

# ISLAMIC POLITICAL RADICALISM

A EUROPEAN  
PERSPECTIVE



EDITED BY  
TAHIR ABBAS

Edinburgh University Press

# CONTENTS

Notes on the Contributors	v
Preface and Acknowledgements	xiii

## Part I – Definitions

1. Introduction: Islamic Political Radicalism in Western Europe <i>Tahir Abbas</i>	3
2. The Discourse of ‘Terrorism’ between Violence, Justice and International Order <i>Jørgen S. Nielsen</i>	15
3. A Clinical Psychology Perspective on Radical Islamic Youth <i>Edward J. Lifton</i>	25
4. The Scales for Defining Islamic Political Radicalism <i>Ismail Adam Patel</i>	42

## Part II – Islamic Political Radicalism in Europe

5. Europe and Political Islam: Encounters of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries <i>Sara Silvestri</i>	57
6. Anti-Semitism amongst Muslims <i>Haris Aziz</i>	71
7. The Growth of Islamic Radicalism in Eurasia <i>Galina M. Yemelianova</i>	83
8. Radical Islam in Europe: Misperceptions and Misconceptions <i>Alok Rashmi Mukhopadhyay</i>	99

**Part III – The British Context**

9. How the Zionist Colonisation of Palestine Radicalised British Muslims 117  
*Daud Abdullah*
10. From the Ethos of Justice to the Ideology of Justice: Understanding Radical Views of Scottish Muslims 131  
*Gabriele Marranci*
11. Islamic Political Radicalism in Britain: The Case of Hizb-ut-Tahrir 145  
*Sadek Hamid*
12. Islamic Political Radicalism in Britain: Muslim Men in Bradford 160  
*Marie Macey*
13. ‘Because I am Pakistani . . . and I am Muslim . . . I am Political’ – Gendering Political Radicalism: Young Femininities in Bradford 173  
*Gurchathen Sanghera and Suruchi Thapar-Björkert*
14. Disconnection and Exclusion: Pathways to Radicalisation? 192  
*Basia Spalek*
15. Transitional Religiosity Experiences: Contextual Disjuncture and Islamic Political Radicalism 207  
*Akil N. Awan*
16. An Assessment of Colonial Strategies of Resistance, Liminality and Herberg’s Thesis in the Rise of Radicalism among British South Asian Youth 231  
*Ron Geaves*

**Part IV – After 7/7**

17. Ruminations and Reflections on British Muslims and Islam Post-7/7 247  
*H. A. Hellyer*
18. Electronic Monitoring and the Creation of Control Orders for Terrorist Suspects in Britain 263  
*Mike Nellis*
19. British Islamic Political Radicalism 279  
*Salma Yaqoob*
20. Disengaging with Terrorism: The Internal Muslim Challenge in Deligitimising Radicalism as a Means of Tackling Extremism 295  
*Sayyed Nadeem Kazmi*

- Index 303

## INTRODUCTION: ISLAMIC POLITICAL RADICALISM IN WESTERN EUROPE

Tahir Abbas

Where most of the Muslim world is still facing up to the challenges of Islam and democracy, Muslim minorities in the West face a whole host of issues in relation to identity, the adaptation of religio-cultural norms and values, and issues of everyday citizenship. In the current climate in Britain and more widely in Western Europe, there is the increasingly significant phenomenon of the indigenous-born, native-language-speaking Muslim youth politicised by a radicalised Islam. This book is an attempt to explore the issues that seemingly impact on Islamic political radicalism, exploring sociological, political, cultural and psychological ideas. It is an analysis of a combination of complex factors in relation to cultural, economic, social and political dislocation compounded by national and international neo-Orientalist and Islamophobic political and media discourse, where the international climate is replete with references to the 'Islamic' and the 'terrorist'.

In Western Europe, indigenous-born Muslims can often experience a complex and dislocated existence. Post-war immigrant groups who were either invited or came searching for improved economic opportunities have found their young growing up in societies that exhibit prejudice, discrimination and racism towards minority Muslim communities. Local education for the young is limited, for much the same reasons as in Britain – that is, poor schools in poor neighbourhoods, often with less educated parents. This affects the likelihood of securing effective higher education or labour-market entry. It also prevents individuals and communities from participating as good citizens in society. There are also inter-generational tensions as a result of language, culture and attitudes towards majority communities. Invariably, as the process of adaptation begins to evolve in subsequent generations of migrant communities an adjustment to majority society occurs. At times there is resistance, as in the case of a few Muslims who see integration as a negative feature of life in liberal

secular nation-states regarded by some as somewhat antithetical to the life of 'a good Muslim'. There are others who have made a positive effort at integration; but once they have experienced the negative impact of the system, a sense of dislocation and alienation, perceived or real, occurs and affects their consciousness. This then encourages some to seek to resolve Muslim issues, home and abroad. These individuals can be politically subjugated by radical interest groups, often resulting in their carrying out horrific acts of violence invariably involving the annihilation of the self and largely for other Muslims.

### The emergence of Salafi thought in Western European contexts

Major concerns in the question of Islamic political radicalism are how it comes about in the first instance and, having determined an answer, how it can then be alleviated. However, it is also palpably clear that questions in relation to what drives radicalisation and how to engage with radicalised young people remain difficult to answer. The communities from which many radicals emanate are generally removed from formally engaging in the political process. Where there is suspicion of activity, it tends to centre on the movements of 'shadowy figures who venture into homes late at night', presumably engaging in radicalising others or themselves. It is possible to do this with media developments in the Islamic world and because of the way in which the bleak truths of war can stir the imagination of young minds already susceptible to feelings of frustration, anger, hate and ultimately the will to carry out an 'honourable duty'. There are also cases of young Muslims, often of middle class status, beginning their radicalisation for the first time at university. These young people arrive in situations where their ethnicity and religion can cause further feelings of disillusionment with wider society and the sense that they do not belong. Similarly, there is a perceptible view that higher education institutions are 'hotbeds of radical political Islamic activity', sometimes acting as launch pads for further encouraging young Muslims to become radicalised. These young Muslims are perhaps away from home for the first time, and very much emotionally affected by the injustices of the world – this is how Muslims are potentially radicalised.

There have been earlier periods in this so-called radicalisation of Islam, particularly in the twentieth century, through the Salafi ('early Islam') writings of Muslim ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna's *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, Maulana Abu'l a'la Maududi in the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s, actions of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and its wings, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Fateh in the 1960s and 1970s, or through the Libyans, Iraqis, Iranians or Lebanese, such as Hamas or Hezbollah in the 1980s. A perceptible pattern is found where Muslims in Islamic lands have opposed the dominant interests of major capitalistic states vying for a new world order. The overall response has come about over the last two hundred

years as Islam and Muslims have had to counter the imperial and colonial onslaught, often supported by US and British interventions in the Middle East and the Muslim world in an effort maintain control of important economic concerns or to fight the Third World war – the cold war against the ‘red enemy’.<sup>1</sup> Witnessing the events of the last three decades, from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 onwards, the Muslim world has been in turmoil while Muslim minorities in the Western world have faced economic, social, political and cultural marginalisation. It is these harsh experiences that characterise our sociological, anthropological, cultural studies and political science interests in the current study of Muslims.

