing with the Muslim community. Like many other European politicians Sarkozy had suspicions about activities of dubious Koran schools in the backwaters of urban slums. He was also worried about their finances which often came from abroad. In 2004 Sarkozy proposed changing the law of 1905 in respect to the financing of mosques which he thought should be erected openly in city centres. He argued that the Muslims had not encountered a religious infrastructure when they immigrated and this was unfair compared to the Catholics who profited from an infrastructure

dating back before 1905. Moreover, Sarkozy demanded public funding for the Muslim community as many Muslims were poorer than the rest of the society.<sup>24</sup>

His successor as interior minister, Dominique de Villepin, strongly opposed such plans. He did not want to initiate changes in the law of *Laïcité*, instead opting in March 2005 for the instalment of an Islamic foundation which was to be controlled by the Public Finance Administration (*La Caisse des Depots*). This foundation would serve to construct and maintain religious buildings, ensure the education of future imams and finance the administrative affairs of the CFCM. The French state started the foundation by depositing a symbolic sum of €800,000 in the account of the foundation. The foundation was thereafter to profit from donations from France and abroad which should then be spent under the control of the state. This public initiative encountered protest among Muslims in France. Fouad Alaoui, secretary of the conservative Union of Muslim Organisations of France accused Villepin of trying to nationalize and control Islam in France through this project.<sup>25</sup> In any case, like the CFCM the foundation has not yet properly functioned.

In the case of Germany there was never really an attempt to initiate the unification of Islamic organizations from above. Nevertheless, for many years officials would have wanted such a unification to be carried out by the Muslims themselves. In order to meet such an expectation the last attempt at such a unification process was initiated by the Central Council of Muslims and the Islamic Council. In February 2005 they invited several other umbrella organizations to Hamburg in order to form a *Schura Deutschland* (=German Muslim Council) within a year.<sup>26</sup>

However, as could be expected, they have not yet achieved their unification and rumour has it that the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres has already left the project. The Turkish-sponsored Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institution of Religion (DITIB) did not take part from the beginning as they want to be recognized by themselves as a “corporation under public law” and claim to speak for all Muslims in Germany.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these attempts by the Muslim organizations, there has been one other notable recent development. Interior Minister Schäuble invited fifteen representatives of the Muslim community and fifteen representatives of local, federal and governmental institutions to Berlin for a so-called Islam Conference in September 2006. Besides the four large Muslim organizations and the Alevis, ten individual Muslim personalities from different backgrounds were invited. The scope of the invitations went beyond organized Islam in Germany in order to represent the majority of Muslims in the country. Not all Muslims belong to the organizations and many are not religious at all. The aim of the conference was to work for a better integration of Muslim migrants. “How can

we make it that the Muslims in Germany will come to see themselves more and more as German Muslims?” the minister asked.<sup>28</sup>

Of course such initiatives have been accelerated by the threat of terror which has reached Europe in recent years. But there are other urgent matters which also indicate a need for an Islam Conference. For example the question of Islamic religious education is high up on the agenda as there are some schools in certain areas of Germany where Muslim pupils constitute the majority. Other religious groups are already granted such rights due to their legal status, and the introduction of Islamic religious education in public schools would mean equal treatment for Muslim pupils.<sup>29</sup>

Even if matters of education are within the federal states’ responsibility, it represents an important sign when the German interior minister openly propagates its introduction and in fact many federal states have started introducing Islamic religious education in public schools on a trial basis in recent years. The German Islam Conference has, according to Schäuble, a further general aim of stating “where we want to be in five, ten or thirty years and how we get there”.<sup>30</sup> Therefore the Islam Conference project with its related sub-projects and roundtables will last for a period of two to three years before a final declaration is made. What is very interesting, though, is that German officials are no longer openly demanding a unification of the German Muslim organizations before engaging in talks about state-Muslim relations. Certainly they would like such an association, but there will be no pressure from above as in France. The plural structure of Islam in Germany has been recognized; in this context the *Innensenator* of Berlin (Interior Minister of the Federal State of Berlin) Eckhart Körting said: “Let a thousand flowers blossom – the important thing is that they open up”.<sup>31</sup>

These efforts by the German government are mostly perceived as very positive by the Muslim side, even though German Muslim organizations would have preferred that the state talk exclusively to them and they contest the right of some Muslim participants to speak on behalf of believing Muslims. Anyhow, despite the Islam Conference the state-Muslim relationship still has a long way to go to reach the same legal standards which are granted to other religious groups in Germany. In the long run one might even expect that several different Muslim organizations will be recognized separately as “corporations under public law” in order to mark their religious diversity. German law allows such a practice as can be seen in the case of the Christian communities.

## Conclusion: Neither Eurabia nor Euroislam

Many aspects concerning the Muslim presence are so far exclusively dealt with on the national level. There is no overall European approach to these questions. Another example is the issue of the headscarf, which ranges from very liberal in Britain (such as official headscarves for Muslim policewomen) through the somewhat indecisive German model, where state teachers are not allowed to wear it in some federal states, to the total ban on headscarves for teachers and pupils in France. It seems that European states try to fit their respective Muslim communities within the existing legal and social framework concerning religious communities which developed hundred years ago, even though the overall composition of the religious groups dealing with the state has totally changed since then. What is notable, then, is a nationalization of Islam in European countries instead of the development of a Eurabia, Euroturkia, Eurosouthasia or Euroislam. A Euroislam would entail a consensus among European countries about how to deal with religion in general, but we are far from such a common approach.

It must be kept in mind as well that there is currently a dominance of specific ethnic Muslim groups in many European countries such as the Turks in Germany, Arabs in France and South Asians in Britain. This ethnic variance of Islam in European countries also furthers the process of the nationalization of Islam in Europe.

There will be a German Islam or Islam in Germany which will be in practice quite different from its French counterpart. Of course that does not mean theological differences, but social and cultural distinctions will emerge even more than nowadays.

Comparing the French and the German approach, it appears that the latter allows a more flexible integration of immigrant religions than the somewhat severe concept of *Laïcité* that offers no basis for state subsidies for new religious communities. However, Muslims need to know that they are equally treated in religious affairs. Such respect is important but represents only one aspect of the integration of Muslim minorities.

The social aspects of integration are far more important and should not be downplayed whatsoever. Both in France and Germany the Muslims largely belong to the lower social stratum. Therefore better access to education, active participation in society's affairs and a realistic outlook for work opportunities are the key elements of integration and should be accompanied by legal equality in the religious sector. Finally, both sides need a large measure of patience and calm. Not every headscarf is the end of the Occident as we know it and the Western media is not anti-Islamic per se. The history of Muslim migration is only over forty years old and it will take many more decades until the Muslim migrants' integration into, and complete acceptance by, European societies.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Uhle, Arnd: *Staat – Kirche – Kultur*, Berlin 2004, 109.
- <sup>2</sup> Lemmen, Thomas: *Muslime in Deutschland. Eine Herausforderung für Kirche und Gesellschaft*, Baden-Baden 2001, 183.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.
- <sup>4</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26.09.06.
- <sup>5</sup> Nielsen, Jørgen: *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh<sup>3</sup> 2004, 13.
- <sup>6</sup> [www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/STZS3V,0,Staat\\_und\\_Religion\\_in\\_Europa\\_im\\_Vergleich.html](http://www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/STZS3V,0,Staat_und_Religion_in_Europa_im_Vergleich.html) <06.12.06>
- <sup>7</sup> Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, 22. So far no Islamic school has met the expectations of the French authorities such as a high standard of learning and minimal sanitary requirements in order to qualify for similar public funding. There are, however, several privately funded Islamic schools, see: C. J. Soper and J. S. Fetzer, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, Cambridge 2005, 86.
- <sup>8</sup> Mollenhauer, Daniel: “Symbolkämpfe um die Nation. Katholiken und Laizisten in Frankreich (1871-1914)”, in: *Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz Gerhardt Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche, Frankfurt 2004, 202.
- <sup>9</sup> [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de), <20.12.06>
- <sup>10</sup> [http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/information/les\\_dossiers\\_actualites\\_19/reaffirmer\\_principe\\_laicite\\_68/](http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/information/les_dossiers_actualites_19/reaffirmer_principe_laicite_68/), <17.11.06>.
- <sup>11</sup> Şen, Faruk and Aydın, Hayrettin: *Islam in Deutschland*, Munich 2002, 2; [www.bmi.bund.de](http://www.bmi.bund.de), <05.12.06> (Homepage of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior); [www.remid.de](http://www.remid.de) <05.12.06> (Homepage of the Religious Studies Media Service).
- <sup>12</sup> Lemmen, *Muslime in Deutschland*, 35.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 52f.
- <sup>14</sup> [www.islam.de](http://www.islam.de) (10.08.05), <5.12.06>
- <sup>15</sup> Lemmen, *Muslime in Deutschland*, 65.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.
- <sup>17</sup> Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, 13.
- <sup>18</sup> Manfrass, Klaus: “Islam in Frankreich. Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Innen- und Außenpolitik”, in: *Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz Gerhardt Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche, Frankfurt 2004, 303.
- <sup>19</sup> Bowen, John R.: “Islam in/of France: Dilemmas of Translocality”, paper presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Europeanists, Chicago, 14-16 March 2002, 6, <http://www.cerisciencespo.com/archive/mai02/artjrb.pdf>, <15.11.2005>
- <sup>20</sup> Amiraux, Valérie: “CFCM: A French Touch”, in: *ISIM-Newsletter*, 12 (2003), 24f.
- <sup>21</sup> [www.cfcmtv.com](http://www.cfcmtv.com), <6.12.06> (Homepage of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman).
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> [www.le-monde.fr](http://www.le-monde.fr) (19.09.2006), <06.12.06>
- <sup>24</sup> Sarkozy, Nicolas: *La République, les Religions, L’Espérance*, Paris 2004, 112.
- <sup>25</sup> <http://lnmf.net/article.php?sid=426,23.11.2005>, <06.12.2006> (Homepage of La Ligue Nationale des Musulmans de France, LNMF).
- <sup>26</sup> *Rheinischer Merkur*, 28.07.05.
- <sup>27</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 08.02.05.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.09.06.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.09.06
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.09.06.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.09.2006.

# Lafif Lakhdar: A European Muslim Reformist

*Menahem Milson*

Lafif Lakhdar is a Tunisian intellectual living in Paris. The name Lafif Lakhdar is the French transcription of his Arabic name, “Al-‘Afif al-Akhdar.” He is one of the foremost reformist intellectuals in the Arab world today. His articles are published regularly on the liberal websites Elaph and Middle East Transparent, and subsequently are posted by dozens of other reform-oriented sites. He is an outspoken and relentless critic of Islamism and Islamist terrorism.

On 24 October 2004, the liberal Arab websites [www.elaph.com](http://www.elaph.com) and [www.mettransparent.com](http://www.mettransparent.com) published a manifesto written by Arab liberals – among them Lafif Lakhdar – in which they petition the United Nations to establish an international tribunal for the prosecution of terrorists and people and institutions that incite to terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The special significance of this petition was that it not only spoke of terrorism and terrorists in general terms, but specifically mentioned by name a number of leading Islamist clerics as promoters of terrorism who should be prosecuted at the tribunal – among them, the prominent and media-savvy Islamist Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, one of the leading authorities of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is not surprising then that the banned Tunisian Islamist movement Al-Nahda, headed by Sheikh Rashid al-Ghannushi, has declared Lafif Lakhdar an apostate, which many Islamists understand as a call for his assassination.<sup>2</sup>

Lafif Lakhdar was born in 1934 to a poor peasant family in northeastern Tunisia. Of the nine children in his family, seven died in infancy, with only him and one brother surviving. Because of the family’s poverty, his only schooling was half a year in a French school and Koran studies in the village. When he grew up, he went to the Al-Zaytouna religious university, where not only were studies free of tuition, but which also offered room and enough board to get by. Afterwards he studied law, and practiced law for a number of years. In 1958, he represented a Tunisian oppositionist who was tried, convicted and put to death, following which Lafif Lakhdar’s movement was restricted by the police. In 1961, he fled from Tunisia to Paris, where he joined the circle of Algerian FLN leader Ahmad Ben Bella’s supporters. Eventually, when Ben

Bella was elected president of Algeria, Lakhdar became one of his closest advisers. When Ben Bella was deposed in 1965, Lakhdar fled Algeria, and spent several years wandering throughout Europe and the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1960s, Lafif Lakhdar was in Jordan and was close to the PLO leadership. In 1970 he moved to Beirut, where he was a prominent figure in Marxist and left-wing circles. In his own words, hunger had made him into a socialist. However, the civil war in Lebanon brought about a rift between him and his onetime left-wing associates, for he could not accept their support for the forces which undermined and threatened to destroy the only democracy in the Arab world. He then returned once more to Paris, where he lives to this day.

In 2005, a study of Lafif Lakhdar's thought was published in Beirut under the title *The Devil's Advocate*. The author, Shaker Nabulsi, explains that he took the title from one of Lafif Lakhdar's articles in which he describes himself as the devil's advocate, explaining that he is not only ready to defy common wisdom but also to constantly challenge his own views in search of the truth.

Lafif Lakhdar's views on Islam and Muslims in Europe stem from his views on the general question of the relation between religion and state on the one hand, and his position on the need for reform in Islam on the other. A paper he sent to be read at the "Congress on Modernity and Arab Modernization", which was held in Beirut from 30 April-2 May 2004, is an effective summary of his views on these issues.<sup>4</sup> The article's main focus is on the need to transform education in the Arab world – education in general and religious education in particular – at all levels of schooling. This emphasis on education is a central feature of Lakhdar's thought. In a paraphrase of Jean Piaget's quip that the French educational system turns the genius into the talented and the talented into the mediocre, he said that Arab-Islamic education – with the exception of the Tunisian school system – turns the peace-loving into an aggressor and the aggressor into a terrorist.

According to Lakhdar, the reason that Arab-Islamic elites, throughout the Arab world, opt for this kind of religious education is that the political elites in the Arab world, who lack democratic social legitimacy, compensate for this deficiency by promoting Islamist education, which by nature is anti-modern and anti-rationalist.

For Lafif Lakhdar secularism is the very basis of a healthy society. It is not the only prerequisite, but it is certainly an indispensable one. He defines secularism as the separation of religion from politics. He distinguishes three categories of countries: theocracy, the secular state, and countries in a state of transition between the two. According to Lakhdar, theocracy was widespread during the Middle Ages, and while it is extant in the Christian world today only

in the Vatican, in the Islamic world there are several theocracies: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and until 2002, the Taliban state in Afghanistan. Most Islamic countries, though, are in a state of transition from theocracy to a secular state.<sup>5</sup> Lakhdar says:

A state in transition from theocracy to secularism is one whose constitution determines that the Shari`a [Islamic religious law] is the first source of legislation....

Women and non-Muslims in this state of transition are second-class citizens, and sometimes even zero-class citizens. For example, a woman is forbidden to run for the presidency or even for a lesser office, because in many Islamic countries women are still considered as lacking the intelligence needed for governing, and lacking the religious standing needed to perform religious ritual. Non-Muslim citizens are still treated as *dhimmis*....

According to Lafif Lakhdar, Arab and Muslim countries cannot escape becoming secular. The direction of historical development is towards secularism, which is the hallmark of modernity. Muslims are destined like the rest of humanity to adopt modernity and, as a result, secularism. He writes:

The separation of the sacred and the mundane is a consequence of modernity. The farther back we go in history, the more we see that the separation of the two is the rare exception, while the rule is that they are tied together, particularly among primitive tribes.

The Islamists' psychological slavery to their forefathers – that is, to the Prophet, his Companions, and their followers – paralyzes their minds no less than ancestor worship [paralyzes] the mind of primitive [tribes]. The divine logic brought by the forefathers is everything, while the human logic of our minds is nothing....

So far, secularism has failed in the attempt to make headway in the Arab world, because Islam has not yet undergone the necessary religious reform that Judaism and Christianity underwent in Europe. A religion that has undergone reform is a modern religion that recognizes the separation of religion and state, and agrees to restrict itself to the religious sphere, with the state being responsible for mundane matters.

The second reason for the failure of secularism to make headway [in the Arab world] as a complete political system is the cowardice of the political leaders. Islam did not undergo reform in Turkey... yet despite this, thanks to the leadership of the Muslim Kemal Atatürk, the Ottoman theocracy – the Caliphate – came to an end, and on its ruins arose a secular state that is not ashamed of its secular identity.

Lakhdar highlights the role of the leader Kemal Atatürk in extricating his country from a medieval form of regime into a modern one. In other words, Lakhdar suggests that the Arab countries would be better off if their leaders had the courage to establish secular regimes as did Kemal Atatürk. Here we can see Lakhdar's dual role: on the one hand, he is a scholarly observer of social history who describes what he sees as the inevitable outcome of social development (namely, secularism); on the other, he is a passionate reformist who is anxious to have secularism now and castigates the Arab leaders for not choosing the path to progress.

Lafif Lakhdar rejects the argument that secularism is anti-religious. He says those who make this claim are either ignorant, or else disingenuous – like some of the Islamist leaders. Secular France, for instance, does not prevent the construction of mosques in the country.

By the same token, he asserts that there is nothing to prevent the secular state from offering religious education – provided that it is a modern religious education that has undergone reform. For religious education to be modernized and reformed, he adds that: “the pupil must study religion with the help of modern sciences: comparative history of religions, sociology of religions, psychology, religious anthropology, interpretation of sacred texts, and philosophy – in order to develop critical thought in the next generations.

In Tunisia, he explains, students at the religious Al-Zaitouna University learn Islamic and modern philosophy throughout all four years of study. Those studying the sciences, including medical students, learn modern philosophy throughout their studies. There is nothing like philosophy and the humanities to strengthen thought against the Islamists' religious-political propaganda. This kind of reformed, modern religious education is not merely desirable for the secular state in the Arab and Islamic region – it is a necessity. This, he believes, is the antidote to religious extremism.

Lafif Lakhdar emphasizes that secularism does not mean a rupture with Islam. He explains that it is a break with autocracy and theocracy in the Muslim world, but on the other hand is a renewal of other elements in Islam – such as the rationalist theology of the Mu'tazila, Muslim philosophical thought that subjected holy texts to interpretation by the human mind, and Sufism, that is, Islamic mysticism.

A self-declared secularist, Lakhdar, does not deny a role for religion in modern life so long as it is a personal, private – and of course, voluntary – form of religion. He writes that he admires the mystical experience in general, and is particularly attracted to the writings of the great medieval Islamic mystic Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi. In this respect Lakhdar's attitude is reminiscent of that of the late Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz.

In a recent interview, Lafif Lakhdar summarized his views on the crucial issue facing Europe and Muslims in Europe – namely, integration vs. multiculturalism:<sup>6</sup>

Within Islam in Europe, there are two conflicting trends. [The first is] the trend that insists on the Muslims' cultural independence and separation from European societies and preservation of all Islamic customs – including those which stand in contradiction with the universal human values prevalent in contemporary human societies, such as European ones. The other trend, to which I myself belong, says the opposite: it insists on the cultural integration of European Muslims into European societies, and the adoption of Europe's universal cultural values, in order to modernize their traditional values, most of which are not adapted to the needs of our time.

This necessary integration does not mean that they give up their spiritual values, but only those customs that contradict the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other international conventions that derive from it...

Lakhdar states that the first trend – which may be termed the communalist trend – is dominant. He also notes that they refuse to speak about “European Muslims” and insist on referring to “Muslims in Europe” so as to highlight the separation of cultural identity between Muslims and Europeans, whereas he himself purposefully speaks of “European Islam”.

According to Lakhdar, the Islamists have attained their dominant position among Muslims in Europe through a virtual monopolization of the media – not just the Arabic media but also of the French and European media, which gives preference to speakers who support the communalist view – such as Tariq Ramadan – and virtually ignores the many Arab intellectuals who are in favour of integration (such as Taher Ben Jaloun, Muhammad Arkoun, Malek Chebel and Lafif Lakhdar himself).

The flow of petrodollars strengthens the enemies of integration and allows them to establish their own print media, publish translations of Islamist preachers into European languages, and dispatch preachers of Islamism to all the poor Muslim suburbs and communities.

There is another factor operating in favour of the Islamist-anti-integrationist trend, namely, the attitude of liberal Western intellectuals. Here is how Lakhdar presents this issue: “Why do some of the European intellectuals and the English and American media support the anti-integration trend?” He answers as follows:

The first explanation is that it is the result of political demagoguery: when the right-wing is in power and it makes a decision or assumes a certain position, the left wing, that is, the opposition, automatically

opposes it, not because they are convinced that the decisions are wrong, but because they must assume a different position.

Second, the guilt feeling [on account of European colonialism] ... which affects many European intellectuals, pushes them to support the [Islamist demands that Muslim girls wear the] hijab in school or [the claim that it is all right for Muslims] on the occasion of the Muslim feast of the sacrifice, to slaughter sheep in their bathrooms, or the right of Muslim families to circumcise their daughters.

Lafif Lakhdar angrily calls this guilt-ridden approach “pathological.” He asserts: “The third reason is cultural relativism which is even more dangerous than the former two factors, because it derives from a philosophical conviction which has become prevalent in Europe, indeed in the entire western world.”

Lakhdar indignantly continues: “a sound mind recognizes that there are universal human values, such as human rights, and if one does not accept this, then every human society can become a Darwinian society, that is, a society of ‘the survival of the fittest’ and the whole world becomes a jungle ruled by the law of the jungle.”

Lakhdar explains that the religious-ideological underpinning of the separatist, communalist approach is the Islamist doctrine of *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’*. This doctrine states that Muslims must ally themselves with and have allegiance to Muslims only, and that they should dissociate themselves from all non-Muslims. The Islamists’ insistence on the hijab – a custom which Lakhdar rejects – is one of the expressions of this doctrine: Muslim women should have an appearance that differentiates them from their surrounding environment. He says that the hijab, both in Europe and in Muslim countries, is a clear expression of the subjugation and humiliation of women – an attitude that must be changed in order for Muslim societies to progress.

He rejects the criticism of the French government’s ban on the hijab in schools, criticism that often employs the language of human rights and religious freedom. Lakhdar argues that those who condemn the French policy make it appear as though there is a ban on the hijab in general – which is, of course, not the case; the ban applies only to wearing the Islamic head covering at school, but not elsewhere at home or in public. According to Lafif, the hijab in the school is a form of religious propaganda and therefore should rightly be prohibited.

A portrait of Lafif Lakhdar cannot be complete without specific mention of his insistence on full equality for women in Muslim societies. In an article on the writings of Saudi human-rights activist Wajeha al-Huwaider, in which he firmly supports her call to liberate Arab women, particularly in Saudi Arabia, he points out that there is one Arab country, Tunisia, in which women have

already achieved some degree (albeit not full) of equality thanks to the personal-status legislation passed by the late Habib Bourguiba.<sup>7</sup> This legislation has put an end to polygamy and to arbitrary divorce of women by their husbands, and has given women in Tunisia full civil political rights.<sup>8</sup> Lakhdar emphasizes that, while he agrees with Wajeha Huweidar’s criticism of the Arab regimes “that give men a free hand to treat women as their property, the real blame lies with the misogynic religious education that the young people receive in all Muslim countries, with the exception of Tunisia.”

Impressed by the speech of Bahiyya al-Hariri, the sister of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri, one month after his assassination, Lakhdar wrote an article titled “Why Shouldn’t Bahiyya al-Hariri Become Lebanon’s Indira Gandhi?”<sup>9</sup> In it he asserted: “If Lebanon really wants to reestablish its democracy, now that it has rid itself of both the Israeli and the Syrian occupation, it should inaugurate its democracy by shattering the foolish taboo – that is grounded in traditional Islamic law which was made by men and for men, and aims to deprive women of their equality to men in terms of civil rights and duties – and to abolish the medieval division of labor between the genders, which designates men for government and dominance and women for cooking and childbirth.”

## Conclusion

Lafif Lakhdar’s views on Islam in Europe are rooted in what he holds to be universal values, and which he has made his own: humanism, liberalism, democracy – all of which naturally imply women’s equality and non-discrimination on religious or ethnic grounds. He makes it no secret that he believes modern European societies to be far more advanced in these respects than Arab Muslim countries, and it is his view that the Muslim world should adopt the Western norms of democracy and separation between church and state. Hence, he is strongly in favour of full integration of Muslims into European society. In the above-mentioned recent interview, he proposed an interesting source as a model for this integration: he recommended to Muslims that they adopt none other than the old Jewish principle of *dina de-malchuta dina*, or “the law of the land is binding,” as the basis for European Islamic minority law – a daring choice indeed. Thus in form, as well as in content, Lafif Lakhdar is a courageous and original voice in contemporary Arab thought, a reformist without a hint of apologetics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP81204>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA25405>.

<sup>3</sup> See Shaker Nabulsi, *The Devil's Advocate: A Study on the Thought of al-'Afif al-Akhdar* (Beirut, 2005), pp. 25-27. [Arabic title: *Muhami al-shaytan: dirasa fi fikr al-'Afif al-Akhdar* (Beirut, 2005), pp. 25-27. ]

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/alafif\\_hadatha.htm](http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/alafif_hadatha.htm).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif\\_lakhdar\\_secularism\\_key\\_to\\_full\\_citizenship.htm](http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif_lakhdar_secularism_key_to_full_citizenship.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.elaph.com/ElaphWeb/ElaphWriter/2007/9/261964.htm>

<sup>7</sup> "Wajeha Al-Huwaider – A New Saudi Voice," [http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif\\_wajiha.htm](http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif_wajiha.htm). [Arabic]

<sup>8</sup> Lakhdar states that the only aspect discriminating against women which still remains in Tunisian law, namely the inequality between men and women in inheritance law, was preserved due to immense pressure exerted on Bourguiba by Saudi Arabia.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif\\_lakhdar\\_bahia\\_harriri\\_lebanese\\_indira\\_ghandi.htm](http://www.middleeasttransparent.com/old/texts/lafif_lakhdar_bahia_harriri_lebanese_indira_ghandi.htm)

## Appendix

*On September 8, 2007, the liberal Arab e-journal Elaph posted an interview given by prominent Arab liberal Lafif Lakhdar to MEMRI Chairman Professor M. Milson.*

*Following are excerpts from the interview:<sup>1</sup>*

**Menaheem Milson:** What is the meaning of the ideological struggle we see raging today among Muslims in Europe?

**Lafif Lakhdar:** Two basic tendencies are struggling against one another within European Islam. The first is the tendency that holds fast to Muslims' cultural independence with regard to European societies and retains Islamic traditions in their entirety – among them those that conflict with the major universal humanistic values of European societies, such as equality of the sexes, secularism, and individual liberty.

The second tendency, and the one to which I subscribe, demands the opposite: the cultural assimilation of European Muslims and those [Muslims] living in Europe into the European societies, and the adoption of [European] universal civilizational values in order to revive and renew their [own] traditional values, most of which are no longer in conformity with the times.

This assimilation, which is necessary, does not mean that they have to abandon their spiritual values or the best of their social values or their history. It only means their abandoning those traditions that are in contradiction with the values of the International Declaration of Human Rights and the other UN conventions that derive from it, such as the Convention on the Elimination of [All Forms of] Discrimination against Women, and the conventions on children's rights and the protection of minorities.

What gives cause for hope is that, according to the latest survey, the Muslims with the highest percentage of cultural assimilation in France are the Tunisians. This is due in large part to the quality of Tunisian religious education, which has nothing of the culture of hatred for "infidels", but rather a culture of moderation that Tunisians absorb through [both] the religious and the political discourses.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this is rare in the lands of Islam.

**MM:** Could you be specific about what you mean when you speak about traditions that conflict with human rights?

**LL:** The Islamic values that conflict with human rights and which Muslims everywhere, and in particular those in Europe, where women enjoy nearly full rights, are for example disdain for women and the beating of women, as Koran 4:34 commands: "Beat them." I have demanded the abrogation of this verse, i.e., that it not be put into practice, because it is no longer in conformity with the universal values of the age. This year, the Islamic Tunisian historian Mohammed Talbi also demanded its abrogation.

Likewise, we Muslims need to stop considering proliferation of children as a religious obligation. We need to stop depriving non-Muslim women who are married to Muslim men of their rights to guardianship over their children and inheritance of their Muslim spouses and children. We need to stop the sexual disfiguration of girls through circumcision. We need to stop insisting on women's inequality to men in civil rights, and polygamy, which is a catastrophe for Muslims in their countries and in the diaspora.

In France there are 30 thousand polygamous families... with an average of 14.5 children in each family. The rate of [children] failing out of school among them is very high, as are the rates of marginalization and delinquency. [On the other hand,] the average [school] success rate among families with no more than five children is close to the general French average.

The Islamists often present the counter-argument: You want to destroy us from the root! I am conscious of the people's need to be connected to their historical roots, but I propose to Muslims that they maintain a symbolic tie to their roots – for instance, the celebration of their holidays and putting in practice their spiritual values. In parallel, I propose that they develop an organic tie with modern civilization, that is, democratic institutions, and modern humanistic values and sciences. There is no future for Muslims if they remain outside of [this framework], and particularly if they are against it.

In truth, there is only... one world civilization. But there are a number of cultures that cannot be accepted [into it] unless they make their traditions, which are at times barbaric, conform to the values of human rights.

The first tendency [I spoke of], which is actively promoted by the French Islamists and the traditionalist imams – and they are the overwhelming majority – is the dominant one in European Islam. [In fact,] this tendency rejects the appellation “European Islam”, preferring the appellation “Islam in Europe” in order to emphasize its cultural independence from the societies in which it lives...

**MM:** From where does the tendency opposed to assimilation draw its strength?

**LL:** The tendency opposed to assimilation draws its strength from four basic factors:

1) The religious discourse – Friday sermons, preaching, private Islamic schools, and the media – is under the monopoly of the supporters of this tendency. Even the European media – the audio-visual media in particular – which looks to be provocative, at any price – presents the supporters of this tendency on any and every occasion. [They present] people like Tareq Ramadan, and it is rare that they present Fathi Bin Salama, or Malek Chebel, or Taher Ben Jelloun, Ghaleb Bin Sheikh, the [former] Mufti of Marseilles Soheib Bin Sheikh, Yousef Siddiq, George Trabishi, Hashem Saleh, Mohammed Arkoun, or myself, and dozens of other secularist Muslim intellectuals.

The Arab media, like Al-Jazeera, Iqra, and Al-Manar, which have a large audience among European Muslims, act in the same manner. The supporters of the secularist tendency are blocked out of these media. “The Opposite Direction”, the most popular program on Al-Jazeera, has been boycotting me ever since I refuted, on the last show I was on, the claims of the holocaust-deniers.<sup>3</sup> And [Saudi] Prince Khaled Bin Sultan banned me from writing in [the Saudi-owned international Arab newspaper] *Al-Hayat* in 2001, after I insisted during an Al-Jazeera program on the necessity of international civil society intervening in order to stop the stoning of Muslim women in Iran.<sup>4</sup>

2) The second factor is the petrodollars that flow to the supporters of the tendency opposed to assimilation so that they can have their own press, translate al-Qaradawi’s books into European languages, and so that they can send preachers to the suburbs and all of the French cities to stuff the minds of Europe’s Muslims with their anti-assimilation propaganda and their incitement to violate the values of human rights.

3) The third factor is that the organization of Muslims in Europe, and especially in France, favors the tendency opposed to European Islam’s assimilation into European societies over the tendency that demands its assimilation.

4) The fourth factor is the jurisprudence of *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’*, [which states that] allegiance [must be] limited to believers, and [declares] total renunciation of the infidels (polytheists, Jews, and Christians). This jurisprudence is what played a role in forming the religious culture of Europe’s Muslims, especially first-generation ones, since they learned this in their countries, from primary school to higher [education].

Today, this is the jurisprudence broadcast by audio-visual media such as Al-Jazeera, Iqra, and Al-Manar, which have a large audience among Europe’s Muslims. It is [also] spread through Islamist and jihadist websites. The *mujahid* Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote in his book *Knights under the Banner of the Prophet* that the spread of the slogan of *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’* among the masses of the Islamic nation is Al-Qaeda’s main goal – and not the liberation of Palestine, “despite its being dear to us”.

[Al-Zawahiri writes:] “Making the masses of the Islamic nation understand *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’* will require a long time, and our enemies will not give us that time; therefore we must use jihad in Palestine as a means of making the Islamic nation understand *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’* – in other words, [to make them understand] that the Jews and the Christians are our enemies and that we must treat them as enemies, through jihad against them, until we either make them accept Islam, or until we finish them off...”

*Al-wala’ wa’l-bara’* divides humanity into “believers” and “infidels”, with the only relation between them being [a relation of] hatred and jihad – that is, war. It divides the world into “the abode of Islam” and the “abode of war”. The

abode of war, ever since the Crusader wars, has been Europe, and the abode of Islam's relation to it has been hatred of it and jihad against it. [It also requires] the total renunciation of the "infidel" inhabitants' religions, their customs in clothing and food, and their institutions, sciences, and values. [It] considers Muslims who imitate the infidels apostates who must be fought and killed.

The jurisprudence of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* forbids living in the abode of war for more than three days, unless this is necessary for trade, medical treatment, or studies "in useful branches of science that are found only in the lands of the infidels". But [even this] permission to live in the infidel lands is conditioned on the Muslim remaining devoted to his religion, taking pride in it, and hating the infidels.

Saudi students learn: "If you live in the infidel lands – in order to receive medical treatment, for studies, or for trade – you must harbor hatred for them while living amongst them." Islamist refugees in Europe carry with them *fatwas* that allow them to live in the abode of war out of necessity, on the condition that they do it harm.

The difficulty Muslims have in assimilating into non-Muslim societies is due to this culture of hatred, which they imbibe in the schools and the media in their countries. Thus it is necessary to stop training the European Islamic religious cadres in this autistic and racist jurisprudence, which is an expression of the ethnocentrism so widespread among primitive tribes and peoples.

**MM:** Why do you reject the thought of cultural pluralism and communitarianism?

**LL:** The [kind of] cultural pluralism that means peaceful coexistence among cultures joined by the common denominator of rationalism and humanism is a benefit to humanity. The rejection of communitarianism – i.e., the insularism of each religious group and the violation of the common human [denominator] – is the rejection of the jurisprudence of terrorism. It is the rejection of the jurisprudence of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'*, which demands that Muslims "love themselves only" and "hate the infidels". [The rejection of communitarianism] is the rejection of the *hijab*, and this [in itself] is the rejection of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'*.

The Al-Qaeda jurist Al-Qahtani wrote in his book *Al-Wala' wa'l-Bara'* that [the principle of] *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* demands that the Muslim "strive to establish God's word on earth and the rule of the *Shari'a* over every situation." The *hijab*, being an application of the *Shari'a* laws of dress, is a symbol of the *Shari'a*'s rule over every Muslim's daily life. It is also a symbol of the inferiority of the Muslim woman who is "deficient in her mind and in her religion"; and it is a symbol of her body being something shameful that must be covered as one covers things shameful. Is there any humiliation to women greater than this humiliation?

**MM:** Is the *hijab* really a religious obligation in Islam?

**LL:** The pro-*hijab* propagandists from the French Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters among those living [in France], all of whom are thoroughly infused with the jurisprudence of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'*, [become] autistic when they plug their ears against the proofs [that argue] against the *hijab*.

[For instance,] Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi [issued] a *fatwa* to the Muslim women of France and Europe [allowing them] to not wear the *hijab* – this according to the principle of Islamic jurisprudence that “necessity makes licit that which is forbidden”.

In addition, the great Egyptian jurist Justice Muhammad Sa'id Al-'Ashmawi, in his book *The Truth on the Hijab and the Authoritativeness of the Hadith*, expressed his view that the *hijab* was obligatory only for [the Prophet] Muhammad's wives. Similarly, the famous Sheikh Gamal Al-Banna, the brother of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hassan Al-Banna, said: “Islam did not impose the *hijab* on women; the jurists imposed the *hijab* on Islam”.

But in a secular society like France that has separated religion from state, it is meaningless to get into a discussion of jurisprudence. The discussion must be legal and political.

As for the legal: French secular law rejects religious propaganda in the schools. And the *hijab*, in one of its meanings, is religious propaganda for a [certain] political-religious orientation – that of Islamism.

As for the political: 67% of French citizens reject the *hijab*, according to the polls. It would be suicidal, in a democratic country like France, to not comply with the will of the French citizens who reject religious propaganda in the schools. The representatives of the Muslim minority must be crazy to think [they can] bring the mosque into the French schools... when the grandfathers and fathers of these French people took the church out of the schools in the year 1905 with the secular pact (*pacte laïque*). Such an attempt would be an inadmissible revolt against French secularism.

**MM:** What would be your answer to those who say that forbidding the *hijab* in French schools is a “violation of religious freedoms”?

**LL:** ... Religious freedom and personal freedom are legally and morally tied to responsibility, and the responsibility here is respect for French positive law and human rights – the respect that was decreed in the preamble to the 1946 Constitution. For France to respect [these] religious freedoms for Muslims would require it to violate its law and human rights. It would have to allow, for instance, a Muslim to beat his wife, circumcise his daughters, and apply *Shari'a* corporal punishment. Respect for religious freedoms is not absolute. It is conditional on respect for positive law and universal humanist values.

The French Muslim Brotherhood protested that the *hijab* law was against women's individual liberty. This is a claim that does not hold up.

First of all, the number of girls who wore the *hijab* was 1,200, according to Interior Ministry statistics. After discussions between these girls and their school principals, all but 240 girls removed the *hijab*; it seems that these 240 clung to the *hijab* on the advice of their families, who hold sympathies for the French Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the number of French Muslim girls is more than 350 thousand, it is clear that the *hijab*-wearers are a minority and that they – or, more probably, the Islamists who use them – want to impose the *hijab* on French law, on the French Constitution, and on the majority of French Muslim women.

A great number of Muslim women have internalized the Islamic jurisprudence, which was written by men and for men. This is what one French sociologist called “symbolic violence”, meaning that the victim – in this case the Muslim woman – accepts the view of her executioner.

When Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery, the slaves didn’t accept this – they refused their freedom. Should Lincoln have respected their individual freedom and taken back the abolition of slavery because the slaves had internalized it?

When [Habib] Bourguiba abolished polygamy and unilateral divorce [in Tunisia] in 1956, the majority of women rejected these laws and voted against him in the local elections. Should Bourguiba have taken back this law and left women victims of obsolete Islamic jurisprudence?

In 1964, Saudi Arabia abolished slavery, but most of the slaves refused their freedom. Should Saudi Arabia have taken back the abolition of slavery out of respect for the individual liberty of the slave?

A decision is legally and morally legitimate when it aims to increase people’s dignity and to make them less subject to the traditions of their religious or ethnic group. The abolition of slavery, the abolition of polygamy and unilateral divorce, the forbidding of the *hijab* in schools, and the forbidding of female circumcision increase the dignity of slaves and women, and make them less subject to their obsolete traditions, which the collective conscious of slaves and Muslims – male and female – have internalized. The forbidding of the *hijab* increases women’s dignity...

[Forbidding the *hijab*] gives back esteem to a woman’s body. How so? A man’s body is partly shameful – from the navel to the knee. A woman’s body is shameful in its entirety, apart from the face and the hands. Muslim women aren’t equal to Muslim men even in the value of their bodies!

One French psychoanalyst thinks that French Islamists demand [that women wear] the *hijab* because a woman’s hair makes them think of hair she has somewhere else, and this inflames their passions. This reduces women to sex. In this case, the *hijab* would then be an absurd solution to the Islamists’ sexual repression.

The subconscious meaning of this is that every woman with her hair uncovered is a whore whom any Muslim has the right to violate. This is why the Islamic jurists forbade Muslim slave-girls to wear the *hijab*, and likewise non-Muslim women – i.e., Muslims have the right to violate them whenever they want. This was the meaning of the *hijab* among the priests of Babylon in the eighteenth century B.C.E.! The woman who covered her hair was a free woman who belonged to a free Babylonian man, and no one else was allowed to violate her, whereas the woman whose hair was uncovered was a lowly woman whom it was licit to violate! Thus the historical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological meanings of the *hijab* all point to a denigration of women's dignity.

The orientation that demands that the Muslims of Europe not culturally assimilate into their societies doesn't just demand the *hijab*; some of them are also opposed to the forbidding of female circumcision – which is something that is forbidden by French law. They urge Muslim students to demand their own food – *halal* meat – in school dormitories, to refuse to attend classes on evolution because it opposes the Koran's view of creation, and to refuse to attend philosophy class, because the Muslim jurists outlawed philosophy in the twelfth century C.E. [They urge other Muslims] not to dress like the French (i.e., to wear the *hijab* and white Afghani dress); and they demand that Muslim women be treated in the hospital only by female doctors, and not male doctors, because men – and especially non-Muslim men – are forbidden to see a Muslim woman's body or to touch it.

These demands are inspired by the jurisprudence of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'*, which forbids Muslims to integrate into non-Muslim societies and to imitate Jews and Christians, “even in something that is beneficial to them”, as Ibn Taymiyya says in his book *Following the Straight Path in Opposition to the Party of Hell*, “for Allah will either give us something equivalent to it or better in this world, or else will give us compensation for it in the next world”.

There are two reasons behind the problematic nature of European Islam: the fact that there has been no reform in Islam, and the fact that Sunni Islam has not internalized its minority status [in Europe].