The question as to whether the Islamic societies of universities are genuinely places where Muslims are radicalised has yet to find firm answers. *Hizb-ut-Tabrir* (HT) was banned from British university campuses by the National Union of Students (NUS) in the mid-1990s, and is banned from many European countries today. There were a number of Salafi organisations influencing impressionable minds throughout the 1990s in Britain. Organisations such as Al-Muhajiroun (the splinter group founded by Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad in the UK in 1996, disbanded in October 2004), Supporters of Shariah, and HT, had much success in ‘infiltrating’ university Islamic societies in Britain before their actions began to be viewed with suspicion. Encouraged to see themselves as engaged in a battle that pits ‘good’ against ‘evil’, angry young Muslims fuelled by Occidentalism sensationalism see Western nation states in negative binary terms. The rhetoric of the ‘evil other’ has been used by both George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden in an attempt to invigorate their following.<sup>2</sup>

Today, HT may well be carrying out its work covertly, infiltrating other university societies, namely Pakistan or Indian societies. But its success, overt or covert, is difficult to gauge in real terms. No suicide bombing has been carried out by any British member of HT, although Asif Mohammed Hanif, who blew himself up in Tel Aviv in 2003, and his partner in crime, the would-be bomber Omar Khan Sharif, were both British and had some links with Al-Muhajiroun. Many of the ‘Seven in Yemen’ who apparently tried to blow up the British Embassy and a nightclub in Sana in 1999 were British-born Muslims. They met at university and were largely radicalised, directly or indirectly, by Abu Hamza al-Masri, formerly of Finsbury Park Mosque. Clearly, therefore, when young Muslims go away to university, it is apparent that a small few do emerge very different from whom they were when they entered. How and exactly why this should be is not entirely comprehensible. The danger, nevertheless, is that many of these people emerge as outwardly well-integrated folk who live and work among majority society unbeknown as potential threats to us all, until, that is, it is often far too late.

Before the events of 9/11, the Rushdie affair of 1989 highlighted to the world that there were issues pertaining to the South Asian Muslim community regarded as relatively innocuous until then. Pictures of the ‘book burnings in

Bradford' reverberated around the globe and the media reaction was particularly negative, home and abroad. The collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1991 and troubles in far off Muslim lands firmly placed Islam and Muslims in the immediate sphere of media and political attention. After 9/11, and certainly after 7/7, a whole host of factors have negatively impacted on British Muslims. Increasing anti-terrorist measures, increased policing powers, racial and ethnic profiling in the criminal justice system, a civil societal debate around culture that places South Asian Muslims at its heart, although never quite explicitly, questions around the apparent unassimilability of Muslims, with a focus on community cohesion and widening cultural and economic and social positions – all of these have co-existed alongside the apparent and increasing 'jihadi salafi' radicalisation of young Muslims. Gender issues are also important to explore, as it is often men who are most likely to be embroiled. Young Muslim women have been shown to better engage with the theological, political and social pressures placed on their identities as being both British-born and a Muslim. Certainly, it is reasonably well confirmed that Muslim women outperform their male counterparts in higher education, and where possible are better able to negotiate issues of ethnicity, identity and high-profile religious minority status.

What recent events have invariably revealed is a worrying lack of knowledge of Islam not just within majority society but also within Muslim communities. Politically, debates in relation to the 'Muslims in Britain' issue have been between the left, which focuses on economic structure and the Iraq war; the right, which has championed culture and nation; and the liberals, who have focused on civil liberties and freedoms in a democratic society. Polarised societies remain in the hands of subjugated radical Islamists on the one hand and dominant neo-conservative Christian evangelicals, whose rhetoric is dominated by such notions as 'good Muslims are with us' and 'bad Muslims are against us', on the other. Furthermore, concerns about multiculturalism, segregation and 'Britishness' remain palpable in a society that sees its elites struggle to appreciate the extent of its diversity while only slowly relinquishing any notions of empire or of remaining a player in the global marketplace. What ceases to enter the imagination is that often Islamic political radicalism is about the tensions of trying to be European, British Asian, Pakistani or Kashmiri as much as it is about being Muslim.

### **Radicalising British Muslims**

Many who have been involved in Islamic political radical activities have been South Asian Muslim but not all – a number have been African-Caribbean reverts. Somali groups who are now forming communities in increasingly segregated areas are experiencing severe economic and social disadvantage and exclusion. They experience a particular form of marginalisation that hits the group in three ways: 1) English society tends to strongly dislike 'foreigners' – xenophobia remains an important issue in white-English groups as well as in more integrated

ethnic minority communities; 2) direct racism and discrimination is experienced because of their skin colour and 3), they experience hostility towards Islam in the same way as other Muslims in British society. These radicalised Muslims have not all necessarily been poor – some attend university but were born on the ‘wrong side of town’. They experienced prejudice, racism and discrimination throughout their early lives and sustained themselves in education in spite of its limitations in relation to Muslims or ethnic minorities per se. By hoping to find ‘the truth’ they were ultimately misdirected by radicalising Islamists seeking to convert apparently once-decadent young Muslims or those yearning for a more literal interpretation of the religion. By giving them a sense of belonging, identity, or an association with a struggle that transcends their everyday boundaries and barriers, theologically, metaphysically and spiritually, Islamists have moved with a twisted message of salvation and redemption.

At the national and international level, it is also argued that the politics of George W. Bush in the USA and Tony Blair in Britain help to further radicalise Muslims here, although there is continued official denial in relation to this assertion. However, Mohammad Sidique Khan, in a taped video message broadcast on Al-Jazeera TV on 1 September 2005, said: ‘Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against *my people* [emphasis added] all over the world.’ Furthermore, the ways in which Muslim prisoners have been treated in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Gharib prison at the hands of the Americans, and the latest revelations of the extent of the abuse inflicted on Iraqi prisoners and civilians by the British army (January 2006), serve only to disillusion an already disenfranchised British Muslim community.

Since 9/11, throughout much of the Western world, changes to international finance, anti-terrorism legislation, and debates around identity cards, citizenship and rights and obligations have all seen the nation-state seemingly tighten its grip on Muslim minorities. Is it that the ‘War on Terror’ has revealed itself to be an ideological construction, helping to maintain the status quo, while Muslims are derided, misrepresented, incarcerated and, in general, made to feel and think they are unwelcome? The same could be said about the shift towards regarding Muslims as the ‘enemy-within’, as an undifferentiated mass of ‘Arab terrorists’, as groups who are overly demanding of their religious and cultural rights, and as people unwilling to integrate into majority society.<sup>3</sup>

### The challenge of 7/7

One of the major shifts in thinking in recent years has seen the move from a focus on race to a focus on religion. Since the events of 9/11, and more recently 7/7, there has been a perceptible shift in relation to the major ‘race relations’ problems in Britain. In relation to crime, education, health, housing, unemployment, graduate employment, local area tensions in relation to regeneration, vilification in the media, national and international focus on terror,



violence, extremism and, indeed, the subject of multiculturalism, Muslims as well as the religion of Islam remain in sharp focus. Many of the current major social policy questions relate to Muslims, and although New Labour as part of its third-term legacy is increasingly concentrating on other domestic issues such as education, health, energy, pensions and Europe, the subject of Iraq and anti-terrorism are still key priorities. Current analysis suggests that there are certain segments of the British Muslim minority community that are underdeveloped. While the state continues to institutionalise against racism (ethnic, racial and religious), and increasingly monitors and acts upon social and economic exclusion, Muslims still have yet to find the opportunity to integrate into society effectively.

As a result of the recent terrorist attacks in London, there has been a genuine attempt on the part of the state to try and engage with its British Muslim minority, particularly the young and disaffected. Reverberations from the complete shock of the events are still being felt as communities, neighbourhoods, politicians and the state come to terms with the enormity of what happened and the potential implications for public and social policy. What compounds the distress is the discovery that the acts were orchestrated by British-born Muslim perpetrators, many of whom were seemingly well-integrated citizens. The London terror outrage now known as 7/7 has brought it home to us that the threat from suicide bombers comes not simply from foreigners who slip into the country, but from people who live and have grown up amongst us. This possibility had completely bamboozled the intelligence services, who were of the view that any would-be terrorist attacks would be organised by overseas groups infiltrating networks in Britain. That these young British men were prepared to be radicalised in this way has come as a genuine surprise to many. It makes it all the more pertinent to better understand the mechanisms and processes that drove them to their actions and, more importantly for the future, to determine how best to engage with alienated British Muslim minorities.

The need to understand and appreciate the depth of the dissatisfaction felt by young Muslims in Britain is more important than ever. There are a number of factors that can be recognised and not just from the London bombings. After 9/11, and more recently 7/7, there has been a focus on leadership, and in particular on organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), who have been seen as unreflective or unrepresentative of Muslims as a whole. There has also been a perceptible focus on mosques, and in particular on imams and the content of Islamic teaching. It is a jigsaw but at least we can already put some of the pieces in place.

### *Islamic political indoctrination*

In certain instances, there is indoctrination of young people radicalised by messages claiming an Islamic knowledge that encourages the putting to death of

innocent people for infinite rewards in paradise or as part of an act of war. Islamist groups of a Jihadi-Salafi orientation – those who possess a literal interpretation of Islam, which is inward-looking – are the essential driver in this radicalisation of Muslims, in the West and elsewhere. Whether as minorities or majorities in almost all of the countries of the world, there is a perceptible strain among some Muslims for whom interpretation of Islamic doctrine such as Shariah law tends to be frozen and Islam closed off to the rest of humanity. However, although these people constitute a tiny minority of the 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide, they often evoke the greatest discussion in media and political discourse in relation to Islam as a whole.

It is important to emphasise that the actions of these terrorists are almost entirely political and not at all theological. As young individuals experiencing acute social exclusion and faced with multiple challenges and confrontations in relation to religion, culture and society, their only solution is to take a radical Islamic perspective. They are determined to ‘go straight to heaven’ through a process of creating political change by encouraging the world’s leaders to take action on Iraq specifically but also Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir as part of the wider struggle to liberate Islam and Muslims from the offensive they currently experience. They are but the few who are made to most reflect the many.

#### *Social enterprise*

There is a genuine issue concerning leadership at home, in the community and at the local and national levels – although it can also be argued that the Muslim community has not had time to integrate. Leadership in the Muslim population is determined by offering managed political power to elites who are often of a very different make-up and outlook to the many they seek to represent. Local community ‘elders’ are maintained by community support mechanisms that facilitate the electoral process to the advantage of the main political parties but can take out of the hands of the people the choice of who they want as their leaders. Religious leadership has also been weak. The imams in mainstream mosques are not central, if relevant at all, to the leadership of Muslims, and have absolutely no responsibility at all for the radicalising of the young. They are for the most part poorly equipped to fulfil their role in the religious, cultural and intellectual edification of young people, and their potential could be better exploited. These failings make young people vulnerable to Islamists who are able to satisfy the thirst for knowledge and often in a language that is sometimes better understood. The opportunity for imams to be educators of the community in the Qur’anic texts and in their application for Muslims living in the West has been missed, and Muslim communities are poorer for it.

*Economic and social exclusion*

There is no doubt whatsoever that social exclusion features prominently. Many young Muslims live in poverty, in overcrowded homes, segregated areas, declining inner city zones, face educational underachievement, high unemployment, low graduate employment, and experience poor health. These disadvantages have significant implications for young people growing up in society as they experience limiting horizons fuelling distrust, generating antagonism towards the state and creating an acute sense of isolation. Such structural factors are endemic in any sense of alienation that young people experience. Alongside issues of economic marginalisation, young Muslim men have to operate in an evermore competitive and globalised world. Essentially, they face problems of racism, discrimination and anti-Islamism that affect a particular section of the British Muslim community. It is easy to lose sight of Muslims in parts of the Midlands and the North while focusing on urban elites and a significant politico-media class of individuals in the South of England. A cultural, intellectual and political North–South divides adds to many of the structural problems affecting Muslim minorities per se.

*A crisis of masculinity*

Young Muslim men, invariably of South Asian origin, are experiencing a sense of dislocation because of the presence of aspirational and committed women in society, as well as Muslim women within the South Asian community. In educational terms at least, women are outperforming men, although their representation in further and higher education is sometimes left wanting. There is a crisis of masculinity in society, with Muslim men particularly affected. Economic decline and psychological and cultural features impact on young Muslims in harsh terms. Furthermore, it is especially important to highlight the question of cultural patriarchy. British-born South Asian Muslim men often wish to integrate into society far more than earlier generations. However, certain inter-generational tensions can emerge, dislocating the second generation from the first. Parents have a particular set of expectations and children another. Tensions and rifts emerge, and within the context of patriarchy, which is especially acute for Pakistanis, young Muslim men, protected by their mothers (who can reproduce their own marginalisation through this), are unable to effectively channel their energies in a more productive way. The cleft between generations is not always bridged, with young men unable to find a way out and parents either unaware or prepared to turn a blind eye.

A particular problem is the theology of inter-generational conflict. Younger Muslims want a stricter and more literal interpretation of the Qur'an, Sunna and Hadith because it gives people a sense of identity in an evermore fractured

world. Given the freedoms provided to Muslims in Britain to take on challenges, individuals concerning themselves with struggles in other parts of the Muslim world are encouraged. But the theology of first- and second-generation South Asian Islam, particularly in relation to Pakistanis, is generally inflexible and unable to accommodate the interests and anxieties of current generations. As a consequence, younger Muslims turn to 'radicalised' sets of messages that stem from outside the community and which position them in reaction to their parents and to wider dominant society.

### *Islamophobia*

Islamophobia refers to the fear or dread of Islam. It has a historical narrative that stretches back to the dawn of Islam but it also displays modern day equivalents. We see it in the daily press, news media, documentaries, docu-dramas, various crime-detective series, and so on. We also see it in politics, certainly in relation to how references are made to an 'evil ideology' which ultimately homogenise and standardise a very diverse world religion. What all this does is to further isolate marginalised young Muslim men who perceive themselves as ever-beleaguered by a popular culture that regards Islam, and Muslims, in anti-theoretical terms. A neo-Orientalism of the kind we have been recently witnessing places Islam as the bogey of society. Furthermore, it exhibits no boundaries, as Islamophobia has both local and global effects.

### *Media*

The role of the media is important. It is perfectly possible for an individual to be raised in an insulated environment, where television, internet, community and local enterprise are almost entirely South Asian or Muslim. A young man can be radicalised by images of victims in Palestine or Chechnya from his own home, through conversations within a circle of friends with similar perspectives on life, or by reading the many pieces of imbalanced literature that are freely available, Islamic or secular. This is one of the consequences of globalisation: people are connected to every aspect of life through communication, information and financial technologies but have lost touch with neighbours in the process. Where the media encompasses Muslims at one level, at another it spreads Islamophobia – not least by focusing on preachers from the wilder fringes of Islam rather than the more recognised authorities. While few commentators are able to distinguish between the Islam that is practised in general and the disturbed Islam that is practised by the very few, they remain prominent critics of the religion. This conceals the fact that there is wide-ranging debate within Islam about modernity. The Western critique, relentless as it is ill-informed, hinders rather than facilitates this active discussion.

*Iraq*

Last, and by no means least, there is British foreign policy. The essential question is how far did the war on Iraq make the 7/7 events a reality? The answer is clearly political from the point of the observer. One view would be to suggest that, in reality, it has little to do with Iraq. Britain has experienced young South Asian Muslim men involved in Islamic political radicalism well before 7/7, and indeed 9/11. In fact, this phenomenon has been long in the making, with young European-born ethnic minority Muslim men involved in actions abroad, namely Bosnia, Chechnya, Yemen, Afghanistan and Israel. However, there is no doubt that Iraq has become one of the biggest tragedies of foreign policy. It has undoubtedly destabilised the region and no doubt the many Muslims in the rest of the world who worry for it. But it is not the overwhelming cause of Islamic political radicalism in Britain and in other parts of Western Europe.