[As to the first reason:] Islam is still a primitive religion that has not been reformed, as has European Christianity. Nor has it been guided in the right direction, as European Judaism has been.

[As to the second reason:] Sunni Islam, which has been accustomed, for the past 15 centuries, to always being the ruling majority, still has not taken in the fact that it is a minority in Europe – and in Iraq. One of the principle reasons for terrorism in Iraq is that the Sunni minority refuses to recognize the reality of its being a minority, and the resulting fact that it does not have a monopoly on rule over the Shi'ite majority and the Kurdish minority.

The Sunni Muslim minority in Europe refuses to obey the universal laws and follow the universal values of European societies, because it subconsciously views the French majority as dhimmis who have no right to rule over their Muslim masters.

It is this mentality that, to this day, has prevented the emergence of a [branch of] Sunni jurisprudence that would give a theoretical treatment to the condition of the European Muslim minority and would present Muslims with jurisprudential rulings that would make it easier for them to conform to European laws and values.

In the Talmud there is a maxim that advises Jews that the laws of the state you live in are valid, obligatory, and apply to all. This Talmudic maxim could be a founding principle for a European Islamic minority jurisprudence that would make the European Muslim feel that he is a European citizen, and not just a temporary resident in the “abode of war”.

In truth, the Jewish minority’s cultural assimilation into the values of the French Republic presents a precedent that it would be worthwhile for French and European Muslims to follow in order to effect their assimilation into the values of the Republic.

In 1807, Napoleon convened the French Jews’ religious establishment, the Sanhedrin, in order to turn the French Jews into “proper citizens” by bringing Jewish religious law into conformity with French secular values, so that the Jews would become part of the French nation after having formerly been an insular religious community.

The Sanhedrin responded positively to Napoleon’s request, and in 1808 the institution called the Consistoire was established, and it declared that the political aspects of the Torah were no longer valid, since the Jews were no longer a nation.

In this way, all forms of religious-legal independence were foregone. In practice, [this meant] that marriages and divorces could only be concluded through the civil registry, and mixed marriages were recognized, in accordance with French civil law.

Thus French Jews were culturally assimilated into modern French society. The result was beneficial to both the Jews and to France, as the historical reality demonstrated, and this has been recognized by discerning people among French Jews – and first and foremost by Joel Mergui, the head of the Israelite Consistoire for Paris and its suburbs, who recently said of the 1808 Sanhedrin pact with Napoleon: “This founding pact instituted the Jewish community as an assimilated part of the Republic, and it remained valid for 200 years.”

“(...)The Jews of France demonstrated, under all circumstances, their three-fold loyalty as included in the Sanhedrins reply in March, 1807: 1) loyalty to the laws of the Republic; not only have the Jews of France not put this in doubt or disputed this, but they are even the defenders of these laws and

values; 2) loyalty to the nation; the Jews of France have never failed to defend their country; 3) and loyalty to their faith and their history.”

The French Muslim minorities should do as the Sanhedrin did and pronounce that they are abandoning [those Koranic] verses that are obsolete and no longer valid for their place and time, and that they are abandoning the *Shari`a*, accepting mixed marriages, and that they are adopting “the pact of three-fold loyalty”.

It appears that the French Muslim elite has begun to draw inspiration from the French Jewish minority; Ghaleb Bin Sheikh, an important member of the French [Muslim] religious elite, has said that “it goes without saying that there are passages in the Koran of a belligerent and aggressive nature... and (we need) to publicly state that the sociological ramifications of this part of the Koran are obsolete.” [As the saying goes,] heavy rain begins with a trickle.

**MM:** Why do some European intellectuals and some English and American newspapers support the orientation that is opposed to Muslims’ cultural assimilation in European societies?

**LL:** This is a strange phenomenon. In my opinion there are three reasons for it.

The first reason is [a matter of] ritual: if the right makes a decision when it is in power, or adopts a position when in the opposition, then the left has to automatically oppose it, not out of conviction that the decision or position is wrong, but just to differentiate itself...

Second: a feeling of culpability. A wide swath of European intellectuals are afflicted with what psychology terms moral masochism, that is, an unjustified feeling of culpability. Colonialism arose centuries ago, and like any historical phenomenon, it had its positive and its negative aspects. There is no objective justification for these intellectuals to support the *hijab*, or the slaughtering of the Feast of Sacrifice lamb in the bathtub, or female circumcision, or exorcising *jinn*s out of epileptics, using the Koran and beatings – sometimes to the point of death, as has actually happened in France. This support [for these phenomena] is a sick reaction the explanation for which lies in [the field of] psychology.

Third: cultural relativism. This orientation is incomparably more dangerous than the aforementioned two, because it starts out from a philosophical conviction that is nearly predominant not just in Europe, but in all of the West, as well as in the Islamic world.

The preachers of this [cultural relativism] are the Islamists, who [use it to] justify their clinging to barbaric medieval religious values and practices – such as the claims that “a woman is deficient in her mind and her religion”, as the *hadith* says; and that she is unfit for rule, because “a people who place a woman over them will not prosper”, as another *hadith* says; and that a woman is “a perpetual minor”, as Islamic jurisprudence says; and that the dissimilarity

between men and women and between Muslims and non-Muslims is an essential one, i.e., that it is a divine decision written that was written in the celestial Koran before the creation of men and women and Muslims and non-Muslims.

Thus this dissimilarity, which is the product of culture and history, is presented by [the Islamists] as something natural, or rather a universal law that is above discussion, and is above the lives of women and non-Muslims.

**MM:** What are the mainstays of the philosophy of relativism, and what are its implications?

**LL:** The philosophy of cultural relativism, especially when it claims to be an absolute truth, is a nihilist philosophy that bases itself on: 1) the denial of the existence of any fixed value, in particular the moral and humanist values that serve as a basis of human society; and 2) the equivalence of all values and the equivalence of all cultures – [the equivalence of] primitive, cannibalistic peoples, and the cultures of civilized, modern nations...

Cultural relativists turn historical relativism into an absolute ideological relativism. This is a mistake and a danger. A sound mind recognizes that there are universal human values, such as human rights. If these are not recognized and respected – be it with a minimal recognition – then society becomes Darwinist, with survival for the strongest, and the entire world turns into a jungle, ruled by the law of the jungle, and the boundaries between the values of good and evil disappear...

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> www.elaph.com, September 8, 2007. This document was translated by Daniel Lav. The editors of this volume are grateful to the Middle East Media Research Center (MEMRI) for their kind permission to publish this translation here.

<sup>2</sup> For more details on Tunisian religious education see MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis No. 339, “Liberal Values in Tunisian Islamic Schoolbooks,” March 30, 2007, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA33907>.

<sup>3</sup> See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 225, “Zionism and Nazism: A Discussion on the TV Channel Al-Jazeera,” June 6, 2001, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP22501>.

<sup>4</sup> See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 439, “Liberal Journalist Fired from Al-Hayat,” November 13, 2002, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP43902>.

# On Radical Islam in Europe: Aspects of Conflict, Attempts at Accord

*Amikam Nachmani*

*Immigration is the toughest issue in Europe right now and you know something of it here in California. People get scared of it for understandable reasons. It needs to be controlled. There have to be rules. Many of the Conventions dealing with it post WWII are out of date. All that is true. But, properly managed, immigrants give a country dynamism, drive, new ideas as well as new blood.*

*Tony Blair, August 2006<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In an article entitled “A British Jihadist”, Aatish Taseer conducts an amazing dialogue with Hassan Butt, a Muslim from Manchester who defines himself as extremist and radical. The interview implies that the source of extremism is to be found in the ideas that took root in the fertile British soil, in the weak and passive means that the United Kingdom uses when it comes to asserting its own culture and nationalism, and in the unique traits of second-generation Muslims in Europe:

**Butt:** There is a difference between a citizen who is born in a country and someone who is here on a visa or a permit. Islamically, I agree that someone who runs from the Middle East – where people like me are persecuted – and says, “Britain, I want you to protect me”, has entered a covenant of security. They say, “Look, protect my life and as a result I won’t do any harm to you”. That I agree with 100 percent, but most of our people, especially the youth, are British citizens. They owe nothing to the government. They did not ask to be born here; neither did they ask to be protected by Britain.

**Taseer:** So they’ve entered no covenant?

**Butt:** They have no covenant. As far as I'm concerned, the Islamic hukum [order] that I follow, says that a person has no covenant whatsoever with the country in which they were born.

**Taseer:** Do they have an allegiance to the country?

**Butt:** No, none whatsoever. Even the person who has a covenant has no allegiance, he just agrees not to threaten life, honour, wealth, property, mind, and so on, of the citizens around him.

Taseer: Your argument is based on these people being "British", so don't they necessarily have some loyalty to Britain?

**Butt:** No, that's what I'm saying. They have no loyalty whatsoever; they have no allegiance to the government.

**Taseer:** Perhaps not the government, but to the country?

**Butt:** To the country, no.

**Taseer:** Do you feel some?

**Butt:** I feel absolutely nothing for this country. I have no problem with the British people ... but if someone attacks them I have no problem with that either.

**Taseer:** Who do you have allegiance to?

**Butt:** My allegiance is to Allah, his Shari'a, his way of life. Whatever he dictates as good is good, whatever as bad is bad.<sup>2</sup>

The abovementioned "covenant" that the migrant Muslim parents abide by, is no longer an impediment to the use of violence when it comes to British-born Muslim radicals. Butt asserts that unlike their parents – who were immigrants – they feel they owe nothing to the United Kingdom. They were born in Britain, they are no longer immigrants, hence they are allowed to strike a blow when needed.

The following passage explains the "relief" felt regarding the 7 July 2005 attacks in London. Seemingly terror has a "jihadi etiquette", a set of rules that guide and justify the acts of killing by Muslim militants. The etiquette's "Rule No. 4", as Michael Moss and Souad Mekhemmet describe, says that "you cannot kill in the country where you reside unless you were born there". That is, an immigrant cannot kill; his offspring who were born in the host country are no longer immigrants and therefore may kill:

Militants living in a country that respects the rights of Muslims have something like a peace contract with the country... Militants who go to Iraq get a pass as expeditionary warriors. And the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks did not violate this rule since the hijackers came from outside the United States, Mr. Bakri said.<sup>3</sup>

"When I heard about the London bombings, I prayed that bombers from Britain were involved", he said, fearing immigrants were responsible. As it turned out, the July 7, 2005, attack largely complied with this

rule. Three of the four men who set off the bombs had been born in Britain; the fourth moved there from Jamaica as an infant.<sup>4</sup>

Certain unique mechanisms make it easier to harm innocent people, including women and children: “we would take away the innocence from the person so they were no longer innocent men, women and children. [They would then] become non-innocent and hence, combatants and allowed to be targeted”, explained the same Hassan Butt in another interview. (Seemingly, Butt has since recanted extremism.)<sup>5</sup> There also is a simpler way to justify the use of violence against non-Muslims because, by definition, a non-Muslim cannot be innocent: “At the end of the day, when we say ‘innocent people’ we mean ‘Muslims’. As far as non-Muslims are concerned, they have not accepted Islam. As far as we are concerned, that is a crime against God”.<sup>6</sup>

Moss and Mekhemmet, in discussing the “etiquette” and circumstances that make it permissible to kill civilians and non-combatants, mention the Egyptian Islamic scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi<sup>7</sup> who argued that Israeli citizens may be killed because their compulsory military service means they are not truly civilians. Moss and Mekhemmet also found that some Sunni militants urge the killing of Shiites, alleging that they are not true Muslims. But Moss and Mekhemmet correctly note that Muslim militants are hardly alone in seeking to rationalize innocent deaths: “Whether you are talking about leftist radicals here [Europe] in the 1960s or the apologies for civilian collateral damage in Iraq that you get from the Pentagon, the argument is that if the action is just, the collateral damage is justifiable”.<sup>8</sup>

Moss and Mekhemmet identify six rules that give exemption from the Koranic prohibition on the killing of innocent civilians (“You shall not kill any man whom God has forbidden you to kill, except for a just cause”, Qur’an, “The Night Journey”, 17:33):

**Rule No. 1: You can kill bystanders without feeling a lot of guilt.**

In the typical car bombing...God will identify those who deserve to die – for example, anyone helping the enemy – and send them to hell. The other victims will go to paradise. “The innocent who is hurt, he won’t suffer.... He becomes a martyr himself”.

There is one grey area. If you are a Muslim who has sinned, getting killed by a suicide bomber will clean some of your slate for Judgment Day, but precisely where God draws the line between those who go to heaven or hell is not spelled out.

**Rule No. 2: You can kill children, too, without needing to feel distress.**

[M]ilitant Islamists [claim that] children receive special consideration in death. They are not held accountable for any sins until puberty, and if they are killed in a *jihād* operation they will go straight to heaven. There, they will instantly age to their late 20s, and enjoy the same access to virgins and other benefits as martyrs receive.

**Rule No. 3: Sometimes, you can single out civilians for killing; bankers are an example.**

In principle, non-fighters cannot be targeted in a militant operation, Islamist scholars say. But the list of exceptions is long and growing. Civilians can be killed in retribution for an enemy attack on Muslim civilians ... [in addition] government officials are fair game.... “Any person that comes to our region with a military, security or political aim, then he is a legitimate target” [say Muslim militants].

Attila Ahmet,<sup>9</sup> a 42-year-old Briton of Cypriot descent, who is awaiting trial in England on terrorism charges: “It would be legitimate to attack banks because they charge interest, and this is in violation of Islamic law....”

**Rule No. 4: You cannot kill in the country where you reside unless you were born there.**

“We have a voting system here in Britain, so anyone who is voting for Tony Blair is not a civilian and therefore would be a legitimate target”, says Khalid Kelly,<sup>10</sup> an Irish-born Islamic convert.

**Rule No. 5: You can lie or hide your religion if you do this for jihad.**

Muslims are instructed by the Koran to be true to their religion.... Lying is allowed only when it is deemed a necessity, for example when being tortured, or when an innocuous deception serves a good purpose, scholars say.

But some militants appear to shirk this rule to blend in with non-Muslim surroundings or deflect suspicion....

“We thought the story couldn’t be true, especially when we followed this young man.... He was going out, drinking, chasing girls, drove a red MG” [said a militant]. [He] recalled that the Sept. 11 hijacker who came from Lebanon frequented discos in Beirut.

[T]he “playboy-turned-militant phenomenon” [is not something rare].... [T]he Sept. 11 hijackers might simply have been “guys who enjoyed a good drink” and . . . militant leaders may be seeking to do a “post facto scrubbing up of their image”, by portraying sins as a ruse.

**Rule No. 6. You may need to ask your parents for their consent.**

Militant Islamists interpret the Koran and the separate teachings of Muhammad that are known as the Sunna as laying out five criteria to be met by people wanting to be jihadis. They must be Muslim, at least 15 and mature, of sound mind, debt free and have parental permission.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Rule No. 5 accurately describes the so-called integration of terror-implicated Muslims in Western culture – via acts of hedonism or sophisticated means to disguise their true intentions – as was discovered in the backgrounds of the perpetrators of 11 March 2004 in Madrid and of 7 July 2005 in London. Cricket, martial arts, drinking, sports cars, women, dancing, fish and chips – these apparently were effective means behind which the catastrophes in London and Madrid were prepared and carried out.

## The Phenomenon of Radicalism

European and Muslim mutual images – true or false – are painful. Extreme political ideologies, religious radicalism, terrorism, intolerance, racism and so on are often associated with the Muslim immigration to Europe. Muslim groups and associations have been subjected to intensified monitoring and restrictions. Some of the 9/11 perpetrators first assembled, trained and raised money in Western Europe. The March 2004 bombings in Madrid; the November 2004 murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh; the July 2005 bombings in London; the 2005 riots in Paris; and the 2006 worldwide violent protests against Denmark and the West over the Muhammad cartoons – all poured more oil on the blaze. Surveys conducted in Britain, for example, after the terror acts on the London transportation system and the Muhammad-cartoon protests showed that only 17 percent of the British believe in peaceful coexistence with Muslims; “either we or them” is the mantra of the rest.<sup>12</sup>

Immigration into Europe is presently perceived as a problem, not as a potential future contribution or a cultural addition to European civilization – unlike, for instance, the immigrants to the United States or Canada. Whereas people immigrated to America to settle and become Americans, the perception among many Europeans is that Muslims did not come to Europe to become Europeans but rather to establish minority communities that resemble the Muslim and ethnic cultures of their countries of origin. Some Europeans and radical Muslim immigrants go so far as assuming that the Islamization of Europe is the aim of this immigration. “Europe for Muslims is no longer Dar-al-Harb but already Dar-al-Islam” is the saying among Muslim clergy

in Europe.<sup>13</sup> Europeans in growing numbers perceive this immigration as a threat, as an obstacle to their own integration, as a hurdle before further harmony and EU unity, as a symbol of alienation, as something that threatens to dilute general Europeanness as well as cultures, languages and customs which are unique to, and identify, the various European peoples that live in the continent.

No wonder that all this produces doomsday forecasts; it is likewise easy prey for End of Days predictions, and it generates deep Islamophobia. Globally, Muslim and Arab population growth is described as uncontrolled, not to be checked before 2050. Inevitably it will result in mass migration to Europe. This means, so say these Islamophobic predictions, that Islam has a limited time (a generation or two) to use the Arab and Muslim poor and angry masses to achieve its goal – world supremacy and the Islamization of the West. And since the mass migration will be to Western Europe, the ultimate Armageddon will be waged on European soil:

The Middle East and North Africa are a long-term demographic nightmare. The US Census Bureau estimates that the Middle East is a region where the population will nearly double between now and 2030. Some of the most important, and sometimes troubled, countries in the region will experience explosive population growth. Population growth represents major problems for infrastructure. Much of the region has become a permanent food importer. Employment and education will become critical challenges to regional stability. All these and other features make the Middle East less competitive with the leading developing regions despite the recent boom in oil prices. The trends in population growth actually represent potential threats to security and stability. ... [A]bout 2010 the pool of unemployed Arabs is expected to reach 25 million. True, this is first and above all an Arab problem. Yet, if the expectations are accurate, by 2050, according to the latest UN projections, the population growth rate of the Muslim world will converge on that of the United States (although it will be much higher than Europe's or China's). In the focus on the political processes in the Middle East, the demographic issue goes almost unnoticed, although this is the very source of future problems. However, we just ask: what will become of those 25 million idle young men in an Arab world where violence and terrorism seem to be generated by local as well as regional and international political interests, where the perspectives seem locked up and the future unsafe? What are we going to do with various reports claiming that the next "civilization clash" will not spare the West, *since some Islamic thinkers believe that Islam has one generation in which to establish a global theocracy before hitting*

*a demographic barrier?* Islam has enough young men, they claim, to fight a war during the next 30 years. Because of mass migration to Western Europe – which will be the attracting perspective for the expected 25 million unemployed Arabs – *the worst of the war might be fought on European soil.*<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

These apprehensions are by no means confined to any specific European country. Belgium and the Netherlands, for example, demand the passing of an examination in local or national languages, history and heritage as a prerequisite to obtain permanent residency. The City Council of Rotterdam wants immigrants to speak Dutch on the streets, asking immigrant parents to raise their children predominantly in Dutch. The City Council requests all residents to adhere to the seven principles of the “Rotterdam Code” which, *inter alia*, pay respect to women, homosexuals and atheists.<sup>15</sup>

Since November 2005 a “Britishness Test” has been applied in Britain: every immigrant and refugee who asks for citizenship has to demonstrate knowledge of the English language, culture and history of the United Kingdom. In Germany, as from 2002 and in accordance with the country’s new immigration law, would-be citizens must sign a declaration in which they commit themselves to respect the German constitution. The Union of German Teachers voted in January 2006 to oblige all children to speak only German during school hours, playgrounds inclusive. (“Pupils talk German with their teachers, then turn around and talk Turkish with their classmates”, complain their teachers.)<sup>16</sup> Naturally the immigrants protest against the one-language rule, regarding it as the edge of a much deeper conspiracy to erase their identity and force them to show tolerance and adopt unacceptable aspects and customs such as nudity and homosexuality. Young immigrants in particular feel that they will never be allowed to integrate, let alone assimilate, no matter how much effort they expend;<sup>17</sup> did it help German Jews, they ask, who were “more German than the Germans”?

Richard Bernstein of the *New York Times* has elaborated on the tests immigrants have to take in order to become citizens. His words, though relating mainly to Germany, give the gist of the issue for the entire continent:

A Quiz for Would-Be Citizens Tests Germans’ Attitudes

What’s the capital of Germany? Well, pretty much everybody knows that one. It’s Berlin, of course.

But how about these questions: “Which convention gathered at St. Paul’s Church in Frankfurt in 1848?” “Name three mountains in Germany”. “Which German physicist revolutionized medical diagnosis in 1895?”