The problems of radicalism are multi-layered and multi-faceted. A young man to take the final step to 'suicide bomber' has to experience complete social, cultural, generational, political and economic marginalisation compounded by a puritanical fundamentalist pseudo-theological outlook on life and a sheer selfishness to click that final switch. It takes a rare combination indeed to prompt any young British Muslim man to take those final steps, as in July 2005 – but, according to this argument, should the status quo remain, it is potentially likely to affect us all again in the near future.

All of the above factors are important in any rationalisation of what drives Islamic political radicalism. Which is *most* important depends more on the political position taken by the commentator but what is palpably clear is the interconnectedness of the different factors under discussion. How we view this phenomenon is as much about how we see ourselves as it is about how we want to be seen. The combination of internal and external dynamics, and the juxtaposition of local, national and international issues, places certain Muslims in the West in precarious positions.

**Problems of identity: reflecting on globalisation and the *Ummah***

As Muslims we too are looking inside ourselves and the British Muslim community at large to determine what might be at fault *within* at the same time as analysing how the foreign policies of the George W. Bush and Tony Blair governments have created havoc in distant lands *without*. The global context has been the self-fulfilling prophecy of the 'clash of civilisations' thesis, a theory originally formulated by neo-conservative ideologues such as Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama.<sup>4</sup> The stark realities of the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century have revealed a whole host of examples in which Muslims have suffered throughout the globe. From the first Gulf War (1990–1), to Somalia (1993), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1993–6),

Chechnya (1999), the second Palestinian Intifada (2000–), the war on Afghanistan (2001–2) and the war on Iraq (2003–4), Muslims have been at the receiving end of the pursuit of Western political and economic interests.

There are twenty million Muslims in Western Europe and six million in the USA. From attacks on the Paris metro (1996), the Moscow theatre attack (2002), the Madrid bombings (2004) killing over 200 people, the assassination of Theo van Gogh (2004), the first-ever suicide bombings by home-grown radicals occurs in Europe in 2005. There are discernible connections between events on Western mainlands and in other parts of the Muslim world. Terrorism on the part of Islamists often occurs in reaction to violence inflicted by dominant forces on Muslim people. The events of 7 and 21 July 2005 were not the first time British-born Islamic political radicals have come to the fore. The ‘Seven in Yemen’ (1999) included five British-born Muslims; then there were the two failed shoe-bombers, Richard Reid (2001) and Saajid Badat (2005), and the 2003 ‘Mike’s Place’ bombers in Tel Aviv, who were from Derby and Hounslow; Omar Khan Sharif and Asif Mohammed Hanif are further notable examples. They are also harsh reminders of the recent experience.

### **Contents of the book**

This collection is an attempt to draw together the current strands in thinking exploring the issue of Islamic political radicalism and its causes. The areas discussed in this opening essay are looked at in a much fuller and more dedicated way in the remaining chapters. There is still much research that needs to be carried out in this area but nevertheless a number of distinct ideas and thoughts in relation to contexts, causes and consequences are emerging, and this edition is an attempt to capture a precise scholarship of its time. A number of discernable themes run through the many different contributions, and there are indeed issues that cross-fertilise in an effort to rationalise how the local and global make an impact on changing ethnic and religio-cultural identity formations. Furthermore, different European settings provide their own nuanced rationalisation of the phenomenon.

There are four key parts to the book. Writers analyse the matter from various theological, psychological, Islamic studies, political science, cultural studies, historical and sociological perspectives. Part One, ‘Definitions’, discusses the parameters of Islamic political radicalism and the manifestation it takes. Writers explore the specific theological, sociological and political concerns in the current period. Part Two is an exploration of how the European experience has been shaped by wider geo-political events elsewhere in the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Writers here focus their attention on cases in Western Europe. Part Three specifically concentrates on the recent British experience, exploring events from a number of standpoints. Part Four discusses the ways forward for policy and practice, activism and Islamic doctrine,

personal and civil law, and human rights and civil liberties, specifically in relation to the events of July 2005. The overall message is that radicalism is a problem enough but we all need to work together to resolve the concerns we all have.

### Notes

1. Dreyfuss, R. (2005) *Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam*, New York: Metropolitan.
2. Ali, T. (2003) *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, London: Verso.
3. Modood, T. (2005) *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
4. Lewis, B. (1990) 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, September, p. 60; Huntington, S. (1997) *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon and Schuster; Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Avon.

## EUROPE AND POLITICAL ISLAM: ENCOUNTERS OF THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Sara Silvestri

### Introduction

Hourani (1991) wrote that the religion of Islam has constituted, since its appearance, a ‘problem’ for Christian Europe, but at the same time has represented an intellectual challenge and an opportunity for commercial trade and exchange of knowledge in crucial areas such as medicine. It is not my intention here to discuss issues such as European identity, otherness, whether Europe is Christian or religious, or to speculate on the future of multiculturalism. There is not scope in this paper to elaborate on these crucial but complex themes, hence I should refer the reader to experts such as Davie (2000), Modood (2005), Al Sayyad and Castells (2002) and Stråth (2000), as well as to my own work (Silvestri 2005a).

What I would like to show in this chapter instead is how the idea of Islam as a ‘problem’ continues to exist in Europe not only as a legacy of past history, stereotypes and narrow-minded attitudes of native Europeans but, more importantly, as a consequence of the increasing visibility of political Islam and of its progressive coming physically closer to Europe. Although the majority of Muslims and European Muslims have condemned and distanced themselves from recent violent actions that were carried out in the name of Islam, the very fact that certain terrorists have defined themselves as Muslims cannot be denied and tarnishes the position of approximately 15 million law-abiding EU citizens and immigrants who happen to be Muslim. This also impacts negatively on the inhabitants of two countries with a large Muslim population (Turkey and Bulgaria) that have applied for EU membership.

If we look at the recent history of the European Communities (EC) and the European Union (EU), we will realise that the issue of Islam did not seem to be a major cause of concern for the EC/EU member countries until the 1980s. The



European integration project did not need a 'Muslim Other' in order to develop. The EC/EU emerged in contraposition to different 'Others': Europe's own past consisted of wars and totalitarianism, from Nazism to Fascism to Communism. Both domestically and internationally, the Islamic world and culture were very near to Europe in geographical terms (even 'inside' the EC/EU member states, as in the case of Algeria, which remained a French colony until 1962, or in the form of economic immigrants from North Africa and Turkey who settled in Germany, France and Belgium from the 1960s onwards) but for several decades remained unobserved. In general, '[p]erceptions of Islam and Muslims in the wider European society have been determined much more by international political events than by the settled Muslim communities themselves' (Nielsen 2004, p. 126).

The existence of Islam – both within and outside the borders of the EC/EU – as a religious and socio-cultural entity, as well as a political project, became visible and tangible for Europe only towards the end of the twentieth century. This happened primarily through socio-economic processes such as immigration and the consequent necessity to accommodate the claims and practical needs of ethnic and religious minorities in a social and cultural fabric that hitherto had been almost monochromatic.

Europe had encountered Islam in the colonial period, and was attracted by its exoticism. For instance, in the 1960s, Western media would report with light-hearted curiosity on the lifestyles of royal personalities from the Middle East, as shown in the media analysis conducted by Kai Hafez (2005). But at the end of the twentieth century Europe encountered Islam in a more shocking and violent form, in the unfolding of social and political changes in North Africa and the Middle East. In that context, reference to religious – Islamic – identity proved to be a crucial factor of political mobilisation and also of political violence, which also has had long-lasting consequences on an international scale. The encounter with a bold and violent version of Islamism that, based on an affirmation of Arab-Islamic specificity, rejects Eurocentrism, capitalist universalism and Westernisation (Sayyid 1997), has re-awakened in Europe and in the West as a whole the Crusades' myth that Islam is a threat, the 'enemy' par excellence.

Landmark events in which twentieth-century Europe experienced this aspect of Islamic culture include, for example: the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, with the consequent Islamisation of the Lebanese and Palestinian struggles in the 1980s; the Algerian civil war sparked at the beginning of the 1990s by an explosive combination of social tensions and the country's first free democratic elections; the advent of Islamist political parties in secular Turkey in the 1980s, and their consolidation in the mid-1990s and continuing throughout the beginning of the new century; the worldwide Muslim mobilisation in response to the repeated American wars in (and occupation of) Iraq – respectively in 1991, 2003 and afterwards – and the anti-Taliban invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly, Western countries also faced the strength of a coalition of predominantly Muslim states in 1973, when the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)<sup>2</sup> put an oil embargo on the West, thus provoking a drastic rise in oil prices and at the same time paralysing Europe and America. This episode, however, although involving many Muslim countries, had primarily an economic dimension. The other events listed above, however, represent major occasions in the twentieth century when the Muslim world made an impact on the West by expressing the strength and revolutionary potential of political mobilisation driven by the religious message of Islam. Let us now observe some of the forms under which political Islam has presented itself to Europe.

Between 1979 and the mid-1980s, Iran-sponsored aggressions against US interests and key diplomatic posts and military bases contributed to producing the widely spread perception that associates Islam with fanaticism and terrorism aimed at combating the West. Although not directly attacked, Europe shared, in principle, American concerns about the threat to Western democracy represented by the Islamic revolution in Iran and by the symbolic and real impact that this Islamist project might have on neighbouring – and already politically unstable – Muslim countries. By receiving Iranian exiles who were fleeing the Islamist theocracy (and settling, in particular, in France), Europe implicitly declared its hostility to the Iranian Islamist project. In symbolic terms, Europe became involved in an intellectual conflict with the Islamic world, although this did not imply a physical confrontation with the Islamic ‘enemy’ on European soil. As Kepel (2000) has observed, the *fatwa* of Ayatollah Khomeini (the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran) issuing a death penalty against Salman Rushdie as a punishment for his ‘blasphemous’ book *The Satanic Verses* had a crucial impact on Western perceptions of a distant Islamic world. The *fatwa* had the effect of projecting symbolically the space of Islam, the *ummah*, into the Western world, starting from Europe (Kepel 2000, p. 21). By pronouncing this condemnation against a British citizen of Muslim background, the Iranian imam was also asserting his supremacy as world leader of the Islamic faith, thus committing a double affront: against the indigenous Muslim leaders of the various Muslim communities of the UK and, more importantly, against the hegemony of Saudi Arabia, until then the dominant propagator and defender of Islam (in its Sunni-Wahhabi variant) throughout the world (Kepel 1994, p. 209).

Besides this occurrence, it was through events in Algeria that Islamic grievances were suddenly, and physically, brought to Europe’s doorstep. The Algerian confrontation at the turn of the 1990s involved the Algerian government, army and secret services in opposition to the much-feared ‘Islamists’. What was considered the ‘Islamist’ part was in fact a receptacle for and expression of social and economic discontent and frustration, and included a diversity of individuals and aspirations, from the political party Front Islamique du

Salut (FIS, Islamic Salvation Front – itself divided into a radical and a moderate current) to militant armed groups, all embracing the message of political Islam but in varying degrees. The FIS challenged the status quo both in the local and general elections, respectively in 1990 and 1991, but was prevented from taking power by a military coup in January 1992. This opened the road to anarchy and civil war. The drive for political change through democratic mobilisation and the ballot box in Algeria triggered a guerrilla war against the Establishment (that is, the government, the army and the secret services) that saw the involvement of two rival armed groups – the Groupements Islamique Armé (GIA, Armed Islamic Group) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) – often regarded as two diverging and extreme trends within the FIS. This heightened situation provided the breeding ground for the radicalisation of the young and the poor who came into contact with the Mujahedeen (holy warriors), who had fought the Islamic *Jihad* in Afghanistan against the Russians<sup>3</sup> and joined the GIA, thus producing an escalation of violence not only against the Establishment but against civilians too.<sup>4</sup> The Islamists' battle was contradictory in terms. If, on the one hand, it appealed to the democratic system and to human rights in order to gain legitimacy through elections and by condemning the abuses of the corrupt regime, on the other hand this process of purification and rectification of society also implied a rejection of French 'cultural colonialism', including the notion of *laïcité* (secularism).<sup>5</sup>

According to Gilles Kepel (1994), the Algerian crisis soon spilled onto Europe through the Algerian diaspora. Many Algerian immigrants – or descendants of Algerians – living in France were still being entitled to vote for the elections in their homeland. The French scholar argues that a number of informal networks supporting the various trends of the FIS (including the Salafist one) spread out across France and in 1991 the *Fraternité algérienne en France* (FAF, Algerian Brotherhood in France) was founded (Kepel 1994). Allegedly, several GIA cells also became based in France, Germany and Great Britain, thus de facto exporting their fight against corrupt and infidel society from the domestic to the international context.<sup>6</sup> These developments alarmed the French and European police to the extent that the sequence of explosions in the Paris underground in 1995 (25 July, 17 August and 6 October) were not a totally unexpected act of terrorism. Although some commentators suspected the Algerian secret service, officially the blame for those bombings in three of the most trafficked stations of the French capital fell on militants from the GIA, and the incidents were branded as cases of 'Islamist terrorism' on European soil. Even if experts have detected infiltrations among the Islamists on the part of the Algerian Establishment in order to maximise violence and thus discredit the Islamists, the general impression across the world was that political Islam was a dangerous and bloody enterprise and that future 'Algerias' should be prevented (cf. Joffé forthcoming; Volpi 2003). This complex and tense relationship between political Islam, civil society, democracy and authoritarian regimes is

characteristic of most of the Islamic world. It constitutes a stumbling block for a large international actor such as the EU, which is interested in securing a geopolitical zone of stability around its borders,<sup>7</sup> is determined to fight international crime and terrorism, and at the same time does not rule out (and in fact supports through its intercultural dialogue project) exchanges with Islamist activists since, paradoxically, they constitute the most committed (and most respected by the local population) groups involved in the process of democratisation through their activities in the civil society sector.

In the same last decade of the twentieth century, the evolution of political Islam in Turkey centred around the fortunes of the Refah Partisi (RF, Welfare Party). Founded by Necmettin Erbakan in 1983, the Welfare Party is regarded to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood orientation and to the Milli Görüş movement (to which large numbers of the Turkish diaspora in Germany adhere).<sup>8</sup> Although initially banned from running for parliamentary elections, the Refah won a 19 per cent vote in the local elections (for the mayor of Istanbul and Ankara) in 1994, and 21 per cent in the parliamentary elections of 1995, with the result that Necmettin Erbakan became Prime Minister (1996–7). This was a short-lived victory, however, because the military and the Constitutional Court intervened to ban and dissolve (1998) the Refah party on charges that its Islamist and anti-Western message was incompatible with the country's secularist tradition. Other Islamist parties emerged in the 1990s from the ashes of the Refah, the Fazilet Partisi (FP, Virtue Party) and the Felicity Party, but both received little support from the voters and the Fazilet itself was contested and banned by the military and the Constitutional Court in 2001. In November 2002, something extraordinary happened: the Islamist reformist Justice and Development Party (AKP), which was headed by the former Mayor of Ankara, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and was composed of former members of the Refah party, triumphed in the general election with 34 per cent of the votes. Mr Erdogan, founder and leader of the AKP, became Prime Minister in 2003.<sup>9</sup> He himself had been jailed in 1999 for reciting a poem by an Islamist author the content of which – evoking a warlike imagery of mosques, minarets, bayonets, faithful and soldiers – was inciting religious hatred. The past of Mr Erdogan and of the AKP members has led the opposition and external observers to label the party as 'Islamist', although the Prime Minister has repeatedly expressed his annoyance with the 'fundamentalist' tag and said that his is 'not a party based on religious values' (*BBC News*, 30 September 2004).