If you are a foreigner living in Germany and do not know that the National Assembly was the convention that gathered in 1848, or that

the 1895 scientist was Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen, you might not be able to become a German citizen – not, at least, if a new citizenship test for foreigners is adopted by the national government.

Lately it seems that just about everybody in this country is talking about the proposed citizenship test, which would add to an already fairly long list of requirements to become a German citizen. ...

The 100-question test ... has received a lot of comment, in part because of the widespread belief that many German university students would have trouble passing it, so how fair would it be to impose it on immigrants relatively unschooled in German culture?

But at a deeper level the debate about the test, echoing the immigration debate in other European countries, illustrates the difficulty that Europe has with the immigration question. And the plain fact now is that the prevalence of Muslims among the immigrants – and fears that Islamic extremism is infiltrating Europe – has given the usual immigration debate a special edge.

The world certainly took note a couple of weeks ago when a new Dutch law came into effect requiring all would-be immigrants to take a Dutch citizenship test, based largely on a two-hour videotape that immigrants are strongly encouraged to view.

...The video is certainly a general introduction to the Dutch way of life, including how to open a bank account and register for the national health service. But there are also much-discussed scenes of nude bathing at North Sea beaches and of gay men kissing in public, presumably to give immigrants a sense of the prevailing Dutch cultural and moral values.

But what critics of the video are saying is that *the underlying and discriminatory message is this: Do not come to the Netherlands if your religion makes you so socially conservative that you would be uncomfortable with the Dutch way of life.* Or, as the narrator of the video puts it: “You have to start all over again. You have to realize what this means before you decide to come here”.

... It was only in 2000, for example, that [the German] Parliament passed a law allowing people born in Germany of foreign parents to become citizens if they so choose, and if they meet some fairly stringent criteria.

The law was expanded in 2005 to provide for the cultural and linguistic education of would-be immigrants, each of whom is required to take 600 class hours of German language instruction and an additional 30 hours on the country’s history, culture and way of life.

To its advocates, a nationwide citizenship test would just be a way of ensuring that applicants are truly ready to be German. “The state is allowed to ask whether citizenship is a conscious decision”, [Chancellor Angela] Merkel said, arguing for a national citizenship test. “Citizenship can’t be granted with a wink and a nod”.

But citizenship is not given with just a wink and a nod, opponents of the test say, citing a list of requirements that are already stiff enough: fluency in German, economic independence, a renunciation of extremist groups. Besides, the critics argue, the test would be a poor way to screen out extremists or terrorists, because people would find ways to pass it whether they really accepted the principles of German democracy or not.<sup>18</sup> (emphasis added)

The demands from the immigrants are practically a recipe for conflict: naturally immigrants tend to cling, some obsessively, to their culture, deeply fearing the loss of their identity. Moreover, many Muslim immigrants despise what they see around them and feel contempt towards Europeans. They keep minority-majority contacts to a minimum and impose isolation and restrictions to decrease or avoid socialization with the European majority. They perceive the Western, secular Europeans around them to be *inferior* to them especially because of: promiscuous sexual behaviour, drugs, prostitution, alcohol, AIDS, the destruction of the traditional family structure, the prevalence of the one-parent family, the treatment of the elderly, their own isolation and the lack of respect towards them, and so on. In the following quotation the author emphasizes the gap between Turks (hence also potential Turkish immigrants to Europe) and Europeans. Other Muslims have similar images of the West, Europe and Europeans:

Turkish culture is very different from the West. Concepts such as strong family ties, respect for elders and unconditional love of, and commitment to children, sound like clichés in the West but form the basis of Turkish society. Loneliness is a rare phenomenon. Relationships are not based on manipulation, and the foremost motivation of individuals is not greed. The people of Turkey are enamored of foreigners, and racism seems to be distant from everyone’s mind, even though the West tries to portray Turks as ogres. ... On the political side, Turkey could slowly but politely let Europe stand on the sidelines while the republic looks to itself, to its other friends and to the Turkic nations of Asia. We are culturally more akin to them than to the West, with its excessive and exploitative nature, or to the Arabs, with their strange views of women and their theocratic political systems. Turkish culture,

since its origins on the steppes, has always put women on the same horse as men.<sup>19</sup>

The feeling of alienation among Muslims in Europe is augmented by other detrimental factors: they own fewer flats than people from other religious groups, produce fewer lawyers, doctors and so on, and suffer more from unemployment. In 2001, for example, 48 percent of Britain's Muslims reported being engaged in various sorts of economic activities and professions; the rates were 65 percent for Christians, 67 percent for Hindus and 75 percent for those without religious affiliation. Fewer Muslim British women take jobs outside their homes; whereas four of every ten British Muslim women stay at home, the average in the UK is just over one of ten.<sup>20</sup> In France the alienation is mutual: Arab immigrants do not feel French because they feel France does not perceive them as such: "We are lost because young Arabs in France do not perceive themselves as French. They look at the 'whites' and say 'the French'" .<sup>21</sup>

With nothing but loose contacts with the sending country and little if any social and political affiliation with the receiving country, the result in many cases is growing frustration and alienation with a clear inclination towards political and religious radicalism, or "*re-Islamization*". Such radicalism is a strong substitute, an effective incentive for male Muslim immigrants who strive to reinforce their control and buttress the old patriarchic system.<sup>22</sup> When contact is lost with the country of origin, when parents lose control over their children, when Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and practically all European societies show a grim and angry face, Islam is the only available option for affiliation and identity. In a common pattern all over Europe, "Islam, however understood or misunderstood, becomes the default identity".<sup>23</sup>

### "Muslim Nationalism" and "Over-Islamization"

Many Muslim immigrants of the second generation, who were born in Europe and have had Western and European education, do their utmost *not* to strike roots in their host countries, not to assimilate or intermingle with Europeans. This is a well-known behaviour of a minority that further clings to its values when it feels threatened and in danger of losing its identity and ethnicity. These immigrants insist on equality, but in separation from the British, French or Dutch. They do not wish to adopt the secular social or political codes of Germany or any other European country. Instead they look to the idea of a cross-country identity or "*Muslim nationalism*" that they fervently pursue. This contrasts with the general European antipathy towards religion, the marginal status and lack of any revolutionary zeal in European Christianity.

There are no reliable figures on how many Muslims living in Germany regularly attend mosque; estimates vary between 40-50 percent. Comparison with mosque attendance in Turkey, however, shows that this is almost *double* the figure. As Peter Schneider summed it up in the *New York Times*:

Amid the German refrigerators, televisions, and mobile phones, a rural culture was celebrating its resurrection, where Turkish was spoken, where people ate, prayed, fasted and celebrated according to custom, and where the surrounding local culture of unbelievers and the unclean was looked down upon. . . . Some hundred thousand Muslim immigrants were able to take up, in Germany, the life of their ancestors in Anatolia. *Indeed, maybe life in Anatolia was meanwhile more modern than in the Muslim districts of Berlin. . . .* [As one Turkish Muslim put it,] “*Turkish men who wish to marry and live by Sharia can do so with far less impediment in Berlin than in Istanbul*”.<sup>24</sup> (emphasis added)

It is said about Muslims that in Europe they pray more than they did in their countries of origin, visit the mosque more often and that more of them fast during Ramadan. Perceiving oneself as a minority in a foreign country can lead to gathering at the mosque (or church or synagogue). Alas, by doing this Muslim immigrants accentuate the gap between them and the secular European majority, and even between themselves and their churchgoing neighbour. Once again West Europeans who have lost interest in religion and live without it must now face the Muslim religion, an encounter which is not always peaceful.

*TIME*'s Nicholas Le Quesne also found that living in Europe gives the Muslim immigrants the confidence to practice their religion more openly, relying on the principles of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression and association. On many occasions the Muslim immigrant can practice these liberties in Europe to a greater extent than in his country of origin. Even the most discernible ethnic and religious facets such as headscarves, the veiling of women and girls, the establishment of religious and Islamic associations or the building of mosques are generally retained. Their abolishment has never been an easy task, and has always been contingent on meticulous legal procedures and public opinion or parliamentary debates.

Questions are asked about the anger of young Muslim migrants, whether it is possible to understand or justify such sentiment and how Europeans should relate to it. Some no doubt support the view that “those doing wrong are excused if they belong to a ‘victim’ group, while those at the other receiving end of their behaviour are blamed simply because they belong to the ‘oppressive’ majority”.<sup>25</sup> The oppression could have occurred in the colonial past, or could be a result of present deprivation and alienation. However, the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut was less forgiving about the October

2005 riots in Paris. Using an analogy, he vehemently denied the inevitability of violent Francophobia among Muslims in France:

I was born in Paris, but I am a son of Polish [Jewish] immigrants. My father was expelled from France. His parents were expelled and killed in Auschwitz. This country [France] deserves our hatred: what it did to my parents was much more violent than what it did to the [Muslim Arab] Africans.<sup>26</sup>

Muslims in Europe, particularly in France, complain that the host countries insist on preserving the old system and ignore the major changes that have taken place, in particular the present prevalence of multi-ethnicity and heterogeneity: “the French people must accept that old France, that country with blond children only, that country doesn’t exist anymore”.<sup>27</sup>

In history lessons in [French] elementary schools they continue to talk about “our Gallic forefathers”. How is a boy who was born in France to parents who came from Senegal, Algeria or Morocco supposed to react when he is told about his Gallic forefathers? These children enter school and immediately feel the split in their identity. It starts in the kindergartens, but the state does not see the problem and does not help the children cope with the problem. Instead of giving them psychologists, educators and social workers who will cope with the problem already in the kindergarten or elementary school, the state waits until the children grow up and become juvenile and law offenders. Then it sends them to the police.<sup>28</sup>

Muslims also complain that the widespread talk about the millions of Muslims in Europe, “the six-million-strong Muslim community in France”, for example, is done deliberately to scare the Europeans and cause them to perceive Muslim immigrants as a danger, chiefly because of their numbers. “We are not a monolithic world”, insists Mustapha Benshenane, a Sorbonne political scientist of Algerian origin. “We do not come from the same place, our cultures are different, we do not speak the same language”.<sup>29</sup>

### “Cool-Eyed Analysis”: Immigration Contributes More than It Detracts

It was found in Britain that on balance, immigration contributes more to the kingdom than it detracts: in 1999-2000 immigrants gave about 10 percent *more* in taxes than they received in benefits and services or about a \$4 billion surplus. And, surprisingly, in 2000 there were 5 percent more university graduates among immigrants than among British-born citizens. By extension this is good for Europe generally, as the phenomenon is not an isolated one. The

International Labour Organization found that during his lifetime the average immigrant in Germany contributes 50,000 euros more than he receives; the Muslim middle class in Germany contributes around 39 billion euros annually to the country's GNP and billions to the national pension funds.<sup>30</sup> And as the following quotation shows, for the aging British population (32 per cent of the British – 18.6 million people – are above fifty years old, a total that will reach 23.8 million by 2012),<sup>31</sup> immigration is a blessing, perhaps not so much in disguise:

While there are some communities where immigrants remain unsuccessful, resentful and resented, the more striking phenomenon is how well immigration has worked for Britain. The U.K.'s National Health Service would screech to a halt without foreign staff (in 2000, 27 percent of health professionals were foreign); the humming economy is sucking-in migrants from all over the world, many of them highly skilled with the government's active encouragement. Nearly two-thirds of immigrants arriving between 1994 and 2003 who were employed before coming to the U.K. had worked in professional and managerial jobs. In the late 1990s, non-British nationals made up 12.5 percent of the country's academic staff.

This is not to say that Britain's immigration policies are perfect, or that all anti-immigration arguments are baseless myths. But *cool-eyed analysis suggests that on balance, immigration is good for the U.K. – and, by extension, Europe.*<sup>32</sup> (emphasis added)

Immigration – of Muslims to Europe in particular – is no different than any other issue: when debated and analyzed, immigration deserves more balanced and objective consideration.

## Conclusion

A quotation from Aatish Taseer's "A British Jihadist", with which this discussion opened, will now conclude it. It attempts to explain the 7 July 2005 bombing of the London transportation system by British-born, British-educated Muslims. Apparently, Britishness and, by extension, Europeaness, should be more assertive:

[W]hen our tube bombers were growing up, any notion that an *idea of Britishness* should be imposed on minorities was seen as offensive. *Britons themselves were having a hard time believing in Britishness. If you denigrate your own culture you face the risk of your newer arrivals looking for one elsewhere.* So far afield in this case, that for many second-generation British Pakistanis, the desert culture of the

Arabs held more appeal than either British or subcontinental culture. Three times removed from a durable sense of identity [the separation of Pakistan from India; their emigration from Pakistan; the alienation in Britain], the energized extra-national worldview of radical Islam became one available identity for second-generation Pakistanis. The few who took it did so with the convert's zeal: plus Arabe que les Arabes.<sup>33</sup> (emphasis added)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tony Blair, "A Renaissance in Foreign Policy", speech to the World Affairs Council, Los Angeles, reprinted in *Der Spiegel*, 3 August 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Hassan Butt, a radical Muslim from Manchester who helped recruit Muslims to fight in Afghanistan, quoted in Aatish Taseer, "A British Jihadist", *Prospect Magazine*, No. 113, August 2005, <http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/printarticle.php?id=6992>.

<sup>3</sup> Omar Bakri Muhammad, a radical sheikh of Syrian origin, leader of Muslim organizations in Britain, allegedly having contacts with Al-Qaeda, who in 2005 after sheltering for twenty years in the UK moved from London to Lebanon, is subsequently not allowed back in Britain.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Moss and Souad Mekhemmet, "A Guide for Taking a Life", *New York Times*, 10 June 2007.

<sup>5</sup> CBS News, "The Network: Hassan Butt Tells Bob Simon Killing in the Name of Islam is 'Cancer'", *60 Minutes*, 25 March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Anjem Choudary (a radical British Muslim), "Anjem Choudary Talks of 7.7", BBC Channel 4, *News Night*, 7 July 2006, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C73ePf\\_2KVw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C73ePf_2KVw).

<sup>7</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi is an Egyptian Muslim scholar and preacher, a prolific writer who is known for his popular TV programs and websites. Al-Qaradawi is particularly noted for his support of Palestinian suicide bombings.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Moss and Souad Mekhemmet, quoting John O. Voll (professor of Islamic studies at Georgetown University), "A Guide for Taking a Life", *New York Times*, 10 June 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Attila Ahmet, known as Abu Abdullah, was born (1964) and raised in London to Turkish Cypriot parents. He worked as a soccer coach, earning the nickname "Attila the Hun", before he "converted" to radical Islam and started to preach. Ahmet was formerly an aide to the hook-handed imam now imprisoned in Belmarsh jail, Abu Hamza al-Masri. See also "UK Islam, Faces of Fanaticism, Part Five", 28 August 2006, <http://www.westernresistance.com/blog/archives/002839.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Khalid Kelly, formerly Terence Kelly, is an Irish male nurse who went to work in Saudi Arabia and converted there to Islam. Caught distilling alcohol, he was deported to London and soon began attending sermons by the radical preacher Omar Mohammad Bakri. See Kathleen Moore, "World: Muslims in the West – Radical Believes Suicide Bombers Acted with Right Intentions (Part 3)", RadioFreeEurope, RadioLiberty, 2 September 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/09/6527882e-6393-487c-92e5-71a08336af59.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Moss and Mekhemmet, "A Guide."

<sup>12</sup> J.F.O. McAllister, "A Secret Success", *TIME*, 28 February 2005; Assaf Oni, *Haaretz*, 17 February 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Bassam Tibi, lecture presented at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Jerusalem, 13 June 2006. Dar al-Harb means "the house of war"; Dar al-Islam means "the house of Islam".

<sup>14</sup> Hichem Karoui, "Middle East-North Africa: Population Explosion", *World Security Network Foundation*, 5 April 2005.

- <sup>15</sup> Peter Schneider, “The New Berlin Wall”, *New York Times*, 4 December 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/magazine/04berlin.html>.
- <sup>16</sup> Nicola Laska, Reuters, reprinted in *Haaretz*, 21 July 2005; Assaf Oni, *Ha’aretz*, 17 February 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> McAllister, “Secret Success”.
- <sup>18</sup> Richard Bernstein, “A Quiz for Would-Be Citizens Tests Germans’ Attitudes”, *New York Times*, 29 March 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> Birsan Iskenderoglu, “Turkey vs. the West”, *Turkish Daily News*, 20 February 1999.
- <sup>20</sup> *Haaretz*, 21 July 2000.
- <sup>21</sup> Alain Finkelkraut, interview in *Haaretz*, 21 November 2005 (translated from Hebrew).
- <sup>22</sup> *The Economist*, reprinted in *Haaretz*, 21 July 2005.
- <sup>23</sup> Michael Radu, “Europe, Fall 2005: Gangs in Search of an Ideology”, *Watch on the West*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Vol. 6, No. 7, November 2005.
- <sup>24</sup> Schneider, “New Berlin Wall”.
- <sup>25</sup> Melanie Phillips, “Come to Londonistan, Our Refuge for Poor Misunderstood Islamist Victims”, extracted from Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (London: Gibson Square, 2006).
- <sup>26</sup> Finkelkraut, interview in *Haaretz*.
- <sup>27</sup> Mustapha Benchenane, interview in *Haaretz*, 12 December 2005 (translated from Hebrew).
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Branson MacKinley, *International Herald Tribune*, reprinted in *Haaretz*, 27 June 2005; Schneider, “New Berlin Wall”.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Guardian*, quoted in *Haaretz*, 23 October 2006.
- <sup>32</sup> McAllister, “Secret Success”.
- <sup>33</sup> Taseer, “British Jihadist”. See also Daniel Pipes, “Euro-Islam: The Dynamics of Effective Integration”, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, 21 June 2006, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=109941&fuseaction=topics.event\\_summ](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=109941&fuseaction=topics.event_summ).

# De-Mythifying Islam: A Novel Hermeneutical Approach to the Relations between the Three Religious Traditions of Europe

*Angelika Neuwirth*

## Introduction

Speaking at a conference that is primarily interested in social-political issues, one risks appearing odd or even impertinent in presenting critical reflections on contemporary scholarship. Yet in my view the Koran, whose academic treatment will be a focus of this talk, occupies a central position in the whole debate about the borderlines of European culture. I will argue that the failure to discuss the Koran with the methods conventionally applied in Religious Studies has contributed to endorsing a unified narrative of an exclusively European modernity that excludes Islam. The essentialist treatment of the Koran can best be explained in terms of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. Since a historico-critical analysis is still yet to be achieved, the Koran is studied without a firm historical basis, i.e. in isolation from the Late Antique milieu of its genesis and thus severed from those traditions that are considered as constituting the very roots of European identity.

A revision of the conventional approach is presently being undertaken in the framework of a new research project hosted by the Berlin Institute of Advanced Studies, "Europe and the Middle East; the Middle East and Europe", which has been established in order to reconsider a number of currently dominant binarisms. Before turning to the particular sub-project pertaining to this conference, entitled "Perspectives on the Qur'an: Negotiating Different Views of a Shared History", I will briefly describe the project at large.<sup>1</sup>

## Questioning Binarisms

One important objective is the questioning of conventional binarisms. To quote from the rationale of the project:

The public debate in the European and Middle Eastern media, as well as the scholarly discussion in both regions, is shaped by cultural and terminological dichotomies built upon an ‘either-or’ logic such as Europe/Middle East, the West/Islam, modernity/tradition, war/terror, progressive/static, democratic/despotic, secular/religious, and enlightened/traditional. Not only are such conceptual dichotomies reductive and mystifying, they tend to privilege an idealized and unified narrative of an exclusively European Modernity, erected in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and operative till today.

Europe not only drew the political boundaries in the Middle East but also projected these borders onto the geography and history, the art and culture of this region and not least the academic disciplines dealing with the Near East, and still claims the largely undisputed right to interpret the fundamental concepts and terms with which societies and cultures all over the world are described. Ideological boundaries are thereby drawn that, here as well as there, lead to the seemingly endless debates about the compatibility of Islam and Modernity and about the notions connected to it, such as human rights, the Enlightenment, secularization, and democracy, as well as to vastly oversimplified eschatological paradigms and hermeneutical concepts like “Rise and Decline”, the “Clash of Civilizations”, the “New Crusades”, or the “End of Europ”. The conventional self-image of modern European societies as being essentially non-traditional – as opposed to other (still) traditional societies (“the West against the rest”) – has powerful self-legitimizing functions....