The fact that Erdogan has passed many more democratic reforms than any of his predecessors seems to confirm the sincerity of his intentions, and some have even argued that the Justice and Development Party is a 'post-Islamist' entity (Zucconi 2003). But people (both in Turkey and abroad) are still suspicious. Their objection is that, even if the founder of the AKP has announced and indeed started a reformist plan, the AKP members happen nevertheless to have previously associated with (currently forbidden) parties that *did* embody

an interpretation of political Islam that, allegedly, threatened to subvert the country's geo-political stability, both domestically and internationally. The domestic opposition to political Islam could, however, be put down to the military seeing their interests jeopardised by a rival and more legitimate political force. On the international plane, the fear is that the Islamisation of Turkish politics could result in 1) opening up the way to more radical groups linked to terrorist networks; and 2) as a consequence, alienating the sympathy of Western and allied countries (for example, NATO, the EU, Israel) and jeopardising Turkey's entry into the EU. This last point is expanded upon in the next section.

### The Turkish-Islamic challenge

Islam and Muslims were becoming a visible and constituent part of European society already in the 1950s, when waves of immigrants from the former colonies in Asia and North Africa moved to Britain and France, and later also to Germany, Belgium and Holland. However, the particular religious affiliation of these individuals did not seem to pose any problem to what was generally felt to be the 'European identity', perhaps because of the receiving states' emphasis on assimilation and integration, or because 'difference' tended to be measured by race rather than by cultural/religious identity.<sup>10</sup> The debate over the EU Constitution (2002–5), the war in Iraq and its consequences (2003 onwards), and the EU Enlargement of May 2004 sparked off once again, and with great intensity, the debate on the European identity. This discussion became all the more controversial when a date (3 October 2005) was set for a culturally Muslim country – Turkey – to start negotiations for EU membership.

Political, social and cultural unrest in the EU about the prospect of Turkey's membership is not new and can be traced back to the country's first membership application in 1987. As Diez (2004, p. 328) has pointed out, Turkey is '[t]he discursive site where most of the othering of Europe against Islam is performed'. Nevertheless, allowing the country to apply for EC/EU membership in 1999 has implied acknowledging Turkey's 'Europeanness', since, according to the EU Treaty, 'only European states' can join the Union (Diez 2004). This fact renders the relationship between Turkey and the EU 'ambiguous', which is, after all, not something new. As Rich (1999) has noted, historically the Ottoman empire remained a significant 'European power' until the twentieth century. 'However, while the Ottomans were *in* Europe, they were until the nineteenth century not fully *of* it' (Rich 1999, p. 443).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, European suspicion towards Turkey is, first, a matter of identity and, second, an issue of security, entrenched in the fear that Turkey's entry into Europe could turn out to be an Islamist or even '*jihadist* Trojan horse' (Kepel 2004).

Western powers have never really officially expressed the concerns outlined above, although individual EU officials and political personalities such as former Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, Convention President Giscard d'Estaing, Italian

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the German Christian Democrat Party (CDU) Angela Merkel, French Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy, and even Pope Benedict XVI (especially when he was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) have voiced their reservations with regard to Turkey's entry in Europe, or have more generally argued a fundamental divergence between 'Islamic' and 'European' culture.<sup>12</sup>

Typically, the debate over the suitability of Turkey's entry and the rejectionist discourse have intensified at critical times when the country's accession to the EU was looming, for instance during the two years that preceded the Helsinki European Council of 1999.<sup>13</sup> Between 1997 and 1998, the European Parliament drafted a report on Islamic fundamentalism and the challenge it posed to the European legal order (European Parliament 1997). This report provoked a heated debate not only inside the European Parliament but also in the public domain. Several Muslim organisations across the EU member states found it 'a specific and unjustified attack on Islam and Muslims in Europe' (Association of Muslim Lawyers 1998). They subsequently activated in order to lobby the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from their respective countries not to vote in favour of the report. The document, which is often referred to as the 'Oostlander Report', from the name of the Dutch MEP who put it forward, Arie Oostlander, was in the end voted against because the majority of the Euro-Parliamentarians either abstained or disagreed with the stereotypes and inaccuracies (for example, the equation Islam = political Islam = terrorism) adopted in it to define Islam and Islamism (European Parliament 1997).

At about the same time, a Spanish MEP, Abdelkader Mohamed Ali, rapporteur to the Youth, Education and Culture Committee, issued a substantially different type of report, 'Islam and Averroes Day', to mark the 800th anniversary of the death of the Muslim philosopher who connected Europe with the Islamic world. Mr Ali took advantage of this EP platform to call for a series of measures that would strengthen the links between the Muslims of Europe and their host countries, for example by intensifying intercultural relations across the Mediterranean. He even provided some concrete suggestions on how to help articulate a 'modern, self-reflective, liberal European Islam', such as the creation of European centres for the education and training of imams, who are otherwise 'imported' from the Muslim world. However, 'many MEPs had reservations about the nature of co-operation that should take place with the Islamic world'.<sup>14</sup>

The dynamics triggered by these two controversial reports on Islam in Europe point to divergent attitudes towards Islam within the EU institutions. One emphasises the security risks associated with Islam; the other consists in the attempt to modernise Islam, and to adapt it to the European lifestyle and mindset. Neither of these approaches taken alone seems the most appropriate for the EU to think of and to use to interact with Muslims, within and out with the EU borders.

In the decade marking the beginning of the twenty-first century, an official stance centred upon intercultural dialogue has in fact concealed the existence of contrasting attitudes in the EU with regard to Islam and Turkey. This type of discourse has been adopted both by the EU and by the ('Islamist') Turkish government of Erdogan. Espousing the widely shared discourse on intercultural dialogue has an appeasing effect, although closer consideration can reveal its shortcomings. The essence of intercultural dialogue lies indeed on a dialogic exchange, but also implies the existence of different parts, with different identities or characteristics, that are willing to enter such a relationship and yet maintain their own specificities. Two – or more – different subjects can easily undertake intercultural dialogue (where each one, as a 'Self', would encounter an 'Other'), but this is not obvious if the Other becomes part of the Self. That is to say, in the case of Turkey, intercultural dialogue seems to work so long as Turkey is part of the 'outside' Muslim world with which the EU is so keen to establish social and cultural exchanges.<sup>15</sup> But when there is a prospect that Turkey might become part of the EU, the logic of intercultural dialogue does not seem to work. The fact that the EU is seeking to establish a relationship of collaboration and mutual respect with a different culture does not necessarily also mean that it is ready or willing to accept that culture as part of its own identity, although, as we have seen before, European identity is a rather elusive reality. It has historical roots that cannot be denied: Ancient Greece and Rome, Christianity, the Enlightenment, the two World Wars that drove Europeans to seek peace and solidarity and to design the 'integration' project after so much atrocity; but these have been (and are) constantly questioned and re-shaped by historical events and by interaction with new peoples and cultures. Such transformations are not predictable and are not normally the result of a rational decision.

If the EU member states decide to finally include Turkey in the EU,<sup>16</sup> they would have to come to terms with the fact that not only Islam is cultural component of Europe (a fact that has after all – though reluctantly – been accepted towards the end of the twentieth century), but also that Islamism can be a legitimate political actor in the European democratic system. Twenty-first-century Europe is very secularised, is committed to protecting human rights and freedom of religion, and has also some legal and political mechanisms in place (both at the EU and at the national level) to regulate the activities and the representation of religious groups in the public sphere as well as their interaction with the political system (normally in a consultative way). Therefore, if we consider Islam simply as a religion – that is, with faithful who are entitled to the right to practise it at certain times of the day or of the year, in specific places of worship, and requiring specific dietary attentions, schools, holidays, and so on – there do not seem to be any problems. Perhaps European states still have to adjust laws and public services in order to best accommodate the needs of their Muslim inhabitants; but in an epoch that privileges the protection of the human rights of the individual this should not be an impossible task. It is a matter of practise.