As against that the project “Europe in the Middle East; The Middle East in Europe” assumes that the future of Europe and the Middle East depends on an inclusive and reflexive rethinking of Modernity, with its foundational conceptual key components science, secularism, and democracy. As such, it is conceived as an enterprise that dissociates Modernity from dominant Western European paradigms; that includes its negations; and that dislodges Modernity from its projected religious, racial, or ethnic origins in order to be faithful to the principles these concepts suggest.<sup>2</sup> It will examine processes of tradition building and struggles over the past and the modern as connecting themes. Three programmatic ideas and three guiding principles can describe the common agenda of the project: (1) the reconfiguration of historical legacies between Europe and the Middle East; (2) the formation of origins and mythical beginnings; and (3) the role of key concepts of Modernity, both in cultural and political discourse and in the framework of scholarly research. The guiding principles of the latter are (a) the critique of disciplinary nationalism; (b) the emphasis on the need for a “research with” scholars from the region, ‘rather than research on’; and (c) the aim of bridging the gap between scholarship, the arts, and the public.<sup>3</sup>

## The Koran and Koranic Studies: “Perspectives on the Koran: Negotiating Different Views of a Shared History”

### *The Dilemma*

Against the widespread tendency to view the Koran as a text that is essentially alien to “Western” culture, the project’s primary objective will be to situate it within the religious landscape of Late Antiquity, a cultural legacy shared by European and Middle Eastern history. Why is a historical approach to Koranic studies so important? I would suggest that Koranic studies are not informed by the methods of Religious Studies as currently practiced internationally, but still follow a limited and selective set of methods which tend to be essentialist in their attitude towards the Koran.

Already in the 1990s, Aziz al-Azmeh,<sup>4</sup> lamenting the fact that the Koran was not submitted systematically to the set of methodological steps that are pursued in biblical studies, could not imagine any reason for that failure other than the Koran’s exceptional position as a non-Biblical scripture, its alleged “alterity”. Western Koranic studies, according to al-Azmeh, partake in the “Orientalist discourse” that tends to de-contextualize Near Eastern cultural phenomena, thus allowing scholars to dispense with the rigid laws applied in related Western fields of academic research. What is Orientalist is the exotic perception of the Koran<sup>5</sup> that fails to acknowledge it as a scripture of monotheism like the other scriptures, i.e. texts that through the particular process of their canonization have acquired an extraordinary position in their communities. In precise terms, William Graham defined scripture thus:

Scripture is not a literary genre but a religio-historical one. No text is authoritative or sacred apart from its functional role in a religious community and that community’s historical tradition of faith. The sacred character of a book is not an a priori attribute but one that develops and achieves widespread recognition in the lives of faithful persons who perceive and treat the text as holy or sacred. In other words, the scriptural characteristics of a text belong not to the text itself but to its role and standing in a religious community.<sup>6</sup>

What is striking in the Koranic case is that such a generic and relational understanding of scripture as that which is now common in the study of religion is – according to Graham – “largely compatible with the Qur’an’s own frequent use of *kitab*, *kutub*, to refer to scriptural revelations given by God to previous prophets or messengers, before the bestowing of the Qur’an upon Muhammad as his *kitab*”.<sup>7</sup> This observation implies that the Koran constitutes an exception among scriptures, insofar as the scriptural character

of the Koranic text is not due to a later development but is an intrinsic feature of the Koran itself. In Graham's words:

It is ... the generic use of kitab/kutub to refer to earlier scriptures and to the Qur'an itself that is special, or even unique, about the Qur'anic notion of scripture. Typically, the other sacred texts of the world's religions that we call scriptures were not written with any similar consciousness of belonging themselves to a category of texts called scripture. Most if not all great scriptural texts other than the Qur'an are unconscious of being even potentially scriptures, for scripture or any analogous concept is usually a category developed ex post facto.<sup>8</sup>

If this is true, then the "widespread recognition in the lives of faithful persons" that bestows on the text its scriptural character, is not that of the later Muslim community but that of the group involved in the first Koranic communication process. This conclusion is of momentous consequence for Koranic studies. It implies that no serious study of the Koranic text – that goes beyond external, linguistic and grammatical aspects – can dismiss the Koran's "scripturality" that is inscribed in its pre-canonical text. Yet, the distinction between the scripturality-informed pre-canonical text that was communicated to the first listeners, and the later canonized official text of the Muslim community has constantly been glossed over in Koranic scholarship.<sup>9</sup> The unique claim raised by the Koran itself to constitute a scripture and thereby to closely belong to the trias of monotheist scriptures originating from the Late Antique Near East, still awaits discussion and moreover to be employed as a point of departure to re-think the Koran's position in modernity.

In what follows, I will first outline what I view as problematic in current Koranic studies, then turn to the development that preceded and perhaps induced the present crisis, and, in conclusion, propose some ideas on how to cope with the problem.

### ***The "Invisible Text"***

The failure of Koranic studies to locate the Koran on eye level with the other scriptures is evident in many respects. Its most striking consequence is the disappearance of the text as such from scholarship. The Koran has become an "invisible text". Not only is the Koranic text in contemporary scholarship not being studied as a literary artifact systematically;<sup>10</sup> scholars moreover shy away from dealing with the Koran as such, preferring to read it through the lens of its later commentaries.<sup>11</sup> Not the Koran as a cultural self-expression of its historical epoch, documenting a particular response to the discourses contemporary to it, but the Koran mirrored in the Muslim community's later understanding, is what presently occupies scholarly attention.

The failure of Western scholarship to locate the Koran on eye level with the other scriptures is evident in many respects. Its most striking consequence is the disappearance of the text as such from scholarship. Scholars for thirty years or so have been shying away from dealing with the Koran as a text, preferring to read it through the lens of its later Islamic commentaries.<sup>12</sup> Koranic studies today are concerned with Qur'an-cum-tafsir, i.e. "the Qur'an interpreted" instead of the text as such. The Koran is not studied as a cultural self-expression of a particular historical epoch, documenting a response to the universal discourses contemporary to it, but as a scripture of an already firmly established exclusivist religious community.

This retreat from the text itself was supported by several historical coincidences. One cause was the "methodological turn" in Koranic studies induced by John Wansbrough in 1977.<sup>13</sup> Wansbrough, who claimed that the Koran should be regarded as an anonymous compilation emerging from the "sectarian milieu" of the eighth- or even ninth-century southern Iraq, widely shattered the confidence in the historical genuineness of the Koranic text. Although new findings of Koranic manuscripts that partly date back to the end of the seventh century no longer allow for such a radical revision of Islamic tradition, skepticism vis-à-vis the Koranic text – if not the entire corpus then at least parts of it – has persisted and still widely deters a microstructural reading of the text as a literary artifact.

Giving up the Koranic text as an object worthy of investigation was made all the easier by the roughly simultaneous emergence of post-modern literary theory. This theory sees the reader as creating rather than discovering meaning in the text. In William Cantwell Smith's words: "The reader's response [to the Koran] is not to the meaning: it is the meaning".<sup>14</sup> Although this approach is highly problematic, "since the testimonies of reader-response to the Qur'an are again embedded in old texts...that would again require the intermediary role of further readers",<sup>15</sup> thus creating ever new aporias, exegesis-informed Koran-reading widely continues to supersede the reading of the text itself.

### ***Koranic Studies vs. Biblical Studies***

Needless to say, a marginalization of the text itself in favour of its exegesis comparable to the Koranic case would be inconceivable in serious biblical Studies. Nowhere in the current academy does critical biblical scholarship build on exegetical traditions. Neither are the texts of the Hebrew Bible read through the lens of the Midrashic discussions nor is the New Testament read with reference to the treatises of the Church Fathers. In both fields of biblical studies, individual units of the scriptural texts are contextualized first of all with each other and secondly with the writings and traditions current in the milieu that they emerged from.

In other words, the biblical texts have long been thoroughly historicized. The deconstruction of myth – the myth of a transcendent origin of the texts – that was thus achieved was, however, counter-balanced by a new invention of history. I refer to the staging of the Near East as the mythical birthplace of Europe. The ancient Near East, identified as the milieu of the genesis of the biblical texts, was since the nineteenth century in the European and American historical narratives monopolized as the cradle of Western civilization.

Up until the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, the Middle East is considered to have been the setting of important developments in Western history. The subsequent advent of the Arabs, however, supposedly led to a cultural disconnection of the Middle East both from its own past, be it Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Phoenician or Hellenistic, and from Judeo-Christian tradition. To quote just one example, the introduction to *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (1997) by Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg:

Since the study of the ancient Near East, or Bible World, is the study of the roots of Western civilization, it has a particular meaning for intellectuals in the West. For intellectuals in the Near East, it has an additional significance; for the antiquity of the Near East as it is being discovered through archeological excavations has a growing effect on the nationalisms in the area today.... Iraq and Syria dedicate themselves to the rediscovery of the old cuneiform cultures that distinguish their lands from other Arab lands, Turkey [and] Iran... Lebanon distinguishes itself from the surrounding countries with an ideology whereby its people are the descendants of the Phoenicians...<sup>16</sup>

This evaluation implies the view that Middle Eastern societies, though presently reclaiming their local heritage are – with the sole exception of Israel – not “really” entitled to it. Their claim is merely ideological – they manipulate the Near Eastern heritage for nationalist ends, while the history thus claimed is that of the land, not of the people living on it today.

This assumption that the emergence of Islam resulted in a near-complete alienation of the Middle East from Western culture, a vision that virtually “excommunicates” Islam from the realm of the biblical cultures by negating its legitimacy in the space of the mythical birthplace of Europe, had perhaps its most far-reaching consequences in Koranic studies. The Koran was never recognized as a text documenting a creative reworking of Late Antique culture. Although historical scrutiny easily shows that the Arabian peninsula, situated at the peripheries of the Byzantine and Sassanid empires, was connected to intellectual developments that were crucial for what was later identified, and more specifically monopolized, as the cultural heritage of Europe, in contrast to the writings of the Church Fathers and the rabbis, originating from almost the same time and space, that were considered part of the European heritage,

the Koran was severed from its pluri-cultural milieu, being essentialized as a corpus without a genuine cultural context.

This negation of history, in turn, induced a radical re-interpretation of the Koran in terms of literary genre: the Koranic polyphone texts, reflecting the dramatic process of the emergence of a community out of the negotiation of various traditions, are violently forced into the narrow frame of a linear prose compilation, achieved by one autonomous “author”, who allegedly premeditated the collection and manipulated the material to fit his message.

## The Historical Background of the Dilemma

### *Abraham Geiger (1810-1874)*

This particular re-coding of the Koran in auctorial terms is already a fait accompli when the Koran, which for centuries had been subjected to Christian bias, is for the first time in Western research made the object of a purely philological analysis. This development took place within the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*<sup>17</sup> (the study of the Jewish religion and people), a German Jewish intellectual movement starting in the nineteenth century that was primarily concerned with the historicization of Jewish religious traditions. It is here that scholars with a solid philological training turned to the Koran – no longer to refute it as had been the case with their Christian contemporaries, but to apply the newly acquired tools of historical research to the text. It would, however, be exaggerated to claim that the initiative targeted Islam in the same way as it targeted Judaism, i.e. as another religion to be acknowledged as bearing universal values. The purpose of the enterprise was “to recover earlier Jewish sources and kernels of ideas that had imbedded themselves in new (Muslim) literary environments: Jewish themes in Muslim texts”.<sup>18</sup>

Already one of the founders of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Abraham Geiger, took particular interest in the history of the Koran. In 1833 he published his famous *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*<sup>19</sup> Geiger’s title not only presupposes a material dependence of the Koran on Judaism but an auctorial intention on the part of Muhammad as well. In Geiger’s view, Muhammad consciously looked to the Jews and the Jewish past when establishing his own faith and formulating a Muslim worldview. Geiger refers to the Koran as “the product of a seventh-century Arab’s literary imagination and oracular skill”.<sup>20</sup> Yet, Geiger “in opposition to a long established Christian tradition did not regard the Islamic prophet as a self-serving adventurer. ‘Muhammad seems to have been a genuine enthusiast (*Schwärmer*) who was himself convinced of his divine mission’”.<sup>21</sup>

Geiger’s approach to the Koran – though in terms of contemporary methodologies pioneering – epistemologically was to set the course for an unduly simplified perception of the Koran that post-Enlightenment scholarship

had inherited from the preceding practice of anti-Islamic polemics. The assumption that Muhammad authored the Koran apodictically negates the interaction of the multiple agencies involved in the genesis of the Koran: the Prophet, the emerging community of his listeners and those adjacent groups who acted as transmitters of the multiple traditions current in the Late Antique Near East. To reduce this polyphone scenario to one individual agent would mean to lay the hermeneutical burden of the re-formulation of the multiple traditions reflected in the Koran on the shoulders of the one person, Muhammad, who consequently – in view of the frequent Koranic divergences from those traditions – is to be blamed for innumerable “misunderstandings”.

It was the negation of the Koran’s “scripturality”, its creative participation in the scriptural tradition, that kept scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* blind to the Koran’s status as an autonomous new paradigm. Yet it needs to be acknowledged that the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – Geiger, Hartwig Hirschfeld,<sup>22</sup> Josef Horowitz<sup>23</sup> and Heinrich Speyer,<sup>24</sup> to mention only the most prominent – introduced a vast amount of Koranic intertexts that are indispensable for the historical understanding of the Koran. Koranic scholarship has never recovered from the violent disruption of these scholars’ work that was brought about by the Nazi expulsion of Jewish scholars from German universities in the 1930s.

### ***Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930)***

Only twenty-seven years after Geiger, another pioneering Arabic scholar, Theodor Nöldeke, initiated his scholarly career with a work commissioned by the Paris Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in 1858: a chronological analysis of the Koran. His study, which was originally written in Latin and appeared in German under the title *Geschichte des Qorans* in 1860, and was later revised by Nöldeke himself and Friedrich Schwally (1909) and again extended by Gotthelf Bergsträsser and Otto Pretzl (1937),<sup>25</sup> consists of an attempt at re-arranging the suras and sections of suras according to their chronological sequence. Although making critical use of pertinent traditional Muslim scholarship, Nöldeke dealt with the text as such, scrutinizing it in search of formal, stylistic and logical criteria for a chronological allocation of individual sections. He thus laid the basis for a critical reading of the Koran as the outcome of a developmental process.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, Nöldeke’s work itself was hampered by the limits of his method. What has been lamented about nineteenth-century studies in the Arabic popular epic, the *sira sha`biya*, applies to Koranic studies as well. The object of nineteenth-century Orientalists “was to cut away the encrustments of time in order get back to the “original”. The foundation stone of this brand of hermeneutics was philology: the study, comparison, and evaluation of texts through which time

was defeated, the layers of history peeled, onionlike, away, and the original state of affairs...revealed in all its pristine glory".<sup>27</sup>

Nöldeke's analysis, not unlike that of Geiger, proceeded on the lines of a textual archaeology. Although intending to re-construct the chronological sequence of the Koranic communications, he did not consciously consider the pre-canonical text as a communication process. In his work "later additions" to earlier texts are not acknowledged as the outcome of a listener's response, but are discarded as disturbing intrusions into a more original stratum of the text; later re-formulations or re-writings of earlier sections are disqualified as surplus "repetitions" rather than identified as self-referential comments. This procedure, built on the assumption of a linear auctorial compilation, necessarily resulted in the misperception of the Koran's strongly dialogical structure in terms of disorder and repetitiveness. It eventually consolidated the established trivialized image of the Koran.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Later Developments in Koranic Scholarship***

Koranic scholarship after the disappearance of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, deprived of the cultural and linguistic skills demanded to identify Jewish intertexts in the Koran, lost interest in the Koran's Late Antique setting altogether. Richard Bell<sup>29</sup> and Régis Blachère<sup>30</sup> further elaborated Nöldeke's chronology without substantially superseding it.<sup>31</sup> Post-war scholars such as Rudi Paret<sup>32</sup> and Montgomery Watt<sup>33</sup> turned their focus to a more general reading of Muhammad's message, making ample and often somewhat naive use of the Islamic tradition – a development that was finally to provoke the skeptical response of John Wansbrough<sup>34</sup> and his school in the late 1970s. Wansbrough's work advocating a wholesale dismissal of Islamic tradition and with it the Koran's chronological and geographical frame, induced a shift in Koranic studies. Although manuscript evidence has meanwhile been discovered<sup>35</sup> that disproves a later emergence of the Koran, Anglo-Saxon Koranic scholarship still largely continues to dismantle the historical and critical apparatus that contextualizes the Koran, or at least to water down the autonomy of the Koranic corpus by merging Koran and commentary, tafsir, to serve as one joint source text.

As against this de-historization, two German scholars, Günther Lüling<sup>36</sup> and Christoph Luxenberg,<sup>37</sup> more recently ventured to restore a dubious history to the Koran, considering it as a re-writing of earlier Christian texts. The two cases of a revival of textual archaeology, however unprofessionally applied and thus quickly rejected by scholars of early Islam, have further widened the hermeneutical gap that has long been dividing Koranic scholarship into Islamic and Western.

## Ways out of the Dilemma?

This is a state of affairs that calls for a re-thinking of Koranic studies. How can Western Koranic scholars produce knowledge that is both relevant and hermeneutically acceptable to their Muslim colleagues as well? One venue, already successfully tested in the Near East – by the Egyptian text linguist Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd<sup>38</sup> – might be “semantic analysis” that had earlier been introduced by the Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu.<sup>39</sup> Another may be the investigation of the Koranic aesthetics as perceived by its readers, drawing on traditional Arabic rhetorics, such as has been exemplarily conducted by Navid Kermani;<sup>40</sup> and recently Stefan Wild has proposed “mantic speech” as a further venue.<sup>41</sup> These methodologies, however, avoid the crucial question of the Koran’s historicity and thus its relation to the traditions of the adjacent cultural groups. For both epistemological and political reasons, however, it seems indispensable to go beyond these post-canonical approaches and try to re-locate the Koranic genesis in the context of Late Antique culture.

The “pre-canonical” reading that I am advocating is not intended to replace the accepted post-canonical, i.e. exegesis-informed reading. It is meant to add another voice to the already existing readings that have been proposed and tested during the history of the Koran’s reception, like the philosophical reading presented by al-Razi or the mystical one of Ibn ‘Arabi.

At the same time, such a pre-canonical reading is more than an additional option; it is a political exigency. The historicization of the Bible, as we saw, generated a myth of origin for European culture, inventing the Near East as its birthplace. This invention rested on the exclusion of Islam from the biblical Near Eastern cultures, thus uprooting the Koran from both its Late Antique origin and its participation in the exegetical discourse of biblical tradition. It is this “excommunication” that in the post-modern era has to be reversed.

This reversal, the re-introduction of Islam and its scripture into Europe’s mythical core, can in my view be achieved with scholarly means: through repeating the experiment of historicization. Like the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, the Koran has to be re-contextualized with the cultural milieu of its origin, which has been monopolized by the Western narrative. Re-established in its historical space and time, the Koran will finally be positioned at eye level with the other scriptures, and thus reveal itself no less than the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as a substantial part of the European heritage.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See [www.wiko-berlin.de/index](http://www.wiko-berlin.de/index).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the Report by the High-Level Advisory Group established at the initiative of the President of the European Commission, *Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*, Brussels 2003. The project is also informed by earlier works

by scholars such as Shmuel Eisenstadt, Aziz Al-Azmeh, Abdallah al-'Arwi, Ulrich Beck and Reinhard Schulze.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.wiko-berlin.de/Index](http://www.wiko-berlin.de/Index).

<sup>4</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, "The Muslim Canon from Late Antiquity to the Era of Modernism," in Arie van der Kooij (ed.), *Canonization and Decanonization*, Leiden: Brill 1998 (Studies in the History of Religion, 82), and again to appear in: Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography*. Budapest.

<sup>5</sup> A quite different critique of Koranic studies has been presented by Mohammed Arkoun, *Islam: To Reform or to Subvert?* Beirut 2006. Arkoun pleads for a crossing of the "epistemic and epistemological threshold" (77) to update Koranic studies and achieve a deconstructionist analysis of the Koran. Although he unilaterally favours linguistic and psychological approaches without sufficiently regarding the still existing desiderata in historical-philological scholarship, his plea for a "diversification of the methodologies and the enlargement of the scope of a compared history of religions," coupled with the elaboration of an anthropological frame of understanding is certainly in line with the claim raised in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> William Graham, "Scripture and the Qur'an". In: Jane McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*. Leiden 2004, IV, 559 (henceforth *EQ*). It is true that

scripture as a particularistic concept seems to have first developed fully in Jewish and Christian contexts and it was in later phases of these and, most recently, in secular contexts primarily within the Western world (especially those of the modern academy) that generic use of the term was subsequently developed to refer commonly not only to particular Jewish or Christian biblical texts but also to the sacred texts of other religious communities.... This is not to say that in other religious traditions there are no analogous concepts that might be adduced, rather it is to note that the inclusion of the Qur'an (or Veda or Lotus Sutra) under the rubric of the Latinate word 'scripture' is not terribly old historically and was relatively infrequent until the past century or so – at least since the 1879-1894 publication of Max Müller's edited series *Sacred Books of the East*. Such generic usage is now much more common but scripture as a phenomenon occurring in diverse religious contexts and traditions is still something that has only begun to be studied comparatively and globally in any adequate way. *op. cit.*, 558

<sup>7</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*, 259.

<sup>8</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*, 260.

<sup>9</sup> It is not acknowledged by William Graham either, who discusses the relationship between "Scripture and the Qur'an" as applied to both the pre-canonical and the post-canonical text without differentiating between them. Such a distinction is, to some degree, discouraged by a current more general skepticism towards historical approaches to scriptures. Thus Biblical Studies has recently seen a move, spearheaded by Brevard Childs, away from tradition history and redaction history towards a growing interest in the final version of the biblical text as it has become canonical within the Christian church. A similarly "synchronic" approach to the Koran has been advocated, among others, by Daniel Madigan. Even though both positions are by no means ahistorical – the final version of the text is after all viewed as having come into being at a particular moment in time – they privilege the final stage in what they recognize to be an extended process of textual genesis over preliminary stages, and they do so by virtue of the fact that it is the canon in its final shape which has been accepted as binding.

<sup>10</sup> There are only isolated attempts, see Michael Sells, "Sound, Spirit and Gender in Surat al-Qadr," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 111 (1991) 239-59; idem, "Sound and Meaning in Surat al-Qari'a," *Arabica*, 40 (1993) 403-30; Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, Berlin 1981; idem, "Referentiality and Textuality in Surat Al-Hijr. "Some Observations on the Koranic 'Canonical Process' and the Emergence of a Community," in I. Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning of the Qur'an*, London 2000,

143-172; idem, “Images and Metaphors in the Introductory Sections of the Makkan Suras,” in Gerald Hawting and Abdalqader Shareef (eds.), *Approaches to the Qur’an*. London 1993, 3-36; idem, “Qur’anic Literary Structure Revisited. Surat al-Rahman between Mythic Account and Decodation of Myth,” in Stefan Leder, *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden 1998, 388-420; Marilyn Waldman, “New Approaches to ‘Biblical’ Materials in the Qur’an,” in W.M. Brinner and S.D. Ricks (eds.), *Papers Presented at the Institute of Islamic-Judaic Studies*, Atlanta 1986, 47-63; Mustansir Mir, “The Qur’anic Story of Joseph. Plot, Themes and Characters,” in: *Muslim World*, 76 (1986), 1-15. See also Issa J. Boullata, “Literary Structures in the Qur’an,” *EQ*, III, 192-205. The present author has tried to demonstrate Koranic scripturality in “Vom Rezitationstext über die Liturgie zum Kanon. Zur Entstehung und Wiederauflösung der Surenkomposition im Verlauf der Entwicklung eines islamischen Kultus,” in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur’an as Text*, Leiden 1996, 69-111.

<sup>11</sup> B. Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic exegesis*, London 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the majority of the articles in *EQ*, I-V, 2000-2005, and such works as B. Wheeler, *Moses in the Quran and Islamic exegesis*, London 2002.

<sup>13</sup> John Wansbrough, *Qur’anic Studies. Methods of Interpretation*. Oxford 1977. See the review by Angelika Neuwirth, in: *Welt der Islam*, 23-24 (1984), 539-42.

<sup>14</sup> William Cantwell Smith, in: Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. London 1992, 539.

<sup>15</sup> David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers. A Qur’anic Study*, Surrey 1999, 10. Marshall adduces an observation made by R. M. L. Gethin, a scholar of Buddhism (R. M. L. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, Leiden 1992, 6): “The gap of understanding between two cultures may be of a different order but is not logically different from the gap of understanding that exists between two individuals of the same culture. They too will occupy their own particular worlds.... Logically, then we are left with the question of whether anyone can ever communicate with anyone else”.

<sup>16</sup> Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, New York 1977, 18.

<sup>17</sup> See Jacob Lassner, “Abraham Geiger: A Nineteenth-Century Jewish Reformer on the Origins of Islam,” in Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam. Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, Tel Aviv 1999, 103-36.

<sup>18</sup> Lassner, *op. cit.*, 112.

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen? Eine von der Königlich-Preussischen Rheinuniversität gekrönte Preisschrift*, Bonn 1833. English translation: *Judaism and Islam*, translated by F.M. Young, Madras 1898, reprinted New York 1970, with an introduction by Moshe Pearlman.

<sup>20</sup> Lassner, *op. cit.*, 114.

<sup>21</sup> Lassner, *op. cit.*, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Koran.* Leipzig 1886; idem, *Jüdische Elemente im Koran*. Berlin 1878, id., *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Josef Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin 1926.

<sup>24</sup> Heinrich Speyer, *Die Biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Gräfenhainichen 1937.

<sup>25</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans*, new edition by F. Schwally, G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl, Leipzig 1909-38, 3 vols.

<sup>26</sup> Marco Schoeller’s judgment (“Post-Enlightenment Academic Study of the Qur’an”, in *EQ*, IV, 188f.), “Nöldeke’s *Geschichte des Qorans* (GdQ), since its appearance in a second enlarged edition in the first decades of the twentieth century – considerably augmented by three other scholars – has proven to be the decisive standard text to which all modern scholars interested in the Qur’an must refer”, seems to be, however, wishful thinking, since Nöldeke’s diachronic

approach was given up already in post-World War II scholarship and has been dismissed as obsolete in more recent scholarship.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword. Sirat 'Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic*, Salt Lake City 1996. 14f.

<sup>28</sup> Various aspects of Koranic scripturality have been discussed by Arthur Jeffery, *The Qur'an as Scripture*, Baroda 1936.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh 1953, see Marco Schoeller, "Post-Enlightenment Academic Study of the Qur'an," *EQ*, IV, 187-207.

<sup>30</sup> Regis Blachere, *Introduction au Coran*. Paris 1947.

<sup>31</sup> Marco Schoeller, "Post-Enlightenment Academic Study of the Qur'an," *EQ*, IV.

<sup>32</sup> Rudi Paret, *Muhammad und der Koran*, Stuttgart 1980.

<sup>33</sup> Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh 1970, 1991.

<sup>34</sup> John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies*. See the review by Angelika Neuwirth, in *Welt des Islams*, 23-24 (1984), 539-42.

<sup>35</sup> Gert Rüdiger Puin, "Observations on Early Qur'an Manuscripts in San'a," in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text*, Leiden 1996, 107-11, H. C. Graf von Bothmer et al., "Neue Wege der Koranforschung," *Magazin der Forschung*, 1 (1999), 33-46.

<sup>36</sup> Günther Lüling, *Über den Ur-Koran. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vor-islamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Koran*. Erlangen 1974; idem, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad. Eine Kritik am "christlichen" Abendland*. Erlangen 1981; see the review by Gerald Hawting in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 27 (1982), 108-12.

<sup>37</sup> Christoph Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*. Berlin 2000; see review by Claude Gilliot, "Langue et Coran. Une lecture syro-araméenne du Coran," in *Arabica* 50 (2003), 381-91; Francois de Blois, "Islam in Its Arabian Context," in Angelika Neuwirth, Michael Marx and Nicolai Sinai (eds.), *The Qur'an in Context* (to appear in 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhum al-nass. Dirasa fi 'ulum al-Qur'an*, Cairo 1410/1990; idem, *Ishkaliyat al-qira'a wa-alīyat at-ta'wil*, Beirut 1410/1992; cf. Navid Kermani, *Offenbarung als Kommunikation. Das Konzept wahy in Nasr Hamid Abu Zayds "Mafhum al-nass"*, Frankfurt 1996.

<sup>39</sup> Toshihiko Isutzu, *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran. A Study in Semantics*, Tokyo 1959.

<sup>40</sup> Navid Kermani, *Gott ist schön. Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran*, München 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Stefan Wild, unpublished draft of a research project "The Qur'an as Mantic Speech".

# A Negotiating Minority within Minorities: West African Muslims in France and the United States

*Monika Salzbrunn*

## Introduction

Senegalese networks are linked around shared processes of identification and common values. Migrants around the world organize themselves in transnational associations, political and religious networks. Kinship, geographic origins, political goals, gender, economic activities, migration and religion can be the basis for solidarity. I aim here to show how a specific branch of Islam, the Murid Sufi order, founded by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927), provides a frame for social security in a broad sense, adapting its practices to the local migration context.

The mystical Sufi brotherhoods emerged a long time after the Prophet Mohammed, so there is no mention of them in the Koran. Although a growing number of Senegalese Muslims claim not to belong to any brotherhood, there are four main Sufi brotherhoods: Quadiriyya, Layène, Murids and Tijâniyya. The oldest brotherhood is the Arabic Quadiriyya, founded by `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166). For a long time, this was considered the most important brotherhood in sub-Saharan Africa. In Senegal, the order is located in the northwestern town of Ndiassane. The relatively insignificant Layène brotherhood is characterized by its refusal to participate in pilgrimages to Mecca, as one of the five pillars of Islam. The Layène accept women during religious ceremonies, but, since I was also invited to religious ceremonies of the Baye Fall branch of the Murids during my fieldwork in Senegal, I cannot generalize on rules forbidding women's participation in ceremonies.

The Murids are, in contrast to the dominance of brotherhoods of Arab origins, considered the only brotherhood founded by a black African Muslim, Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1850-1927), who was forced into exile in Gabon by the French colonial government because of the powerful influence he wielded over believers. The capital of the order is in Touba, which boasts one of Africa's largest mosques and Bamba's grave. The Tijâniyya, founded by Sheikh Ahmad

al-Tijani (1735-1815), is the largest but not necessarily the most influential brotherhood in Senegal. Their main centre is located in Tivaouane, but there are rival branches such as the Niassène in Kaolack, and the Omariens or the Mustarchidine wa Mustarchidaty guided by Mustapha Sy. I will focus mainly on the Murid brotherhood in France and the United States.

In the last twenty years, Senegalese migration has shifted from West African cities to France, from France to its neighbouring countries and finally to the United States. Whereas the secular French state discourages religious display, especially within public space, the more community-oriented United States is far from being opposed to religious references in the public sphere. These differences partly explain the different local expressions and functioning of religious Sufi networks in France and in the United States. I will analyze how religiously defined networks interact with other kinds of alliances, and how these worldwide existing configurations manage to create specific local expressions that respond to needs in social security. Studies in migration have focused a great deal on nomadism, mobility and trans-border connections. Although these are no doubt important characteristics of the religious Sufi networks, it is necessary to stress the very local strategies of residence, the occupation of public space and connections to local decision-makers as well as other important networks.

Even though the migrants, notably the political and religious activists, take into consideration the cultural and political differences between their various places of residence, they follow continuous strategies across their trans-local spaces. Special events such as the Murid Parade in July or the Senegalese presidential election campaign in spring 2000 provide rich empirical data for analyzing the complex interaction between Senegalese inside and outside their country, their trans-local networks and their connections to the local situation in Paris and New York City. The latter include the various inhabitants of Harlem and the local geographical setting, the representatives of the state and the politics of immigration, as well as the mayor and his political program. The recently opened House of Islam founded by members of the Murid Sufi order in Harlem shows how deeply the Senegalese in the United States are already rooted. The annual religious event organised by the Murids is part of a larger strategy of recruiting converts who support the religious network based in Senegal, whose richest contributors reside outside West Africa.

The reasons that people integrate or are in contact with these religious networks are highly complex: the notion of social security has changed according to the local context and the individual situation of the members. Whereas financial support for other members of the networks, trade relationships and spiritual help are still the most important motives for entering the networks, other motivations have recently emerged. As the new president of Senegal is a member of the Murid network, the relations become more politically oriented.

With the growing financial impact of the Senegalese migrants, the petty traders and taxi drivers who were a majority at the beginning of this migration are now joined by very rich investors who commit themselves and their business more in their new places of residence than in their home villages. The weekly prayer at the “House of Islam”, lunch at a Senegalese restaurant in Harlem owned by members of a Sufi order, and the participation in annual political and religious events become important places of sociability which transcend the belonging to a religiously defined network and can be analyzed as the “landscapes of confluence” of different kinds of local and global networks.

### Complex and Shifting Solidarities in a Religious Network

Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann define social security as “the dimension of social organisation dealing with the provision of security not considered to be an exclusive matter of individual responsibility” (2000:14). In a recent comparative reflection about migration and development, Patrick Gonin and Mohammed Charif (2005:11) underline the key role that migrants play in local development processes that are no longer carried out under state control, but the result of collective action directed from one locality to another. The importance of decentralization processes has also been pointed out by Gudrun Lachenmann (1994) and our own previous works (Petersen-Thumser and Salzbrunn, 1997), especially concerning the gender perspective.

The studies cited above show an increasing importance of local development processes, financed by migrants, that provide a framework for economic and social security particularly in a context where the state disengages from responsibilities in the sector of health, education, pensions and so on. Religious networks fill in the gap, providing material as well as immaterial goods by creating a common basis for solidarity. The creation of trade and petty trade networks is the best-known aspect of economic solidarity within religious networks based on Muridism. In a context of growing feelings of insecurity and risk perception, emotional and spiritual aspects of social security also become more and more central in the migrants’ needs. Finally, changing immigration policies increase the need for administrative support.

### Muslims in France

It is highly complicated to estimate the number of Muslims in France, because religion is considered part of private life and therefore is not mentioned in any official statistics. As a consequence of the disastrous racial politics under the Vichy regime during World War II, nor is ethnicity mentioned in the contemporary census. For those reasons, the number of Muslims residing in France can only be estimated approximately. The number of residents coming

from states with a majority of Muslim citizens and the number of citizens of these states who have obtained French nationality are two indicators that remain weak. However, the following figures can help in estimating the percentage of Muslims from sub-Saharan Africa compared to those coming from other countries. Estimations posit four million to five million Muslims residing in France. Of these, 1,550,000 are of Algerian origin, 1,000,000 of Moroccan origin, 350,000 of Tunisian origin, 100,000 from various Middle Eastern countries, 315,000 from Turkey, 250,000 from sub-Saharan African countries, 100,000 from Asian countries and 40,000 are converts of French nationality.

In public opinion, Muslim practices are more associated with citizens of North African origin than of sub-Saharan African origin. On the one hand, this perception has the advantage of protecting sub-Saharan Muslims from discrimination based on religion (although they are still victims of discrimination based on their phenotype). On the other hand, those minorities are not well represented in institutions that were created as representatives of Islam in France, namely the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM). In fact, the Fédération Française des Associations Islamiques d’Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles is hardly represented within the national and regional assemblies of the CFCM. The CFCM was created and developed under the influence of three different French interior ministers (Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Daniel Vaillant and Nicolas Sarkozy) and was supposed to serve as a unique partner of the French government concerning the organization of religious practices (venues, rituals, education and training etc.).

Religious practices in the public sphere are in general discreet in France, because the concept of *laïcité* separates religious signs and manifestations from public places and institutions. Belonging to a separate group or identification with any religion is even considered as threatening the unity of the French Republic, as recent political discourses in the context of presidential elections have shown. Hence, especially Sufi brotherhoods remain very discreet and gather in private places. The only exception for public appearance of a religious leader representing a Sufi brotherhood takes place in a non-French territory in Paris – UNESCO. Every year, a leading Murid scholar gives a lecture in the main assembly hall of UNESCO in Paris. However, this is announced as an intellectual meeting rather than a religious event. Compared to New York, where expressions of religious belonging are omnipresent, the various forms of religious practice remain far less visible within the public space in France.

## A Short History of Senegalese Immigration to the United States

Senegalese migration was insignificant until the late 1960s: from 1961 to 1970, 29,000 Africans (including North Africans) immigrated to the United States. From 1971 to 1980, 81,000 immigrants followed. The Immigration Act of 1990 established a lottery system that favoured underrepresented countries, a category that included all African countries. Since 1995, 40,000 African immigrants have come to the United States every year, with the exception of 2002 when 60,000 came. Currently 100,000 Africans live in the state of New York, constituting 11 percent of the total African population of the United States. Nigerians are the largest sub-Saharan group of immigrants; Ethiopians and Ghanaians follow far behind. However, it is difficult to obtain accurate figures because the numbers of officially recorded immigrants are much lower than the real number. Furthermore, the Census Department gives unreliable estimates. The 1990 census counted only 2,287 Senegalese, whereas various studies showed that their number in New York City alone approximated 10,000. The first Senegalese traders arrived in the 1980s. Although Senegalese immigrants have now spread all over the country, the largest community still lives in New York. Today, more than a third of the Senegalese in the United States reside there. There also is a large community in Washington, D.C..

Another way to estimate the number of Senegalese abroad focuses on the number of voters during elections. During the last election (2001), 1,877,836 regular votes were registered; 2,802,253 voters were on the official lists. Among those, 135,170 Senegalese living abroad were registered; 56,908 votes were counted. The largest part voted in Gambia (34,018 registered, 8,656 votes). In France, 6,508 votes were counted; in Italy, 6,058 out of 17,937 registered electors voted. In the United States, 3,934 were registered and 1,046 voted; in Saudi Arabia, 2,071 and 807, respectively; in Germany, 957 and 182, respectively. However, these figures only give information on the immigrants who have lived abroad for a long period and have taken the initiative to get registered as voters. As this demands much motivation, patience and administrative work, the majority of Senegalese abroad are not represented in these lists, and their numbers can only be inferred from these indications.

The sociocultural background of African immigrants in the United States differs from the background of immigrants in France: the Senegalese immigrants, and more generally, immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, are much more educated than the migrants who came to France in the 1960s. In fact, 98 percent of African immigrants in the United States are high school graduates and almost half have bachelors or advanced degrees. Hence, “African migrants are the most educated group in the nation”, in comparison

to other immigrant groups<sup>1</sup>. The most substantial part of African emigration is not due to poverty but directly linked to the brain drain. The Africans' average annual incomes are higher than those of the foreign-born population as a whole. Forty-five percent earn \$35,000-\$75,000 a year thanks to their high education levels. This is higher than the median income of the African American and Caribbean populations. However, in most cases the income of African immigrants does not correspond to their academic achievements.

Examples for the perception of this recent African immigration may be found in official documents about immigration to the United States in general: "they bring to the United States their robust work ethic, dynamism, and strong attachment to family, culture and religion, just as other Africans did several countries ago" says a website linked to the Schomburg Center of Research in Black Culture, part of the New York Public Library.<sup>2</sup> This perception of the African migrants is similar to discourses that Senegalese migrants' associations conduct in order to obtain new members and to become rooted in the local place of residence.

The ASA (Association des Sénégalais d'Amérique), founded in 1988, defines its objectives as the defence of the Senegalese sociocultural and traditional values, participation in the economic development of their community, and the unity of the Senegalese without any religious, political or philosophical distinction. Although the interior regulation prohibits any religious, political and philosophical discussion and activity in order to avoid partisan struggles, the ASA informs its members about religious discussions organized by other Senegalese organizations such as the Senegalese Catholic Association in America. Furthermore, the interdiction of political discussions is relative because one of the objectives of the ASA is to contribute to the economic, political and socioeconomic development of the Senegalese community in the United States. However, Senegalese and African unity is advanced in order to overcome the gap between less educated petty traders called Moudou-Moudou and intellectuals.

## Theoretical Reflections about Social Networks and Transnational Social Spaces

Over the past decade, studies on migration have more and more focused on social networks. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Susan Szanton (1992) have opened the discussion in a transnational perspective. Recently, Nina Glick Schiller and George Eugene Fouron (2001) researched the phenomenon of long-distance nationalism, which implies a continuous reference to the migrant's nation of origin. When Thomas Faist (2000) and Ludger Pries (1996) defined the notion of "transnational social spaces", based on empirical fieldwork on migrants circulating between different geographical areas, they

underlined the creation of new imaginary spaces that go across and beyond geographic boundaries. Finally, Robin Cohen and Steven Vertovec (1999) have provided an extensive reflection on diasporas and transnationalism.

Pries (1996), while studying migration between Mexico and the United States, identified the transmigrant, a working migrant who is situated in plural social spaces. Transmigrants interact in highly complex transnational networks that provide information about employment, facilitate the transfer of money to the family in the home village, and offer a means of identification with the home country by network members' sharing everyday practices such as preparing food and organizing social gatherings according to well-established rites. The networks are structured by mutual obligations and are the result of a complex system of loyalty. The positions and identities created in this way are hybrid because they take into consideration elements of the original and host countries. These transnational social spaces result from new forms of delimitation and differ from geographic or national boundaries, transcending a simple coexistence of the two systems of reference (Pries, 1996: 456).