The real problem with Turkey entering the EU seems instead to consist in the fact that political Islam is alive and thriving in the country. The way Islamism presents itself at the moment, in the clothes of the AKP, is harmless and, as mentioned above, the party's founder rejects the appellation of 'Islamist'. Yet the legacy of the Refah party and of the long and multifarious Islamist tradition that traces back to the Muslim Brotherhood movement is there and cannot be denied.<sup>17</sup>

### Confronting political Islam, terrorism and social tensions

It is widely known that the expressions 'political Islam', 'Islamic fundamentalism' and similar terms are linguistic conventions used to encompass rather diverse phenomena that have a connection to Islam and to political activism. Such phenomena can diverge, even conflict with each other, over the use of political violence. Hence it is inherently wrong to think that Islamist politics equals extremism or terrorism. On the other hand, it is difficult, even impossible, to distinguish one trend from the other, or to identify the genuine long-term intentions of a group.

In short, the reasons for these difficulties are connected to internal fragmentation and lack of a clear leadership or hierarchy in Islam, and to the simultaneous existence of contested readings, by Muslim intellectuals, clerics and religious scholars, of the relationship between Islam, democracy and modernity. Against the backdrop of this complex situation, the fear that Turkish Islamic democracy could degenerate into the Algerian crisis (that is, the explosion of Islamist violence and civil war) is not unfounded, at least in principle, although the peculiar socio-economic preconditions that led to the crisis in Algeria do not seem to exist in Turkey. This also explains why, despite a (seemingly genuine) willingness on the part of the EU to interact with a country (Turkey), and even with a political party (the AKP) whose cultural (and ideological, in this case) references lie in the religion of Islam, a fear exists that the openness of the democratic process could bring Islamist politics *inside* Europe, with unpredictable consequences.

The traumatic experiences of the Paris, Madrid and London bombings in 1995, 2004 and 2005, the murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands in November 2004, as well as the fact that the 9/11 attacks were partly coordinated in Europe, have demonstrated the vulnerability of Europe's social fabric to a relatively new type of terrorism whose recruitment strategy resorts to the language and symbolism of Islam.<sup>18</sup> Even if the majority of the Muslim population in Europe and abroad has vehemently condemned those terrorist acts, and even if Islamic religious leaders have sought to distance themselves from the 'preachers of hatred' (thus contributing to the construction of the artificial notion of 'moderate' Islam), at the popular level the sense that the Muslim 'enemy is within' (Ansari 2004) persists.<sup>19</sup> Hence it is possible that opposition



to Turkey's entry into the EU could intensify on the part of the EU member states not because of any dislike or distrust of Turkish people and of Turkish Islam but because of the implications of the presence of Islamist politics in Turkey for the rest of Europe.

Allowing into the EU a country with a large Muslim population does not seem to be a major problem from the legalistic point of view of the Treaties. And yet the principle itself of allowing Islamic politics could revolutionise Europe, as it is plausible that quite a number of separate Muslim parties would arise. Another possible scenario is that the extremist groups that in the decade 1995–2005 have been recruiting disaffected Muslim youth in order to carry out murderous actions in Europe, allegedly to punish and cleanse a corrupt Western society in the name of Islam, might find their violent political struggle more legitimate in Europe (since these groups tend to be banned in Islamic countries). They could perhaps better 'disguise' their intentions if Islamist politics is allowed into Europe. Indeed, the possibility that the introduction of a form of political Islam that is compatible with the Western democratic parliamentary system could compete with and finally outdo the so-called 'Islamist' political violence (that is, terrorism camouflaged in Islamic clothes) seems more remote simply because the ultimate goal of this new form of de-centred terrorism is not dialogue or political negotiation but violence for its own sake.

Besides having concerns about the possible implications of the entry of Turkey into the EU and fear of acts of terrorism carried out in the name of Islam, European states and citizens – Muslim and non Muslim alike – are increasingly anxious about a more domestic and more palpable threat: the disaffection and hostility of youth from minority groups living in deprived areas of the major European cities. Many Muslims are unfortunately involved in this process.

Multiculturalism – the cohabitation with diversity – has undoubtedly produced reciprocal curiosity and socio-cultural *métissage* resulting, for instance, in beautiful artistic and culinary products. Yet it has also caused social and racial tensions that risk causing the ghettoisation of some communities.<sup>20</sup> There is, therefore, no reason for celebrating multiculturalism as the best strategy of integration of immigrants and minorities. The French model of integration through assimilation, for its part, whilst opposing segregation into communities and insisting on the important notion of equal citizenship, has also failed to amalgamate smoothly Muslims and other minorities into its social fabric. As a consequence, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, most European states register high levels of unemployment amongst their immigrant and Muslim populations. This factor, combined with the crumbling of traditional strategies of integration, has opened the way to the eruption of violence against state institutions and civilians on the one hand, and against Muslims – as in retaliation – on the other. With the London bombings in July, contested draconian anti-terror laws, rising levels of Islamophobia, and the

riots in Birmingham and in France in the autumn, the year 2005 will be remembered as a peak in this history of social tensions involving and affecting Muslims in Europe.

As Timothy Garton Ash (2005) has affirmed, even if the ‘vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists’, most of the terrorists who threaten ‘what we still loosely call the west’ claim to be Muslim. This, he argues, is enough for most people living in the West to affirm that ‘we do have troubles with Islam’. At the same time, it seems impossible to identify one precise reason at the source of this troubled relationship. This might seem a simplistic analysis of the current situation. But it is very much a reflection of feelings expressed in everyday conversation. No matter how rich and sophisticated Islamic culture and tradition can be, and despite the efforts of European governments, associations, educational institutions and private individuals to engage in intercultural dialogue or to facilitate exchanges with and the integration of Muslims in European society, a seed of doubt on whether Islam belongs to or can fit in with Europe remains. The difficulties that Islam has in being treated equally with other monotheistic religions, and that Muslims have in voicing their concerns, do not appear to ease these problems and suspicions.

### Notes

1. The presence in Iraq of American and other allied armed forces (such as the British) has continued – and has been vehemently contested – up to now (2006).
2. OPEC is a permanent, intergovernmental organisation created at the Baghdad Conference on 10–14 September 1960. Its aim is to coordinate oil production policies in order to help stabilise the oil market and to help oil producers achieve a reasonable rate of return on their investments. It is made up of eleven developing countries (Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela) whose economies rely on oil-exporting revenues. The first Summit of OPEC Sovereigns and Heads of State was held in Algiers in March 1975. See the OPEC website: [www.opec.org/aboutus/](http://www.opec.org/aboutus/). Accessed 14 June 2005.
3. Having been ‘made redundant’ at the end of the cold war, several fighters found a new mission to combat in the cause of their Muslim brothers in Algeria and in Bosnia in the 1990s (cf. Kepel 2000).
4. For a full account of the Algerian civil war, see Joffé (forthcoming) and Volpi (2003).
5. On these contradictory aspects of the Islamists’ relation to democracy, see Kepel (1994) and Roy (2004).
6. The academic community disagrees with the connections that Kepel identifies between the Algerian violence and the European context.
7. Cf. the Barcelona Process (Euro-Mediterranean Conference 1995) and the Neighbourhood Policy (European Commission 2003).