## Translocal Social Spaces: The Importance of the Local Living Conditions

Following Pries' concept of transnational social spaces and Glick Schiller and Fouron's (2001) last book on long-distance transnationalists, I suggest emphasizing the importance of the specific local living conditions by adopting the notion of translocal social spaces. Even though Pries included the importance of elements of the new environment within the transnational social space, the reference to the home country seems to be the most important part of the reference system. During our fieldwork among Senegalese migrants in Europe and the United States, we observed that the local economic, social and cultural reference systems became more and more important within the transmigrant's identification process. Their action was only partly determined by their reference to their original nation, village or family, but more and more to their new local and national environment.

Hence I suggest a definition of translocal social spaces as the result of new forms of delimitation that partly consist of, but also reach beyond geographic or national boundaries. These translocal spaces lead to new sources of identification and action based on specific local and global reference systems.

Studies on Senegalese migration have intensely focused on Murid trade networks<sup>3</sup>. The increasing migration of Senegalese peasants to the urban areas, and the international migration to Europe (France, Italy, Spain and Germany) and, currently, to the United States (especially New York), have reinforced the creation of translocal social spaces. Our participatory observation from 1994

to 2002 in Senegal, the United States, France, Germany and, to a lesser extent, in other European countries indicated that political issues are becoming more and more important, especially within the Senegalese communities abroad. The translocal social spaces are not necessarily exclusively based on religious practices or on belonging to a *dahira* [religious community; < Arabic: *dā'ira*, circle]. Communities have cross-cutting ties and individuals belong to several networks and (interest-) groups at once. Undoubtedly the Murid economic networks are some of the best-organized groups with an unquestionable financial influence.

Nevertheless, we have observed that individual and collective migrants' (political, economic and social) activities, particularly in and around Paris, focused considerably on the desire for political change. This element in the migrants' discourse can be considered as a long-distance nationalist reference. The large political coalition that aimed at breaking the domination of President Abdou Diouf in 2000 was united beyond religious or ideological orientations. In fact, Leopold Sedar Senghor and then his follower Abdou Diouf from the Socialist Party had controlled the Senegalese government since independence from France in 1960. A number of scandals, corruption and the country's economic difficulties after the devaluation of the currency (Franc, CFA) in 1994 had contributed to growing dissatisfaction and a desire for political change within the population in Senegal, but also among the Senegalese migrants. The opposition managed to unify their efforts during the decisive campaign for the presidential elections in 2000. During the electoral meetings of Senegalese immigrants in 1999 and 2000 in Paris, for example, three women controlled financial affairs: one Murid and one Catholic woman who belonged to the main opposition party PDS (Senegalese Democratic Party), and one Tijâni woman who was a member of a very old Marxist party, And Jëf/PADS (Parti Africain pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme).

This example reflects the attitude of most of the activists as well of most of the voters. Religious issues were not openly discussed during the meetings in and around Paris – on the contrary, political speakers underlined several times the *laïque* character of the constitution. Nevertheless, most of the practicing Murids were conscious of the fact that in the person of Abdoulaye Wade, a Murid *talibe* (Wolof: pupil < Arabic *talab*) was leading the main opposition party. In the past, several *marabouts*<sup>4</sup> were criticized by the population after having supported the government – a government which has been more and more contested. The dissatisfaction with the ruling government, and the difficult economic situation of the population since the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 have increased the desire for political change, particularly among youth, whose participation rate in elections was very low until 2000. Hence, it became a growing risk for *marabouts* to openly support the ruling government by the issuing of *ndigals* (which means a general order, in this case a clear

recommendation for a vote). In France, a member of the Senate, the second chamber in Senegal, proudly said during a meeting of the opposition: “I have convinced my *marabout* not to give any *ndigal*, although he usually supported the Socialist Party”. The applauding audience in Paris shared the opinion of the *marabout*, believing in the real possibility of political change.

Presumably, historical structures of religious authority were largely contested on an individual level. People’s desire to take autonomous political decisions, independent of *marabouts’* advice, was obvious. This evolution laid the groundwork for Abdoulaye Wade’s strategy of relying on translocal networks. Wade himself organized his election campaign from his residence in Versailles near Paris. His local contacts, especially with the French liberal political leader Alain Madelin, were crucial for organizing the campaign. Several deputies of Madelin’s party supported the members of Wade’s party by lending them their infrastructure (offices, etc.). The second important city where the election campaign took place was New York.

Political claims of the migrants constituted the central part of Wade’s political program: a less restrictive customs policy, governmental aid for investments in Senegal, bilateral social insurance agreements, decent living conditions for migrants in France and so on. Wade addressed himself systematically to the migrants during electoral meetings that were organized in the collective workers’ homes in and around Paris. He presented himself as the only candidate who was close to the migrants and well understood their problems. In New York, he systematically met members of the West African community based in Harlem. His discourse focused not only on the problems of migrants coming home to Senegal (such as trouble with customs) but also on the local situation in New York.

Senegalese migration, which over the past twenty years has been circular and translocal<sup>5</sup> rather than restricted to two locations, has recently shifted towards the United States. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s the administrative conditions and the job opportunities for seasonal agricultural work and for petty trade were still convenient for sub-Saharan Africans in Europe, in the 1990s the restrictive visa policy in the European Union encouraged more and more Senegalese migrants to move to the United States. Better-educated migrants in particular explained their decision to live in the United States not only for economic reasons but also because they felt that Senegalese migrants in France were “*déclassé*” (Gueye 2001: 130).

This feeling is related to living conditions that are becoming worse and worse, the complicated bureaucracy, which discourages liberal entrepreneurs, and to the sense of low esteem for African migrants in general, reflected by their lack of representation among political or economic decision-makers. Another reason for the downgrading of France as an important venue for migrants is the attitude of the Senegalese government towards the migrants

who are French residents. None of them is represented among the Senegalese ministers, although American Senegalese are better represented in the new government.<sup>6</sup> This is a deception for the voters because the election campaigns in France in 2000 and 2001 (cf. Salzbrunn, 2001) focused particularly on the representation of migrants on the list of the winning PDS.

Abdoulaye Wade addressed his election campaign to the migrants abroad as somebody who was part of the Senegalese abroad, knowing well their problems and living conditions. Wade himself had resided in Versailles near Paris for several years and used this argument in order to obtain the migrants' votes during the 2000 presidential election. The fact that a Senegalese resident of France had a key position on the PDS list for the parliamentary elections in 2001 was also used as an argument in favour of the PDS in France.

## Creating Social Security through Translocal Spaces in the United States

Since the 1990s, the United States has been a new centre of Senegalese migration, which is mostly a result of the above factors. From New York City, New York State, Connecticut and New Jersey, migrants spread over the whole country, building several regional centres such as that in Atlanta, Georgia. The local context of migration and the way that migrants organize themselves within the new translocal spaces are as important as the knowledge and customs from their original home. Therefore, we suggest including the notion of 'translocal spaces' in theoretical and empirical approaches to migration. Our recent empirical fieldwork among religious (Sufi) and political Senegalese networks in New York has shown how deeply these networks are rooted in the local social spaces.

Getting connected to key persons in the religious communities in New York and getting in touch with the local administration in order to build up commercial, social, political and religious structures are important examples of local strategy for migrants that researchers need to take into consideration (Salzbrunn, 2004). The implementation of religious and political structures by migrants in New York requires profound local knowledge about law, customs, administration and so on. The existing social practices have influenced and modified the experiences of the Senegalese, and led to new hybrid practices which take into consideration the very specific local situation in Harlem.

Whereas France and Senegal are secular states, religious references in public space are much more visible in the United States. In Harlem, prayers are organized within public space, often via microphones on the street in front of churches or assembly halls. The flourishing Pentecostal or Neo-Protestant movements in particular put a strong emphasis on missionary street work. The Senegalese migrants, who have become familiar with the religious patchwork

of Harlem, have adopted the use of loudspeakers to announce daily prayers in a recently opened mosque in the urban centre of West African migration, near the well-known Malcolm Shabbaz mosque. Iconographic symbols of religious affiliation are also omnipresent in the names and decors of Harlem boutiques, as well as in the cars of Senegalese cab drivers. Stickers and paintings reproducing the only existing image of the founder of the Murid brotherhood, Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853-1927), and photos of the Murids' caliphs residing at Touba are commonly displayed in Senegalese restaurants or video shops.

The use of these iconographic documents is much more common than Arabic writings and calligraphy – which can be explained by the limited knowledge of Arabic among the West African Muslims compared to other Muslim migrants residing in the United States. The symbolic presence of Senegalese religious leaders within the public space provides a feeling of emotional security. Senegalese become a part of Harlem through their religious expression. Instead of feeling “downgraded” in a country where religion, and especially a non-Christian religion, is less visible, Senegalese migrants in the United States become more and more upgraded; the practice of religion lends them respect in the eyes of Americans.

This acceptance allows the Senegalese, in turn, to identify more with American values. One example of this ongoing identification process is the increasing use of the English language and the decreasing use of French, and the presence of American flags during religious demonstrations such as the Murid Parade. The rooting of the Murids in the United States can be seen as a sign of emotional and spiritual security, although it is not a guarantee of economic and administrative security. It increases, however, the hope of achieving the latter, and shows that Senegalese, Murid and American identity do not exclude each other but can be parts of an individual identification process, accompanied by the elaboration of various aspects of social security.

Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Suzanne Blanc-Szanton (1992) assert that non-acceptance in the established society favours identification among immigrants with transnational and home-country communities. The higher identification of migrants with America than with France is not only linked to colonial history, but also to the higher degree of emotional security and symbolic presence within the public space. A brief history of the Murid community in New York shows how the Senegalese Muslims became established.

## The Murid Community Establishes Roots in New York

In 1986, a couple of hundred Senegalese Murid migrants set up their first *dahira* in New York under the auspices of Serigne Moustapha Mbacké Gaidé

Fatma. His father, Sheikh Mbacké Gaindé Fatma, is the eldest grandson of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba. During this period, the Murids met regularly in Brooklyn at a house named Keur Serigne Touba. Brooklyn was one of the first residential quarters of the Murids in New York, mostly frequented by Haalpulaar or Fulbe.<sup>7</sup> Because the high concentration of Fulbe originated from the Futa Toro, a region in East Senegal around the Senegal River, Brooklyn's Fulton Street was also named Futa Street.

Serigne Moustapha Gaindé Fatma took the initiative of contacting his grand-uncle Serigne Mourtalla Mbacké to encourage him to visit the New York *dahira*. The latter was asked to pay for his own journey. In their publications and reports of annual events, the Murids normally underlined that the first part of the funding of a visit or of the construction of a mosque came from the Sheikh's initiative. His acts are described as an example that encourages the Murid followers to do similar acts of charity. Originally, of course, part of the aid offered by the Sheikh came from his followers' donations.

One of the most important African American converted *talibes* in the United States is Sheikh Balozy of New Jersey. He financed an important part of the first visit of Sheikh Mourtalla in 1988. The largest part of the costs was allocated to pay for the hotel, and the idea of attaining a place of permanent residence developed two years later. When the annual event attracted so many disciples that the Brooklyn space became too confined, the location shifted to Manhattan.

## The House of Islam in Harlem

Becoming aware of the growing number of Senegalese and African American *talibes*, Sheikh Mourtalla took the initiative of setting up a non-profit organization whose aim was to create a permanent centre for the Murids. The Murid Islamic Community of America Inc. (MICA) was founded as a 501 (c) 3 type, which allows donors to deduct tax from the amount of their contribution. Sheikh Balozzi, known as "the first American talibe", is the president of MICA. In 1991, three years after his first visit in New York, Sheikh Mourtalla asked MICA to buy a house in New York in order to create a House of Islam. Murid publications such as the bi-monthly bulletin *Mouride* in French and the MICA website (in English) underline that Sheikh Mourtalla has given US\$55,000 to support the project.

The *talibes* have collected another \$61,000, which led to the acquisition of a lot in Harlem. According to an initial estimate, the final four-story building would require an additional \$250,000. Finally, after several errors and delays, the cost reached \$350,000. In eight years, the Murids managed to raise \$500,000 through gatherings and assemblies.

On the first floor, a mosque and a school “for the teaching of Muslim religion” were the first installations. On the second floor, the Sheikh’s residence was installed in order to avoid paying hotel costs. According to official sources, the rest of the space is reserved for welcoming other Murid dignitaries who visit the city. Our informants reproduce the discourse of Murid hospitality, declaring that “anybody who arrives and who is looking for an apartment can go to the House of Islam and reside a couple of days there”.

In the *talibes’* discourse, the House of Islam is a symbol of Murids’ hospitality and openness. Cheikh Bassirou Lô, who lived in New York from 1992 to 1995, has been head of the Murid community in New York since 2001. He confirms<sup>8</sup> that hospitality is offered to guests for two days, which gives them time to find a place to stay. One of the four rooms in the house is reserved for that purpose. Sheikh Bassirou Lô estimates that the Murid community in New York has one thousand to two thousand members. The monthly membership fee mentioned in the procedures of Murid *dahiras* is \$30-\$50.

An important part of the Senegalese embassy staff in Washington comes to the main religious celebrations: Eid, Magal and the prayers at the end of Ramadan. The Senegalese consul of New York regularly attends Friday prayers. The House of Islam is not restricted to Murides. According to Sheikh Bassirou Lô, members of the Tijâniyya brotherhood also attend prayers. He wants the House of Islam to be an open space for anybody who is interested in Islam. After 9/11, he felt a growing interest in Islam among the American population. An indicator for this impression was the growing number of registrations for weekly classes at the House of Islam. As Sheikh Anta Babou points out (2002), education, through the mediation of *dahiras*, constitutes an important source of social capital among Murid migrants. The consciousness of belonging to this religious community has grown since 9/11 among the Murids, but the general interest of the American population in the diversity of Islam has also grown. Sales of translated Korans have increased, and so has the demand for Arabic lessons.

It is true that the general increasing interest in Islam was not exclusively due to a positive attitude, but also to fear and mistrust; interest in literature on religious based terrorism also grew. Still, in this context, Murids who felt rejected tried to differentiate their religious practice as Sufis from other Islamic groups or ideologies rooted in the Near East. Religious expression, and especially the expression of Islamic practice, certainly did not become easier after 9/11. But given the significant number of Muslims residing the United States, the clear expression of a tolerant, non-violent religious practice was welcome.

Other Black Muslim organizations called for a deeper connection to the American Muslim roots. This does not refer to the Arab migrants who came at

the beginning of the twentieth century, but to the descendants of the Muslim slaves. In his *Reflections on Black History Month*, Imam Zaid Shakir points out that in identifying with

African Muslims, we must not allow ourselves to forget that they were part of a greater community, a community which has evolved to almost fifty million African Americans. The struggle of that community, its pain, perseverance, triumphs, and defeats, cannot be separated from the struggle of its Muslim members. If we as Muslims are moved by the suffering cruelties of a vicious system, we would similarly be moved by the plight of their non-Muslim African brothers and sisters who suffered the same injustices.<sup>9</sup>

Imam Zaid Shakir quotes the references to the history of slavery in Sylviane A. Diouf's book on *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*.<sup>10</sup> Diouf points out that 20 percent of the Africans enslaved in the Americas were Muslims. In some areas such as the coast of the Carolinas, Georgia and parts of Virginia, this may have approached 40 percent.

During Black History Month, facts about institutional racism are discussed with reference to the history of slavery. This leads to a discursive construction of a we-group of African American Muslims and African Muslims, considering all African Americans as being brothers and sisters, too. The counterpart of a growing interest in Islam has been a growing hostility towards Islam in general and Arab Muslims in particular. For that reason, Black and recently immigrated African Muslims have also tried to show a particularly peaceful, tolerant and moral image of Islam, underlining constructed African particularities. The construction of a tolerant and peaceful image of Sufi Islam is part of a wider strategy that aims at building a solid spiritual and emotional security, followed by administrative security in terms of residence permits and economic security represented by permits for establishing businesses.

The huge size of the House of Islam reflects the desire of the Senegalese migrants to develop strong roots in the urban space. The investment in the migrants' new location is also a proof of their economic impact and the ambition to invest significant amounts of money in the translocal migration network rather than in the country of origin, even if both practices are still current. Finally, the Murid Islamic Community in America carries out missionary activities through the publication of a magazine in English, although French is still the most common language among the Senegalese migrants besides Wolof and Fulbe. Titled *Education: A Key Function in Muridism: A Message from Shaykh Mourtada Mbacke ibn Khadimou Rassoul*, the magazine presents the history of Muridism, especially the life of its founder Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, and gives a detailed account of the current activities of Murids in Touba and New York detail. Citations of Koranic verses and of Sheikkh Ahmadou

Bamba's words appear throughout the articles, as well as advertisements of members of the Senegalese community. These include attorneys, travel agents, car services and money transfer agents, as well as shops such as bookstores, grocers, clothing, video markets, wholesale and retail distribution centres for perfume, cosmetics and food, computer centres and import-export firms. The Murid radio stations have also included an advertisement for their radio and Internet broadcasting service. Finally, the magazine contains an application form for the "Children's Quranic Saturday and Sunday school", held at the Masjid Touba Islamic School for children, based at the House of Islam. Providing an alternative education is part of the migrants' strategy of increasing their social and cultural capital. Attracting potential converts to Muridism by distributing magazines in English is another goal.

### From the Annual Visit of Sheikh Mourtalla Mbacké towards the Official Shaykh Ahmadou Bamba Day

Although 1989 is cited as the year of the first official visit of Sheikh Mourtalla Mbacke to New York, the Murid community managed as early as 1988 to obtain the official proclamation of 28 July as Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacke Day in Harlem by David N. Dinkins, then president of the Borough of Manhattan:

Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan. City of New York. Proclamation. WHEREAS: Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke of Touba-Senegal-West Africa was among the most charismatic and effective leader of this century; and WHEREAS: To honour his distinguished memory and his outstanding achievement for the benefit of African personality and culture; and WHEREAS: His venerated son Cheikh Mourtalla Mbacke of Touba Senegal has come in Harlem to visit his thousands of followers and admirers; and THEREFORE: The Senegalese Murid Community and the people of Harlem are proud to seize this opportunity to salute as a great leader Cheikh Mourtalla Mbacke and to proclaim this day July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1988 to be known as: "CHEIKH AHMADOU BAMBA MBACKE" in Harlem. IN WITNESS WHEREOF I HAVE HERETO SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN TO BE AFFIXED THIS 28<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JULY 1988. David N. Dinkins<sup>11</sup>

Charles B. Rangel, U.S. congressman representing the 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, New York, signed a similar proclamation on behalf of the House of Representatives in Washington, DC. The only detail that differs from Dinkins's proclamation is that Rangel writes that "We [rather than "To"] honour his distinguished memory and his outstanding achievement for the

benefit of African personality and culture". Choosing the personal instead of the impersonal form, Rangel clearly includes himself among the people who honour Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's life and work. This identification with the Senegalese migrants could be remembered by potential voters during the next election campaign. During our stay in Harlem in autumn 2002, election workers frequented Senegalese boutiques in order to leave their propaganda material. During the West Indian Parade in Brooklyn, candidates also participated in the march in order to obtain communities' votes.

The above declaration reproduces the official discourse of the Murid community to consider Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba as a charismatic leader and as an incarnation of African character. His African identity is emphasized for two reasons. First, the internal historiography of the Muridiyya seeks to distinguish this brotherhood from Arabic Sufi brotherhoods such as Tijâniyya, Layène and Quadiriyya which also are popular in Senegal, underlining the fact that the Muridiyya was the first brotherhood founded by a sheikh from sub-Saharan Africa. Second, especially in the context of the United States, the highlighted Africanness of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba and the Muridiyya is supposed to attract African American Muslims and potential converts in search of African roots and authenticity. We will see later how the discourse of Africanness and of African American brotherhood is systematically used by participants in the Murid Parade in Harlem during Sheikh Mourtalla Mbacke's annual visit.

Since 1989, the local Murid community has organized annual meetings around the visit of Sheikh Mourtada Mbacke in New York. These visits are videotaped and documented on cassettes for sale in Senegalese shops all over the world. The arrival of Sheikh Mourtalla Mbacke at JFK Airport as well as the annual Murid Parade, a march through Harlem towards Central Park, are documented in detail. During the march, reporters ask Senegalese and African American followers to comment on the event. The African American participants in particular underline the importance of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba as an icon for unity between African migrants and African Americans in the United States. We will see below how the relations between these two groups are manifested in everyday life and how they struggle for resources.

In Atlanta, where another important regional centre of West African migration has been established, the mayor has also signed a Proclamation concerning the Murid brotherhood:

City of Atlanta. Office of the Mayor. Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe Day. Whereas, The City of Atlanta is honoured to welcome Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe, the Second in leadership line of the Mourtide Sufi Order of Touba-Senegal, West Africa to our great city on August 11, 1997; and Whereas, Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe is the son Cheikh Ahmadou

Bamba M'Backe, founder of the Mourдите Sufi Movement, the non-violent movement which was a major influence in the liberation of Senegal; and Whereas, Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe carries on his father's work to liberate his people through religion, education and economic prosperity and used his personal funds to establish over 400 hundred schools with more than 4,500 teachers in Senegal, Gambia, Gabon, parts of Europe and the United States; and Whereas, We honor Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe for his life-long devotion to improving the educational, religious, economic and social welfare of people around the world and commend him for his outstanding academic excellence, superior professional accomplishments, and leadership abilities: Now, therefore, I, Bill Campbell, Mayor of Atlanta, on behalf of the citizens of Atlanta, hereby proclaim August 11, 1997, as Cheikh Mourtalla M'Backe in our City and urge all citizens to be cognizant of the events arranged during his visit.

Bill Campbell. Mayor.<sup>12</sup>

This text presents an interesting hybridization of American and Murid references, which reflect the creation of the migrants' identity discourse. Furthermore, the proclamation shows how an event can be created and emphasized by the language of officials. In the sentence, the Murids are called a "Sufi Order", which corresponds to their theological description. After that, the Murids are cited as a "Sufi Movement" and a "non-violent movement". These terms fit the American reference system, in which movements have been saluted for their struggle for collective rights. The heritage of Martin Luther King makes Atlanta a particularly important place for non-violent movements – which does not mean that there were no violent struggles based on race or ethnicity. But the history of Atlanta facilitates including this reference in the general discourse. The individual liberation or the victory against oneself, which is a central part of Sufi theology, is absent from the semantic level of the text. Collective values, such as the liberation of Senegal from the French colonialists, and economic prosperity, are emphasized, though education is also mentioned.

The use of "non-violent" alludes to Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's attitude towards the French colonial government. The latter sent the spiritual leader into exile in Ghana, and later in Mauritania, because his spiritual attraction was considered subversive. However, other important members of the Sufi brotherhood either were violent in their struggle against the French government or collaborated with local officials. Several marabouts served as interfaces between the French governors and the local population in order to maintain the colonial order. Liberation in the name of religious convictions is only one

aspect of Murids' attitudes towards political power. We will mention below how this ambiguous behaviour towards political decision-makers continues today.

Economy is mentioned in almost Weberian terms, reflecting the successful marriage of Murid work ethics and American economic liberalism: Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's recommendations of hard work and contribution to prosperity are common knowledge among Murids and frequently cited as a virtue. The lobbying for official support by elected decision-makers is part of the strategy to occupy the public space in order to spread religious and political messages. The latter are not necessarily declared as such; several Murid intellectuals would even deny any contemporary link between the Sufi brotherhood and politics. We conclude that this is rather a question of definition of what can be considered as politics. In the analysis of several declarations relating to the Murid march, we have seen how global and local politics are reflected during this event. Being recognized as part of Harlem is part of the successful achievement of emotional and administrative security, even though the proclamation of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day is not an exceptional gesture in the context of a multicultural society that supports minorities.

## The Importance of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's Mother and the Women's Dahiras and Entrepreneurs in New York

As I have already shown concerning the Senegalese presidential elections (Salzbrunn, 2002), women are central actors in organizing political and religious events. At all the political or religious events I have observed, women played an important part in the organization and always were present during the ceremonies.

In New York, the *dahira* Mame Diarra has approximately one hundred members who pay \$50 for each event that has to be organized, which essentially involves religious feasts such as Gamou or Magal. During the annual visits of Serigne Mourtada Mbacké, they prepare food for visitors and *talibes*. In 2001, they also served Senegalese dishes to their neighbours in Harlem, which was an opportunity to present an image of generosity.

In Senegal, the burial site in Porokhane of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's mother, Mam Diarra Bousso, is attracting growing interest amongst Murid pilgrims (Evers Rosander, 2003). The emerging cult around this female religious icon contributes to the growing importance of women in diffusing Muridism. In 2002, the pilgrimage dedicated to another important female figure in Muridism, Sokhna Mai, the sister of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, was officially institutionalized as a Magal in the Murid calendar. The institutionalization of pilgrimage to places associated with female religious icons strengthens the participation of women in the promotion of Muridism. These pilgrimages are

another example of the importance of events in diffusing a religious and, in this case, gender-biased, message. As I have pointed out earlier, women play also key roles in important functions such as finance and logistics. Several key persons act as interfaces with a broader population in order to forward important messages and to mobilize the population to attend religious or political events. Women are also clearly present in the representations that circulate about the events: like any participant, they are always invited to express their opinion by reporters who prepare videotapes about the event. The important place that women occupy within the religious and political networks reflects their historical importance in decision-making processes in Senegal.

### The Regular Visits to New York of Sheikh Mourtada Mbacke

At the end of the 1990s, the annual visit of the Murid Sheikh Mourtada Mbacke became an important event lasting for more than two weeks. The Senegalese and American press, as well as radio stations, regularly report the news. Video producers film the whole event in order to commercialize the tapes via retailers in the United States, Europe and Senegal.

On his arrival at JFK Airport, a crowd of hundreds of talibes wearing large *boubous* (a typical article of clothing) welcomes Sheikh Mourtada Mbacke at each visit with *khassaides* (religious songs and prayers). Serigne Mbacké Ndiaye and Adja Aram Adji, president of the female dahira Sokhna Diarra, direct the organization of the visit. El Haj Mohammad Balozi, the first African American convert, is the first person to salute Sheikh Mourtada on American soil. While kissing the sheikh's hand, he has one knee on the ground. Then he leads the sheikh towards a huge white limousine, where the sheikh, accompanied by the *talibes' khassaides*, leaves the airport with an escort of the Port Authority of New York Police. The important engagement of the police who accompany the event is seen as a sign of prestige rather than a threat by the participants. Whereas events organized by Muslim minorities in European countries are sometimes accompanied by large numbers of policemen to prevent conflict and subversive acts in the crowd, the engagement of the American police in this specific religious event is rather seen as a matter of officially honouring the arrival of a religious authority who needs protection and respect.

Before the acquisition of the House of Islam in Harlem, the sheikh resided during his stay in prestigious luxury hotels. Upon his arrival at Pennsylvania Hotel in 1999, a huge crowd, comprising many women and children, again saluted him. Tens of banderols, mostly in English but also in Arabic, proudly celebrated "blackness" as an important quality, or cited "Allah the Creator of the Universe". Children wore T-shirts especially printed for this event, some

showing Senegalese and American flags. Several messages were appeals for conversion: “You young people. Get the achievement of peace and justice as your ultimate goal while starving [*sic*] for knowledge and enlightenment”.

In 2001, the ambassador of Senegal and his son welcomed Sheikh Mourtada at the Salon d’honneur at JFK Airport. This manifestation of official honour was reported in the bimonthly francophone Mouride magazine distributed around the different migration platforms. Obtaining Senegalese and American official proclamations or symbolic honours is part of the strategy of occupying public space, and is not seen as contradicting the secular constitution of Senegal.

The culminating point of the annual visit is the Murid Parade, a march through the streets of Harlem that ends with several discourses held in Wolof, Arabic and English at a corner of Central Park. The videotape that documents the Murid Parade for 1999 contains interviews with several participants during the march. The common motif of most of the discourses is the celebration of “African” unity, the wish to bring together “Africans born in America and Africans born in Senegal”. One of the main messages is the invitation for a reinvention of Africanness addressed to the African American population. Clear allusions are made to the Black Muslim movement and Afrocentric philosophy: “We want to thank Sheikh Mourtada for coming here to spread Islam among the African-American community”. Several speakers assimilate African unity to conversion to Islam.

We would like to thank Sheikh Mourtada for his dedication, his hard work, his support for the last ten years to the Murid Islamic community here in America. Insh’Allah, next year, the Murid Islamic community will be continuing to propagate Islam, propagating and letting the world know that the Senegalese, that the African American community have come together to do something great. That something has been prophesized by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, one day we will come together and be one.

After the discourses, several Senegalese and African Americans demonstrate their unity by emphatic accolades. The women, who were mostly at the end of the parade, are also interviewed, expressing in Wolof or French their great satisfaction at participating in this event. A large place is always reserved for female participation in religious or political events in Senegal. During official meetings with religious or political authorities, women are systematically represented and participate in the debate. The participation of the female *dahira* Mame Diarra in the 2001 Murid Parade and the community’s activities in general are reported in the *Mouride* magazine as “immense oeuvre”. “Behind every great man, a great woman is hidden”, says the article as a summary of the situation in New York.

## Changing Alliances in Harlem

Various actors understand the different messages issued during the Murid Parade differently. As the Afrocentric allusions by several African American speakers require a high level of instruction in order to be deciphered, they presumably are understood by a very small group of participants. The demonstrative discourse of brotherhood between African Americans and recently arrived African migrants conceals profound conflicts that emerge in everyday life in Harlem. Very strong mutual prejudices exist.

In 1994, the violence that characterized the relations among different groups of traders reached a climax when access to public space was radically redistributed. Before that date, Nigerian and Senegalese petty traders occupied the public space in Harlem, attracting a growing number of clients and tourists around 125th Street. The shop owners, mostly African Americans and Asians, had the impression that the occupation of the sidewalk prevented their clients from entering the boutiques. Rudolph Giuliani then based his mayoral election campaign on the promise to disperse the informal traders. As the informal traders were constrained to leave this area, the shop owners realized that their clients shifted with them, so they finally lost important benefits.

The Malcolm Shabbaz mosque proposed itself as an interface between the informal vendors, the mayor and the 125th Street Vendors Association, promising to regulate the informal vendors in an area at 116th Street. This caused a significant conflict between Nigerian traders, who were opposed to this plan, and Senegalese, who mostly agreed with this solution (Stoller, 2002:121-143). The Senegalese, being used to the local negotiation processes since their arrival in 1982, managed to negotiate with City Hall and the Masjid Malcolm Shabbaz, which disadvantaged a large part of the Nigerians. Paul Stoller's analysis of the "Spatial Politics of African Traders in Harlem" (*ibid.*) presents the opposite image of the declared brotherhood between black people during the Murid Parade.

However, in certain circumstances, the Senegalese join the African American population or use the etiquette of blackness in order to achieve political goals. This strategy stems from the Murids' excellent understanding of the way political negotiation processes work in the United States. Collective claims in the name of a group, particularly a minority group that can benefit from affirmative action programs, can be more successful for people than individual demands. There are individual people who have succeeded partly thanks to affirmative action programs or to belonging to a certain group (e.g., Murids who negotiated the access to public space with the mayor of New York, or African American students who have obtained special research grants), but there are also indicators of ongoing discrimination based on race: the high percentage of African Americans who are incarcerated or the extremely low

percentage of mixed couples in the United States (compared to France) show the real impact of a constructed and/or perceived racial difference.

It may be too early to draw general conclusions on the relationship between Afro Americans and recent African immigrants, so that I limit my own analysis to the specific case of Senegalese immigrants in New York. We have seen that analysis of the specific local situation is extremely important for comprehending a translocal network. An extension of the analysis to the situation in Atlanta (where Martin Luther King's non-violent movement has its roots, and where African American politicians have promoted racial identity as a ground for legitimacy) or in California would need further intensive fieldwork.

## Islam within the French Republic

In France, the Senegalese migrants do not use the same strategy because the French Republic is based on universalism and rejects communitarian categories. This leads back to Abbé Grégoire's political concept of allowing people human rights in the name of the individual who is part of the Republic, but not in the name of interest groups. However, in order to be able to speak with one representative per religious group, the French government encourages the creation of official Religious Federations (which are structured similarly to churches). The Jewish and Muslim Councils (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, CFCM) are negotiating the place of religion and religious symbols within public space. Their power is relatively limited, and in practice, distinctions are made between the different religions for historical reasons.

For example, the large majority of Catholic churches are maintained by the state because they were constructed before 1904, which classifies them as being under the protection and responsibility of the state. In comparison, Muslims have to finance the maintenance of their mosques on their own, because they were constructed more recently. Muslims from sub-Saharan Africa suffer from a double disadvantage: they are underrepresented within the CFCM and do not necessarily share its position. On the one hand, this lack of consideration and institutional power can cause trouble; on the other hand, the non-association of Black Africans with Islam can protect them from religious-based attacks in times when public opinion may confound Islam with Islamism or even with terrorism.

During the recent debates about the interdiction of religious symbols in the public space, especially the wearing of veils within public schools, several journalists associated the veil with oppression of women and Islamist ideology. This very emotional debate concerned mostly Muslims of North African origin. Young women of sub-Saharan origin are less likely to wear a veil. Their mothers' coloured headscarves were less associated with religion

than with folklore or customs. In the United States, clear distinctions are part of the conception of the American multicultural society, so that rights are attributed in the name of these differences. The Murids have well understood these mechanisms.

## Cross-Cutting Alliances in Harlem

Another part of their strategy to become well rooted in the public space in Harlem is the translation of their values into a language understood by Americans in order to promote their activities. The most important issues among these values are economic and moral practices. The ideology of very hard work and the ideal of a certain form of piety are welcomed by a section of American society. In the context of an open battle by state officials against drugs and alcohol, the promotion of an ascetic lifestyle by the Murids is considered a helpful initiative. American researchers who are specialists on Muridism also express their fascination in the expression of these values. In their own discourse, Murids declare that they have reconstructed large parts of Harlem, fought crime and stopped the disintegration of the area. These changes increase economic, emotional and administrative security.

Negative prejudices against African Americans include their supposed negative attitude towards work and loss of moral values. I have also collected several negative testimonies of African Americans against Africans. These include the feeling that their new employers in recently opened shops and restaurants exploit African Americans, or that the Africans show no solidarity but rather a hostile attitude towards the former inhabitants of Harlem. Almost every person I interviewed from both groups gave a concrete example of negative experiences with the other group. The apparent unity, which is declared during the Murid parade, seems to contrast with everyday social relations. Regarding the attraction for African Americans of Muridism, the economic dynamics of the Senegalese traders are cited as one of the personal reasons. In general, conversion results from a search for spirituality and authenticity.

Even though the average African American Muslim might not have the historical intellectual roots of the various Black Muslim movements in mind – and the knowledge gap between leaders and followers of a social or religious movement is a general phenomenon – it is important to underline that the leaders of the major African American nationalistic Muslim movements have managed to connect Afrocentric and Muslim ideologies. Pauline Guedj (2003) points out that the Ahmadyyah Movement, the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam have drawn inspiration from the theory of an Afro-Asian Islam and an Afro-Asian origin of the black race. This idea also provides these movements with a negative referent for their thought. Karen Isaksen

Leonard (2004) points out the inherent paradoxes of these ideologies. In the early twentieth century, the Moorish Science Temple and Nation of Islam “both asserted ‘Asiatic’ racial identities, explicitly rejecting slave, Negro, and/or African identities in many ways”. The emerging category of “Asiatic Black” can be interpreted as a response to the racialization of identity politics in general in the United States.

Nevertheless, the complexity and variety of the contemporary identity discourse of the Murids shows how dynamic these discourses and references are. The reference to “African personality and culture” in the New York mayor’s proclamation of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day connects African roots and Sufism, which enables African American Muslims who currently research their African roots to identify themselves with this spiritual leader. But it should be underlined how fragile these intellectual identification processes are, because those of the everyday-life struggles that are based on religion, ethnicity, origins and so on have an important impact on community life and individual practices in the United States. The discourses of social or religious movements are not representative of the relations between individuals and/or groups.

## Conclusion: Achieving Social Security in New York and Paris through a Translocal Religious Network

We have asked what kind of social security arrangements can be found in different religious contexts. Differences concerning the welfare state explain different strategies in building up individual and collective social security. In the United States, the social security provided by the state is rather thin, but the American Senegalese are higher educated and the unemployment rate is lower, so that they can easily find one or two jobs. Administrative and economic support is important at the beginning of their stay; emotional and spiritual support is more important in the long term. In France, the welfare state provides basic needs for migrants, but the average Senegalese worker earns only a low salary or receives a low pension because of unqualified work in the car industry. The absence of affirmative action programs in France and the myth of equality in the Republic do not allow pointing out real existing discrimination in the job market, so that particularly young and well-educated Senegalese feel uncomfortable and need emotional as well as economic support. Finally, those who can afford a flight ticket and manage to obtain a visa migrate to the United States, disdaining France even more once they succeed overseas.

The local Murid network in Harlem is an actor for social transformation. The real estate within that area has considerably changed since the arrival of the first Senegalese migrants in the 1980s. Thanks to the visibility of religious

practices within public space, the Senegalese Muslims, and particularly the members of the Murid brotherhood, gain emotional and spiritual security, accompanied by administrative and economic security provided by the state and by the Borough of Manhattan. The authorities trust the new migrants because of their Muslim ethics, which is expressed in almost Weberian terms in their lobbying campaigns and in public events such as the annual Murid parade.

As well as Pentecostalism, which “has become a transnational phenomenon that, in its modern form, is locally expressed through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people” (van Dijk, 2002:178), Muridism has spread around the multi-sited migration network and evolved. On the one hand, the local expression of Muridism changes according to the specific context and influences the religious network as a whole. On the other hand, the local expression of Muridism as an event contributes to the restructuring of a local territory including social, economic and political practices. We have shown how the Murids managed to use the local administrative rules (such as the access to public space for religious communities) and the specific symbols of belonging to American citizenship (through the Proclamation of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba Day, etc.) in order to become a part of Harlem. Even if concrete everyday relations with African American citizens are a source of serious conflict, the Murids used the common colour of skin to create a link and to lobby for particular rights and recognition.

The demonstration of religious ethics such as piety and hard work can easily be understood from an American Protestant standpoint and helped Murids obtain recognition in public opinion and beyond. This strategy is directly connected to the specific local context and is the result of the hybridization of religious, political and social practices related to a multi-sited translocal space. The specific local expressions of this translocal network stem from a fine knowledge of this context. They do not erase the general uncivic structure of this translocal movement: for example, the important financial flows extend beyond national boundaries or controls of international public organization. Murids do not systematically seek a visible place in public space, but in the case of New York, this visibility and the construction of a peaceful, tolerant, event “workaholic” image of the Murids was helpful in the negotiation process with the mayor. So the occupation of public space is not an aim in itself, but can also be considered an instrument of the effective local rooting of an uncivic translocal network.

In Muridism, the individual relationship between talibe and marabout has always been the basis of a wider network of solidarity. Migration has led to a deterritorialization of this relationship, reinforced only during visits of the talibe in Senegal or by displaced spiritual links in favour of Sheikh Mourtada, who went to see the Senegalese around the world until his death on 7 August

2004. So far, migration, a source of emotional insecurity, has reinforced the translocal religious network that provides stable spiritual and emotional solidarity. However, the economically successful American Senegalese invest a growing amount of their benefits in the United States and only a small but efficient part of their gains in Senegal. Will the following generation maintain the translocal solidarity network or will moral obligations shift from Senegal towards an intra-American network, or even disappear within the individualized society?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These findings are published by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, part of the New York Public Library ([www.inmotionaame.org](http://www.inmotionaame.org), 07.10.2005).

<sup>2</sup> [www.inmotionaame.org](http://www.inmotionaame.org), 07.10.2005.

<sup>3</sup> See the recent articles by Sophie Bava, “The Mouride Dahir between Marseille and Touba”, *ISIM Newsletter*, 8, 2001, and by Serigne Mansour Tall, “Mouride Migration and Financing”, *ISIM Newsletter*, 9, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Marabout is a French word from the Arabic word *Marbūt*, ascetic, or from the word *Murābit*, inhabitant of the *Ribāt* in Senegal. The term *marabout* was introduced by the French colonials to designate a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. The marabout is usually above the imam (but this is not always clearly defined). Above the *marabout* is the Grand Marabout, who in turn is subservient to a *Khalif*. The highest position is occupied by the *Khalif général*. In certain cases women can become *marabouts*, such as Sokhna Maguette Diop Aidara in Thiès.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term translocal in order to underline the importance of the local rooting indispensable for the functioning of a multi-sited network. The different nation-states in which the migrants circulate are still important, particularly in terms of residence law and administration, but the very specific local environment changes from place to place within a national setting and needs to be known in detail in order to organize religious or political events.

<sup>6</sup> The prime minister and the ministers have been replaced very often since 2001, so that the composition of the government could have changed between the writing of this article and its publication. Nevertheless, the point is that the impression of being forgotten remains among an important part of the Senegalese who reside in France.

<sup>7</sup> Haalpulaar or Fulbe (*Peul* in French) means an “ethnic” group in West Africa, mostly nomads and cattle owners.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Shaykh Bassirou Lô at the House of Islam, New York, 5 September 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Imam Zaid Shakir, *Reflections on Black History Month* (Zaytuna Institute and Academy, 2004). ([www.zaytuna.org](http://www.zaytuna.org)).

<sup>10</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> This is the exact reproduction of the text, including the original mistakes.

<sup>12</sup> This is the exact reproduction of the text, including the original orthographic (Mourдите instead of Murid, etc.) and other mistakes.

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