8. The Society of the Muslim Brothers (in Arabic, *al-Ikhwan al-muslimun*), also known as the Muslim Brotherhood, is a reformist and modernist movement founded in Egypt in 1928 by schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna (1906–49). It became a large educational and charitable organisation with increasing political power. Influential figures of the second generation of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), as well as the teaching of the Asian thinker Maulana Abu'l a'La Maududi (1903–79), contributed to developing the activist character of the movement and reinterpreted the notion of *Jihad* (literally, the strife for spiritual purification) in violent terms. In 1954, Qutb was imprisoned after his attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Brotherhood was outlawed between 1954 and 1984. In 1981, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was murdered by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an organisation that originates in Muslim Brotherhood thought (see Kepel 1994; 2000). The prominent al-Qaeda figure Ayman al-Zawahiri (b. 19 June 1951) was formerly the head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad paramilitary organisation.
9. For a description of and commentary on these events, as well as on the alternation between the Islamist parties in Turkey, see Kepel (2000, p. 503ff); Zucconi (2003); Karacasulu (2005); *Economist* (9 November 2002). For a portrayal of Erdogan, cf. *BBC News* (30 September 2004).
10. The British Race Relations Act (RRA) of 1976, for instance, protects ethnic minorities but does not mention religious minorities.
11. Emphasis added.
12. Nevertheless, a few months after his enthronement, Pope Benedict XVI showed a smoother approach to Islam. He even had an official encounter with German Muslim leaders during his trip to Cologne, Germany, for World Youth Day in August 2005. Moreover, contrary to many expectations, the conservative attitude of this Pope concerning religious rituals, and in moral and bio-ethical matters, is highly appreciated by many European Muslims who, like him, complain about the moral laxness and declining spirituality in Europe. An example of this was an article published in the November 2005 issue of the Muslim magazine *Q-News* (Murad 2005).
13. At that summit Turkey was granted the full status of 'candidate country', although the starting date for the negotiations was only decided in December 2004.
14. All quotations in this paragraph are from European Parliament (1998).
15. Intercultural dialogue is a central element of the third pillar of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (see Silvestri 2005b).
16. As of mid-2006, Turkey was still at the beginning of the negotiating phase.
17. On the Muslim Brotherhood, see note 9 above.
18. Although the terrorists who perpetrated these acts tend to claim that they have been inspired by Islam, and they explicitly locate themselves in a particular tradition of political Islam, that of Salafism (cf. Joffé 2004), I am still reluctant to define these acts of political violence as 'Islamic terrorism'. That is why I tend to specify that we are in the presence of terrorist acts that borrow the powerful 'language' and the 'symbols' of Islam. Schmidt, Joffé and Davar (2005) have produced an excellent

- comparative study of political extremism also arguing the centrality of psychological factors and dismissing as secondary the purely ideological or religious elements.
19. This analysis of Muslim responses and public attitudes towards Muslims, as well as the creation of the stereotyped image of a 'moderate' Muslim community, result from my constant media monitoring during 2000–5, as well as from a more thorough comparative media analysis whilst at London Metropolitan University during July–September 2005.
  20. The London bombings of July 2005 triggered a passionate debate on the alienation of Muslim communities in Britain and on the failure of the multicultural model (cf. BBC survey, 4 August 2005; *Telegraph* editorials by Boris Johnson and Marc Steyn on 18 July 2005 and 19 July 2005; Roger Hewitt in *Society Guardian*; 20 July 2005; Commission for Racial Equality (2005); Modood 2005). However, signs of uneasiness with multiculturalism had emerged already with the Rushdie affair in 1989 and during the riots in Yorkshire in the summer of 2001. Cf. the 'Cantle Report' on the disturbances in Oldham and Burnley (Home Office 2001) and also Allen (2003).

### References

- Abbas, T. (ed.) (2005) *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, London and New York: Zed Books.
- Al Sayyad, N. and M. Castells (eds) (2002) *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Allen, C. (2003) *The Bradford Disturbances: The Sentencing and the Impact*, London: Forum Against Racism and Islamophobia (FAIR).
- Ansari, H. (2004) *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800*, London: Hurst.
- Association of Muslim Lawyers (1998) *Rejection of Oostlander Report in EU Parliament*: [www.aml.org.uk/news/98-00lr.htm](http://www.aml.org.uk/news/98-00lr.htm). Accessed 1 June 2005.
- Commission for Racial Equality (2005) Press release: *After 7/7: Sleepwalking to segregation*, 22 September: [www.cre.gov.uk/Default.aspx?LocID=ohgnew07s.RefLocID=ohg0900c002.Lang-EN.htm](http://www.cre.gov.uk/Default.aspx?LocID=ohgnew07s.RefLocID=ohg0900c002.Lang-EN.htm). Accessed 23 September 2005.
- Davie, G. (2000) *Religion in Modern Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diez, T. (2004) 'Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17 (2), pp. 319–35.
- Esposito, J. (2002) *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Euro-Mediterranean Conference (1995) *Barcelona Declaration*, Barcelona, 27–8 November.
- European Commission (2003) *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, COM (2003) 104 final, Brussels, 11 March.
- European Parliament (1998) 'Minutes of the sitting of Monday 13 July 1998', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 292/1, 21 September.

- European Parliament (1997), Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs (Rapporteur: Arie Oostlander) *Dangers of fundamentalism*, INI/1996/2118.
- Garton Ash, T. (2005) 'What we call Islam is a mirror in which we see ourselves', *The Guardian*, 15 September.
- Hafez, K. (2005) 'The image of the Middle East and Islam in Western Media: A Critical Reappraisal'. Lecture delivered at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge, 13 October.
- Halliday, F. (2005) 'Turkish doubts', *openDemocracy*, 29 July.
- Home Office (2001) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cante* ('Cante Report') December.
- Hourani, A. (1991) *Islam in European Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joffé, G. (forthcoming) *Algeria: The Failed Revolution*, London: Routledge.
- (2004) 'Global Terrorism', *EuroMeSCO Papers*, no. 30, May.
- Karacasulu, N. (2005) 'Turkish Islamists and the European Union: A Shift in Perception'. Paper presented at the third ECPR General Conference, Budapest, 8–10 September.
- Kepel, G. (1994) *À l'Ouest d' Allah*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- (2000) *Jihad: Expansion et déclin de l'islamisme*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- (2004) 'Turkey's European Problem', *openDemocracy*, 14 December.
- Modood, T. (2005) *Multicultural Politics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Modood, T. and P. Werbner (eds) (1997) *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe*, London and New York: Zed Books.
- Murad, A. H. (2005) 'A Pope's progress', *Q-News*, November.
- Nielsen, J. (2004) *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Rich, P. (1999) 'European identity and the myth of Islam: a reassessment', *Review of International Studies*, 25, pp. 435–51.
- Roy, O. (2004) *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, London: Hurst.
- Sayyid, B. S. (1997) *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London: Zed Books.
- Schmidt, C., G. Joffé and E. Davar (2005) 'The Psychology of Political Extremism', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18 (1), pp. 151–72.
- Silvestri, S. (2005a) 'The situation of Muslim immigrants in Europe in the XXI century: the creation of national Muslim councils', in Henke, H. (ed.) *Crossing Over: Comparing Recent Migration in Europe and the United States*, Lanham, MD: Lexington, pp. 101–29.
- (2005b) 'EU relations with Islam in the context of the EMP's cultural dialogue', *Mediterranean Politics* (special issue, *The EU and the Mediterranean: Conceptualising Cultural Dialogue and Social Systems*), 10 (3), pp. 385–405.
- Stråth, B. (ed.) (2000) *Europe and the other and Europe as the other*, Brussels and Oxford: PIE-Peter Lang.
- Volpi, F. (2003) *Islam and Democracy: The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria*, London and Stirling, VA: Pluto Press.
- Zucconi, M. (2003) *Turkey's New Politics and the European Union*, Rome: Etnobarometro.